

### INLAND AND OCEAN MAIL-SERVICES.

Inland mail-services were maintained efficiently throughout the year. Floods and snow were responsible for several interruptions, but with one or two exceptions these were not serious. The North Island contracts expire at the end of the year, and new contracts will be let from the 1st January next.

The Auckland—Vancouver and Wellington—San Francisco ocean mail-services have operated throughout the year without interruption. The contracts for the services were renewed from the 1st April for an indefinite period, subject to three months' notice of termination by either of the contracting parties. This departure from the usual practice of a definite contract was necessary on account of the unusual conditions now prevailing.

### AIR MAILS: PROPOSED EXTENSION TO AUSTRALIA OF UNITED KINGDOM—INDIA SERVICE.

It was announced some months ago that a proposal was afoot to extend to Australia the weekly air mail-service at present operating between England and India. The proposal seems now to have assumed definite shape, it having been announced that it is hoped in January to extend the service from Karachi, the existing terminal, by way of Calcutta and Rangoon to Singapore. From Singapore extension will later be made to Australia, a section of the service which will be controlled by the Australian Government.

Until the service is extended to Australia it will offer little advantage to New Zealand. A Sydney—London service would, however, be of material advantage, particularly in weeks when there is no despatch of mails from New Zealand to the United Kingdom via North America. On the information available it is estimated that the transit-time London—Sydney on the proposed extended air service will be eighteen days, making a transit-time London—New Zealand of twenty-one or twenty-two days if connection were made at Sydney on the sailing-day with the New Zealand weekly steamer. This transit-time compares with an average transit-time of thirty days for New Zealand mails forwarded by land and sea to Great Britain via North America. In the direction Sydney—London it is estimated, on the assumption that the air mail would make departure for London from Sydney on the arrival of the New Zealand steamer, that the acceleration in the time of delivery of correspondence to Great Britain and Europe would vary from four days in some cases to as much as twenty days in others.

It is understood that the charge for letters exchanged between Great Britain and Australia on the air service will be 1s. 3d. per half-ounce (air-mail fee and postage combined), and that the same rate will apply to New Zealand correspondence.

Some time is likely to elapse before the extension of the service from Singapore to Australia. In the meantime the Department is keeping closely in touch with developments.

### POSTAGE-STAMPS.

Printed by the photogravure process, proofs of the proposed new series of pictorial stamps for New Zealand were received during the year. The reproductions, however, were not up to the standard desired for the new designs; and it has now been decided to have the stamps printed by the intaglio process. A tender for the work has been accepted, but it cannot yet be stated when the new issue will be on sale. The droving scene proposed originally for the 1s. denomination in the pictorial series is found to be unsuitable for satisfactory reproduction in a stamp; and a new design—depicting a tui—has been adopted.

A "Health" stamp of the denomination 2d. was placed on sale during the year, and resulted in a sum of approximately £820 being made available to the Minister of Health for expending on children's health camps.

It has been decided not to proceed for the present with the issue of the proposed new series of air-mail stamps.