

In January, 1927, arrangements were made for correspondence for Great Britain marked "Via Australia" to be despatched to connect with steamers of the Orient line sailing from Australia. Letters posted two or three days after the departure of a San Francisco or Vancouver steamer and despatched via Australia arrive in London several days in advance of letters forwarded by the next outward Vancouver or San Francisco mail from New Zealand.

Advantage continues to be taken of the opportunity to despatch mails to Great Britain by a vessel sailing via Panama if the vessel happens to offer a quicker despatch than that of the next contract or Orient line steamer.

#### FIRE ON STEAMER FROM GREAT BRITAIN.

A portion of the parcel-mail for New Zealand despatched from London on the 3rd December, 1926, by the "Remuera" was damaged by a fire which broke out in a mail-locker in No. 2 hold shortly after the departure of the steamer from Panama. Approximately two hundred parcels, including a few insured, were destroyed, and a large number of parcels were more or less damaged.

#### INLAND MAIL-SERVICES.

In respect of mail communications the following are the only incidents worthy of recording:—

In May, 1926, a heavy slip on the Wairarapa incline blocked the railway-line near the entrance to the Summit tunnel, causing a three-days interruption to the transit of mails over this route. Letter-mails between Wellington and offices in the Wairarapa were carried by service car, and second-class mail-matter was carried by train via Palmerston North. At about the same time slips and flooded creeks caused an interruption to the Nelson-Westport mail-service. Floods damaged the railway bridge at Blackball, and again interrupted the transport of mails to and from that place.

The Northern Steamship Co.'s steamer "Manaia," carrying passengers and mails from Tauranga for Auckland, ran ashore near Slipper Island on the 10th June, 1926, at 11.30 p.m. Both passengers and mails were safely transferred to another of the company's steamers and taken on to Auckland. The "Manaia" became a total loss.

Extensive floods in July, 1926, inundated the country in the vicinity of Rangiotu and Foxton, interrupting mail communication between those places and Palmerston North, and between Foxton and Levin. Temporary arrangements were made for the conveyance of mails by motor-buses between Palmerston North and Foxton, and by boats between Levin and Foxton. Slight disorganization occurred to other mail-services in the vicinity. A similar interruption took place in the mail-services between Palmerston North and Wanganui, and between Awakino and Te Kuiti. The Wanganui River service suffered likewise. Normal services were resumed without undue delay.

A landslide in the Manawatu Gorge on the night of the 24th October, 1926, completely blocked railway traffic and consequently disorganized the mail-service to the Hawke's Bay and Wairarapa districts. Arrangements were immediately made for the transport of mails between those districts and the Manawatu district by departmental motor-lorries, with the result that little public inconvenience was occasioned. Normal mail-train connection did not resume until the end of November.

At the beginning of November, 1926, as a result of torrential rain, the Buller River overflowed its banks and invaded Westport, completely isolating the town. Mail communication through the Buller Gorge was interrupted for nearly a week. At about the same time a similar flood caused the Waimakariri River to overflow its banks, interrupting mail connections between Christchurch and North Canterbury for some days. In both cases no effort was spared and many risks were taken in re-establishing mail connections.

#### RURAL MAILS.

There are now in use 15,472 rural boxes, an increase of 925 on the number for last year.

The number of rural deliveries (including part rural deliveries) in operation at the 31st March, 1927, was 377, as against 365 for the year 1925-26.

The demand for the large-sized rural box referred to in last year's report is steadily increasing. Farmers appreciate the more commodious receptacle, as it affords protection against the weather for bread, groceries, and other similar parcels, which although they do not pass through the Post Office, are frequently delivered by the mail contractor. Arrangements have now been made to exhibit a sample of the large box at suitable post-offices.

It has been found possible to modify the regulations in the direction of permitting settlers to obtain a rural delivery in a case in which the number of families to the mile of travel is three in respect of a route of over ten miles in length, and four in respect of a route of less than ten miles. Formerly the required numbers of families were four and six respectively.

#### "HOUSEHOLDER" CIRCULARS.

The "Householder" delivery service continues to grow in public favour. The revenue from this class of mail-matter for the period 1st April, 1926, to 31st March, 1927, was £10,067, as against £8,798 for the preceding twelve months, and £4,847 for the twelve months ended the 31st March, 1925.

The advertising public is beginning to appreciate the Post Office as an advertising-medium. The "Householder" delivery service, in particular, affords a cheap and reliable means of getting publicity-matter into the homes of the people. The mail advertisement carries "personal touch," and as it enables the advertiser to have his samples delivered with his advertising message it constitutes a form of advertising that is unique not only in method, but also in the results that may be achieved.