

SEVENTH REPORT
OF THE
MARINE DEPARTMENT, FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 1872.

Customs Department (Marine Branch),
Wellington, 28th August, 1872.

SIR,—

I have the honor to submit the following Report on the Marine Department for the year ended on the 30th June, 1872:—

2. The usual returns and tabular statements are appended hereto, which furnish detailed particulars of the cost of the Department, and of the cost of the maintenance of the several lighthouses in the Colony during the period referred to, and which show also the amounts collected for pilotage, port charges, light dues, and fees for survey of steamers, &c.

3. *Lighthouses.*—Inspections of the lighthouses have been made from time to time during the year by one or other of the officers of the Department who could be most conveniently spared for the purpose, as opportunities of visiting the various stations occurred. The whole of the lights have been properly maintained throughout the year; they are at the present time amply supplied with oil and other requisite stores, and the buildings are all in good order. Allusion was made in my last report to the defective condition of the Dog Island Lighthouse tower, and to the necessity that existed for having it strengthened and repaired without delay. The plan designed by Mr. Blackett, the Marine Engineer, for effecting this object by means of a strong framework of durable hard wood, encircled by stout wrought-iron bands, has been successfully carried out; the work, which was superintended by Mr. E. Whiting, was completed at a cost of £978 4s. 3d.* The cost for materials, &c., was £487 0s. 3d., and for labour £491 4s.; the latter item was considerably increased through the prevalence of wet and inclement weather during the progress of the work. The only other repairs of any importance which had to be made during the past year have been to the tower of the Cape Campbell Lighthouse (an open-framed wooden structure), which, owing to faulty work in its construction, required wedging up and fastening throughout. Whilst these repairs were being executed, the opportunity was taken to have the lighthouse painted; it was, when built, painted white and red in alternate bands; it is now coloured white on the upper and red on the lower half, which enables it to be seen distinctly at a greater distance than formerly.

4. Owing to the isolated position of the Farewell Spit Light, it has been found necessary to appoint a third Lightkeeper at that station. This I believe was the original intention, but a trial was made with two Keepers only when the light was first exhibited. It soon became evident, however, that a Second Assistant Keeper was required, both on account of the distance that has to be travelled by the Keepers to procure fresh provisions, and of the heavy work entailed on them in conveying the oil and other stores to the lighthouse from the place where these stores are landed from the steamer that takes them to the Spit. The Lightkeepers' dwellings not affording sufficient accommodation for three Keepers, a cottage had to be provided for the Third Keeper; the timber, &c., for it, and for a staging to be erected between the Keepers' dwellings and the lighthouse tower, was provided by the Government at a cost of £131 1s., and the building and staging were constructed by the Keepers, under the direction of the Principal Keeper, who is a carpenter, and who has industriously occupied himself since his appointment to Farewell Spit with work of various kinds about the lighthouse and dwellings, and has thus saved considerable expense to the Department.

5. In consequence of a want of harmony between the Keepers at Mana Island Lighthouse, it was found necessary in December last to transfer the Assistant Keeper to Cape Campbell. Soon afterwards the Principal Keeper there preferred several charges against this Assistant. These charges, after careful investigation on the spot by an officer sent from this Department, were found to be entirely without foundation. As this Principal Keeper had already quarrelled several times with other Assistants who had been stationed with him, and had on more than one occasion made groundless or frivolous charges against them, evidently with the intention of getting them removed or dismissed, and as considerable expense was caused in conducting inquiries into these alleged grievances, it was felt that a person of this kind could not any longer be trusted to have charge of a lighthouse, and that his unworthy conduct merited severe punishment. He was accordingly reduced to the rank of Assistant Keeper, and was transferred to another station. His place at Cape Campbell was filled by promoting the Assistant Keeper at Pencarrow, who was the senior on the list of Assistant Keepers, and who, since his promotion, has carried on his duties satisfactorily.

* Of this sum only £552 19s. 1d. appears in this year's accounts,—the balance, £425 5s. 2d., having been paid during the current year.