

the tower and other buildings are now being prepared by the Public Works Department. A lantern and apparatus were obtained for a contemplated lighthouse at Cape Kidnappers, but, a strong opinion having been expressed by master mariners that a light at East Cape was a much more pressing necessity, it has been decided to use the lantern and apparatus referred to for the proposed lighthouse at East Cape.

The Wellington Harbour Board has agreed to contribute the sum of £800 towards the cost of improving the light at Somes Island, and the necessary apparatus for a second-order light has been ordered from England. A new lantern will not be required, as that which was formerly at Farewell Spit will be used with the new apparatus. A brick tower will be erected near the present wooden tower, as the latter will not be suitable for the new light.

No further progress has been made in the matter of the erection of a lighthouse on the Snares, as the proposed agreement as to the division of the cost of erection and maintenance has not yet been completed by the Governments of New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania.

The Slaughter's cotton-powder signal referred to in my last report has been received from England, and is now being erected at Pencarrow Head by the department's artificer. It has been necessary to sink a well 40 ft. deep for the weight of the clock which works the apparatus, and a concrete magazine for the cartridges to be used for the explosions is being built at some distance from the apparatus. The working of the signal will be attended to by the lightkeepers.

A further communication has been received from the committee of Lloyds to the effect that the committee propose to erect signal-stations at Cape Maria van Diemen, Farewell Spit, and Nugget Point, but that they intend to defer the matter for a time, as they find it inconvenient to proceed with the work at present. It has, however, been decided to at once include these places in the list of Lloyds signal-stations, and arrangements have been made for the lightkeepers in the meantime to report to Lloyds agent at Wellington any vessels that may request them to do so.

The service has lost three keepers during the year—viz., Principal Keeper J. W. Johnson, who has retired on a pension; Assistant Keeper J. McLellan, who has resigned; and Assistant Keeper N. Sciascia, who was killed by a bull at Portland Island. Keeper Sciascia left a widow and ten children, and it has been decided to grant Mrs. Sciascia a compassionate allowance equal to one year's salary of the deceased. Five new keepers have been appointed, three of them in consequence of the above vacancies, and two in consequence of the exhibition of Cape Palliser light.

The sum of £17,851 8s. 7d. was collected for light dues during the year, as compared with £15,995 5s. 4d. during the previous year, being an increase of £1,856 3s. 3d.

*Harbours.*—The buoys in the harbours under the control of the department have been overhauled and cleaned by the Government steamers, and additional buoys have been laid in Ngunguru Harbour. The Secretary to the Wellington Harbour Board having suggested the advisability of prescribing a special signal for the use of vessels requiring a tug at night, a signal was devised, and, after obtaining the opinions of the principal Harbour Boards thereon, it was prescribed by the Governor in Council. A bright harbour light has been established on the south head of Hokianga Harbour, and two white leading lights, for guiding vessels across the bar at night, are shown when the Harbourmaster considers it prudent to do so. A small building for the lamps and gear has been erected. Two buoys have been placed on the end of Tory Shoal, at the entrance to Kaipara Harbour, and, in consequence of the extension of this shoal, an alteration of the positions of the leading beacons has been necessary. The large buoys in this harbour are overhauled by the Government steamers, but the small ones are attended to by the subsidised steamer, which also conveys the Harbourmaster to the various branches of the harbour. Captain J. Robertson has resigned the position of Harbourmaster at Manukau, in order to proceed to the Klondyke Goldfields, and the position has been filled by the appointment of Captain J. Neale, master of the s.s. "Hine-moa," who has had considerable experience of the harbour. Captain G. Thomson has retired from the position of Harbourmaster at Okarito, and has been succeeded by his son, Mr. J. W. Thomson. Mr. H. B. Dobbie, Railway Manager at Picton, has been appointed Harbourmaster at that port in place of Mr. A. Duncan, the former Railway Manager. Several snags which rendered the navigation of the Wairau and Opawa Rivers dangerous have been removed. The boiler of the s.s. "Neptune," which was wrecked at the entrance to the Wairau River, is lying in the channel, and, as it is a danger to navigation, the owners have been called upon to remove it. Failing their doing so, the department will have it removed at their cost. There has been a good deal of trouble with the willows which were planted on the banks of the Wairau and Opawa Rivers for the purpose of preventing the erosion of the banks. Some of these trees fall into the channel and cause banks to form, and the stumps of others which have been cut project over the banks, and are a source of danger to passing vessels. Owing to the owners of the "Waitemata," which sunk in the Hauraki Gulf after collision with the s.s. "Stella," failing to remove the wreck when called upon to do so, arrangements were made for it to be blown up by the Auckland Torpedo Corps. Although sunk in 15 fathoms of water, the position was in a fairway, and the masts were a peril to navigation. The work was satisfactorily performed, and the cost of doing it will be recovered from the owner of the vessel. From the time the wreck occurred until its removal a buoy and a light to mark its position were maintained by the department. A large number of plans of harbour-works have been submitted to the department for the approval of the Governor in Council, and in most cases approval has been given. A return showing the works approved and the licenses issued for the occupation of foreshore is appended hereto.

A sum of £2,649 13s. 7d. was collected for pilotage and port charges during the year in respect of the ports under the control of the department.

*Oyster-fisheries.*—The beds in the Northern Oyster-fishery, which extends from Whangaruru Harbour to the North Cape, were examined by the Inspector before the end of the close season, and, as he reported that they were not in a fit condition for picking, the whole fishery was closed, and it