

The falling-off in the amount of fees received for engagements and discharges is attributable to the fact that no fees are charged for the engagement and discharge of seamen on transports and hospital ships.

Proceedings for breaches of the law in regard to seamen were taken by the Department with the following results: The Northern Coal Company, for employing an engineer in the s.s. "Baden Powell" at less than the current rate of wages—a nonsuit was granted; F. W. Tillick, master of s.s. "John," for taking a seamen to sea without placing his name on articles—fined £1 and costs; and H. Berglund, for making a false declaration that he was entitled to ship—fined £5 and costs, or to undergo one month's imprisonment.

Masters, Mates, and Engineers.

The examinations have been satisfactorily carried out. 345 candidates passed and 108 failed. Of those who passed 189 were masters, mates, and engineers of sea-going ships, 35 were masters and engineers of steamships plying in restricted limits, 8 were masters of fishing-boats and of cargo-vessels up to 25 tons register, 25 were engineers of sea-going vessels propelled by mechanical power other than steam, and 88 were engineers of similar vessels plying within those limits.

The only alteration made in the regulations during the year was the abolition of the requirement that candidates should pass the wool test in the sight tests.

Great difficulty has been experienced during the year in getting properly certificated second mates for foreign-going ships, and consequently it has been necessary in some cases to allow experienced men without the required certificates to fill the positions. The fact that a number of certificated men have gone to the front has no doubt conduced to the shortage.

Captain W. Whiteford, of Wellington, has been appointed an Examiner of Masters and Mates, and Captain A. Carson has been appointed Examiner of Masters of River Steamers at Gisborne.

Report by Captain Blackburne, the Principal Examiner, is appended.

Registration of Shipping.

Returns are appended showing the vessels registered in the Dominion on the 31st December last. There were then on the register 196 sailing-vessels, of 21,762 registered tonnage, and 385 steamers, of 71,695 tonnage. The numbers at the end of the previous year were 197 sailing-vessels, of 20,984 registered tonnage, and 384 steamers, of 77,901 registered tonnage. The number of seamen and boys on board was 3,593, as compared with 4,335 at the end of 1914.

Survey of Ships.

Certificates have been issued to 293 steamers, 474 oil-engine vessels, and 83 sailing-vessels, as compared with 294 steamers, 474 oil-engine vessels, and 88 sailing-vessels in the previous year. The certificate of one vessel was cancelled owing to her becoming unseaworthy. Details as to alterations and repairs to vessels surveyed will be found in the report of the Chief Surveyor, which is appended.

Proceedings were taken by the Department for the following breaches of the law in connection with the survey of ships: A. McKenzie, for running a launch without a certificate—fined £2 and costs; S. Clare, for a similar offence—fined £2 and costs; and J. Brown, for a similar offence—fined £5 and costs.

Deceased Seamen's Estates

The estates of twenty seamen have been dealt with. The amount received was £289 1s. 7d., and the amount paid to relatives and other claimants was £260 18s. 6d. Particulars of the estate are given in the appended return. The sum of £99 9s. 7d., which had remained unclaimed for over six years, was paid into the Public Account.

Wrecks and Casualties.

During the year eighty-one inquiries were held, sixty-seven of them being preliminary inquiries and fourteen Magisterial inquiries. Appended returns show the casualties and an analysis thereof. Those on or near the coasts of the Dominion were seventy-two, of 28,055 tons register, as compared with eighty-five, of 39,604 tons, in the previous year. The number of lives lost was one, as compared with twenty-two in the previous year.

The Superintendents of Mercantile Marine at Auckland, Wellington, Lyttelton, and Dunedin have been appointed to be the officers at those ports who are to conduct inquiries into shipping casualties.

Notices to Mariners.

A return of New Zealand Notices to Mariners which have been issued is appended. A large number of notices concerning matters outside the Dominion has been published by the Department, and circulated for the information of shipmasters and others.

Meteorological and Weather Office.

The Rev. Mr. Bates, Director of the Meteorological Office, reports as follows:—

"Daily weather forecasts have been despatched to 208 places, and Whakatane has been added to the list during the year. Evening forecasts are despatched through the Press Association for twenty-one morning papers, and seven of the principal dailies receive full weather reports through the same medium. The Post Office officials have generally rendered every assistance in their power, but complaints occasionally reach the office that the exhibition of the weather telegrams on the notice-boards has not been prompt, particularly in places where the officials are remote and do not feel their responsibility.