

3,022 tons, as compared with 7 of 5,173 tons in the previous year. The number of lives lost was 14, as compared with 79 last year. Of these 12 were within the colony, viz.: 7 in the "Toroa" (all hands), and 1 each from the s.s. "Akaroa," "Ada and Eva" "Emma Sims" and "Saxon," and 1 in an oil-launch run down by the s.s. "Sterling" in Kaipara Harbour.

"The Shipping and Seamen Act, 1903," makes provision for rehearings in the case of formal investigations into shipping casualties, when new and important evidence has been discovered which could not be produced at the investigation, and when the Minister has reason to believe that there has been a miscarriage of justice. The rehearing may either be held by the Court which held the inquiry in the first instance or by the Supreme Court, as may be ordered by the Minister. The Act also provides that inquiries are not to be held in buildings used as Police Courts unless no other suitable places are available, and that the Minister may direct a Superintendent of Mercantile Marine to attend an inquiry, when he is to have the right to put questions to witnesses.

*Government Steamers.*—The s.s. "Tutanekai," which was procured principally for telegraph-cable work, has been handed over to the Postal and Telegraph Department. The "Hinemoa" has been employed principally on lighthouse and harbour work, which includes laying, overhauling, and cleaning buoys and erecting beacons in harbours under the control of this Department. She has also visited the Kermadecs once, and the southern islands twice, to search for castaways and repair and replenish the provision-depots which are maintained on the islands. She has been provided with a new oil-launch, and her old launch, which was not very suitable for her work, has been handed over to the Harbourmaster at Manukau, as it is suitable for work in that harbour.

*Shipping Laws.*—The necessity for amending and consolidating the shipping laws has been felt for some time past, and a Bill for the purpose was introduced into Parliament in 1902, when it was referred to a Select Committee, which took a great deal of evidence and reported on the Bill, but it was not further proceeded with. It was again introduced last session and passed, and is now awaiting His Majesty's assent. When it comes into operation it will confer a great benefit on the shipping and commercial community, as it makes important amendments in the law, makes obscure and conflicting provisions clear and harmonious, and consolidates six statutes into one. The principal new provisions are as follow: A foreign-going ship is required to carry two certificated mates instead of one. Home-trade steamships of 60 tons register and upwards, and home-trade cargo sailing-ships of 100 tons register, must carry certificated mates, and such ships of 100 tons register and upwards trading more than 300 miles between terminal ports must have second mates. Foreign-going certificated second mates are entitled to ship as mates in the home trade, and all candidates for certificates are to be British subjects. Any master or mate may, at any time, be required by the shipowner or by the Minister to be examined in the sight-tests by Government Examiners. No person is to be licensed to procure seamen, who are in future to be procured through the Shipping Offices, or by the masters, mates, engineers, owners, or the *bonâ fide* servants of the owner in his constant employment. The engagement and discharge of whole crews of home-trade ships are to be effected before Superintendents of Mercantile Marine, and articles of agreement are to terminate on the 30th June and 31st December. Desertion is defined, and deserters who cannot be dealt with before their ship sails can afterwards be prosecuted by the owner or agent, and copies of the agreement and of entries in the log-book are to be accepted by Courts as evidence. Forfeited wages are to be paid into the Public Account instead of to the shipowner. Masters and officers who assault seamen on the high seas are made liable to imprisonment or fine. The Minister may arrange with the Postmaster-General for the issue of seamen's money-orders. The clearances of foreign-going ships which are required to pay the coastal rate of wages are to be withheld until such wages are paid. Intercolonial, in addition to home-trade ships, are made liable to pay the wages, maintenance, and medical expenses of seamen taken ill in the service of the ship for the remainder of the agreement, not exceeding three months, and, in the case of intercolonial ships, if the agreement expires within one month from the commencement of the illness, payment is to be made for one month after the expiry. The illness which is to entitle a man to the benefits provided for, is one which requires medical treatment for fourteen days instead of for one month as under the Act of 1890. Provision is made for a Registrar of Seamen, who is to keep a record of the services of all seamen; and engine-room logs are to be kept on steamers which carry not less than two engineers. Steamers from beyond intercolonial limits, not carrying more than twelve passengers, are not to be subject to survey in the colony, and sailing-ships trading in intercolonial limits are to be surveyed annually. Power is given to the Minister to define restricted limits for steamers and vessels propelled by oil, gas, &c. The adjustment of compasses is to be carried out under regulations made by the Marine Department, and power is given to the Governor in Council to make regulations as to the loading and stowage of ballast, and the loading of grain-cargo in bulk. It is made an offence to ship wool, flax, tow, or skins in such a condition as to be liable to spontaneous combustion. The law as to inquiries into shipping casualties has been remodelled on the lines of the Imperial Merchant Shipping Act, and provision is made for rehearings, for Superintendents of Mercantile Marine taking part in such inquiries, for Magistrates ordering a change of venue, that the inquiries are not to be held in Police Courts unless other suitable buildings are not available; and that, in cases where there has been loss of life, but no injury to the ship, the inquiries may be held by Coroners. Alteration is made as to the liability of shipowners as regards cargo lost, and they are authorised to make special freight-charges for valuables. Provision is made against owners inserting certain clauses in bills of lading exempting themselves from liability for damage to cargo. Provision is made for the registration of New Zealand ships by incorporating into our law certain of the provisions of the Imperial Merchant Shipping Act.

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GEORGE ALLPORT, Secretary.