

Arrangements have been completed for the reception of telegrams at the Post Offices throughout the Colony; forms and envelopes being procurable at each office. The messages are sent through the Post Office free to the nearest Telegraph Station; but each telegram must be prepaid by postage stamps affixed. As the arrangement only came into force on the 1st June, no statistics are available; but there can be no doubt that it will be a great boon to residents out of the reach of a telegraph station. In the event of a telegram not being sufficiently stamped, the deficiency is collected on delivery.

On the 15th of June, a system of Money Order Telegrams was instituted. The money part of the transaction is completed by the Post Office, this Department simply telegraphing the respective orders and advice. The arrangements are such as not to interfere in any way with existing money order regulations. The public have already largely availed themselves of this privilege—a very great one, in all cases in which the saving of time in the payments of small sums is of importance.

Table K. contains a statement of the number of telegrams and of letters despatched within each Province during the year, as compared with the totals for each of the previous two years. It will be seen that the per centage of telegrams to letters shows a large increase during last year.

FINANCIAL.

On the 1st of September, 1869, a uniform rate of charge for ordinary and Provincial Government telegrams was established, namely—2s. 6d. for the first ten words, for any distance, and 6d. for each additional five words, or fraction of five words; Press telegrams being charged, for the first ten words, 1s. 6d., and for each additional ten words, or fraction of ten words, 6d. On the 1st April, 1870, a further reduction was made to—Ordinary and Provincial Government telegrams, 1s. for the first ten words, for any distance, and 6d. for each additional five words, or fraction of five words; and Press telegrams, 6d. for the first ten words, and 6d. for each additional fifteen words, or fraction of fifteen words. The charge for the signature of the sender of Press telegrams was at the same time discontinued.

From table B, it will be seen that the total number of telegrams despatched during the June quarter under the the Shilling Tariff, shews an increase of 22,565 over those during the previous quarter under the half-crown tariff, whilst the cash receipts show a decrease of £101 17s. 6d. Thus the public was largely benefited by the reduction, the Department doing nearly double the amount of work, and the Government receiving £100 less revenue. It cannot, however, be doubted, that as telegraphic facilities are extended—especially by the opening through to Auckland—and as the advantages of a general use of “the wires” come to be appreciated, the reduction of charges will prove a gain to the revenue as well as a great boon to the community.

The details furnished last year of the total number of telegrams of each code, and the receipts for each, will be found repeated in Tables C, D, E, F, H. The table shewing the total value of business, the total cash receipts, and the cost of maintenance of each station (G) will be found to be interesting.

The number of telegrams of all codes transmitted during the year was 185,423, or an increase of 29,256 on the number (156,167) during 1868-69. This increase is, to some extent, due to the work performed on the old provincial lines, and to the opening of new stations—but it is mainly attributable to the increased facilities given to the public by the reduced charges. The immediate effect of the reduction was well shewn by the fact that during April (the first month it was in force), the users of the telegraph for private purposes were 1333 in excess of those during March.

The total cash revenue of the line from Bluff to Napier, including the Patea line (Table I.), amounts to £16,799 18s. 1d.; the total value of business done during the same period being £28,233 2s. 6d. After deducting the cost of maintenance of stations (£14,745 12s. 8d.), and of maintenance and reconstruction of lines (£12,392 13s. 5d.) this leaves a balance of £1,094 16s. 5d. to the credit of this portion of the line.

The returns of the Auckland line, treated in the same way (Table J.), shew an excess of expenditure over receipts of £2,162 1s. 3d.; but after deducting the amount to the credit of the Bluff, Napier, and Patea line (£1,094 16s. 5d.), there remains only £1,067 4s. 10d. to the debit of the Department. At least £6,000 of the cost of maintenance of Southern lines might, however, be fairly charged to construction, so that there might be said to remain a balance to the credit of the Department of close on £5,000.

The total cash receipts of both lines is £17,218 1s. 4d.; and the total value of business done £29,470 7s. 4d.—(Tables I. and J.).

Considering the depressed state of the colony during the year, the prospects of the Department may be regarded as encouraging, and it can confidently be said that the public fully appreciate the advantages resulting from the reduction of charges, by which the telegraph is made a means of convenience usable by all, instead of a luxury, or a costly necessity in cases of emergency.