

for which it was established. Out of the whole number of boys educated and trained at the school, only twelve have as yet been apprenticed to the sea-service, notwithstanding that every effort has been made by the department to induce shipowners and shipmasters to take the boys.

*Harbours.*—In consequence of the abolition of the provinces, it became the duty of this department, after the 1st January last, to superintend the management of the harbours, except those for which Harbour Boards had been constituted. It was at once found that various necessary repairs had to be executed at several of the pilot stations, &c. In attending to these matters, and in conducting the correspondence with the Harbour Boards constituted by Acts of last session, the work of the department was very greatly increased. The buoys in the Manukau Harbour, 34 in number, of which 17 are of iron, and the remainder wooden cask buoys, have all been lifted and thoroughly repaired; the mooring chains and shackles were found to be very much worn, and these had to be replaced with new ones or repaired. The revenue cutter "Ringleader" was employed for lifting and laying down the buoys, and the whole work was carried out under the directions of the Harbour-master, Captain Wing.

A contract has been let for the construction of two large iron buoys for Kaipara. At Poverty Bay a contract for the removal of rocks in the Turanganui River has been let, and one at Havelock for erecting beacons in the upper part of the harbour. For Kaikoura two iron mooring buoys have been made and placed in position there.

*Kaipara Pilot Station.*—In June, 1871, a piece of land inside the North Head at Kaipara, comprising ten acres, was purchased from the Natives as a site for a Customhouse. The late Provincial Government of Auckland, by arrangement with the General Government, shifted the pilot station from the South Head on to this land. The necessity for a signal station having been urged on the Provincial Government, they some time afterwards erected a signal staff and signalman's house on the sand hills five or six miles to the seaward side of the pilot station, and connected it with the latter by telegraph. The consent of the Natives for the erection of the signal station and telegraph line had not been acquired, this probably not being considered necessary, on account of the utterly valueless character of the land on which the signal station was placed. On the completion of the work they claimed a high annual rental for the ground, and refused to entertain any proposals for its purchase. After much fruitless negotiation the matter was placed in the hands of Mr. Preece, of the Native Department, who took a deal of trouble to secure the land for the Crown, and eventually succeeded, for the moderate sum of £150, in acquiring an uninterrupted block from the pilot station to the signal station, including the portion on which the telegraph poles are erected. This successful purchase satisfactorily settles a troublesome question with the Kaipara Natives, and secures ample accommodation for the future requirements of the harbour establishment at this large and important port.

*Harbour Boards.*—Prior to last session there were seven Harbour Boards—viz., Auckland, Kakanui, New Plymouth, New River, Riverton, Oamaru, and Otago—which had been constituted by Ordinances of Provincial Councils, under authority of "The Harbour Boards Act, 1870." The Moeraki and Napier Boards were constituted by Acts of the General Assembly in 1875, and last session eleven more Boards—viz., those for the Bluff, Castlepoint, Foxton, Hokitika, Lyttelton, Patea, Thames, Timaru, Waitara, Waimakariri, and Wanganui—were called into existence. There are thus no less than twenty such Boards at present in the colony, each constituted by a separate Act or Ordinance, few of which are alike, and none of which define the powers of the Boards, but leave them dependent on the powers which, under "The Marine Act, 1867," may be delegated to them by the Governor. The provisions contained in the 7th, 10th, 12th, 13th, 30th, 31st, and 32nd sections of that Act have accordingly been delegated by Orders in Council to most of these Harbour Boards, so that they now have all the powers and authorities which the Provincial Governments previously had in respect of harbour administration. Most of the Boards, however, from lack of funds, have been unable to undertake the management of their respective ports, and the harbour establishments have therefore had to be carried on at the cost of the colony. Owing to the large number of Harbour Board Acts, and to the want of a clear definition of the duties and responsibilities of Harbour Boards, it would be exceedingly desirable to have a general Act, the main provisions of which should be applicable to all, and in which their powers should be accurately laid down, especially as the law as it at present stands interposes difficulties which prevent these bodies from managing their own purely local affairs.

*Weather Reporting.*—Appended hereto will be found a very full report from Captain Edwin, detailing the results of his operations during the past year.

*Returns.*—The customary returns showing the ordinary expenditure of the department, cost of lighthouses, return of wrecks and casualties, and wreck chart, are also appended hereto.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM SEED,  
Secretary of Customs.