

STAFF.

The total number of officers on the staff on the 31st March was as under:—

	31st March, 1900.
Postmaster-General	1
Classified Staff.	
First Division	3
Clerical Division	949
Non-clerical Division	546
Distributors and Messengers	349
Total, Classified Staff	1,848
Employés not on Permanent Staff:—	
Country Postmasters	1,474
Nightwatchmen	2
Postmasters and Telegraphists or Telephonists who are Railway officers	149
Total	3,473

COMPARATIVE Return of Officers of the Post and Telegraph Department for the Years ended 31st March, 1899, and 31st March, 1900.

	Mar. 31, 1899.	Mar. 31, 1900.		Mar. 31, 1899.	Mar. 31, 1900.
Postmaster-General	1	1	Brought forward	92	97
Secretary	1	1	Chief Postmasters	16	16
Superintendent of Electric Lines	1	1	Postmasters and Officers in Charge on		
Assistant Secretary and Inspector	1	1	Permanent Staff	111	111
Assistant Inspectors of Post-offices	3	3	Clerks (including Telephone Exchange)		
Controller of Money-orders and Savings-			Cadettes and Cadets in Post-offices	917	969
banks and Accountant	1	1	Operators (including Cadets in Tele-		
Telegraph Inspectors	3	4	graph-offices)		
Telegraph Sub-Inspector	1	..	Letter-carriers	184	202
Electrician	1	..	Messengers (Post Office)	38	37
Assistant Electrician	1	1	Linemen	66	67
Mechanicians and Cadets	7	8	Telegraph Distributors and Message Boys	317	349
Clerks in General Post Office—			Nightwatchmen	2	2
Secretary's Office	13	14	Postmasters and Telegraphists or Tele-		
Inspector's and Dead-letter Branch	6	6	phonists who are Railway officers	149	149
Controller of Money-orders and Savings-			Country Postmasters and Telephonists	1,403	1,474
banks and Accountant's Branch	46	50			
Storekeeper and Assistants	6	6			
Carried forward	92	97	Totals	3,295	3,473

The increase of sixty-three officers in the clerical division and thirty-nine in the non-clerical division is mainly the result of the great increase of business already alluded to.

UNIVERSAL PENNY POST.

It has been determined to introduce a universal penny letter-post in this colony from the 1st January next. The beginning of the new century will fittingly mark the event, which should give widespread satisfaction, and prove an epoch in the history of the colony. New Zealand will by this reform be placed in the forefront of the civilised countries of the world. Not only in the colony but throughout the Empire the penny post will be hailed as an inestimable boon. Judging from the enormous increase in the volume of correspondence which has followed the cheapening of postage-rates in New Zealand in the past, only a few years should elapse before the financial loss incurred at the outset is largely, if not entirely, made up.

MILITARY SERVICE OF OFFICERS OF THE DEPARTMENT.

Eleven officers of the department were accepted for service in South Africa with the New Zealand contingents. The places of the officers will be kept open, and all their rights of seniority under the classification preserved, until the return of the troops to the colony.

The department is represented in the Defence Forces of the colony by an infantry corps known as the Post and Telegraph Rifles, which forms the E Company of No. 1, Wellington Battalion, and which is recruited entirely from among the post and telegraph officers at Wellington. The company was formed on the 21st May, 1898, on which date the acceptance of its services by the Government was gazetted. It has acquired a reputation for efficiency, and there is evidence that the drill and discipline have had a good effect.

APPEAL BOARD.

The Board met in June last year and considered nineteen appeals. Of these, eleven failed, and three would have been settled in the ordinary course by the department. Of the remaining five recommendations of the Board, two were carried out, consideration was deferred in one case, and in two cases the Minister was unable to agree with the Board's findings.

HEALTH OF STAFF.

This presented no unusual features during the year. Considering the fact that the averages shown in the table below were affected by prolonged absence in several cases, the department may congratulate itself on the general good health of its staff. This has been largely contributed