

Reference was made in last year's report to difficulties that had arisen with regard to the three years' domicile required of candidates for examination in this colony under the Board of Trade Regulations; and also to the special regulations which had been issued to meet the case of persons applying to be examined for certificates, who have not the requisite domicile qualification to entitle them to be examined for Board of Trade certificates. I enclose herein copies of letters that have passed between this department and the Board of Trade on this subject, from which it will be observed that these special regulations have been approved of by the Board of Trade, and that a more liberal interpretation will hereafter be given to the term "domicile," so that all difficulties in relation to the examination of candidates and the granting of certificates of competency in this colony have now been entirely removed.

*Wrecks and Casualties.*—The number of wrecks and casualties that occurred on the coasts of the colony, during the year ending 30th June last, was no less than 58, of an aggregate tonnage of 7,703 tons, being 34 wrecks, of 4,282 tons, more than took place last year. Of these wrecks, 27, of 5,074 tons, were total, and 30, of 2,629 tons, were partial. Vessels that are known to have been recovered after being wrecked, although returned by the officer holding the inquiry as "Total," are placed under the head of "Partial." Under this heading are also placed all vessels which have suffered casualties, however slight.

Twenty lives were lost; the number in the previous year was thirteen. Eight were lost in the "Flora Macdonald," on the Manukau bar; five in the "Cyrus" and two in the "Wellington," near Sinclair's Head; three in the "Agnes," between Waikato and Raglan; one in the "Redcliff," in Allday Bay; and one washed overboard from the "Elizabeth," off Wellington Heads. Besides the wrecks above referred to, the return contains also particulars of casualties to four vessels which occurred beyond the limits of this colony, viz. the "Prince of Wales," 23 tons, totally wrecked at the island of Mangaia; the "Lady Bowen," "Allahabad," and "Claud Hamilton," which suffered more or less damage at sea—the latter losing the master, through a sea carrying away the deck-house.

*Weather Reports.*—The daily weather reports exhibited at the various telegraph offices throughout the colony having been found to be not entirely reliable, mainly, I understand, in consequence of the telegraph clerks being unable to spare sufficient time from their ordinary duties to make the requisite observations, and these reports being of great service to the seafaring community, you resolved to take steps for securing, as far as possible, thoroughly reliable information as to the state of the weather, from observations to be made at all the coast stations by the Harbour Masters, leaving the few inland stations, as at present, in the hands of officers of the Telegraph Department; the information thus collected to be carefully recorded and studied, with a view of eventually establishing a system of storm signals such as are in use in the United Kingdom and other maritime countries. Captain Edwin was detailed to undertake this duty, and has been located in an office in the Custom House, to enable him to communicate without loss of time with the telegraph office, which is next door. The following stations are in direct communication with this central office, viz.—Auckland, Manukau Heads, Thames, Coromandel, Taupo, Opunake, Castle Point, Wellington, Hokitika, Westport, Bealey, Lyttelton, Timaru, Oamaru, Port Chalmers, Bluff, and Queenstown. I enclose herein a copy of a letter from Captain Edwin, reporting the progress that has already been made towards carrying out the design here referred to.

*Returns.*—The usual returns and wreck chart will be found appended hereto.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM SEED,

Secretary of Customs.

The Hon. the Commissioner of Customs, Wellington.

Mr. W. SEED to the ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Marine Department, Board of Trade.

Customs Department (Marine Branch),

Wellington, 12th March, 1874.

SIR,—

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter (M. 18549, 4th December, 1873), in reply to mine of the 30th September last, in which I pointed out certain difficulties that had arisen in regard to the three years' domicile qualification imposed by the Board of Trade on candidates for certificates of competency in this colony.

In reply, I have been directed to thank you for the very full and prompt explanation afforded by you on the points raised in my letter; at the same time, I am to state that whilst this Department fully recognizes the necessity for due precautions being taken for preventing improper persons from obtaining certificates, yet, that a rigid adherence to the strict terms of the condition imposed by paragraph 5 of the Order in Council of 9th August, 1872, will frequently bear hardly on persons desiring to be examined for certificates of competency in this colony. A striking illustration of this is afforded in a recent case which is described in the copies of correspondence enclosed herein; and I am to represent that the Government of this colony would esteem it a favour if the condition referred to could be relaxed, at any rate to the extent of allowing certificates to be granted to persons who have served continuously in ships trading to New Zealand for a period of, or for periods amounting to, at least three years immediately preceding their application to be examined, so as to place them in the same position as if they had served on board vessels registered in New Zealand. This relaxation would meet the case of persons who take service in vessels which trade between this colony and the United Kingdom, and who naturally desire to pass their examination in the place where, from having the longest time in port, and from being able to live on shore with their friends, they have the greatest facilities for preparation and study.

With regard to the last paragraph of your letter, in which you point out that when the master or first mate of any British vessel arriving in this colony has from any cause been removed, her officers of lower grades can now bring the ship home, and that a certificate as master would not be necessary under the circumstances, I am to observe that this statement seems to be at variance with the paragraph on this subject in the "Second Memorandum" by the Board of Trade relating to colonial certificates. That paragraph states that—