

postage is charged according to weight in pounds. Articles of the kind may now be sent as "small packets" at a much cheaper rate. An additional advantage is that "small packets" are forwarded with letter-mails, and thus receive a quicker despatch than parcels. The service is particularly valuable as a means of forwarding Christmas and other gifts overseas.

#### REDUCTION IN NEWSPAPER POSTAGE RATE.

An important concession made possible as a result of the improved financial position of the Department was the recent substantial reduction in the postage on inland newspapers between 3 oz. and 8 oz. in weight. In 1931 the rate for a newspaper up to 3 oz. was fixed at  $\frac{1}{2}$ d., and that for a newspaper of over 3 oz. at 1d. for each 16 oz. or portion of 16 oz. On the 18th September last, the postage per newspaper was reduced to the uniform rate of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for each 8 oz. or portion of 8 oz., representing a reduction from 1d. to  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. on newspapers over 3 oz. and not over 8 oz. in weight. The extent of the concession will be appreciated when it is mentioned that the change is estimated to result in a diminution in revenue of £10,000 per annum. That the Department was in a position to forgo this amount of revenue in the interest of the community is very gratifying.

#### REMOVAL OF RESTRICTIONS ON ARTICLES POSTED AT HALFPENNY RATE.

The removal recently of certain restrictions on the posting of accounts, circulars, &c., at the halfpenny rate of postage will be welcomed by members of the business community. Previously, a small addition made to an account, such as a request for payment, or any slight variation in the wording of a circular letter, disqualified the article from transmission at the cheaper rate. The definition of articles of this kind has been widened to permit of more latitude in the direction indicated, and it will be possible for business men to distinguish more readily between what may be posted at the halfpenny rate and what is liable to the letter-rate.

#### INLAND AND OCEAN MAIL-SERVICES.

Interruptions to inland mail-services during the year were of short duration only, being due to exceptional weather conditions. The contracts for the services in the South Island, which expired at the end of December, were relet from the 1st January at a considerable reduction in cost.

Apart from the cancellation of two round trips on the San Francisco run, of which mention was made in my last report, the Auckland-Vancouver and the Wellington-San Francisco ocean mail-services have been performed regularly.

#### AIR MAILS.

As predicted in my last report, the London-Singapore air-mail service was extended to Australia in December last; and arrangements were made for letters from New Zealand to be forwarded by the service at the rate per half-ounce of 1s. 6d. to Great Britain and of 9d. to 1s. 9d. to intermediate and other countries for which mails are conveyed by the service. The transit time for air mails in both directions between London and Brisbane is twelve days. The schedule is arranged to enable inward mails for New Zealand, which reach Cootamundra, New South Wales, on Thursdays, to connect with vessels leaving Sydney for the Dominion on Fridays; and for outward mails from the Dominion forwarded to Australia on Fridays to connect with the air-mail despatch leaving Cootamundra on the following Wednesday. Unfortunately, owing to unforeseen difficulties, it has not always been possible to arrange for inward mails to reach Sydney in time to connect with the Friday steamer. Normally, however, the service has enabled mails exchanged weekly between New Zealand and Great Britain to reach their destination in seventeen days, which is little more than half the average transit time of mails