

During last winter and early spring the training-ship "Amokura" was moored in Wellington Harbour, and the boys attended technical-school classes at the ship's schoolroom on the Thorndon Esplanade, instruction being given by a teacher employed by the Wellington Technical School, the Department paying his salary. The examination which was held at the end of the term showed very satisfactory results. The vessel is now moored in the harbour for this winter, and the instruction classes are being carried on in the same way as was done last winter.

The vessel commenced cruising at the end of October last, having been delayed for a time owing to the outbreak of war, and in addition to coastal cruises she paid two visits to the southern islands, and one to the Kermadec Islands, to search for castaways, and to examine the provision and clothing depots which are maintained on those islands for the benefit of persons who may be shipwrecked on them. During her coastal trips she called at Gisborne, Picton, Port Underwood, Kaikoura, Lyttelton, Akaroa, Timaru, Oamaru, Otago Harbour, Bluff, and Stewart Island. It is usually found that after she visits a place applications for admission to her come from boys at those places. No difficulty has been experienced in keeping up her full complement of sixty boys—in fact, there are usually boys waiting for vacancies.

The general behaviour of the boys has been good; their duties have been carried out with alacrity and cheerfulness, and there have been no serious offences against discipline.

Under the arrangement made with the Union Steamship Company four more of the best boys have been placed on board the s.s. "Aparima" to be trained as officers. Their names are—S. A. Faulkner, of Devonport; W. H. Cadwallader, of Timaru; F. H. Retter, of Auckland; and L. Massey, of Gisborne.

There are at present fifty boys who have been trained in the ship serving in the Empire's military and naval forces. They are as follows: With the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces—W. W. McNeil, C. J. Lawton, H. C. Breach, A. S. Birse, W. Brennan, F. Small, E. L. G. Mahony, A. J. Cox, W. Morrissey, P. J. Jenkins, V. J. Hay, E. C. Sarginson, J. G. Macalister, S. R. Billett, T. P. Moir, W. Middleton, C. C. Todd, B. W. Martin, T. J. Guthrie, A. J. Westrupp, H. C. Watson, J. Scaife, P. Manson, C. G. Edwards, E. A. Latimer, G. Silvester, I. Asher, and J. Smith; in His Majesty's Navy—R. H. Hucks, A. H. Soper, W. H. Burborough, J. F. Burrows, B. Macfarlane, H. O. Stone, G. M. Collins, E. Magnusson, F. C. Turvey, H. G. Hullah, R. W. Fairweather, R. T. Ings, H. T. M. Watson, F. Darlow, E. O. Maney, T. W. Parton, F. Kivell, J. Hannan, C. J. M. Gaby, and I. Grace; in the Imperial Army—T. R. Wagstaff; in Imperial Transport Service—M. Martin.

The members of the permanent staff have carried out their duties very satisfactorily. Their quarters are very cramped, but owing to the small size of the ship they cannot be enlarged.

Lighthouses.

The construction of a ferro-concrete tower for the proposed light on Karori Rock has been proceeded with during the year, but, owing to its being impossible to work on the rock in southerly weather and to there having been a good deal of such weather, the progress of the work has been slower than anticipated. A portion of the foundation had to be started near high-water mark and built up to the top of the rock—a height of 25 ft. This has been completed, and the tower has been built to a height of 32 ft. above the rock, leaving 8 ft. to be completed. The light will be an automatic acetone-acetylene white light showing a flash of half a second followed by an eclipse of three and a half seconds.

An iron tower has been erected on Channel Island, in the Hauraki Gulf, and an automatic acetone-acetylene white light has been installed in it. It was lighted on the 11th February, 1915, last, and showed the following flashes: half-second light; two seconds eclipse; half-second light; ten seconds eclipse. Since it was lighted a defect developed in the mechanism, and pending a new flasher being procured the light is showing a flash of half-second light with eight seconds darkness.

A vote was taken last session for a light on Flat Rock, in the Hauraki Gulf. The necessary steps are now being taken to alter the beacon on the rock to make it suitable for carrying a light, and an automatic acetone-acetylene light has been ordered.

Automatic acetone-acetylene lights have been ordered for Nelson and Ponui Passage lighthouses.

Last session of Parliament a vote was taken for a light on Okuri Point, D'Urville Island, which will serve as a mark for the Beef Barrel Rocks, and steps are being taken to erect the necessary tower and to procure an automatic acetylene light.

The Pintsch-gas light has been maintained at Jackson's Head, but I recommend that an automatic acetone-acetylene light be procured and substituted for it, as such a light will be more reliable, the work of attending to it will be much lighter, and the cost of the necessary gas less.

The various lighthouses have been maintained in a state of efficiency, and the keepers have carried out their duties satisfactorily.

The Department has always necessarily provided houses for keepers, and in consequence of this being done their salaries have been less than they would have been had they provided houses themselves. Since the Public Service Superannuation Fund was established the keepers have had a valid grievance in that their superannuation allowances being based on their salaries, those allowances are less when they retired than they would have been had they provided their own houses, as is done by other public servants for whom houses are not provided. This grievance would be remedied by fixing the salaries £25 a year higher than the rates hitherto paid, and charging the keepers £25 a year house-rent.

Lightning struck Dog Island tower at 12.30 a.m. on the 1st June last, fusing the telephone-wires and speaking-tube, destroying two spare copper shutters and all connections on the telephone-line to the Bluff, breaking four windows, and smashing tank-stand where the current went to earth. On the 30th September an earthquake threw the machine out of position in the Cape Campbell tower: the light was out for one night, when the machine was put back into its place. On the 28th October an earthquake made a deep crack in a part of East Island near the lighthouse and the principal keeper's house, but no damage was done to the buildings.