

Attention having been drawn in Parliament to certain alleged irregularities in connection with the examination of masters and mates, shortly after the House rose inquiry was made, with the result that action was taken against Captain Allman, the Chief Examiner, for a breach of "The Shipping and Seamen's Act, 1877," in procuring a certificate as master, home trade, for one James Jones by falsely representing that he had passed the prescribed examination, whereas, so far as related to a portion of the examination, the answers had not been written by the candidate in the examination-room in the presence of the Examiner. The information was dismissed, the Chief Justice holding that the words making it criminal for any one by false representation to "obtain a certificate" for himself or for any other person did not apply to the defendant, who had made a false representation in order to enable the issue of a certificate to another person. Informations were laid against James Jones and George von Schoen for assisting in the false representations which procured the issue of a certificate of competency. That against the former was dismissed by the Magistrate on the grounds of insufficient evidence, and after the decision in Captain Allman's case the Crown Solicitor entered a *nolle prosequi* in the case against Von Schoen. Captain Allman, having admitted to the Government the truth of the alleged false representations, was dismissed from the Service on the 4th March last.

The certificate as home-trade master issued to James Jones has since been cancelled by the Supreme Court.

*Coastal Surveys and Dangers.*—The position of the rock in Daggs Sound on which the s.s. "Tutanekai" touched has been fixed by Captain Bollons, of the "Hinemoa," and steps are being taken to erect a beacon on Barclay Rock, Stewart Island.

*Government Steamers.*—I regret to have to report the death of Captain Fairchild, of the s.s. "Tutanekai," which was the result of an accident which occurred on board on the 4th July last whilst an engine was being shipped at Wellington. A pin in the lifting gear broke, and the shackle came down and struck him with such force that he died in a very short time from the injuries sustained. Captain Fairchild had been in the Government service, in command of various steamers, since the 9th July, 1864, and had rendered most valuable services, both during the Maori war and afterwards. A sum equal to one and a half year's salary was voted by Parliament for his widow, and this amount has been paid to her. On the 11th April, 1898, when the vessel was leaving the wharf at Westport with Volunteers, the mooring-rope broke, and took off the leg of Mr. Hunter, the chief officer, who, since his recovery, has been employed as Shipping Clerk in the Customs at Wellington. The "Tutanekai" has been mainly employed in carrying sleepers and other cargo for the Railway and Public Works Departments. Other work done by her has been—the repairing of one of the Cook Strait cables; the conveyance of the men of the Defence Force who were sent to Hokianga at the time of the Native disturbance, from that place to Auckland, and Wellington when the trouble was over; a trip to the southern islands to search for the ketch "Gratitude," which was found wrecked at Macquarie Island; and the conveyance of His Excellency the Governor round the North Island. Alterations have been made in the vessel's deck-house which make more deck-room for coaling, and a bridge has been built across from side to side to enable the master or officer in charge of the deck to see astern. Captain Post, who at the time of Captain Fairchild's death was in command of the "Hinemoa," has been appointed master of the "Tutanekai."

The "Hinemoa" has been employed mainly on the work of conveying oil and stores to the lighthouses, including the material, &c., for the new lighthouse which is being erected on East Cape Island, and in overhauling and cleaning harbour and coastal buoys. In addition to this work, she conveyed the Permanent Militiamen to Hokianga, and visited the southern islands and the Kermadec Islands for the purpose of looking for castaways, and inspecting the provision depots which are maintained on those islands. She has been supplied with a new funnel and a new winch, and has had her machinery overhauled. Captain Bollons was appointed master when Captain Post was transferred to the "Tutanekai."

*Wrecks and Casualties.*—A table showing the analysis of casualties to ships is appended hereto. Those on the coasts of the colony numbered forty, representing 11,550 tons, as against forty-eight, representing 20,357 tons, in the previous year. The total wrecks within the colony were six, of 367 tons, as against six, of 3,302 tons, in the previous year. The number of lives lost was eight, as against twenty-eight in 1897-98. Of these seven were on or near the coasts of the colony—viz., one from the "Aratapu" and six in the "Marmion." The life lost beyond the colony was the result of an accident to the fourth engineer of the "Mapourika."

*Inspection of Machinery.*—The report of the Chief Inspector, which is appended hereto, shows the work which has been done during the year. The work has so much increased that the inspection of a large number of land boilers and the survey of a good many steamers are in arrears; and, as there is not any prospect of the present staff being able to overtake the work, it is necessary that another Inspector should be appointed. I would strongly urge that this should be done without delay. If the appointment is made the new Inspector will be stationed in Canterbury, and, besides doing work in that district, he will be required to assist in Otago and elsewhere when required.

*Survey of Steamers.*—The report of the Principal Engineer Surveyor is appended hereto. Regulations have been made prescribing the class of engineers to be carried by vessels fitted with oil-engines. The master of the s.s. "Waitangi," having carried passengers without a certificate to do so, was prosecuted and fined £1 and costs on each of two charges. Messrs. West and Meffin, owners of the s.s. "Edina," were proceeded against and fined for going beyond the limits allowed by the vessel's certificate, and carrying passengers when not authorised to do so. Mr. Snodgrass, the owner of the "Ripple," was fined £1 and costs for running his vessel without a certificate and a certificated engineer. Captain Grant, of the "Takapuna," was fined £10 and costs for carrying more passengers than authorised; and Captain Robertson, of the "Rotoiti," was fined the same amount for a similar offence.