

*Lighthouse Steamer.*—The “Stella” arrived in Wellington on the 25th October last, and on the 1st November made her first trip by going to Nelson and Manukau with members of the General Assembly after the close of last session. Since that time she has been uninterruptedly employed on lighthouse service, having made at different times twelve trips to the Brothers with the material for building the lighthouse, the keepers’ dwelling, tramway, lantern and apparatus, and with provisions and water for workmen, &c., all of which had to be landed on an exposed rock in the midst of strong tides and frequently a rough sea, without either shelter or anchorage, so that the vessel had to be kept constantly underweigh to maintain her position. The difficulty of landing the above material in small boats was very great. This service was, however, accomplished in about sixty days without accident of any kind. Besides carrying material for the Brothers, the “Stella” also conveyed the material for building the Centre Island and Puysegur Point lighthouses, and dwellings, from Bluff Harbour. This service was also performed without accident. The landing at Puysegur Point being good, no trouble was experienced there; but the landing on Centre Island was more difficult, as a heavy surf frequently sets on to the beach, which would swamp a boat. Great care had, therefore, to be observed, and the work was necessarily more tedious than at Puysegur. On this service the vessel was away from Wellington fifty days, and during almost the whole of that time the fires were never out. The Southern lighthouses on the coast were also visited several times for the purpose of supplying them with stores, and for shifting some of the keepers. In addition to this lighthouse service, the “Stella” made several trips on the coast with members of the Government and other passengers, and once with Volunteers, and was occupied altogether on these trips about thirty days.

Captain Johnson, Inspector of Steamers and Nautical Adviser to this department, has been in temporary command of the “Stella” since her arrival, and he reports that she has proved herself to be a good sea boat, that her consumption of coal is small, and that she is well adapted for the service of the Marine Department.

*Consolidation of Shipping Laws.*—In my report for 1871 I drew attention to the desirability of consolidating and amending the laws relating to shipping. I pointed out that at that time there were eight different Acts relating to shipping and marine matters, that most of these Acts were adaptations of portions of the Imperial Merchant Shipping Acts of 1854 and 1862, and that they had been found to be most faulty where they differed most widely from those Acts. In addition to the eight Acts referred to, there are now five others, viz.,—

“The Merchant Ships Officers Examination Act Amendment Act, 1871;”

“The Coasting Trade Regulation Act, 1871;”

“The Merchant Shipping Acts Adoption Act, 1873;”

“The Steam Navigation Acts Amendment Act, 1873;” and

“The Merchant Shipping Acts Adoption Act, 1874.”

There are thus at present no less than thirteen Acts relating to shipping in force in the colony, of which four are amendment Acts, and three are adoption Acts without having the adopted clauses embodied in them, so that the law on this important subject is, on many points, involved and complicated, instead of being plain and explicit. On this matter being brought to your notice, you expressed your approval of an effort being made to consolidate and codify these laws, and a Bill for this purpose has accordingly been prepared, which, it is to be hoped, will meet with the approval of the Legislature and become law during the present session, especially as the very necessary provisions of the Imperial Merchant Shipping Act, 1876, relating to the detention and survey of unseaworthy ships, and to deck cargoes and overloading, are embodied in it.

*Examination of Masters, &c.*—Certificates of Competency have been issued to 109 candidates; 72 being for masters, mates, and engineers of sea-going vessels, and 37 for masters and engineers of river steamers.

*Steam Navigation.*—Passenger Certificates have been issued to 111 steamers, of 11,666 tons and 4,249 horse-power, being 8 steamers, of 2,401 tons and 659 horse-power, more than were surveyed last year.

*Wrecks and Casualties.*—During the past year 94 casualties were reported to this office, 83 of which occurred on or near the coasts of the colony; of these, 29, of an aggregate tonnage of 4,717, were cases of total wreck; 48, affecting a tonnage of 6,230 tons, were cases of partial loss only, and 6 were cases involving loss of life. The number of lives lost on or near the coast of the colony was 49—viz., 7 in the “Clematis,” 6 in the “Kate Brain,” 4 each in the “Flying Cloud” and “Bonnie Lass,” and 3 each in the “Edward,” “Kaikoura,” and “Dante” (all hands on these vessels being lost); 8 were lost in the “William Akers,” 2 from the “Arthur Wakefield,” and 1 each from the “Moa,” “Acadia,” “Maori,” “Alhambra,” “Start,” “Strathnaver,” “Sir Donald,” “Eagle Wing,” and “Clematis.” Eleven cases were reported which occurred beyond the colony, comprising two total wrecks (tonnage 124), four partial losses (tonnage 1,390) and 5 cases of loss of life. The total number of lives lost being 14—viz., 9 in the “May Queen” (lost with all hands), and one each from the “Vallejo,” “England’s Glory,” “Florinda,” “Thurland Castle,” and “Duke of Sutherland.”

The “Otago,” it will be remembered, was lost at Chasland’s Mistake on the 4th of December last. An enquiry into the cause of the wreck was held at Dunedin, before John Bathgate, Esq., Resident Magistrate, assisted by Captain William Thomson, Nautical Assessor. The Court suspended the certificate of the second mate for two years. Copies of the evidence and the report of the Court of Enquiry were sent to the Board of Trade in due course. The Assistant Secretary, of the Marine Department of the Board of Trade, in acknowledging the receipt of those documents in a letter dated the 6th April last, remarks: “The Board of Trade regret that, looking to the negligence, incapacity, and disobedience of the mate, the Court did not think fit to cancel his certificate.”

*New Zealand Pilot.*—A new edition of this work having been issued by the Hydrographic Department of the Admiralty, a number of copies were ordered from London. These have been received, and were at once sent to the Customhouses at the principal ports of the colony, for sale to shipmasters. A further and larger supply has been ordered for the same purpose.

*Naval Training School.*—I enclose the annual report of the Manager. The school is being well conducted; but I very much regret to have to state that it has not been successful for the main object