

Wages and Effects of Deceased Seamen.—The estates of eighteen seamen, amounting to £191 11s. 11d., were dealt with during the year. Of these, fifteen were new estates. The sum of £159 13s. 1d. was paid to relatives and other claimants.

Engagement and Discharge of Seamen.—The question of appointing master mariners to take charge of this work at the four principal ports has again been under consideration, and it has been decided to appoint Superintendents of Mercantile Marine at these ports, who will perform the duties of engaging and discharging seamen, examination of candidates for masters' and mates' certificates, and also carry out any other duties that may be required of them. An advertisement inviting applications for the positions was inserted in the newspapers, and in response to it forty-seven applications have been received, and these are now under consideration. Mr. R. C. Hunter, formerly chief officer of the "Tutanekai," has acted as shipping clerk at Wellington since the 1st November last. On the arrival of the s.s. "Duke of Portland" at Wellington from Hobart in June last the master reported to the Collector of Customs that three of his men had deserted at Hobart, and asked the Collector to sanction their being written off the articles as deserters. This sanction was not, however, given, as, according to the provisions of "The Imperial Merchant Shipping Act, 1894," the shipping-master at Hobart was the proper person to sanction the writing-off. About a fortnight after the vessel's arrival one of the men reached this port in the s.s. "Ruahine," and reported that he had not deserted, but had been unable to rejoin his ship owing to having been locked up. As the master had not complied with the law at Hobart he was required, before he received his clearance to leave this colony, to deposit a sum of money to defray the cost of the man's maintenance until he obtained employment. When the "Tekoa" was about to sail from Wellington for London in May last two of her crew who were in gaol were taken on board by the police, but after being put on board the master did not keep them there, as the law required him to do, but allowed them to go ashore, and sailed without them. On his return to the colony proceedings were taken against him for a breach of the law, when he was fined £1 and costs. Proceedings were taken against Captain Mathieson, of the s.s. "Napier," for employing a seaman without entering into an agreement with him, and he was fined £1 10s. and costs. Captain Tinney, of the s.s. "Aorere," was fined 15s. and costs for a similar offence.

Three vessels have been detained for survey on account of alleged unseaworthiness during the year—viz., the "Opawa," "Linda Weber," and "Carmoney." In the case of the "Opawa," three of the crew reported that the vessel's rigging was unsafe; but the Surveyors stated that such was not the case. The report of the Surveyors on the "Linda Weber" was that she was fit to proceed from Wellington to Auckland *via* Kaipara, and, as the owners wished to take her there for repairs, she was allowed to go. In the case of the "Carmoney," in which the complaint was made by some of the crew, the report of the Surveyors was that the vessel was seaworthy. The barque "Alexa" arrived at the Bluff from Surprise Island with her load-line submerged. Proceedings were taken against the master, and he was fined £1 and costs.

I have, &c.,

W. T. GLASGOW, Secretary.

The CHIEF INSPECTOR of MACHINERY to the SECRETARY of the MARINE DEPARTMENT,
Wellington.

Office of Chief Inspector of Machinery, Queen's Chambers,
Wellington, 4th April, 1899.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit my annual report on the working of the Inspection of Machinery Act of 1882 during the financial year ended the 31st of March, 1899.

No explosion has occurred to a boiler during the year, and no accident with boilers causing bodily harm to any one has been reported to me. This is a very satisfactory record, and long may it continue. In the sister-colonies of Australia, more especially in New South Wales, the accidents are numerous, as reported in the daily papers, causing great destruction to property and to life and limb. In Australia there is no compulsory inspection of land machinery.

If the introduction of new machinery is to be taken as a criterion of advancement, then New Zealand has had a most prosperous year. In fact, during the last three years the increase has been far above the average. New plant means, also, circulation of money, employment of labour, besides the development of the colony. Mining and dairying account for most of the increase.

Gold-dredge building has been especially brisk in the Otago District, and at the present time over £100,000 is being laid out on this important industry. There is hardly a river or alluvial flat in the whole of Otago without its gold-dredge; and the return in some cases has been phenomenal. An outlay of £6,000 to £8,000 will provide a first-class up-to-date dredge. Most of them are now fitted with compound condensing engines and ladders for getting rid of the tailings.

During the year I visited several of the gold-mining centres, to have a look at the up-to-date methods of manipulation of the best-equipped mines in Reefton, Paeroa, Waihi, and the Thames. What struck me most was the absence of labour after the quartz is won. The machinery in nearly all cases is so designed that it acts automatically, one process following another until all the gold is extracted. Where water-power is obtainable it is used as the initial prime mover. All the old methods of treatment for gold-saving appear to be dying out, chemical and automatic mechanical treatments being now universally adopted.

The new pumping machinery, with its battery of Lancashire boilers, at the Thames-Hauraki Gold-mine, appears to be a first-class article, and I trust will come up to all expectations. It is the largest appliance of its class in the colony.

The iron trade during the year has been good, and suitable men scarce, which is a very healthy state of things.