

Registration of Shipping.

Returns are appended showing the vessels registered in the Dominion on the 31st December last. There were on that date on the register 190 sailing-vessels, of 21,853 registered tonnage, and 390 steamers, of 70,442 tonnage. The numbers at the end of the previous year were 196 sailing-vessels, of 21,762 registered tonnage, and 385 steamers, of 71,695 registered tonnage. The number of seamen and boys on board was 3,520, as compared with 3,593 at the end of 1915.

In addition to the above vessels there are a very large number of oil-launches and some steam-launches in the Dominion which are not registered.

Survey of Ships.

Certificates have been issued to 271 steamers, 465 oil-engine vessels, and 75 sailing-vessels, as compared with 293 steamers, 474 oil-engine vessels, and 83 sailing-vessels in the previous year. Details as to alterations and repairs to vessels will be found in the appended report of the Chief Surveyor.

The inspection of the cargo gear and the supervision of the loading and discharge of ships are being satisfactorily carried out at Wellington and Auckland by the Surveyors who were specially appointed for that work. The appointment of two Surveyors for this work at Auckland was made during the year.

Owing to a good deal of the time of the Superintendent of Mercantile Marine and Surveyor at Dunedin being occupied on work in connection with the transports, Captain Tomlinson, his assistant, has done a great deal of survey-work, and a temporary clerk has been employed to perform the clerical work of the office.

Attached is a return of vessels to which certificates have been issued.

Proceedings were taken by the Department for breaches of the law in connection with the survey of ships: For running their vessels without survey certificates—Messrs. Emirali and Ford, owners of the scow "Thistle," fined £5 and costs; George Sorenson, master of "Ngaru," fined £2 and costs; E. S. Chatfield, master of "Jane," fined £2 and costs; J. Ragg, master of "Freetrader," fined £3 and costs; P. J. Dowling, owner of "Kaiaia," fined £2 and costs; R. A. Nixon, for carrying more passengers on "All Black" than allowed by certificate, convicted and ordered to pay costs; and E. V. Johnson, owner of launch "Rewa," for running beyond certificated limits, fined 5s. and costs.

Deceased Seamen's Estates.

The estates of forty-one seamen have been dealt with. The amount received was £535 11s., and the amount paid to relatives and other claimants was £399 18s. 9d. The sum of £3 4s. 2d., which had remained unclaimed for over six years, was paid into the Public Account.

Wrecks and Casualties.

During the year fifty-five inquiries into shipping casualties were held, forty-six of them being preliminary inquiries and nine Magisterial inquiries. The appended returns show the casualties and an analysis thereof. Those on or near the coasts of the Dominion were fifty-four, of 25,484 tons register, as compared with seventy-two, of 28,055 tons register, in the previous year. The number of lives lost was fourteen, as compared with one in the previous year.

Notices to Mariners.

A return of the New Zealand Notices to Mariners is appended. Besides these a large number of notices relating to matters outside the Dominion have been published by the Department.

Meteorological and Weather Office.

The following is the report of the Rev. Mr. Bates, Director of the Meteorological Office:—

"The work of the Meteorological Office has proceeded as usual during the past year, though without progress or extension of activities, chiefly owing to changes and shortness of staff, as well as the general necessity for economy on account of the war.

"The continuous records of our self-recording instruments require measurement, co-ordination, and analysis to yield desirable information in regard to many interesting questions; but their chief use during the past year has merely been occasional reference for law cases, upon which, however, they have furnished indisputable evidence.

"In the office we have lost two observers—one retired voluntarily from the service and is now employed in the Home Branch of the Defence Department; the other, a cadet who succeeded him, having reached military age, enlisted, and is already on active service with the Expeditionary Forces. Mr. C. O. Coad, of the General Post Office, takes the Sunday observations, but my assistant, Mr. B. V. Pemberton, and I have rearranged our duties so that we can attend to the local Observatory every morning. This at times is very inconvenient through the Dominion weather report having to be got out promptly and almost simultaneously. In this, however, we have been greatly helped by Mr. A. J. Talbot, the Superintendent of the Wellington Telegraph Office, and the reporting officers throughout the Dominion, so that the report is now issued every day between 9.35 a.m. and 10 o'clock—earlier than was thought possible. This weather report is then telegraphed over the Dominion, and is of especial use to mariners through its more speedy publication.