

supervises this examination, and, should the candidate pass in navigation, he examines him in seamanship. It was at one time proposed to appoint one examiner who, in conjunction with another at present in the service, should hold examinations at fixed dates at each of the principal ports, and applications were invited for the appointment, but it was subsequently decided not to adopt this plan. I submit that it would be very desirable to adopt the principle of having examinations at regular intervals at the various ports; by this means I consider that time and trouble would be saved, and the examinations would have a higher standard in the eyes of the public. This plan is adopted in Great Britain. The Chief Inspector of Machinery recommends that this plan should be adopted in connection with the examination of engineers.

*Relief of Distressed Seamen.*—The sum of £36 1s. 2d. has been expended during the year on account of the relief of distressed seamen belonging to New Zealand vessels. Of this amount £12 was paid for the conveyance of the crew of the "Ryno," £3 for the crew of the "Waireka," and £10 for two seamen from Macquarie Island. The sum of £11 1s. 2d. was expended in provisions for replenishing the depôts for castaways established on the Auckland, Campbell, Antipodes, and Kermadec Islands.

*Wages and Effects of Deceased Seamen.*—During the year the estates of fifty-four deceased seamen have been dealt with. One estate, amounting to £19 6s. 8½d., has been transferred to the Public Trustee; £94 5s. 1½d. has been paid to relatives and other claimants, and £140 0s. 10d. paid into the Public Account in accordance with the provisions of section 87 of "The Shipping and Seamen's Act, 1877." Twenty-two new estates were received during the year.

*Survey of Steamers and Inspection of Machinery.*—The duties connected with the survey of steamers and inspection of machinery were handed over to the Public Works Department by direction of the Government on the 2nd December last.

*Wrecks and Casualties.*—The accompanying table shows an analysis of the casualties reported. Those on the coast of the colony number 41, representing 14,803 tons, as against 33 casualties, affecting 17,650 tons, in the previous year. The number of total wrecks within the colony was 11 vessels, of 768 aggregate tonnage, as against 4 vessels, of 4,453 aggregate tonnage, in the previous year. The number of lives lost during the year was 38, as against 8 in the previous year. Of these 24 were lost on or near the coasts of the colony—namely, 6 from the "Louie" (all hands), 2 from the "Clematis," 2 from the s.s. "Ruby," 8 from the "Northern Star" (all hands), and 1 each from the s.s. "Maori," "Waipu," "Acacia," "Wave," "Sarah Pile," and "Edith May." Of the 14 lives lost beyond the colony, 12 were from the "Maile" (all hands), and 1 each from the "Alcestis" and "Canterbury." Portions of the hull of the "Northern Star" came ashore at Kaipara, and it is considered possible that she was lost through collision with the four-masted barque "Gowanburn," portions of wreckage from that vessel having been found on the West Coast about the time the "Northern Star" came on shore. Of the miscellaneous casualties reported, 2 were of a serious character—namely, those to the ship "Timaru," and the s.s. "Ruahine," fire having broken out in the holds of each of these vessels.

*Notices to Mariners.*—Thirty-six notices to mariners were issued during the year, of which nine related to matters within the colony. The following is a list of them:—

Wellington Harbour: Dredging operations.

Napier Harbour: Alteration in position of red light at end of breakwater.

Foxton Harbour: Exhibition of additional leading lights.

Manukau Harbour: Additional beacon erected.

Cook Strait: Entrance to Queen Charlotte Sound. Passage between Jackson's Head and

Beacon Rock should not be used by vessels drawing over 12ft. of water (two notices).

Greymouth Harbour: Towage rates.

Rangaounou Bay: Rock reported.

Kaipara Harbour: Lower beacon, North Head, carried away by encroachment of sea.

*FISHERIES.*—*Oysters:* The Oyster Fisheries Act was passed last session; it provided for an export duty on oysters, for licenses to collect oysters, and for leasing foreshore for the purpose of forming oyster-beds. Regulations were made fixing the export duty at 1s. a hundredweight, and also for the issue of licenses, &c. Under powers provided for by the Act the regulations relative to the export duty, and also to the licensing of persons taking oysters, were made not to apply to the South Island. Several applications for leasing foreshore for the purpose of establishing oyster-farms have been received, but none have as yet been actually issued. I submit that it would be very desirable to have power to lease the existing oyster-beds. At present when a bed is opened, if it is all accessible, it is at once rushed, and the oysters almost completely destroyed. If the beds were leased, the lessees could be made to maintain them in proper bearing. Inspectors under the Oyster Fisheries Act were appointed at Russell and Whangarei, besides which the constables in the parts of the North Island in the vicinity of which oyster-beds exist were also appointed Inspectors. The quantity of oysters exported during the financial year amounted to 430,610 dozen from ports in the North Island, and to 184,080 from the South Island (Bluff only). The quantity exported shows a considerable decrease from last year, caused, it is believed, from the large imports into New South Wales from Queensland.

*Flounders.*—In February last Messrs. Spackman and Clarke were appointed to report on the question of the minimum size of flounders that should be allowed to be taken in Lake Ellesmere; they reported just subsequent to the beginning of the financial year now current, and their report has been presented to Parliament. The question of the taking of immature fish is an important one, and has been the subject of a great deal of discussion in Europe.

*Imported Fish.*—In accordance with the resolutions passed by the conference of acclimatisation societies held at Oamaru in March, 1892, general fishing regulations for a district comprising the whole of the South Island, except portions of the West Coast, were issued; these have proved to be a great saving of trouble and annoyance to fishermen. In the beginning of December last the administration of the laws relating to fresh-water fish was handed over to the Colonial Secretary's Department by the orders of the Government.

*Returns.*—Returns relating to the expenditure of the department, lighthouses, list of certificates issued, wrecks, &c., are appended hereto.

I have, &c.,

LEWIS H. B. WILSON, Assistant Secretary.

The Hon. the Minister having charge of the Marine Department, Wellington,