

STAMP-PRINTING BRANCH.

Having been requested by the Government to take over the control of the Stamp-printing Branch of the Stamp Department, the necessary preparations for doing so are now being made. The printing-plant will be modernised by the introduction of new and efficient machinery for the various operations of printing, gumming, and perforating; and the old hand-presses now in use, which are both slow and costly, will be practically superseded. The present method of production, even with the staff working overtime, barely suffices to keep pace with the demands; but with the new machinery ordered,—comprising one of Napier and Son's double-platen machines, and an American Colts's Armory-press,—it is hoped that the output will be largely augmented, and any prospective increase in the demand amply provided for. For gumming and perforating the sheets one of Newsum's gumming machines, and a couple of Blackhall's rotary perforating machines have been ordered; and steam-heated cupboards will be provided for drying the sheets. These improved methods will result in a saving of nearly £400 per annum in expenditure on labour, and obviate the necessity of resorting to overtime to keep up the stocks as at present.

A new series of stamps for the use of the Government Insurance Department will shortly be issued, the steel dies for which are being executed locally. They consist of six denominations—from a halfpenny to one shilling. The two dies already completed are artistically designed and creditably executed. Electrotypes from them are now in course of preparation in this department.

A new series of stamps for the Railway Department, to be used for the carriage of newspapers by train, are among the productions issued from this office during the past year.

STEREOTYPE BRANCH.

The number of stereotype plates cast last year was 1,176; of electrotypes, 2,566 (included in which are 5 plates of postage stamps, 240 heads in each). The number of rubber stamps manufactured for Government departments was 294.

The railway-ticket printing executed by this branch during the year was as follows: Railway tickets, 2,331,010; season tickets, 10,698; flag-station tickets, 344,500; luggage tickets, 64,000; parcels tickets, 48,950; weighbridge tickets, 18,600.

STATIONERY OFFICE.

The number of requisitions received and complied with during the year ending the 31st December last was 9,876, or at the rate of 32 per day. The number of separate items in the requisitions was 45,157. The quantity of waste paper shipped was 47½ tons, representing in value £136 4s. 9d. The local paper-mills purchase all waste material of this description.

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GEO. DIDSBURY,
Government Printer and Stores Manager.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.