

The s.s. "Hinemoa" took soundings at Mercury Bay in connection with the erection of leading-beacons, off the Western King, in connection with the proposal to moor a lightship there, and at Tauranga in connection with laying buoys. She also searched unsuccessfully for a rock reported off Clay Point.

*Nautical Publications.*

The Nautical Almanac for 1913 was issued in November last, and the large number of copies sold proves the value and popularity of the work. A large number of the A B C Azimuth Tables prepared by Captain Blackburne and issued by the Department have also been sold, as well as a very large number of Admiralty charts. These charts are imported by the Department and are kept for sale at Mercantile Marine Offices at a little over cost-price.

*Notices to Mariners.*

Appended is a return of the Notices to Mariners affecting the Dominion which have been issued by the Department during the year and distributed throughout New Zealand, to the Australian Marine authorities, the Admiralty, and foreign hydrographic offices. In addition to these notices a large number received from Great Britain, the United States, and Australia have been issued for the information of mariners.

*Meteorological and Weather Office.*

During the year the number of forecast-stations has been more than doubled, and wireless weather reports have been obtained from vessels, but they have not come up to expectations, mainly owing to the ships not being generally equipped with standard instruments. The wireless reports received from Macquarie Island have, however, proved of value in connection with forecasting the weather.

The new observatory erected on the Thorndon Esplanade, Wellington, was opened by the Minister of Marine on the 6th June last.

The Public Works Department is supplying a number of rain-gauges which it is distributing to places from which it desires to obtain rainfall records, and arrangements have been made that these records are to be supplied to the Meteorological Office.

I attach a report by the Rev. Mr. Bates, the Director of the Meteorological Office.

*Government Steamers.*

The "Hinemoa" has carried out her usual work of attending to the lighthouses, buoys, and beacons under the control of the Department, and has performed the work very satisfactorily. She also made a special trip to Nelson with mental-asylum patients. She is now thirty-seven years old, and has been nearly all the time in use. Although she has been kept in a good state of repair, she cannot be expected to last much longer. In fact, it would not be advisable now to send her to the Southern Islands, where very bad weather is sometimes met with. It would, in my opinion, be advisable to take a vote during the coming session for part of the cost of a new steamer, so that tenders may be invited and a contract for building one may be entered into. A steamer should be designed specially for lighthouse and buoy work, with separate quarters for lightkeepers, but not much other passenger accommodation, and she should have good cargo-carrying capacity.

For some time past it has been the practice to engage seamen for the "Hinemoa" at the four principal ports only, but it has been found impossible to get sufficient suitable men who are accustomed to boating at those ports. As the vessel has so much boating to do in connection with landing oil and stores at lighthouses, there is great danger of loss of life if the seamen are not men experienced in this work, and as men with the necessary experience can often be got at the smaller ports when not obtainable at the large ports, it has been decided that the master may in future obtain the most suitable men at any port at which he can get them.

The Department has made a two-years agreement with the Seamen's Union, similar to the agreement which the Union has with the principal shipowners, as to the rate of wages, overtime, &c., of the crews of the s.s. "Hinemoa," "Tutanekai," and "Amokura." Under this agreement the hours of labour in port are to be eight hours a day, and on the days of arrival and departure the sea watches are to count are part of the eight hours. As the vessels are deemed to be in port when anchored off a lighthouse, the increase in the amount that has to be paid in overtime in the case of the "Hinemoa" is considerable.

During last winter the training-ship "Amokura" was, as usual, moored in Wellington Harbour, and in addition to undergoing the usual training on board the boys attended instruction classes at the Technical School. As soon as she has finished attending on the battleship "New Zealand" she will be moored in the harbour for the winter for the same purposes. The Technical School classes will in future be held in the building purchased by the Department on the Thorndon Esplanade, which, being near the ship, will be much more convenient and will avoid the necessity of the boys having to walk a considerable distance through the streets to school. In addition to her ordinary training cruises the ship has made trips to the Southern Islands and to the Kermadec Islands to search for castaways and to inspect the provision depots which are maintained on those islands for shipwrecked mariners. It is clear that shipowners recognize the value of the training the boys receive on the ship, as there is no difficulty in obtaining employment for them on other vessels as soon as they have completed their training. So far as can be ascertained, most of them remain at sea.

As most of the work which the "Tutanekai" has to perform is in connection with telegraph-cable laying and repairing, she has been handed over to the Post and Telegraph Department.