

Conveyers.

Great attention has been paid in the United States and United Kingdom to the advantages of conveyers in large offices. In Chicago the system of conveyers, of which various kinds are provided to carry and distribute letters in small quantities, and to handle full mail-bags, &c., is very complete. In New York there is an excellent equipment, and in London the system is to be extended. Conveyers must of necessity be planned to suit the particular building in which they are to be used. As will readily be understood, they consist principally of travelling bands, with suitable devices for discharging letters at prearranged points. In Chicago one form of conveyer is provided with stations with selective stops, which arrest boxes at any point fixed upon by the despatcher. This is accomplished by providing the box with a stop or arm which is set to be operated upon by a corresponding device at its particular station.

The principal officers in the United States and the United Kingdom speak very highly of the conveyers, and generally appear to look upon them as solving a difficult problem.

The majority of the conveyers in use in America are made by the Lamson Company, who have had great experience at this class of work.

For lifting bags from one floor to another the best device I have seen is that in Chicago. It consists of a series of scoop-like shelves large enough to take one bag. The shelves are attached to an endless chain. The bags are loaded and conveyed with great rapidity, and discharged without hesitation at the proper point.

For the purpose of transferring bags from an upper to a lower floor the ordinary lift has been discarded in the larger offices in the United States, in Berlin, and in Paris, in favour of a spiral shoot.

Our new offices at Auckland and Wellington should be fitted with such conveyers as will result in a saving of time, and we should adopt the spiral shoot for conveying mail-bags from upper to lower stories.

A conveyer of much interest is one in use in the Berlin Parcel-post Office. This consists of an endless chain travelling up a slope. At intervals the chain is provided with projections which engage with corresponding depressions or suchlike on the bottom of the parcel-post baskets. Full baskets of parcels are by this means taken from one floor to another.

Postmarking-machines.

I carefully examined all the principal postmarking-machines in use in the offices I visited. In the United States the favourite machine is the Hey-Dolphin, for which is paid an annual rental of £83 6s. 8d. This machine is not so fast as those in use in New Zealand, which are purchased outright for about the cost of one year's rental of the Hey-Dolphin. In Germany a machine much like ours is in use; but it costs more, and is no more efficient, if it is equally so. As our machines are made in New Zealand, and are cheap, and equal to the best in use elsewhere, there is no need at present to consider foreign manufactures of the kind.

Adding-machines.

An interesting development of a mechanical appliance is the use by the Canadian Post Office of a number of adding-machines, which are used at Ottawa to check the money-order accounts of the Dominion. By means of these machines an independent totalling of the amounts of the actual paid orders is made, and the result compared with the total on the Postmaster's accounts. A check is, in effect, made against totals of totals and totals of details, the arrangement generally being for the totals of one section of the Money-order or Accountant's Office being balanced with another section. There is, of course, nothing very novel in the general method; but the novelty of using adding-machines in the way they are used is considerable. It is said by the Canadian Post Office that the results are very satisfactory from every point of view, including that of economy, and after seeing the working of the Department I am satisfied that there is a good deal in the statement. The machine in use in England and America is the Burroughs, an English invention, and the head office of the company in London, which I saw, has offered to send one of the machines to Wellington on free trial. This I recommend should be accepted, as I am convinced that the use of the machines in a systematic way would lead to economy in the Accountant's office. One particular advantage of the machine is that it is specially adapted for the use of women or junior clerks, whose special forte may not be that of checking the additions of others with accuracy. With the machine there are no half-measures, as the work must be accurately done.

I may add that the United States Post Office is much impressed with the machine, and is adopting it largely. The cost of the latest improved machine is £90 each.

I have full details of the Canadian system of checking, which it is not necessary to describe here.

ABOLISHING USE OF ENVELOPES FOR TELEGRAMS.

As the Postmaster-General is aware, I have been endeavouring for a long time to devise a system under which it would be possible to do away with the use of envelopes for telegrams, in order to avoid the risk of error in addressing by a second clerk after the message leaves the telegraph-instrument. Our experiments have not been on satisfactory lines. When in Germany I went thoroughly into the system which has been in force there for very many years, and am satisfied that no better method of closing the telegram without the use of an envelope can be devised. Under the German system there is no marring of the form in opening, and when opened the address is clearly visible as part and parcel of the face of the form itself. Moreover, the form being rectangular, it is superior to those of grotesque shapes which are so frequently submitted to this Department. After the careful and exhaustive inquiry I made I have no hesitation in recommending the adoption of the system, which, owing to the reduction of despatch- and addressing-clerks