

provide for the provisioning of boats and life-rafts. Each boat and raft of foreign-going and intercolonial vessels must carry three days' supply of water for the persons it is certified to carry, five days' supply of plasmon or ordinary biscuit, and five days' supply of chocolate and plasmon jelly, and 4 oz. of limejuice tabloids for each person. In the case of home-trade ships, only two and a half days' supply of water and biscuit need be carried if limejuice tabloids, chocolate, and plasmon jelly are provided. The carrying of these things is not compulsory in home-trade ships, but if they are not provided, three and a half days' supply of biscuit must be carried. The regulations provide that the provisions are to be kept in watertight receptacles fitted with screw tops, and are to be always kept in the boats, so that there may be no danger of the boats and rafts leaving the ship without them in case of shipwreck. New Zealand is, so far as I am aware, the first country that has required ships' boats to be kept provisioned.

The survey of sailing-vessels is at present optional on the part of the owners, but when "The Shipping and Seamen Act, 1903," comes into operation the survey of those engaged in the intercolonial trade will be compulsory.

Prosecutions have been instituted and fines imposed in the following cases, viz.: the master of the steam-launch "Tui," for taking the vessel from Dunedin to Blenheim when the vessel had no certificate for the voyage; the owners of the "Rotokohu," for carrying passengers without a passenger certificate; the owner of the launch "Kilmorey," for running her without a certificate; the owner of the launch "Mahinapua," for running her without a certificate and without a certificated engineer; the master of the s.s. "Torora," for going to sea without a properly certificated second engineer; the owners of the s.s. "Akaroa," for running without a lifeboat; the master of the s.s. "Vivid," for carrying more passengers than allowed by the vessel's certificate; and the master of the s.s. "Te Kapu" for carrying passengers without a passenger certificate.

*Masters, Mates, and Engineers.*—The report of the Principal Examiner of Masters and Mates is appended hereto. For certificates of competency 239 persons passed their examinations, and 76 failed. Of those who passed, 152 were masters, mates, and steamship engineers of sea-going vessels; 65 were masters and engineers of steamships plying within restricted limits; 10 were engineers of sea-going vessels propelled by oil, gas, &c.; and 12 were engineers of similar vessels plying within restricted limits. When "The Shipping and Seamen Act, 1903," comes into operation only British subjects will be eligible for examination for certificates of competency. By the same Act power is given to the Minister to grant certificates of service to persons who apply for them prior to the 31st December next, and who have had charge of ships for twelve months prior to the Act coming into force. As the Act will require certain ships which are not now compelled to have certificated masters to carry such officers, the provision as to certificates of service will enable those who have been twelve months in charge to obtain without examination certificates which will entitle them to continue to command similar vessels.

*Engagement and Discharge of Seamen.*—Appended hereto is a return showing the number of seamen engaged and discharged at the various ports during the year, and the fees received therefor.

The work at Auckland having become too much for the Superintendent of Mercantile Marine, who has a good many candidates for masters and mates' certificates to examine in addition to performing his ordinary duties, an assistant has been appointed to his office. Prior to the appointment it was often necessary for the Superintendent to get clerical help from the Customhouse. The work in the Wellington office is also too much for one man, and it is therefore necessary that an assistant should be appointed for that office. At present when the Superintendent has to leave his office to visit ships, to attend the Court in connection with prosecutions for breaches of the law, or to assist at examinations of masters and mates, he has to get the Collector of Customs to send an officer to take charge of the shipping office, and when an officer cannot be spared the office has to be closed. This causes inconvenience to persons having business with the office.

Two seamen have been prosecuted for making false declarations that they had the necessary qualifications entitling them to ship. In one case a sentence of a month's imprisonment was imposed, and in the other fourteen days' imprisonment. Prosecutions have also been instituted and fines imposed in the following cases, viz.: the master of the s.s. "Aotea," for not giving a fireman a discharge; the master of the s.s. "Koorunga," for carrying a man without putting him on the articles; the master of the s.s. "Gertie," for not carrying the statutory number of firemen; and the master of the s.s. "Kahu," for running on expired articles.

*Wages and Effects of Deceased Seamen.*—The estates of nineteen seamen, amounting to £113 9s. 10½d., were dealt with during the year. Of these, thirteen were new estates. The sum of £34 8s. 3½d. was paid to relatives and other claimants. At the request of the Board of Trade, the Department has paid the sum of £95 13s. to the relatives of deceased seamen who at the time of their death were serving in ships registered in the United Kingdom. This amount has been refunded by the Board of Trade.

*Coastal Dangers.*—H.M.S. "Penguin" has continued the work of surveying on the east coast during the year. She has also surveyed in the Buller roadstead, and Bluff Harbour. The coastal buoys have been overhauled and cleaned and the moorings attended to by the s.s. "Hinemoa."

The "New Zealand Nautical Almanac for 1904," edited by Captain Blackburne, was issued in November last. It contained additional information to that given in the issue for 1903. The large number of copies which have been sold shows that the book has met a want, and the letters which have been received and the favourable reviews of the publication bear testimony to its value. The preparation of the issue for 1905 is now in hand.

*Wrecks and Casualties.*—A table is attached showing the casualties to ships, and an analysis thereof. Those on the coasts of the colony numbered 58, representing 16,200 tons, as compared with 56 of 42,264 tons in the previous year. The total wrecks within the colony were 9, of