

1881.
NEW ZEALAND.

MARINE DEPARTMENT

(ANNUAL REPORT OF THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 18th August, 1881.

I do myself the honor to submit the following report on the operations of this department during the past financial year ended the 31st March last.

Some important changes in the administration of the department have been made during the period referred to. After having been combined with the Customs since the early part of 1870, the Marine Office was in April, 1878, severed from that department, and placed under the management of a Nautical Officer. In October last the Government determined to place the Marine and Customs Departments again under one permanent head, and was pleased to restore me to the position I had formerly occupied, that of having charge of both departments; the services of the officer recently in charge of the Marine Department being retained as Nautical Adviser to the department. The Government at the same time transferred the administration of the Inspection of Machinery Act from the Public Works Department to the Marine Department, in order that the Inspectors under that Act, who are also Inspectors of Steamers, might be placed under the supervision of one department. Shortly before these changes were made, the nominal connection between the Weather-reporting Office and the Marine Department ceased, through the amalgamation of the former with the Meteorological Department; and in July, 1880, the management of the Kohimarama Naval Training School was handed over to the Education Department.

Lighthouses.—The several coastal lighthouses, 21 in number, have been visited and inspected by an officer of the department during the past year; the lights were found to be thoroughly efficient in every case, and the buildings and their surroundings generally in good order.

Reference has been made in previous reports to the necessity for a light at Cape Egmont. A site was selected for this light as far back as 1874; but, owing to the disaffection of the Natives living near that part of the coast, it was found impracticable to proceed with its erection. On the establishment of military posts, and the occupation of the country in the vicinity of Cape Egmont, all chance of serious opposition by the Natives to the establishment of the light was removed, and the Government at once gave directions for its erection to be proceeded with. As the Mana Light, which had ceased to be used after the light on the Brothers was lighted, was in every way suited for Cape Egmont, instructions were given for its removal to that place. The tower is of iron, 53 feet high, and weighs 90 tons. It was taken down, removed, and re-erected on its new site, without accident or mishap of any kind. The light was exhibited at Cape Egmont on the night of the 1st instant.

Although the light on the Brothers, in conjunction with the lights at Pencarrow Head and Cape Campbell, have lighted the southern entrance and narrowest part of Cook Strait, it cannot be said that the strait is well lighted until a light is placed on Stephen's Island. Strangers, it is alleged, on entering the strait from the westward at night, are inclined, in their anxiety to keep clear of Stephen's Island, to give it so wide a berth that they run the risk of being embayed in Wanganui bight. A suitable site for a light has been selected on Stephen's Island, and a track from the beach cut to it through the bush; but, in the absence of appropriations, the work of constructing the light cannot be gone on with. The cost is estimated at £7,000.

The apparatus and lantern for the light at Mokohinau are still in store at Auckland, no instructions having as yet been given to proceed with the erection of this light. The Tory Channel leading lights will be proceeded with very shortly.

Paraffin-burners have been fitted at the lights at Pencarrow Head and Tiritiri. Mineral oil is now used at all the New Zealand lights. At the small lights at Poniu Passage and Bean Rock (Auckland Harbour) the ordinary kerosene of commerce is used; all others are supplied with paraffin oil, which is specially imported. Whilst referring to this subject I think it is right that I should call attention to a passage which appears in the printed report of the Controller and Auditor-General, recently presented to Parliament, which has evidently been made under a misapprehension of the conditions under which the lighthouse oil is supplied, and which, if not corrected, might create an