

## HEALTH OF STAFF.

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

	Numbers comprised (Principal Offices).	Average Absence per Sick Officer.	Average Sick-absence per each Officer employed.
Men ... ..	1,501	Days. 12·35	Days. 4·81
Women ... ..	219	19·44	14·56

## APPEAL BOARD.

The new Board, which met in April last year, dealt with three appeals. In one case the finding was favourable to the appellant, and in two instances the appeals were not sustained.

## POSTAL UNION CONGRESS.

The sixth Postal Union Congress, which was to have met in 1904, but was postponed from year to year at the instance of the Italian Government, assembled at Rome on Saturday, the 7th April last.

The inaugural address was delivered by His Excellency M. Alfredo Baccelli, the Italian Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, in the presence of the Diplomatic Corps and of the High Government officials. Their Majesties the King and Queen of Italy honoured the assembly by their presence. M. Senator Cruciani-Alibrandi, Syndic of the City of Rome, also addressed the assemblage.

The Congress, which met for general business on the following Monday, under the presidency of the Italian Director-General of Posts, had more than ordinary interest for New Zealand. It was the first at which the colony was directly represented by its Postmaster-General, while the Minister's important proposals in favour of universal penny postage and for a separate vote for New Zealand lent additional interest to the proceedings.

The practical business began by the appointment of three committees, whose business it would be to revise the existing Convention and regulations, and examine the new proposals and suggested amendments, for the final adjudication of the Congress.

The first (or "Grand") Committee comprised the delegates of the principal Union countries, including Australia and New Zealand, and was presided over by the principal British delegate. This Committee, among other things, had to deal with all questions relating to postage-rates, sea and territorial transit-charges, &c. The propositions emanating from the Australasian Colonies also came under the review of this Committee.

A summary of the more important business, and the decisions of the Congress on the propositions brought forward by and on behalf of New Zealand, are given below. A fuller report of the proceedings will be laid before Parliament later on.

New Zealand's proposal for universal penny postage was introduced by the Postmaster-General in an impressive speech, setting forth the great advantages of cheap postage and the success which had attended the introduction of penny postage in Canada and New Zealand. The motion was seconded by the delegate for Egypt, who strongly advocated its adoption, and was cordially supported by the Commonwealth delegate. When the question came to a vote, only the United States, Egypt, and Australasia were found supporting the motion, Great Britain, Canada, India, and Japan abstaining from voting. On its becoming known that Great Britain would not support the motion, its defeat was a foregone conclusion. The opposition displayed by many of the delegates was for other than financial reasons—a disinclination to move with the times, and a belief that the proposals were somewhat ambitious for so young a colony. But there is little doubt that the discussion awakened a very wide interest in the question, and that the Congress of 1911 will give the world universal penny postage. Meantime it may be possible for New Zealand to establish restricted unions with some of the Union countries for penny postage. Such a union, it is hoped, may be possible with the United States, or, failing this, an agreement for the delivery of our penny letters within the States without surcharge. These matters were discussed with the President and the Postmaster-General of the United States by the Postmaster-General of this colony when he passed through America.

Germany, it should be mentioned, had already carried a proposition to raise the letter-weight from 15 to 20 grammes, as opposed to Great Britain's proposal to reduce the letter-rate from 2½d. to 2d. for the first half-ounce, and from 2½d. to 1d. for each succeeding half-ounce, a proposal strongly opposed by Germany, France, and other Continental countries. After the division was taken, Great Britain intimated that it could not accept the 20 grammes—an impossible weight for countries which had not adopted the decimal system, and that it would bring up the question again. Japan's proposal to reduce the rate from 2½d. to 2d. was also defeated.

At a later stage Great Britain moved that the letter-rate be 2½d. for the first 20 grammes, and 1½d. for each succeeding 20 grammes, and that the countries not having the decimal system should adopt the ounce (which is over 28 grammes) as the equivalent of 20 grammes. The proposal was again strongly opposed by Germany, France, and others, but after a very animated debate in full Congress, Great Britain's motion was carried by a majority of four. The reduction, which means a material concession to the public, but is more favourable to countries not using the decimal system, will not have effect until October next year.

The question of a separate vote for New Zealand was brought forward in the first Committee by the principal British delegate in a forcible and tactful speech, demonstrating that the colony