

were ever constructed for such cargo. In most countries where fruit is grown for export ships are specially constructed for its carriage. On an average the boats plying here steam very little over ten knots. This slow rate of speed, which would suit imperishable cargo, is not conducive to the fruit cargoes landing in good condition. What is really required is faster ships, specially constructed, with plenty of ventilation, and cooling-chambers.

The freight charged from New Zealand to the Cook Islands is 40s. per ton, and from New Zealand to Tahiti 35s. When inquiries were made upon this subject it was stated that the difference was caused by the fact that, although the distance is much greater from New Zealand to Tahiti than it is from New Zealand to Rarotonga, the company had no charges to pay in the French possessions. I submit that they have no charges to pay in the Cook Islands. It is true that they supply their own boats and boatmen at Rarotonga, and that they have to pay for the upkeep of the wharf and the sheds—property which is leased to them by the Cook Islands Administration; but they charge at the rate of 1s. per ton on inward and outward cargo, and this is over and above the 40s. per ton freight. At all the other islands of this Group at which the company's ships touch, the boating is done by the Natives and traders themselves at their own cost, delivering at the ship's side outward cargo, and returning with inward cargo. Therefore, I submit that the company should be approached to grant the same concessions to the Cook Islands inhabitants as are granted to the inhabitants of the French possessions.

The outward cargo is charged at the rate of £1 per ton from Tahiti to Auckland—the same as is charged from Rarotonga to Auckland. The freight from Rarotonga and Tahiti to Wellington is 25s. per ton.

A set of tables giving the exports from the Group by the Auckland and Wellington routes is appended. The inward cargo I am not in a position to supply.

There can be no doubt that the Wellington service has opened up markets for our fruit in the southern portions of the North Island, and also in the South Island, which has very greatly benefited the growers. The more markets secured, the greater will be our exports and profits. As previously pointed out, the area under cultivation does not at all indicate the possibilities for fruit-production or increased cargoes yet to be carried.

When the Union Steamship Company's inspector for island trade visited Rarotonga in March last a very satisfactory interview took place. Valuable information was obtained from Mr. McLennan on the fruit question. The company has agreed to carry free of cost all material imported by the Administration for the erection of fruit-sheds, and also to carry free of cost all plants and trees for the encouragement of the industry in the outlying islands.

At the end of next month the company is sending a steam-launch down to tow their cargo-lighters at Rarotonga to and from the steamer. This will assist very materially the quick transport of the fruit from the wharf to the ship.

RAROTONGA.

Everything is prosperous and orderly on this island, the Natives being content and law-abiding, and food and clothing plentiful.

Some trouble was caused in the early part of March last, as reported in my despatch No. 155, in consequence of the offences committed by some few Natives in digging up the bodies of deceased Natives interred in the Native burial-ground. The reason given for this offence is a superstitious one—*i.e.*, the belief that the spirit of the dead haunts the living, and until the dead body has been destroyed by fire the evil influence continues. This is not the first occasion upon which this serious offence has taken place. From inquiries made I find that this practice was unknown to the ancient inhabitants of the Cook Islands.

On going into the matter I found there was no law to deal with the culprits. The Federal Council was therefore called together with the object of having placed before them an Ordinance which had been drafted to cope with the matter. This Ordinance met with the unanimous approval of the Council, and it was accordingly passed, and forwarded to you for the signature of His Excellency the Governor.

Upon calling the Council together with the view of having the twenty miles of road surrounding the island placed in a good state of repair, Makea Ariki, the Arikis, and members of the Council throughout the island met me in every possible way, with the result that the whole twenty miles is in excellent order for traffic. It is two years since anything of any importance has been done to the main road, and I desire to thank the inhabitants for the ready manner in which they responded to the call.

If the revenue will permit, it is intended to erect two more bridges, which will complete the network of bridges spanning the various streams.

It is necessary for the ready cartage of fruit that the main road be kept in good order, and the present good state of the road will greatly facilitate shipping.

As will be seen in the Engineer's report attached, a concrete fumigator, for the fumigation of fruit, was built at a cost of £605. Each chamber has a capacity to hold 500 cases of fruit. A description of the building will be found in the report referred to.

ARORANGI WATER-SUPPLY.

If finances will permit, it is intended to connect the village of Arorangi with a water-supply. This is a district far removed from a natural watercourse, and the inhabitants suffer very much from the want of water. The population of the village is about four hundred, and for the health of the people I consider this work of an urgent nature.