

Point, and in order that shipmasters may know that they can also send messages by signalling them to the lighthouse Lloyd's flag will be flown at each station. When a master signals a message it will be sent by telegraph to Lloyd's agent in Wellington, who will telegraph to the lighthouse any communications which are to be signalled to vessels. If it is found that this arrangement entails much additional work at Nugget Point the question of appointing a third keeper at that station will have to be considered, as there are only two keepers there at present, whose time is pretty fully occupied in performing the ordinary lighthouse duties and in keeping the road from the landing-place in repair.

The sum of £20,996 8s. 3d. has been collected for light dues during the year, as compared with £19,382 16s. 4d. during the previous year, being an increase of £1,613 11s. 11d.

*Harbours.*—The Government steamers have attended to the overhaul and cleaning of the buoys in the harbours under the control of the department. Those in Gisborne and Whangarei Harbours have also been done, at the cost of the Harbour Boards. The approach to the wharf at Onehunga having become obstructed by a bank, a vote for dredging was taken last session of Parliament, and the Westport Harbour Board dredge and two hoppers have been chartered and taken over to Manukau for the work, which is now being carried out, the dredged spoil being deposited in a part of the harbour where it will not impede navigation. At Nelson material from road-slips was being deposited over the wall of the Rocks Road, and, as this was likely to be injurious to the harbour, it became necessary to stop it. The removal of material for ballast from the foreshore of Waiheke Island has been prohibited, as it was found that the beach was being seriously injured. Mr. Walter Bowles has been appointed Harbourmaster at Picton, in place of Mr. H. B. Dobbie, resigned. The wreck of the steamer "Waipara," which has been lying in the Okarito River for the past two years, being dangerous to passing vessels, the owners have been called upon to remove it. Failing their doing so, the department will do the work and recover the cost from them. Flag-signals for indicating the state of the bar at small ports which are not provided with the means of making the signals fixed by the harbour regulations have been prescribed.

A return showing the harbour-works authorised by the Governor in Council and the licenses issued for the occupation of foreshore is appended hereto.

The sum of £3,255 14s. has been collected for pilotage and port charges in respect of the harbours under the control of the department, as against £2,664 16s. 6d. during the previous year. The amount collected at each port is shown in the appended return.

*Fisheries.*—Mr. L. F. Ayson, who visited Europe and America for the purpose of inspecting the fish-hatcheries there, and obtaining information respecting the introduction of suitable salt- and fresh-water fish into the colony, has been appointed Inspector of Fisheries. This will enable the department to take more active steps to assist in the development of the fishing industry.

A vote of £500 was taken last session for experimental trawling in order to ascertain the best fishing-grounds off the coasts, and the steam trawler "Doto" was chartered early in March last for the work. She is commanded by Captain Nielsen, who has had considerable experience in trawling in Europe and in Hawke's Bay, and who was in charge of the vessel which carried out experimental trawling in New South Wales two years ago. Mr. Ayson, who accompanies the vessel on behalf of the department, directs where the trawling is to be done, and keeps records of the results. Work was begun off the coast north of Lyttelton, continued down to Foveaux Strait, Te Waewae Bay, and round Stewart Island, and it is intended to test the Wanganui Bight, Blind and Golden Bays, the Hauraki Gulf, and Poverty Bay. Mr. Hamilton, Registrar of the Otago University, accompanied the vessel from Lyttelton to Dunedin for scientific purposes, and Mr. G. M. Thomson, of the Otago High School, will accompany her while working in Blind and Golden Bays and in the Wanganui Bight. The work done so far has been satisfactory, and, when completed, a full report of the results will be made by Mr. Ayson.

Mr. Ayson has inspected and reported on the site of the proposed fish-hatchery at Purakanui, and the department is now endeavouring to arrange for a local Board to construct and maintain the hatchery, a subsidy being granted by the Government towards the cost.

On different occasions American whitefish have been put into Lake Rotoiti, in the Nelson District, but, as none have been caught, an attempt has been made to net the lake, in order to prove whether or not the attempt to acclimatise this valuable food-fish has been successful. Owing, however, to the large number of snags in the lake the netting operations were unsuccessful.

Complaints have been made by line and hand-net fishermen that the trawlers interfere with their fishing, and drive the fish away from places where they were formerly plentiful. For these reasons the department has been asked to prohibit trawling within a prescribed distance from the shore. It has not, however, seen its way to do this. It is believed that the allegation that the fish are driven away is incorrect, and the rocky nature of the bottom close to the shore on most parts of the coast prevents the trawlers from working close in.

Regulations have been made allowing the use of set-nets with an opening of not more than 3 ft. by 1 ft. for taking whitebait in the Ashley River and its tributaries the Taranaki and Waikuku Creeks.

The use of nets for taking fish has been prohibited in the Wanganui River above the Aromoho Railway-bridge for a year from the 1st March last. This has been done to prevent interference with the breeding-ground of flounders and the taking of trout by the fishermen.

The close season for seals has been extended up to the 30th June, 1901. Mr. Henry, the caretaker of the Government reserve for native birds on Resolution Island, Dusky Sound, thinks that it may be possible to restock the seal rookeries in that sound with the progeny of tame seals, and in order that he may make a trial of his plan he has been authorised to get three young seals for the purpose of taming them and breeding from them. The experiment will be interesting, and, if successful, a valuable one.