

this colony, 3 vessels of 1540 were total losses, 3 of 1584 tons partial losses, and one loss of life only. The total loss of life reported in these casualties was 2, namely, one each from the "Wave Queen" and "Circe." The wreck of the "Tararua" was one of the most disastrous that has ever occurred on the coasts of this colony. The painful incidents connected with it were vividly described by the Press at the time, and excited a profound sensation throughout New Zealand and in Australia. No good purpose can be served by now repeating the harrowing details, and I therefore only make this brief reference to this memorable wreck.

Harbour Works.—A considerable number of plans of wharves and other works on tidal lands are forwarded to this department for approval by the Governor in Council, in pursuance of the provisions of "The Harbours Act, 1878." The conduct of this business causes much correspondence and takes up a deal of time, mainly through the imperfect character of the plans submitted to the department, all of which have to be carefully scrutinized by the Marine Engineer, who, before any projected work is approved of, has to certify that such work, in his opinion, will not be or tend to the injury of navigation.

The following Orders in Council under the provisions referred to were prepared by the department during the year ended 31st March last:—May 10: Approving of plans of Heathcote Swing-bridge. May 10: Authorizing A. W. Croft to erect a wharf at Gisborne. May 17: Approving of plans of works for the improvement of New River Harbour. June 27: Approving of Sir John Coode's plans of harbour-works at Waitara. June 27: Vesting management of wharf at Motueka in Waimea County Council. August 22: Consenting to preliminary works for construction of Calliope Point Dock, Auckland Harbour. September 22: Approving of plans of grain export-shed, Lyttelton Harbour. October 4: Authorizing W. H. Colbeck to erect a wharf at Batley, at junction of Otamatea and Arapaoa Rivers, Kaipara Harbour. October 4: Vesting management of wharf at Queenstown in Queenstown Borough Council. October 4: Approving of plan of proposed approach to wharf in Bluff Harbour. October 18: Approving of plans of second proposed deviation in Timaru Breakwater. November 15: Authorizing Auckland Timber Company (Limited) to erect a wharf at Mongonui. December 2: Approving of plans of deviation in County Council wharf at Herd's Point, Hokianga Harbour. January 4: Approving of plan of proposed protective wall, Patea River. January 17: Authorizing Messrs. Wigmore and Tolorton to erect a wharf in Whangaroa Harbour. January 24: Approving of plans of first portion of proposed improvement of Wanganui bar. January 24: Approving of plans of proposed fascine protection-works in Waitara River. January 31: Authorizing St. Helier's Land, Building, and Investment Company (Limited) to erect a wharf in Auckland Harbour. February 14: Authorizing F. Freeman to construct a slip in Nelson Harbour. March 13: Approving of plans of two proposed training-walls at entrance to Waitara River. March 22: Authorizing G. G. Russell to erect a wharf in Otago Harbour.

Seal Fisheries.—About a year ago, the attention of the Government was called to the practice that was constantly being carried on of taking seals during the close season, which it was alleged, if not checked, would certainly result in the early extinction of the seal in New Zealand; and an urgent request was made by persons interested in the seal-fishery trade that the catching of seals might be prohibited for three years. Satisfactory evidence was produced to show that the annual value of the sealskins exported was about £8,000. The Government therefore decided that it would be desirable to accede to the request for an extension of the close season, and thereby conserve a source of profit to the colony of considerable annual value. An Order in Council was accordingly made on the 18th October last, extending the time during which it is prohibited to hunt, catch, or kill seals, from the 1st November, 1881, to the 1st June, 1884. It was obvious that this prohibition alone would be as ineffectual for its object as the statutory close season had hitherto been, unless steps were taken to secure its observance. The only way in which this could be done, it was considered, would be by having the sealing grounds visited by a Government vessel, with some officer on board who would have the requisite authority to take proceedings against any person found violating the Order referred to. The changing of the institution at Kohimarama from a Naval Training to an Industrial School, which had already been decided on, caused the schooner "Kohimarama" to be no longer required for that institution, and she was therefore handed over to the Marine Department, and at once fitted out for cruising on the sealing grounds. Captain Greig, a trustworthy and experienced officer, who had been acting as Resident Magistrate and Customs Officer at Stewart Island for several years past, was placed in command. The name of the schooner was changed to "Kekeno" (Maori for seal), and she was well stored with provisions and every requisite for a lengthened cruise. She sailed at the end of March last, with instructions to proceed for the purpose above stated to the Auckland, Bounty, Campbell, and other islands, and places resorted to by sealers. Captain Greig was further instructed to inspect, and if necessary repair and replenish, the stores of provisions, &c., deposited at the Auckland Islands for the relief of shipwrecked mariners, also to search for wrecks, and to afford succour to castaways should he fall in with any at the various places he would reach in the course of his cruise. The mission of the "Kekeno," it will be seen, is in the interest of humanity as well as of commerce; and it will, therefore, no doubt, meet with general approval.

Inspection of Machinery.—The report of the Chief Inspector of Machinery is attached hereto. Last session the Inspection of Machinery Act, as consolidated by the Statutes Revision Commission, was submitted to Parliament, but was not passed; it has been again introduced this year. If passed, the amendments contained in it will cause the work to be more easily carried out. Provision having been made to enable the fees to be collected by others than Inspectors, much of their time, which has now to be devoted to collecting and accounting for fees, will be available for inspection duty.

Returns, &c.—The report of the Marine Engineer on the works carried out under his direction is appended hereto, as also are the usual returns and wreck chart.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM SEED,
Secretary, Marine Department.

The Hon. the Minister having Charge of the Marine Department.