

The change from surface to air despatch, which involved a considerable amount of internal reorganization, was made smoothly, and the new arrangements are operating very satisfactorily for the Department and the public.

Before the change-over to air despatch, the average time taken by letter-mails from New Zealand to Great Britain was twenty-eight to thirty days. The average time taken since the air-mail scheme came into operation is approximately fifteen days. It is anticipated that the trans-Tasman air service will commence before the end of the year, and this should reduce the transit time by at least another two days.

#### ACCIDENT TO FLYING-BOAT "CALPURNIA."

Imperial Airways' flying-boat "Calpurnia," which left Southampton on the 25th November with mails for Australia and New Zealand, met with disaster on the 27th November while attempting to land at Lake Ramadi, Iraq, during a sandstorm. Unfortunately, of the crew of five, three, including the Commander, Captain Attwood, were killed. The New Zealand mails aboard, which closed at London on the 23rd and 24th November, included a large amount of Christmas mail from Great Britain and Ireland. After the accident, salvage operations were put in hand, and the mails, all of which were damaged by water, were forwarded on from Bagdad at intervals as they became available.

The damaged mails were received in the Dominion over the period 19th December to 9th January. When the bags were opened, the contents were found to be damp and more or less damaged. All articles in reasonably good condition were put in course for immediate delivery, and those that were damaged to any extent were renovated and released as quickly as their condition would allow. While the writing on most of the articles was legible, difficulty was experienced in reading addresses on a considerable portion of the mail. Unfortunately, owing to the effect of water on the gum of envelopes, the contents of a large number of letters had become separated from their covers, and in many instances the task of associating contents with covers was a hopeless one. Efforts to effect delivery of badly damaged mail were continued until all deliverable articles were disposed of, and it is estimated that approximately four-fifths of the mail was delivered.

All registered articles of which notification of despatch had been received were accounted for and, with few exceptions, delivered. The insured articles were all delivered.

#### FIRE ON "RIMUTAKA": DAMAGE TO PARCEL-MAILS.

Portion of the mails, consisting principally of parcels from Great Britain to New Zealand, on board the New Zealand Shipping Co.'s vessel "Rimutaka," which left London for Auckland via Panama on the 8th December, was damaged considerably by water, heat, and chemicals as a result of the fire which broke out in No. 3 hold on the 8th January, a few days before the vessel arrived at Auckland, and which burned for nearly twenty-four hours. In the damaged portion of the mail there were 113 bags of parcels and 14 bags of other mail which were stowed in the strong-room in the forward part of the hold. The remainder of the mail, 146 bags of parcels stowed in lockers in the lower part of the hold, was undamaged. Only parcels suffered to any extent, the damage to these varying from slight to serious according to the nature of the contents. Some parcels were a complete loss, but few of the insured parcels were damaged.

#### OVERSEAS PARCELS: PREPAYMENT BY SENDERS OF CUSTOMS AND OTHER CHARGES.

For many years persons in Great Britain and in certain countries (including Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, The Netherlands, and Denmark) for which Great Britain acts as intermediary for the exchange of parcels with New Zealand have been able to prepay the Customs and other charges on parcels sent to New Zealand. From the 1st May a similar service was introduced in respect of parcels sent from New Zealand to Great Britain and the other countries concerned. Previously, the only countries to which parcels from New Zealand could be sent under this system were Australia, the Union of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, and Malaya.

#### EXPRESS-DELIVERY SERVICE WITH EMPIRE COUNTRIES.

Reciprocal arrangements for the exchange of express-delivery letters were made during the year with Great Britain, Australia, the Union of South Africa, and a number of other Empire countries. It is expected that when the service becomes more widely known considerable use will be made of it in conjunction with the Empire air services for ensuring the earliest possible delivery of urgent correspondence.

An express-delivery service for inland correspondence has been in force in the Dominion for many years.

#### FANNING ISLAND: CLOSING OF NEW ZEALAND POSTAL AGENCY.

The New Zealand postal agency at Fanning Island, which was established in 1902, was closed on the 14th February, from which date the post-office at the island came under the control of the postal administration of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony.

It is of interest to recall the circumstances in which a postal agency of New Zealand was established at Fanning Island, in the North Pacific Ocean. When the Pacific Cable Board's station was opened at the island in 1902, the trans-Pacific mail-steamers called there on the voyage from Auckland to San Francisco. The first Superintendent of the Cable Station, Mr. David Cuthbert, realizing the value of direct communication by steamer and telegraph with New Zealand for obtaining mails and provisions,