

Marine, and Mr. Wetherilt, Engineer Surveyor, which resulted in the vessel being detained as unseaworthy until extensive repairs had been executed to the satisfaction of the surveyors. As the vessel belonged to New South Wales and held a certificate issued in that State, a Royal Commission was appointed in Sydney to make inquiry in connection with her survey and receipt of a certificate there, and the result of the inquiry showed that the action taken in this colony was justified. At the request of the New South Wales Government, Captain Reid and Mr. Wetherilt were sent to Sydney to give evidence before the Commission. On their way back they were shipwrecked, being on board the s.s. "Elingamite" when she was lost on the Three Kings, and underwent great hardship, especially Mr. Wetherilt, who was adrift on a raft along with others without food or water for some days.

During the year owners of New Zealand sailing-vessels urged the Department to arrange for the granting of such certificates for their vessels as would be recognised in New South Wales, so as to avoid the necessity of the vessels having to be surveyed in that State, and the Department has been in correspondence with the Department of Navigation at Sydney on the subject. That Department has agreed to recognise New Zealand certificates, and arrangements have been made for their issue. The surveys will be made by the engineer surveyors, but as there is no statutory power in this colony for the compulsory periodical survey, only those vessels whose owners desire it will be surveyed and receive certificates pending an amendment of the law, which it is proposed to make by the Shipping and Seamen Consolidation Bill.

Prosecutions have been instituted against and fines imposed on the master of the s.s. "Queen of the South" for carrying more passengers than allowed by the vessel's certificate, and on the owners of the s.s. "Goldfinch" for taking the vessel from Dunedin to Picton without a certificate.

*Masters, Mates, and Engineers.*—The report of the Chief Examiner of Masters and Mates is appended hereto. For certificates of competency 211 persons passed their examinations, and ninety-six failed. Of those who passed, 140 were masters, mates, and steamship engineers of sea-going vessels; sixty were masters and engineers of steamships plying within restricted limits; eight were engineers of sea-going vessels propelled by oil, gas, &c.; and three were engineers of similar vessels plying within restricted limits.

The New Zealand regulations for the examination of masters and mates, which are similar to those of the Imperial Board of Trade, do not recognise service as second mate in the coasting trade as officer's service for the purpose of qualifying for examination for a foreign-going certificate as first mate or master, and as this rule prevents a great many young men whose New Zealand coasting service is in many cases really as good as intercolonial service, which counts as foreign-going for examination purposes, from obtaining the superior foreign-going certificates, the Department asked the Board of Trade if it would agree to an alteration of the regulations to give relief to our coasting second mates. It did not, however, see its way to do so, and as New Zealand certificates are only recognised as of equal value to those granted by the Board of Trade on condition that the requirements of our regulations are similar to those of the Board of Trade, nothing more can be done in the matter.

*Engagement and Discharge of Seamen.*—This work has been carried out in a satisfactory manner. Since the duty of inspecting life-saving appliances of ships has been placed upon the Superintendents of Mercantile Marine the work they have to carry out is getting too much for some of them to perform single-handed, and the question of giving assistance will soon have to be dealt with. In addition to the duties of the Dunedin office the Superintendent at that place is now carrying out the work of engaging and discharging whole crews at Port Chalmers. Captain Grey, of H.M. Customs, continues to engage and discharge single seamen.

For some time past it has been the practice of owners to insert in articles of agreement a clause providing that masters might make specified deductions from the men's wages for certain offences, and that in the event of any questions arising as to such deductions the Superintendents of Mercantile Marine should settle them. This matter has been under consideration, and it has been decided that the insertion of such a clause is not to be allowed in future articles. The matters can, however, be dealt with by a Court under the provisions of section 17 of "The Shipping and Seamen's Act Amendment Act, 1894," and both sides can still agree to submit in writing any question between them after it has arisen to a Superintendent for his decision under section 61 of "The Shipping and Seamen's Act, 1877."

The question as to the insertion of the master's option clause in articles has also been under consideration, and it has been decided that in future articles it must be reciprocal—that is, that it must give the seaman the same right as the master.

The following proceedings have been taken for breach of the law in connection with seamen, viz.: The master of the s.s. "Nautilus," for proceeding to sea without a fireman, fined £1 and costs; the master of the s.s. "Quiraing," for proceeding to sea without a full crew, fined £5 and costs; the master of the s.s. "Mokau," for not paying the crew within the prescribed time, fined 1s. and costs; the master of the s.s. "Kotuku," for proceeding to sea without a full crew, case dismissed; the master of the s.s. "Haupiri," for putting one of the firemen to do the work of a greaser, case dismissed; the master of the s.s. "Victoria," for proceeding to sea without a full crew, fined £10 and costs; a seaman, for forging a certificate of character in his discharge, sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labour; and against a man for making a false declaration that he was entitled to ship as a seaman, sentenced to seven days' imprisonment with hard labour.

*Wages and Effects of Deceased Seamen.*—The estates of thirty-two seamen, amounting to £296 6s. 4d., were dealt with during the year. Of these, twenty-eight were new estates. The sum of £158 12s. 7d. was paid to relatives and other claimants.