

4. "The Marine Act, 1867," has also worked satisfactorily on the whole, and certain regulations issued under its authority for the prevention of overloading steamers and sailing vessels, and for the prevention of the overcrowding of sailing vessels with passengers, will, it is hoped, prove adequate to their intended purpose, and tend to the protection of life and property. It has, however, been found that the expense of carrying out the system of compulsory pilotage and exemptions from pilotage on vessels under fifty tons burden would so very greatly exceed the income arising from it, that it has been considered advisable for the present to leave that portion of the Act in abeyance. It has also been suggested that it would be advisable to fix a minimum "Harbour Master's fee" (see Schedule to "The Marine Act, 1867"), as the present legal charge of one penny per ton amounts to so trifling a sum for vessels of fifty tons and under, that masters of such craft are not deterred by it from occupying the time of the Harbour Staff unnecessarily, to the delay of the heavier vessels for which mainly the staff is kept up. I should be glad to get the minimum fixed at fifteen shillings.

5. In the course of last summer a congress of harbour-masters was held in Wellington, with a view to the more speedy arrangement of a general code of Harbour Regulations for the Colony, and it is only due to these gentlemen to state that their intelligence and zeal for the general interest of the trade of the Colony have greatly aided this department in the completion of a difficult task. After numerous revisions, the new regulations have been gazetted, and are to come in force from the first day of next month, and I trust they will be found to answer the intended purpose satisfactorily, without annoying interference with the special arrangements rendered necessary by the local peculiarities of the several ports. I ought to call attention to the fact that, by the unanimous recommendation of all the harbour-masters, vessels in distress, and whaling vessels taking shelter or calling for water or provisions, or to refit, are henceforth to be exempt from all port dues in all parts of the Colony, and also from pilotage, unless the services of a pilot are actually made use of. As intimated in last Report, I propose from time to time to issue appendices to these regulations, containing information useful or necessary to mariners, such as descriptions of the various lights in the Colony, notices of new rocks and shoals, &c., &c., so as to make the publication more generally useful.

6. The Lighthouse service has been conducted satisfactorily, and all the buildings, with one exception, have continued in good order throughout the year. At Godley Head the dwellings were partially unroofed by the great gale in February last, and W. B. Mountfort, Esq., architect, who was called in on the emergency, reported that the framing of the roof was too slight, and recommended that it should be strengthened and covered by galvanized iron instead of the slating, which was injured by every gale. This has been done, and a new method of fixing the iron adopted at my suggestion, which renders it, I think, impossible for the roof covering to be blown off, and the buildings are now in thorough repair. The cost of the new roof, including considerable repairs and improvements on the road to the beach, a goods store on the beach, and sundry minor improvements and additions, has been £364; but the work has been well done, and I confidently expect that this station will cost very little for repairs for some years to come. The roofs of the lightkeeper's dwelling at Nelson have been repaired, and the tower painted, and a few minor works done at the other stations; materials have also been supplied to the keepers in certain instances to enable them to make some much-needed improvements for themselves.

7. Two lightkeepers have resigned during the year, but the vacancies have been filled up with steady men, and the officers now in the service appear to have fairly settled down to and to take an interest in their duties, so that there is fair ground for hoping that changes, which are always an annoyance as well as a source of expense, will be less frequent in future. One lightkeeper allowed the light to go out during his watch, thus subjecting himself to the penalty of dismissal; but as his general conduct was good, and he at once reported his fault, and as no evil consequences resulted, the full punishment was not inflicted, and he was only reprimanded, fined, and cautioned to be more careful in future.

8. Orders and specifications were duly sent to England for lanterns and apparatus for the proposed lighthouses on Cape Campbell and Farewell Spit, and for the temporary harbour light for Manukau; and the Government has recently received advice that these works are progressing satisfactorily; in fact, I have no doubt that the lanterns have ere this been shipped. The necessary examination of the several sites has also been made, and the working drawings for the towers and dwelling-houses prepared, both for these lighthouses and for the one proposed to be erected at Nugget Point, and the specifications will shortly be ready. Working drawings for a wrought-iron beacon on Flat Rock, off Kawau, are also all but ready, so that the Government will shortly be in a position to call for tenders for the completion of the whole of these works. Indeed, but for the time lost by my frequent absences from home on public service, and a somewhat severe accident I met with while in Southland on duty, the whole would have been ready ere this. During the past year I have made some experiments with the view of ascertaining the possibility of burning kerosine in the lighthouse lamps, and am sanguine of ultimate success for Dog Island at least, where a number of small lamps are used. The introduction of kerosine would not only enable us to procure the necessary supplies in New Zealand, but would, I am satisfied, effect a considerable saving in the cost of maintenance of all the lights in which it could be used, and would also, I believe, make the light more powerful.

9. I have already, on more than one occasion, recommended the erection of a small light at the entrance to Tory Channel, and beg again to call attention to this important work. Mail steamers from Wellington to Picton are frequently so timed as to arrive off the channel after dark, and when it is at all hazy it is exceedingly difficult to make out the entrance. This, combined with the exceedingly rapid tidal currents which prevail, renders this part of the navigation truly dangerous; indeed, but for the thorough local knowledge, caution and skill of the commanders of these steamers, serious accidents might ere this have occurred, and such may any day take place notwithstanding every precaution. Should the Government not be disposed at present to go to the expense of erecting a light on the South Head, a small leading light could be erected about a mile inside, in such a situation as would probably make it available for guiding vessels through all the dangers, at a cost not exceeding £250 to £300; and as it would be very near the homestead of a resident settler, an economical