

1899.

NEW ZEALAND.

MARINE DEPARTMENT.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1898-99.

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

MY LORD,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 26th June, 1899.

I do myself the honour to transmit herewith, for your Excellency's information, the report of the Marine Department of the colony for the financial year ended the 31st March last.

I have, &c.,

WM. HALL-JONES,

Minister of Marine.

His Excellency the Right Hon. the Earl of Ranfurly,
Governor of New Zealand.

The SECRETARY to the MINISTER of MARINE.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 8th May, 1899.

I have the honour to make the following report on the administration of this department during the financial year ended the 31st March last :—

Lighthouses.—The cost of maintenance of the lighthouses during the year was £12,987 13s. 6d., but this amount does not include any part of the expenses of the Government steamer which periodically visits the lighthouses with oil and stores. No new light has been exhibited during the year, but the work of erecting a lighthouse on East Cape Island is now being carried out by the Public Works Department. This light will be a second-order dioptric revolving white light, flashing at intervals of ten seconds, and will be a most useful light for vessels trading on the East Coast.

The apparatus for the second-order light which is to be erected on Somes Island has been received from England, and steps are being taken to proceed with the erection of the tower.

During the year the sum of £174 14s. 8d. has been expended on repairs to lighthouses, the main work being repairs to the Bean Rock Tower, which was in a bad state from natural decay. At Kaipara an additional room has been built to the principal keeper's house. The principal keeper at Cape Campbell having reported that the tower required repairs, it was inspected by the Marine Engineer, who recommended certain repairs, which are now being carried out under the direction of the lighthouse artificer. It is anticipated that it will be necessary to erect a new tower at this station in about four years' time.

The erection of the Slaughter's Cotton-powder Fog-signal at Pencarrow Head was completed, and the signal was ready for use at the beginning of July last. On its completion it was tested by Captains Fairchild and Allman in the s.s. "Tutanekai." They reported that the first explosion took place when the vessel was two miles and a half distant, and that the sound was moderately loud, sharp, and quick. Afterwards explosions took place at intervals of fifteen seconds, and the sound increased up to seven miles, the reports being best when at a distance of from five to seven miles. There was, however, no fog at the time of this trial. The masters of vessels trading to Wellington have been asked to report to the department their experience of the signal, but so far the only report received is one from Captain Fisk, of the s.s. "Pania," who states that he was able to enter the harbour in a fog during the night of the 25th March last owing to seeing the flash and hearing the report of the signal, whereas he would have had to remain outside all night if the signal had not been working.

Pending further experience with the above apparatus it is proposed to supply the most important lighthouses with rockets for use in foggy weather, and the department is now in communication with the Victorian authorities on the subject of the rocket system in use in that colony, and is obtaining a few rockets for experimental use before ordering a supply from England. The