

than had been previously known since the lighthouse keepers have been stationed there. I am glad to say that, although the lofty tower sensibly vibrated, no damage is reported to have been sustained on that occasion.

The light dues for the past year have very nearly reached the amount estimated. Auckland and Otago only, showing a slight deficiency. At the former, probably arising from a diminution in the shipping traffic, owing to the smaller amount of Commissariat supplies being required for Her Majesty's Troops; and the latter, from the gradual decrease of gold found in that Province. On the whole, however, the receipts, while not overtaxing commerce, may be considered satisfactory,—providing a sufficient fund to defray all the expenses of the department, and a small rate of interest on outlay.

#### *Survey and Inspection of Steam Vessels.*

This branch of the establishment has been greatly reduced during the past year. It formerly comprised three Inspectors and two Engineer Surveyors. The present working staff is one Inspector (Captain Johnson), who receives salary as Admiralty Mail Agent; and two Engineer Surveyors (Messrs. Nancarrow and Hamilton), who perform the duties of acting Inspectors also when required, Warden and Inspector Robertson having resigned, and Warden and Inspector Kennedy being lent to command the Government steamer "St. Kilda," in which capacity, I understand, his services on the East Coast and elsewhere, have been most useful.

The number of steam vessels trading on the seaboard and rivers of New Zealand, coming under the immediate inspection of this department, are thirty-seven (37), having low pressure engines, and twenty, high pressure; the former, requiring to be surveyed at an interval of six months, and the latter, every third month: thus making in all, about one hundred and fifty-four (154) services. Besides which, many steamers, having Australian certificates, running to this Colony, undergo cursory supervision.

When it is considered that these vessels find employment at ports extending from Auckland to Bluff Harbour, and both on the East and West Coast, where the inspecting officers, in the performance of their duties, have to visit them, it will be perceived that the labor, with the present limited staff, is by no means light.

It affords me great pleasure to state that Messrs. Nancarrow and Hamilton, upon whom most of the duty of survey has devolved, have shown themselves both efficient and assiduous in the double capacity of Engineer Surveyors and acting Inspectors. The assistance they have rendered in superintending repairs of lighthouse apparatus, has also been of great service.

From Captain Gibson, Port Officer at Lyttelton, who is deputed by Government to supervise Marine Board duties at Canterbury, I have ever received willing and valuable assistance.

It has been reported to me that at the ports of Hokitika and the Grey, small steam-vessels fitted only to ply with safety within the rivers, and having certificates bearing on the face of them the limit to which they may lawfully proceed, are in the habit of plying beyond the distance which in the judgment of the surveying officers is considered safe.

The Steam Navigation Act, while enacting that vessels shall be certificated for river or sea service, fails to provide for the enforcement of any penalty for violating the conditions of their certificates, unless in cases where they have to clear the Customs, which does not apply to vessels in question. It is quite necessary the Act should be amended in this particular, or a bye-law be made to check the evil, otherwise from the character of the vessels, they being of the smallest and most inferior class, some accident, attended by loss of life, is almost certain to occur.

As I predicted in my last report, numerous casualties to vessels trading to Hokitika, the Grey, and other ports on the West Coast, have taken place. The very nature of the rivers renders losses almost inevitable, so long as recklessness is induced by the temptation of large profits, from the passenger or other trade, to the gold country. These bar ports can only be entered by vessels of burthen during fine weather and under skilful management. It is generally when such considerations are ignored that most of the accidents happen.

#### *Surveys.*

My attention has been frequently directed to the incomplete nature of the surveys of the West Coast of the Middle Island, which since the discovery of the gold fields has been much traversed. Several outlying dangers are said to have been discovered, not laid down in the Admiralty charts, which do not profess to give more than a cursory or running survey, northward of Milford Haven. The great and increasing importance of the trade renders it highly necessary that an accurate and minute marine survey should be made of the coast between the Grey River and Milford Haven. This service would be most satisfactorily performed by the Admiralty Surveying Staff, some of whom are now employed in the Australian Colony, it being very difficult to obtain reliable and qualified persons, whose charts would bear the stamp of authority, from any other department.

#### *Buoys and Beacons.*

There are several buoys and beacons beyond the limits of ports, which have been placed, from time to time, by local authorities, and others recently sanctioned by Government, which require a certain amount of expenditure to keep in serviceable condition. Hitherto no vote of appropriation has been made for this especial service; delays consequently arise in making references to obtain the means wherewith to effect repairs, &c., when needed, thereby exposing shipping for a much longer period to the dangers which these marks are intended to lead them clear of, than under other circumstances might be necessary.

Appended are Returns of Steam Vessels Surveyed, Certificates issued to Masters and Engineers, Pilot's Licenses granted, and Light Dues collected since 1st July, 1865.

I have, &c.,

Marine Board Office, Wellington,  
1st June, 1866.

CHAS. SHARP,  
President Marine Board.