1938.

NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF HEALTH.

Presented in pursuance of Section 100 of the Hospitals and Charitable Institutions Act, 1926.

HON. P. FRASER, MINISTER OF HEALTH.

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REPORTS.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF HEALTH to the HON. THE MINISTER OF HEALTH, Wellington.

I HAVE the honour to lay before you the annual report of the Department for the year 1937–38.

PART I.—GENERAL SURVEY.

The year 1937 is memorable for an outbreak of poliomyelitis, which from point of view of magnitude and severity ranks with the major epidemics of 1916 and 1925. Other noteworthy features of the year were, on the one hand, a rise in the death-rate and, on the other, a further rise in the birth-rate, a drop in the death-rate from tuberculosis, a continued low level of infant mortality and a substantial reduction in deaths from puerperal causes other than deaths from septic abortions.

VITAL STATISTICS.

(Exclusive of Maori.)

Death-rate.—The death-rate was 9·08 per 1,000 mean population, as compared with a rate of 8·75 in the preceding year. This is the highest rate since 1920, when it was 10·15. In view of the increasing number of people in our midst of advanced years the rise in the death-rate was not unexpected. The Government Statistician in his report on the vital statistics for the year 1936, commenting upon the changes in the age-constitution of the population and its effect on the death-rate, had this to say :—

> " There appears to be little likelihood of any further drastic reduction in the death-rate from diseases of infancy and early adult life, and unless public-health measures meet with more success in the prolongation of human life-span through the amelioration of the degenerative diseases of old age, the time cannot be far distant when the death-rate will begin to advance fairly rapidly."