

1888.

NEW ZEALAND.

MARINE DEPARTMENT

(ANNUAL REPORT ON).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The ASSISTANT-SECRETARY to the Hon. the MINISTER having charge of the MARINE DEPARTMENT.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 27th July, 1888.

I do myself the honour to submit the following report of this department for the year ended on the 31st March last.

Lighthouses.—The number of lighthouses under the control of the department remains the same as last year, no additional lighthouses having been erected. The light at French Pass has been altered to show red in the channel towards Nelson, with a white arc round over the Piege Rocks; this alteration, it is understood, is much appreciated by mariners. The lighthouses have been kept in good order, no extensive repairs having been required to buildings or apparatus, &c. The only accident to a light reported was at Waipapapa Point, when the keeper on duty fell asleep and allowed the light to become stationary. The offending keeper was dismissed the service. The light on the beacon at French Pass, which is kept burning night and day, was blown out on three different occasions, viz., on the 18th June, at 7.30 p.m., when it was not possible to light it again until daylight; on the 24th November, when it was out from 2 to 4.30 a.m.; and on the 23rd March, when it was out from 2.30 to 8.30 a.m. No complaints of any of the lights being inefficient were received from mariners. Seven assistant-keepers left the service: two having been dismissed for going to sleep on watch, the services of three having been dispensed with for misconduct, and two having resigned. The knoll at Cape Campbell on which the lighthouse is built having weathered considerably during the last few years, steps have been taken to terrace it with manuka scrub, which it is believed will prevent any further wearing away. Measures are also being taken to put a wire-net fence across the boundary of the reserve, and then to destroy the rabbits, which are very numerous, notwithstanding the fact that there are a good number of ferrets on the reserve. The heavy southerly gale of the 27th and 28th March last was felt most severely at all the stations on the east coast, as far north as Portland Island, but I am glad to say that comparatively little damage was done, the most serious being the destruction of the boat at Portland Island, and the carrying-away of part of the jetty tramway at Cape Campbell. To show the violence of the wind at this station during the gale, I may state that a large lifeboat belonging to the "Kangaroo," lying on the beach at Cape Campbell, was lifted 8ft. or 10ft. off the ground, and carried a distance of about 6 chains. The small light maintained at Wangawehi being very little used, owing to the trade being now principally carried out by steamers, was abolished on the 31st March last.

New Lighthouses.—Steps have been taken to take the land necessary for the erection of Cuvier Island Lighthouse, and plans for a cast-iron tower have been prepared, the contract for its construction having since been let to Mr. A. Beaney, of Auckland, for the sum of £704 3s. It is anticipated that the light will be ready for exhibition in less than a year. Owing to the unfortunate wreck of the "Derry Castle" at the Auckland Islands, attention has been again drawn to the necessity of erecting a lighthouse on the Snares. Correspondence has taken place between the Victorian and New Zealand Governments and the Chambers of Commerce at Melbourne and Invercargill on this important question. The view taken by the New Zealand Government and the Underwriters' Association at Melbourne is, that a light should be erected at the Snares, but the Invercargill Chamber of Commerce recommend that, in any case, a light should be placed on the Auckland Islands. The question of maintaining the dépôts for castaways at the Auckland and other outlying islands, and of visiting these islands at regular intervals, has also formed the subject of correspondence. These questions are, however, still in abeyance, waiting further communications from the Victorian Government. The necessity for the erection of a light at Stephens Island, Cook Strait, had already been pointed out on more than one occasion. It would be a most useful light to all vessels bound through Cook Strait from the westward, the number of which is increasing rapidly owing to