

The PRINCIPAL EXAMINER of MASTERS and MATES to the SECRETARY, Marine Department.

SIR,—

Wellington, 14th June, 1897.

I have the honour to inform you that the examination of masters and mates has been carried out as formerly by the Examiners at the four principal ports in a satisfactory manner.

During the year, in addition to the other examinations, four candidates were examined in and passed the voluntary examination in the laws of the deviation of the compasses of iron ships. This examination forms the necessary qualification required for licensed adjusters of compasses.

There are at present nine licensed adjusters of compasses in the colony, who are distributed as follows: Three at Auckland, two at Wellington, one at Lyttelton, two at Dunedin, and one at Nelson.

Several candidates have failed in the form-vision test, and recently a candidate holding a first mate's certificate omitted to state in his declaration that he had previously failed in the form-vision test in Australia, and on examination in this colony he was still found unable to pass the test. Subsequently, in accordance with the regulations, a note of the fact of this failure was written across the face of the candidate's certificate before it was returned to him.\* The new Board of Trade regulations for the examination of masters and mates will come into force at the beginning of the year 1898. The examination in navigation is more difficult than it formerly was, and several new problems have been added to each grade for certificates of competency for foreign-going ships. The problems are also varied in every possible way, so as to insure that the candidate has a proper knowledge of the subject.

Another important feature in the new regulations is that all examination questions in navigation are to be forwarded by the Principal Examiner in sealed packages to where they are required, and must on no account be opened by any officer other than the Examiner, and by him only at the commencement of the examination. After the examination is completed all the questions are to be again sealed up by the Examiner, and forwarded to the Principal Examiner at Wellington for his approval. During examination (or at any time) the Examiners are to take special precautions to preclude the possibility of any person having access to the examination papers.

In conclusion, I may state that the new requirements of the examination will increase the work and responsibility of the Examiners generally.

I have, &c.,

GEO. ALLMAN,

Principal Examiner of Masters and Mates.

The Secretary, Marine Department, Wellington.

The INSPECTOR of LIGHTHOUSES to the SECRETARY, Marine Department.

SIR,—

Wellington, 14th June, 1897.

I have the honour to report that, in accordance with your instructions, I inspected the northern lighthouses of New Zealand during the months of October, November, and December last.

The result of my inspection is that I found that, almost without exception, the lighting apparatus and towers at all the stations are in good order and well kept; also the keepers' dwelling-houses, with the exception of Manukau Head and Cape Maria van Diemen stations. Manukau Head station is now being put in order, and when completed will be in good condition. As regards Cape Maria van Diemen, the necessary material for effecting the most important repairs was forwarded at the beginning of the year, and I expect this work has been completed some time ago. At all the stations I found the keepers to be a steady, reliable body of men, attentive to their duties, and apparently fully alive to the responsibility of their position. I regret to say that at a few of the stations the friendly relationship that, in my opinion, should exist amongst the keepers (with all due regard to discipline) does not exist. With a view of rectifying this matter some changes will be necessary at an early date.

At the various light-stations where telephone communication is established it has been of great service to the shipping community for weather-reporting purposes, and for reporting passing vessels, and to insure a greater efficiency in this branch of the service several of the telephones have been connected with and extended to the towers, so that the keepers on watch can have immediate access to them, which is a great advantage.

During the year much has been done to improve the lighting system on the coast, and also in several of the harbours.

*Farewell Spit.*—A new iron tower has been erected at Farewell Spit in place of the old wooden tower; the latter was taken down when the new structure was completed.

In September and in June the Engineer-in-Chief and I visited Cape Palliser. In the former month we finally fixed on the site for the lighthouse and the keepers' dwellings; several weeks afterwards the preparatory work for erecting the tower was begun. Much difficulty and delay were experienced in landing the necessary material, owing to frequent intervals of bad weather.

When we visited the station in June the tower and dwellings were in an advanced state towards completion, and should be finished during the month; after which the work of placing the lighting apparatus in position will be gone on with, and if there are no delays there is every prospect of Cape Palliser Lighthouse being lighted and exhibited for the use of mariners about the middle of October next, 1897.

\* The form-vision test is for the purpose of ascertaining whether candidates' vision is such as to qualify them for service at sea as mates and masters. This test is the first that candidates are required to undergo, and until it is passed further examination cannot be proceeded with.