

Board of Trade, have been made, which are to come into force on the 1st January next. The necessary books and appliances for use in the examinations under these regulations have been procured from England. Captain Marciel, the Examiner at Lyttelton, resigned the position during the year, but was afterwards reappointed.

The regulations regarding the examination of engineers have been consolidated and amended. This was rendered necessary by the alteration of the law made by "The Shipping and Seamen's Act Amendment Act, 1896," which made provision for third-class certificates. The regulations also provide that the examinations of engineers are to be held at Auckland during the first week in January, May, and September; at Wellington during the first week of February, June, and October; at Christchurch during the first week of March, July, and November; and at Dunedin during the first week of April, August, and December. In cases of emergency the Examiners are to exercise their discretion as to examining candidates at other than the prescribed times.

*Government Steamers.*—The s.s. "Tutanekai" arrived from Glasgow on the 30th September last. She left Greenock on the 24th July, and called at Madeira, St. Vincent, Capetown, Amsterdam Island, Albany, and Hobart on the way. Captain Fairchild, who went Home for the purpose, brought her out, and he speaks highly of her qualities as a sea-boat. She is to be used for attending to lighthouses, for laying and repairing telegraph-cables, and any other Government work for which she may be required. She was specially designed for cable work, but, as she is not likely to be required often for such work, her cable gear has been put in store here, as it would be in the way when the vessel is engaged on lighthouse or other duty. She is fitted with a first-class saloon, which contains twenty-four berths, and room for making up six other beds; and she has a special cabin for lightkeepers, containing accommodation for eleven men and six women. After her arrival in the colony she was laid up until the middle of December, when she took His Excellency the Governor and party to Nelson, Westport, and West Coast Sounds, returning *via* the Bluff. She has since been engaged on lighthouse and harbour work, including a visit to the Kermadec Islands to inspect the dépôts for castaways which are established there.

The "Hinemoa" was kept fully employed until the middle of December in attending to lighthouses, overhauling and cleaning buoys, and doing other work, including making a trip to the Snare, Auckland, Campbell, Antipodes, and Bounty Islands to search for castaways, and to inspect the provision and clothing dépôts. On her return from her southern lighthouse trip in December she was laid up, as it was decided that the "Tutanekai" was to take up her running. As it was considered that the latter vessel would perhaps be able to do all the work required in attending to lighthouses, &c., it was decided to sell the "Hinemoa," and tenders for her purchase were invited by advertisement in New Zealand, Sydney, and Melbourne; but no offers were received. It was then decided to utilise her by visiting more frequently the sealing-grounds, and by arranging that the Government steamers should convey as much as possible of the coal, sleepers, and other material required by the railways to the port at which they were wanted, and that the other Government departments should ship their cargo by them whenever it could possibly be done. In order to make her more fit for the carriage of cargo, the forehold has been enlarged, and some necessary repairs have been effected to her machinery, &c. Captain Fairchild being now in command of the "Tutanekai," the "Hinemoa" is under the charge of Captain Neale, formerly first mate of that vessel.

*Coastal Surveys.*—The rock off the Gable-end Foreland, touched by the s.s. "Monowai," was found by Captain Fairchild in February last. Its position is very nearly that given by the master of the "Monowai." Captain Neale surveyed the Ward and Theresa Rocks, and Weka Reef, off Stewart Island.

*Charts.*—The charts which the department has hitherto kept for sale to masters and owners of vessels at the Customhouses at the principal ports have only been those of New Zealand and of the Polynesian Islands with which we have trade; but, as there have been several inquiries for charts of other parts of the world, it has been decided to keep a stock of those of Australia, of the Eastern Archipelago, of the China Sea, of the South Pacific Ocean, and of the east coast of South America from Rio de Janeiro to Cape Horn. These will be kept at the Customhouse at Wellington, but masters of vessels at other ports can get what they want sent to them by communicating with the Collector.

*Wrecks and Casualties.*—A table showing the analysis of casualties to shipping is appended hereto. Those on the coasts of the colony numbered sixty, representing 22,058 tons, as against thirty-seven, affecting 21,060 tons, in the previous year. The number of total wrecks within the colony, including four sailing-vessels which are supposed to have foundered, was nine, of 1,450 tons, as against eight, of 2,070 tons, in the previous year. The number of lives lost was fifteen, as against eight in 1895-96. Of these, nine were on or near the coasts of the colony—viz., one from the ship "Westland," and four each from the "Lizzie Ellen" and "Alert" (all hands in the two last-named vessels). The lives lost beyond the colony were one each from the "Westland," "Patrician," "Pleione," "Rakaia," "Soukar," and "Dundale."

*Survey of Steamers.*—The report of the Principal Engineer Surveyor on the work in connection with the survey of steamers is appended hereto. A uniform system respecting the limits within which small restricted-limit steamers are allowed to ply has been brought into operation, and it is found to work very well. Under this system the different limits within which these steamers may ply are defined by regulation. Formerly the Surveyor fixed the limits in each case. The question as to revoking the regulations which require steamers plying in salt and brackish waters, and having non-condensing engines, to be surveyed half-yearly has been under consideration, but the Government has not seen its way to interfere with the regulations. Proceedings have been taken against James Bindon for acting as master of the s.s. "Horeke" without being in possession of a certificate, and against the masters of the s.s. "Staffa" and s.s. "Mahinapua" for carrying more passengers than allowed by the vessels' certificates. A fine was imposed in each case.