

to inspect the depots of provisions and clothing which are maintained there for the benefit of shipwrecked persons. On the 2nd June last, when at East Island, one of her boats, in charge of Mr. Brown, the chief officer, was sent in to see if landing was practicable, instructions being given to him to be careful to run no risk. When nearing the landing-place a heavy sea struck the boat and capsized her, and Mr. Brown and three seamen named N. Buchanan, O. Sjoblom, and Ostermann were, unfortunately, drowned. All the bodies except that of Ostermann were recovered, and that of Mr. Brown was, at the request of his relatives, brought to Wellington for burial. The bodies of the two seamen were buried on the island, and the department has enclosed the grave and erected a tombstone.

*Coastal Surveys and Dangers.*—A dangerous rock having been reported to exist at the French Pass, the locality has been surveyed by Captain Bollons, of the "Hinemoa," who reported that the danger was a patch of rocks completely out of the track of vessels, being a continuation of the first point north of Reef Point. Search has also been made for a reported rock between Hawes Rock and Blumine Island, at the entrance to Queen Charlotte Sound. No rock was discovered, but several patches were found with 1, 2 and 3 fathoms of water on them, and, in consequence, a notice was issued warning mariners against using the channel.

*Wages and Effects of Deceased Seamen.*—The estates of forty-five seamen, amounting to £321 2s. 4d., were dealt with during the year. Of these, thirty-three were new estates. The sum of £210 16s. 3d. was paid to relatives and other claimants, and the sum of £45 0s. 1d., representing estates which have been unclaimed within the statutory period of six years, has been paid into the Public Account.

*Wrecks and Casualties.*—Tables showing the casualties to ships and an analysis thereof are appended hereto. Those on the coasts of the colony numbered forty-two, representing 10,146 tons, as against forty, representing 11,550 tons, in the previous year. The total wrecks within the colony were six, of 2,247 tons, as against six, of 367 tons, in the previous year. The number of lives lost was thirty-five, as against eight in 1898–99. Of these, twenty-six were within the colony—viz., twenty-two from the s.s. "Ohau" (all hands), and one each from the s.s. "Takapuna," "Lily," "Ariel," and s.s. "Wakatu." Of the nine lost outside the colony, eight were from the "Jasper" (all hands) and one from the "Ilala."

The increase of lighthouses, the running of two Government steamers instead of one as formerly, and the generally increased work of the head office has put considerable strain on the staff during the past year. It has not as yet been found necessary to increase the clerical staff, which consists of the chief clerk, two clerks, and a cadet. No extra clerical assistants were employed during the year.

I have, &c.,

W. T. GLASGOW, Secretary.

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

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 17th May, 1900.

I have the honour to inform you that the examination of masters and mates has been carried out by the Examiners at the four principal ports in a satisfactory manner. I have visited all the Examiners, and am very pleased and thankful to have for my colleagues in the work gentlemen whom I can so thoroughly rely on to do their duty faithfully and impartially, and at the same time I believe them all to be gentlemen of pleasant and even temper, so that there has been no ground for complaint (nor is there likely to be) from the candidates of unkind treatment, notwithstanding the fact that the Examiners have had the very unpleasant duty of failing an unusually large percentage of candidates. I have been making every effort to get a large number of examination-papers printed so that the papers may be constantly varied, and since my arrival in the colony last August only papers of my own setting have been given to all candidates, except to those for the Restricted Limits Masters' examination, which last mentioned I now send to Examiners so as to maintain uniformity. At a few of the examinations I have been present myself during the whole of a candidate's examination, and I generally pay a visit to the examination-room for an hour or so while each examination is proceeding in Wellington. All examination-papers are sent in to me from the different ports, which I carefully look through so that any case of wrong failure, or of passing a candidate who ought to have failed, may be rectified. Having had a specially favourable opportunity of late years of watching the conduct of Board of Trade examinations in London, I am thoroughly convinced that the examination now in New Zealand is quite as difficult as in the Home-country, and is as nearly as possible alike to it; also, as it is easier to keep an eye on two or three candidates than on forty or fifty, as in London, there is less opportunity of a candidate cribbing here than in London. I hear, in fact, that now many candidates prefer going to the sister colonies on account of being able to get their certificates easier there. It would be very little expense to the country, and, I believe, would give an impetus to proficiency in navigation, if prizes were given every year for the best papers produced in each grade of the ordinary examination for masters and mates.

I have, &c.,

H. S. BLACKBURNE,  
Principal Examiner of Masters and Mates.

The Secretary, Marine Department.