

Buoy on Shearer Rock, near Tiri Tiri Island, Auckland.
Buoy at French Pass.

The Flat Rock beacon was a strong iron structure designed by the late Mr. Balfour, and was erected in March, 1870 at a cost of £440 8s. 3d. It was destroyed by the heavy gale that swept over the Northern part of the Colony in March last. Steps are being taken to have it replaced by a new one as soon as possible. The Shearer Rock Buoy broke away in the beginning of November, 1870, and again in June last. The Department is much indebted to Captain Burgess, the Chief Harbour Master of Auckland, who took a deal of trouble to recover the buoy on each occasion, and afterwards in re-mooring it

9. *Inspection of Steamers.*—The Steam Navigation Acts, continue, on the whole, to work satisfactorily, although there are one or two points in them that should be amended, especially in respect of masters' and engineers' certificates. At present these certificates are applicable only to particular vessels, and have to be renewed on each occasion of a master or engineer shifting to another vessel. The arrangements made by the late Marine Engineer, as set forth in his report for the year 1866-7, for Mr. Nancarrow's official visits to various parts of the Colony to survey steamers, continue to work satisfactorily.

10. "*Marine Act Amendment Act, 1870.*"—The provisions of this Act for facilitating the issue of pilotage exemption certificates, and for making these certificates apply to whatever vessels may be specified therein and not to one particular vessel, have given great satisfaction and have removed an anomaly that afforded a constant ground of complaint by masters and owners of vessels. The appointment of persons to inspect vessels for the purpose of seeing that they are properly provided with lights, under the power given in this Act, has had the salutary effect of causing vessels, of whatever tonnage, to be provided with side lights, and has thus removed one of the chief sources of danger of collision between vessels at night.

11. *Examinations of Masters and Mates.*—"The Imperial Merchant Shipping (Colonial) Act, of 1869," extended to the colonies the privilege of granting certificates, under certain conditions, which will be of equal value with those issued by the Board of Trade, and will enable the holders of them to command British ships in any part of the world. The Merchant Ships Officers' Examination Act, of last Session, provides for the making of regulations for giving effect to the Imperial Act referred to. Regulations for this purpose have recently been prepared; they are now in the hands of the printer, and will be ready very shortly for submission for the approval of His Excellency the Governor-in-Council. There is one important point, however, in connexion with this subject, that will have to be considered and attended to before the question of certificates for masters can be regarded as satisfactorily disposed of, and that is, the position that existing uncertificated masters are to hold. The object of the regulations referred to is to prevent incompetent and improper persons from becoming masters or mates of Foreign going ships, and of Home-trade passenger ships. In order to attain this object it will be requisite, when the regulations are issued, to bring into operation those sections of "The Merchant Shipping Act, 1854," Nos. 131 to 140, relating to examinations, which, by "The Merchant Shipping Acts Adoption Act, 1869," are at present in abeyance. The effect of this would be to inflict a great hardship on many deserving and thoroughly competent ship masters, now trading to and from New Zealand, who are without certificates, and who would, no doubt, after having successfully commanded vessels for many years, have strong objections to being now subjected to an examination in navigation and seamanship. In Great Britain, when the examinations were first instituted, provision was made in "The Merchant Shipping Act, 1854," to meet the case of persons who had been serving as masters or mates prior to that Act coming into operation, by authorising the Board of Trade to grant certificates of service to them, instead of requiring them to undergo examinations for certificates of competency. In the papers and instructions from the Board of Trade, which accompanied "The Merchant Shipping (Colonial) Act, 1869," no provision is made for the issue in the colonies of certificates of service; but it is obvious that there is the same necessity here for issuing certificates of service on examinations being instituted, as existed in the United Kingdom when examinations were first established there. The readiest way, probably, of getting over this difficulty would be by the passing of an Act in New Zealand for granting "certificates of service," on conditions relatively the same as those laid down in the 135th Section of "The Imperial Merchant Shipping Act, 1854;" these certificates would not be recognised by the Board of Trade, but they would relieve those masters and mates at present without certificates, who are engaged in the inter-colonial trade, and in trading to the South Sea Islands, from having to accept the alternative of undergoing examinations, or of being deprived of the means of earning a livelihood in their present occupations, when the regulations for examination came into force.

12. As the examination of masters and mates under the system prescribed by the Board of Trade will require at least two examiners, it became necessary to appoint another officer to act in conjunction with Captain Johnson to conduct these examinations. In selecting a person to hold this appointment it was considered advisable to obtain at the same time the services of an officer who, in addition to this duty, could assist with the correspondence of the office, and, if possible, who could also execute any marine surveying that may have to be done from time to time, and especially who could undertake the supervision of regulations connected with the adjustment of compasses. The services of Commander Edwin, R.N., have been secured for carrying out this work; his position in the Royal Navy, and the fact of his having served for some time on board one of the Admiralty surveying