

*Notices to Mariners.*

Appended is a return of the Notices to Mariners relating to New Zealand matters which have been issued by the Department during the year. In addition to these notices, a large number which were received from Great Britain, Australia, and the United States of America have been published by the Department and circulated for the information of mariners.

*Meteorological and Weather Office.*

During the year new climatological stations have been established at Rakaia, the Hermitage, and at the Half-way House at Mount Egmont, and considerable increase has been made in the number of rainfall-stations, but the number of weather-reporting stations is practically the same as last year.

District weather notes and a general summary of the ruling weather and storms have been published monthly in the *Journal* issued by the Department of Agriculture.

In response to numerous requests from shipmasters, an extension has been made in the wireless forecasts which are sent out every evening, and special reports have been sent to ships whenever required.

The wireless messages received from Macquarrie Island during the year proved of considerable value for forecasting purposes.

*Government Steamers.*

The "Hinemoa" has been employed on her usual work of tendering lighthouses, in overhauling, cleaning, and painting the buoys and beacons under the control of the Department, and in locating reported dangers. She has also erected a beacon on D'Urville Rock, in the Hauraki Gulf. She has now been running for thirty-eight years, and will have to be replaced by another steamer before long. Plans and specifications for a suitable vessel for the work to be carried out have been prepared, and I recommend that a vote be taken during the coming session so that a new vessel may be procured.

During the strike at the end of last year the seamen and firemen of the "Hinemoa" went out at the call of their union, but no difficulty was experienced in obtaining other men. Most of the new men obtained at first were, however, inexperienced, and this made the time an arduous and anxious one for the master, deck officers, and engineers, to whom the thanks of the Department are due for the way in which they worked to enable the lighthouses, &c., to be attended to.

In order to prevent a recurrence of similar trouble, all the officers and crew of the vessel have been made permanent employees of the State, and given the same privileges as regards leave of absence, superannuation rights, &c., as are enjoyed by other Civil servants. Their pay has been made a little higher than that of the crews of privately owned steamers.

After completing her attendance on the battleship "New Zealand" in May last year the training-ship "Amokura" was moored in Wellington Harbour for the usual winter instruction to the boys. In addition to the usual instruction in seamanship on board during the winter, the boys attended school at the ship's schoolroom on the Thorndon Esplanade, where they were taught by a teacher supplied by the Technical School, the Department paying his salary. The teacher speaks well of their conduct and of the way in which they did their work in school, and the examination results at the end of the school-term were very good.

Arrangements have been made with the Union Steamship Company to take some of the best of the boys on board the s.s. "Aparima" without payment or premium, for the purpose of training them as officers, the only concession given to the company for this being the exemption of the ship from payment of light dues in New Zealand. Under this arrangement six boys joined the "Aparima" in September last, and four will join each year in future. Those who joined in September were C. G. Cullen and S. Richter, who came from Eltham; H. A. Brockett, from Gore; C. Gandy, from Wellington; R. A. K. Lovett, from Bluff; and W. A. Neale, from Waikaremoana.

With few exceptions the boys have behaved well. In the case of those whose behaviour has not been good they were boys whose parents had evidently sent them to the ship because they needed discipline, and in such cases they soon found discipline irksome.

The health of all on board has been good.

During the spring months and early summer last year the vessel visited Queen Charlotte Sound, Otago, Bluff, Preservation Inlet, Stewart Island, Picton, Port Underwood, Nelson, and the Auckland, Campbell, Antipodes, and Bounty Islands. After the midsummer holidays she visited the Kermadec Islands, Russell, and Auckland, and in March last she made another visit to the southern islands and also called at Akaroa and Oamaru. Her visits to the outlying islands were made for the purpose of searching for castaways and examining the depots of clothing and provisions which are maintained on those islands.

An evaporator and distiller have been installed in the ship. They work well, and enable sufficient water to be distilled to meet all requirements on board when the ship is cruising.

*Lighthouses.*

The Department has had under consideration the questions as to the erection of a lighthouse on the Three Kings, but it has not yet been able to solve the question as to the best way of marking these islands. Owing to the precipitous nature of the Western King it would be a very difficult and expensive matter to erect a light on it, and if erected it would be very expensive to maintain, as owing to there being not many days in a year when a landing can be effected it would be necessary to obtain and maintain a special steamer to attend to it. Moreover, the island is rather high for a light, being 600 ft. in height.