

The number of failures in examination was 66 per cent. of the total number of examinations held, as against 54 per cent. during last year. 93 per cent. of the failures were incurred in the subject of navigation and 7 per cent. in seamanship, the latter, which embraces the Collision Regulations, being confined to the lower grade of home-trade certificates.

Of the candidates who passed, three elected to sit for the higher speed signalling examination, and all were successful. This examination is quite voluntary, and it is gratifying to see candidates endeavouring to become as highly qualified as is possible in this branch of the work.

Of the total number of candidates for examination, nineteen passed at first attempt, as against twenty-six last year; one candidate attended the examination six times, and two five times, before achieving success.

There were no applications from candidates to be examined for the higher certificate as extra master, or for a license as colonial pilot.

The slowly decreasing number of younger men who, owing to lack or absence of service in square-rigged ships, are able to sit for "ordinary" (square-rigged) certificates continues to be apparent. The total number of younger men who sat for their first foreign-going certificates (second mate) was fifteen, of whom five only were qualified by service in square-rigged sailing-ships to sit for the "ordinary" (square-rigged) certificate, the remainder (ten) being qualified to sit for certificates for steamships only. Notwithstanding this shortage among the younger men who have not the square-rigged service, there were many of the older men who, by virtue of their earlier service in square-rigged sailing-ships, were thereby enabled to obtain their final certificate as master "ordinary," so that shortage of "ordinary" (square-rigged) certificate holders, although pronounced, is not yet extremely so. The purely local nature of our results does not precisely define the position in respect of our younger men, as a number of them in the course of their voyages obtain their certificates in other parts of the Empire, and we to some extent lose trace of them.

Owing to now proved efficient application of radio for navigational purposes and for marine communications in cases of distress and disaster, and for the purpose of extending the application of wireless to small ships, it has been found desirable that some knowledge of this subject should be possessed by masters and mates in the mercantile marine; and in respect of candidates for their first home-trade certificate of competency it is now compulsory that they shall pass a prescribed elementary examination in wireless before they are allowed to sit for their examination. However, wireless has not yet been made a compulsory subject for foreign-going certificates as these must conform to Board of Trade Regulations, but in the meantime provision has been made that existing home-trade and foreign-going certificate holders may, after passing the prescribed examination in wireless, have that fact endorsed on their certificates.

On the 1st January, 1926, the Imperial Board of Trade introduced alterations to the syllabus of examination for the several grades of certificates of competency. This involved recasting the examination-papers. This has been done, and similar alterations were made in the examinations simultaneously with those made by the Board of Trade. The Board also now requires every candidate for a foreign-going and for a home-trade certificate of competency to produce a certificate of efficiency as a lifeboatman; and a similar requirement by this Department is now under consideration.

EXAMINATION IN FORM AND COLOUR VISION.

Apart from candidates for certificates of competency in the mercantile marine, forty-two candidates submitted themselves to undergo the sight-test examination, which embraces both form and colour vision. These examinations are provided for the purpose of enabling all persons serving or intending to serve in the mercantile marine, or in fishing-vessels, to ascertain whether their vision is such as to qualify them for service in that profession. Of the total, two candidates failed to pass the required standard of vision.

These examinations are conducted at Auckland, Lyttelton, Dunedin, and Wellington as occasion requires, and of the total examinations 52 per cent. were held at Wellington, 36 per cent. at Auckland, 7 per cent. at Lyttelton, and 5 per cent. at Dunedin.

EXAMINATION OF LIGHTKEEPERS IN SIGNALLING.

Lightkeepers who are employed in this Department's lighthouse service are required to submit themselves periodically for examination in signalling duties. This examination involves a knowledge of signalling duties as performed at lighthouses and signal stations, and embraces tests of signalling in Morse code by lamp-flashing and flag-waving, and in the hand-flag semaphore system of signalling. The examination compares favourably with the examination in signalling passed by all holders of certificates of competency in the mercantile marine. The lightkeepers' examinations were held as occasion required, and in the majority of cases the lightkeepers passed the examination with credit. During the year eight lightkeepers were successful in passing this examination.

NAUTICAL ALMANAC AND TIDE-TABLES.

The annual publication of the "New Zealand Nautical Almanac and Tide-tables" was carried out as in previous years, and this book was issued early in December, this being the twenty-fourth edition issued, the first edition being issued in 1903.

This publication contains the very necessary astronomical ephemeris used by navigators, given for every two hours throughout the year; also, daily tidal information concerning the main ports, tidal streams, &c. Owing to the development of New Plymouth and of its more frequent use by oversea ships, also that its locality is a good one on which to base tidal data for some smaller ports,