

Stewart Island.—The Inspector reports that the fishing season has been a fairly good one, and fishermen have earned good money.

ROSS SEA WHALING EXPEDITION.

With the declaration of the Ross Sea area as a dependency of New Zealand, an agreement which had been entered into between the Imperial Government and Messrs. Magnus Konow and C. A. Larsen, of Christiania, was handed over to the New Zealand Government for administration. The financial benefits arising out of the agreement also became the property of the New Zealand Government. Under this agreement Messrs. Konow and Larsen are licensed to catch whales in the Ross Sea area for a period of twenty-one years. The license is not an exclusive one, but the licensees were given to understand at the time of its granting that they would be given some opportunity of recouping the heavy initial expenditure arising out of a pioneer expedition. The benefits accruing to the Government under the license are an annual payment of £200 in respect of each floating establishment (factory-ship), and a royalty of 2s. 6d. per barrel of oil taken over and above 20,000 barrels. The expedition is, by agreement, limited to two floating establishments, and five catchers to each establishment.

The floating establishment—the “Sir James Clark Ross”—a vessel of 7,630 gross tons register, arrived at Hobart on the 25th November, 1923, and was there joined by the five catchers, three of which had come from Seattle via Auckland and two direct from Norway. Captain G. S. Hooper, Nautical Adviser to the Department, was selected to accompany the expedition, which he joined at Hobart. The expedition, the personnel of which numbered 179, left Hobart on the 30th November, and proceeded to the Ross Sea, calling at Macquarie Islands on the way, at which place a reef very dangerous to navigation was discovered and duly notified.

Owing to severe conditions of weather and ice under which the expedition had to work the venture was not so successful as was anticipated, only 17,791 barrels of oil being taken. It was expected that whales would be found farther north than proved to be the case, and the vessel's equipment was hardly suitable to obtain the best results. It is hoped, however, that the experience gained will enable better results to be achieved next season. The vessel returned to Port Chalmers on the 9th April, and proceeded thence to Europe. The five whale-catchers were left at Paterson's Inlet, Stewart Island, for the purpose of being prepared for next season's operations.

RETURNS.

The following returns are appended hereto :—

- (1.) The various kinds of fish caught, and approximately the total quantities and value of fish landed at the different ports, for the year ended 31st March, 1923.
- (2.) The total quantity of oysters taken from the different beds, the quantity disposed of in the Dominion, the quantity exported, and total value.
- (3.) The total quantity and value of fish imported into and exported from New Zealand during the year ended 31st December, 1922.
- (4.) The number of steam-trawlers, oil-engine trawlers, and other vessels employed in net and line fishing, with the number of fishermen employed, and approximately the total number of persons engaged in the fishing industry, at each port, for the year ended 31st March, 1923.
- (5.) The number and kinds of whales taken at each whaling-station, and the quantity and value of oil, bonedust, or fertilizer produced.

PORTOBELLO MARINE FISH-HATCHERY.

A report by the Hon. G. M. Thompson, M.L.C., Chairman of the Portobello Marine Fish-hatchery Board, is appended.

METEOROLOGICAL BRANCH.

The principal work of this branch consists of—(1) Preparation and distribution of morning and afternoon forecasts; (2) preparation and distribution of daily weather report; (3) forecasting and issuing telegraphic notification of special storm or flood warnings; (4) broadcasting evening weather report to shipping; (5) week-end weather reports furnished to the Press or others as asked for; (6) special or extended weather reports in respect to any locality or district furnished as required; (7) collection and publication of rainfall and climatological statistics.

Weather reports from ten stations are sent every evening to the radio-stations at Awanui, Auckland, and Wellington, and this information may be obtained by ships requiring it. The report is also broadcasted by radio at 9 o'clock every evening except Sunday.

General monthly weather reports, which were formerly supplied only to the *Journal of Agriculture* and to *Meat and Wool*, the cost being shared by these two publications, are now made generally available to the Press Association and local newspapers. The data for this return is obtained by telegraph at the beginning of the month, so as to make it quickly available to those interested.

The usual monthly and annual reports have been published in the *New Zealand Gazette*, Government Statistics, and Year-book. A special pamphlet on the “Climate of New Zealand” was prepared by the Government Meteorologist for the Empire Exhibition.

Looked at from a financial point of view, this branch is in a very unsatisfactory state. Expenditure during the financial year amounted to £5,676, and the income to £5 7s. 6d.

It is stated that morning and evening forecasts, and daily weather reports, &c., and monthly statistics are of very great value. Last year, on account of cost, the number of stations to which weather reports and forecasts were sent was reduced. Strong protest was made by stations which