

POSTAGE-STAMPS.

In April, 1922, 5d. stamps of the King George series were placed on sale, in succession to those of the King Edward series. The stock of the latter became exhausted towards the end of the year.

The stock of the ½d. "Victory" stamps which had been overprinted in March, 1922, for use as 2d. stamps was exhausted in May. The stocks of the 1d. and 1½d. denominations of "Victory" stamps were exhausted in October. No denominations of "Victory" stamps now remain on sale.

In August, 1922, 8d. "Official" stamps of the King George series (colour, red-brown) were placed on sale, in succession to those of the King Edward series. The stock of the latter is practically exhausted.

By June, 1922, stocks had become exhausted of all denominations of the Cook Islands stamps issued in 1902 bearing the portrait of Queen Makea Takau and picturing the bird "Torea" or "Wry-neck."

In February, 1923, New Zealand fiscal stamps of the denominations 2s. 6d., 10s., and £1 were overprinted "Niue."

Halfpenny stamps in coils of 240 and 1d. stamps in coils of 480 were, in August, 1922, placed on sale at the post-offices at Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Wellington. In addition to the value of the stamps a charge is made of 2d. for the smaller coil and 4d. for the larger one. The coils are for use in stamp-affixing machines.

PARCEL-POST.

Parcels to and from the United States of America.

On the 1st October, 1922, a system of accounting was instituted with the Post Office of the United States of America in connection with post-parcels exchanged between New Zealand and the United States. Prior to the date mentioned each country retained its own postages; and as the number of parcels received from the United States considerably exceeds the number despatched to that country the system was not an equitable one. Under the system of accounting, the country of origin pays to the country of destination 20 cents in respect of each parcel despatched. The annual balance in favour of New Zealand amounts to approximately £1,000.

Customs Clearance Fee.

A regulation was made under the authority of the Post and Telegraph Amendment Act, 1922, imposing a Customs clearance fee of 3d. in respect of each parcel received by post from abroad containing goods upon which Customs or primage duty is payable. The fee was collected from the 1st March. The charge is made in order that the Post Office may be recouped for the large volume of work it does in connection with the handling of dutiable goods.

Customs Parcels.

The following table shows the declared value of goods received from abroad by parcel-post and the Customs duty thereon, and also the declared value of goods despatched by parcel-post for the year 1922, compared with 1921 :—

	1922.			1921.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Declared value of received parcels ..	1,332,719	0	0	1,318,733	0	0
Customs duty	276,864	14	11	244,683	14	2
Declared value of forwarded parcels ..	67,324	0	0	86,184	0	0

OVERSEAS MAILS.

The R.M.S. "Niagara" and R.M.S. "Makura" continue to be employed in the Vancouver service. The San Francisco service was performed during the early part of the year by the R.M.S. "Tahiti" and R.M.S. "Marama," and during the latter portion by the R.M.S. "Tahiti" and R.M.S. "Maunganui." A satisfactory service has been maintained over both routes during the year, the contract times rarely being exceeded. Notwithstanding this, the average time taken in transit of mails to and from the United Kingdom over both routes continues to be high, owing to delays in certain instances between Vancouver and London and San Francisco and London and *vice versa*. These delays indicate that close connections are not always possible. Efforts are still being made to effect an improvement in the time taken for the transit of mails between Vancouver and London and San Francisco and London, and it is hoped that a satisfactory arrangement will shortly be reached. The average time taken during 1922 by mails from New Zealand to London via Vancouver was thirty-four days, and via San Francisco thirty-five days. From London to New Zealand via Vancouver the average time was thirty-six days, and via San Francisco thirty-seven days.

The commencement of one contract trip via Vancouver was delayed eight days owing to industrial trouble in Australia.

Both the Vancouver and San Francisco contracts have been further renewed until March, 1924.

Correspondence for the United Kingdom and Continent of Europe continues to be forwarded via Vancouver and via San Francisco, except when a vessel sailing via Cape Horn or via Panama offers a better despatch than the next contract steamer, or when correspondence is specially addressed for despatch by a particular vessel or route. Mails from the United Kingdom are still received via Vancouver, San Francisco, Panama, and Suez.

The Federal Steam Navigation Company's steamer "Wiltshire," which left Liverpool on the 22nd April, 1922, for New Zealand, was wrecked on the night of the 31st May, at Great Barrier Island, near Auckland. The "Wiltshire" carried 461 bags of parcel-mail (comprising parcels awaiting despatch from the 8th to the 21st April) from London for New Zealand, one bag of parcel-mail from