

It is anticipated that the re-building of the Auckland Post Office (destroyed by fire in October, 1872,) will be completed about the beginning of 1875.

New Post Offices and Telegraph Stations have been erected and occupied at Gisborne, Hamilton, Te Awamutu, Wairoa, Ross, Malvern, Rakaia, Rangiora, Washdyke, Clinton, and Switzers.

The following Post Offices and Telegraph Stations are either in course of erection, or proposed to be erected:—In Auckland—Alexandra, Newcastle, Onehunga, Opotiki, Pukorokoro, Drury, Riverhead, Helensville, Warkworth, Waipu, Wangarei, Kawa Kawa, Ohaewae, Hokianga, Russell. In Hawke's Bay—Napier, Norsewood (Post Office only). In Wellington—Turakina, Palmerston North, Carterton, Upper Hutt, Masterton. In Nelson—Lyell. In Marlborough—Blenheim. In Canterbury—Christchurch, Kaiapoi, Southbridge, Geraldine. In Otago—Tapanui, Teviot, Waikaia, Otepopo St. Bathans, Port Chalmers, Waikouaiti.

#### MAIL STEAM SERVICES.

It is gratifying to be able to state that the Californian Mail Service has been re-established. The first steamer under the temporary contract left Auckland on the 22nd December last for San Francisco, by way of Kandavau and Honolulu. The service has not been carried on as satisfactorily as could be desired; and it has been necessary to draw the contractors' attention to the manner in which they were performing their contract. It has been urged by the contractors that allowances should be made for their having commenced the temporary service without delay; and also for the stranding of the "MacGregor" at Kandavau, on the first return voyage from San Francisco.

The contract for the permanent service provides that the service should commence in November next. The contractors, however, have found it necessary to apply for an extension of time, which has been granted. It is stated that the time allowed was insufficient for building steamers of the tonnage required for the permanent service.

The late contract entered into in 1867, between the Imperial Government and the P. and O. Company, for the carriage of the Australian mails, was terminated on the 31st of December last, and from the 1st of January a new arrangement came into force in respect to the conveyance of mails between the Australasian Colonies and the United Kingdom. In the event of the colonies, or either of them, establishing mail services by way of San Francisco, Galle, or Singapore, the Imperial Post Office agreed to convey mails to and from the points named and the United Kingdom, free of cost to the colonies; and, in addition, would pay to the respective colonies the postages collected on correspondence despatched to the colonies, less an amount representing the British inland rate of postage; and in the case of the Brindisi route, a further sum sufficient to cover transit charges. With regard to the Californian service, the result of this arrangement is:—New South Wales and New Zealand jointly maintain a line of steamers for the carriage of mails between the respective colonies and San Francisco, and the Imperial Post Office provide for the transit of the mails between San Francisco and the United Kingdom. On the correspondence despatched to the contracting colonies from the United Kingdom, New South Wales and New Zealand receive from the Imperial Post Office—on letters, 1s. 3½d. per oz.; on books, 1s. 2d. per lb.; on newspapers, 3½d. per lb. And with respect to correspondence conveyed to and from non-contracting colonies, by the Californian route, New South Wales and New Zealand receive from those colonies—on letters, 1s. 7d. per oz.; on books, 1s. 6d. per lb.; and on newspapers, 6d. per lb.—these amounts, it has been calculated, representing the gross postages.

Under this new arrangement, the Government of Victoria have entered into a contract with the P. and O. Company for a period of five years, for a four-weekly mail service between Melbourne and Galle, at a cost of £90,000 per annum. This colony contributes to the cost of this service to the extent of the amount represented by the gross postages on the correspondence sent and received. Very free use has been made of this service; and it is to be remarked that the inward mails have invariably been delivered within the contract time.

A contract has been entered into by the department for conveying the Galle and English mails to and from Melbourne and this colony. The service commenced in August last, and is to remain in force for a period of three years. The annual subsidy is £5,000. A correspondence is proceeding with the Government of Victoria with the object of arranging that the outward Suez steamer shall wait some hours for the New Zealand mails, in the event of the steamer carrying them to Melbourne arriving late.

The Government of Queensland have also established a mail service under the new arrangement; a contract having been entered into for running a line of mail steamers between Brisbane and Singapore (by way of Torres Straits), at a subsidy of £20,000 per annum. This service, under present arrangements, is of little value to this colony, and no mails have been forwarded from this end. Numbers of letters, however, are sent from the United Kingdom to this colony, by way of Singapore; and the average length of time occupied in transit has been found to exceed seventy days.

A contract has been entered into for the performance of a mail steam service (in connection with the San Francisco Service) between the Manukau and Hokitika, by way of New Plymouth, Nelson, Westport, and Greymouth. For some time past, Nelson and the West Coast ports of the Middle Island have not enjoyed reliable mail communication; and this service provides for the prompt receipt and despatch of English mails *via* San Francisco.

Steam services are also established between Wellington, Castle Point, and Napier; and between Auckland, Gisborne (other intermediate ports when required), and Napier. These services are not subsidized wholly for the benefit of the Postal Department, but rather with the view of bringing the more remote ports of the East Coast in direct and regular communication with the large commercial centres. The subsidies for these services are not charged against the postal votes.

The steam service hitherto performed between the Fiji Islands and Auckland has been extended to the Middle Island. A temporary agreement has been entered into for the performance of four services, once every six weeks, between Port Chalmers and the Fiji Islands, by way of Lyttelton, Wellington, Napier, and Auckland. The subsidy agreed to be paid is as follows:—For the first com-