

no intention of limiting the prospect of promotion for letter-carriers and others who have the necessary educational and other qualifications for clerkships. Such men will, as far as circumstances warrant, continue to receive consideration for clerkships. The Department sees no reason at present to abandon its policy of recruiting the clerical staff from the lower ranks; but the large additions which have had to be made to the staff during the past two or three years made it necessary on a few occasions to go outside the service. It will not be out of place to mention here that in the last five years 430 letter-carriers, telegraph messengers, and other non-clerical employees have been promoted to the clerical division.

Considerable changes have taken place in the service, owing to the retirement of several principal officers under the age limit. Of those who retired last year, Mr. R. Kirton, who joined the Post Office as long ago as 1854, deserves mention. Mr. Kirton was successively clerk at Wellington, Chief Clerk at Christchurch, and Chief Postmaster at Hokitika and Nelson, and at Christchurch, where previous to his retirement he held the position for over ten years with general satisfaction. Mr. S. J. Jago, Chief Postmaster at Wellington, and Mr. E. Cook, Chief Postmaster at Dunedin, and other officers will retire in the course of this year.

HEALTH OF STAFF.

The following table gives the average absence of officers on sick-leave:—

				Numbers comprised.	Average Absence per Sick Officer.	Average Sick-absence per each Officer employed.
					Days.	Days.
Men	...	...	...	1,281	11·94	6·00
Women	...	...	...	165	14·72	12·73

There were four deaths.

The Department sustained a loss by the death of Mr. Samuel Birt Biss, late Chief Postmaster at Auckland, on the 20th October last, at the comparatively early age of fifty-nine. Mr. Biss joined the postal service as a cadet in March, 1860, and was appointed Chief Postmaster at Auckland in March, 1870. He was unsparing in attention and devotion to his duties. To his powers of organization and tactful methods may be credited the satisfactory position of the Auckland postal district during his long term of office as Chief Postmaster.

APPEAL BOARD.

Fifteen appeals were dealt with by the Board in May last year, of which nine were reported against, two had already been met by Departmental recommendations, and four cases were reported upon in favour of the appellants.

The term of the elective members of the Board having expired, an election was held in February of the present year, which resulted in the return of Mr. F. M. Scully, as postal representative. Mr. W. F. Young was returned unopposed as telegraph representative.

NEWSPAPER POSTAGE.

The reduction of the newspaper postage to Canada from Postal Union rates (1d. for the first 4 oz. and $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for each succeeding 2 oz.) to 1d. for each newspaper, which took place as from the 16th May last, will prove popular. It is to be hoped that the new rate to Canada will be speedily followed by a reversion to the rate to the United Kingdom which existed prior to July, 1892, when, notwithstanding strong opposition on the part of the Postmaster-General at Australian Conferences and in correspondence with the Imperial Post Office, New Zealand was required to adopt the higher Postal Union rate to all countries except Australia. Recognising the advantages of a cheap postage rate for our newspapers to places beyond the colony, no opportunity has been lost by the Department in endeavouring to secure a uniform rate of one penny irrespective of weight. While it is the case that a heavy newspaper costs more to transport than a light one, there can be no question that the incidence of the present charges presses so heavily as to make the transmission of the principal illustrated New Zealand newspapers almost prohibitive. It is without question that a better dissemination of such newspapers, which are of a high standard, would do much to make the people of Great Britain better acquainted with the resources of the colony, and at the same time enable many persons to keep more closely in touch with their relatives in different parts of the Empire.

As the history of the newspaper postage is an interesting one, it may be opportune to refer briefly to it. Prior to 1843 the postage on newspapers to and from Great Britain was free, but under the regulations then passed newspapers were liable to postage if received by a private ship from beyond seas, and to an additional rate if conveyed from one part of the colony to another, the rate being 1d. for British or colonial papers and 2d. for foreign. From beyond seas the cost to the Department was 1d. each, and from one part of the colony to another $\frac{1}{2}$ d. A great many surcharged newspapers were refused by the addressees on account of the postage, while many remained in the Post-offices unclaimed.

In 1846 Commissioners appointed by the Postmaster-General in England to visit the Australian Colonies in order to inspect and report upon the various colonial postal establishments arrived in Auckland. The *New-Zealander* took the opportunity to protest against the newspaper postage. A penny was levied on newspapers posted from Auckland to Sydney, where they were forwarded free of charge to their destination; and if posted from Sydney to New Zealand they