

Coastal Dangers.—H.M.S. surveying ship "Penguin" has continued the work of surveying on the east coast during the year, and various dangers have been surveyed by the Government steamers. The coastal buoys have been overhauled and cleaned, and the moorings attended to.

A Wigham white light, which was exhibited for the first time on the 21st April last, has been erected on the beacon off Jackson's Head, at the entrance to Queen Charlotte Sound. This light will burn without attention for over thirty days, and an arrangement has been made with the Union Steam Ship Company for the master of one of its steamers trading between Wellington and Nelson to renew the oil and wick, which are provided by this Department as required. The light has burnt well since it was exhibited, and is proving to be of great value to shipmasters.

The "New Zealand Nautical Almanac" for 1903, edited by Captain Blackburne, Nautical Adviser to the Department, was issued in December last, and has been very favourably received and reviewed. It contains a large amount of information useful to shipowners, mariners, and others. Captain Blackburn is now engaged on the preparation of the work for 1904, which will be issued about November next.

Wrecks and Casualties.—A table is attached showing the casualties to ships, and an analysis thereof. Those on the coasts of the colony numbered fifty-six, representing 42,264 tons, as against forty-five, representing 28,020 tons, in the previous year. The total wrecks within the colony were seven, of 5,173 tons, as against eight, of 3,948 tons, in the previous year. The number of lives lost was seventy-nine, as against twenty-eight last year. Of these, seventy-six were within the colony—viz., eleven from the "Timaru" (all hands), six from the "May," thirteen from the s.s. "Ventnor," forty-three from the s.s. "Elingamite," and one each from the "Sir Henry," "Concordia," and p.s. "Awarua."

The most serious casualty was the total loss of the s.s. "Elingamite" on the Three Kings, on the 9th November last, while on her way from Sydney to Auckland.

Government Steamers.—The "Tutanekai" has been fully employed all the year. She carried out the work of attending to the lighthouses during the time the "Hinemoa" was undergoing repairs, has been engaged a good while on repairing telegraph cables across Cook Strait, and has been employed on the carriage of railway-sleepers and other Government cargo. She has been supplied with a James's submarine sentry, an apparatus to indicate when getting into shoal water. The "Hinemoa" has been employed on lighthouse and harbour work, and has also visited the Kermadec Islands to search for castaways and repair and replenish the provision depots which are maintained on those islands. When examining a channel, reported to be a navigable channel, to the southward of the Middle Banks at the entrance to Kaipara Harbour she struck the ground, when she lost her rudder and sustained other damage. After getting afloat the master managed to get her up to an anchorage at Pouto, where temporary steering-apparatus was fitted on to her, and she then steamed to Wellington. The tender of Messrs. Morgan, Cable, and Co., of Port Chalmers, was accepted for the necessary repairs, and while they were being executed steam steering-gear and a steam-windlass were fitted on her, and the installation of the electric light was completed. She is now in first-class order.

I have, &c.,

GEORGE ALLPORT, Acting-Secretary.

The PRINCIPAL EXAMINER of MASTERS and MATES to the SECRETARY, MARINE DEPARTMENT.

Office of the Principal Examiner of Masters and Mates, Lambton Quay,
Wellington, 19th May, 1903.

SIR,—

I have the honour to inform you that the examination of masters and mates has been carried out by the Examiners at the four principal ports in a satisfactory manner. On the 20th October Captain Reid, the Examiner of Masters and Mates at Auckland, was called upon to give evidence in Sydney before the Royal Commission which examined into the state of the s.s. "Balmain," which steamer had previously been detained in New Zealand for unseaworthiness. During Captain Reid's absence for about seven weeks Captain Adamson, formerly Assistant Examiner in Auckland, conducted the examinations.

There has been only a very small increase this year in the number of candidates who have presented themselves for examination, and I am sorry to find that in Auckland the number of those who have passed for master of restricted-limit steamers considerably exceeds the number of those who have passed for master of foreign-going and home-trade vessels. This appears to me a serious matter, as with the present very extensive river-limits, especially in the Auckland District, there is nothing to prevent an owner from sending a steamer full of passengers from Auckland right away to Whangarei, a distance of about seventy miles. In England no master can have charge of a passenger river-steamer without at least five years sea service in the home trade, or without holding a certificate as master of a home-trade passenger steamer.

In October last I examined at Lyttelton Mr. George Samuel Hooper for the extra-master certificate. He passed a very creditable examination, and proved himself to be an intelligent and good worker. He was the first candidate who has presented himself for this examination since I have been in the colony, and I was therefore much pleased that he passed so well at first attempt.

I have, &c.,

HAROLD S. BLACKBURNE,

Principal Examiner of Masters and Mates.