

FOURTH REPORT

ON

THE MARINE DEPARTMENT, FOR THE YEAR 1868.

SIR,—

General Post Office, Wellington, 15th August, 1868.

I have the honor to submit for your Excellency's information, a Report from the Colonial Marine Engineer on the administration of the Marine and Steam Navigation Acts, and the general conduct of the Maritime business of the Colony, for the year ended 30th June last.

The arrangements in operation for the inspection of steamers, and the examination of Masters and Engineers, continue to work well, and the business of Mr. Balfour's department is efficiently conducted by him.

After a consultation with the various Harbour-masters from nearly all parts of New Zealand, a general Code of Harbour Regulations for the Colony has been established, in the place of the great variety of Regulations which have hitherto prevailed at the various ports, and which were found very embarrassing to masters of vessels frequenting New Zealand Ports. These new Regulations come into force on the 1st of next month.

The Lighting Apparatus for the Lighthouses at Farewell Spit and Cape Campbell is now being manufactured; and the plans for these Lighthouses, as well as for that at The Nuggets, are now so far advanced that the erection of the buildings can be proceeded with in a very short time.

To His Excellency Sir G. F. Bowen, K.M.G.,
Governor of New Zealand.

I have, &c.,
JOHN HALL.

SIR,—

Marine Department,
Wellington, 10th August, 1868.

I have the honor to forward herewith a Report on the working of the Marine Department for the year 1867-8.

The Hon. the Postmaster-General,
Wellington.

I have, &c.,
JAMES M. BALFOUR, M.I.C.E.,
Colonial Marine Engineer.

REPORT.

1. In my last Report I described the organization of the Marine Department, and explained the arrangements which had been made to enable a small staff to overtake in a satisfactory manner the numerous and important duties with which they were intrusted. I am glad to be able to report that the arrangements so described have continued to work very satisfactorily, and the duties of the department are still carried on in the same manner, with but trifling alterations of detail. The correspondence has, however, become very heavy; and but for the authority I received to employ a temporary correspondence clerk, this branch of my duty must have fallen hopelessly in arrear. The only addition to the present staff that is at all called for at present is a permanent instead of a temporary correspondence clerk and bookkeeper.

2. "The Steam Navigation Act Amendment Act, 1867," has been found to work well, and the present state of the law, as regards the inspection of steamers, may be said to be satisfactory; with, perhaps, the exception of the system of examining masters and engineers, which I hope ere long to be able to assimilate to the system adopted by the Board of Trade. The present law for these examinations is somewhat cumbrous, and the certificates issued, being available only for a particular vessel, are not so valuable as a general certificate of competence would be to any officer who might wish to go to England, or to any other Colony. I am not aware, however, that any officer has suffered in consequence of existing arrangements, especially as several certificates have been granted to the effect that the holder had been examined and would receive a certificate of competence for any vessel, of a certain class, on application; this being the nearest approach to a general certificate of competence which could legally be made. The general classification of steamers referred to in last Report has not been lost sight of, but the subject is surrounded with difficulties, and I have not yet been able to devise a thoroughly satisfactory system which would not unduly injure owners of certain vessels.

3. The Inspectors of Steamers in this Colony are placed at considerable disadvantage from the want of any arrangement by which the hulls of large vessels can be examined from the outside, and on one occasion during the past year I was compelled to have recourse to a diver, for the purpose of ascertaining the extent of the injury done to a steamer's plating by the rocks in Bluff Harbour. On the diver's report the vessel was allowed to proceed; and when she was docked at Melbourne, it was found that he had been successful in detecting all the injuries. The most careful examination made in this way is, however, but imperfect; and it is consequently most satisfactory to know that steps are being taken in several parts of the Colony to provide means for docking vessels of heavy burden.