

MARITIME MATTERS

Steamship Men Wonder How Many Ships They Will Have Here

GOOD FREIGHT OFFERING

Fire Stopped at Shed 24 and Hay Pressing Resumed— Harbor Board to Make Inspection Trip

Considerable speculation is being indulged in amongst steamship men as to what is going to happen when ocean navigation opens here. It was announced by cable yesterday that a number of vessels, mostly from the Canadian route, which had been used as marine prisons for enemy aliens, was to be released from this work. It was not stated whether this meant that they were to be returned to the companies, or transferred to other Imperial business. No instructions have been as yet received by the companies, so that they do not know how many vessels they are likely to have for business when it starts.

Apart from this little defect, it was generally stated yesterday that prospects for the season were by no means as bad as might have been anticipated. The German blockade was treated as non-existent, save for precautions exercised by officers of the ships, and the omnipresent aid of the British guard ships in the war zone. In fact, it was stated that the submarine piracy had not apparently affected passenger business, and that there had been quite a lively enquiry for tickets during the past week or two.

While the passenger business did not promise any great profits, the freight men were optimistic, declaring that prospects were excellent, with lots of cargo offering, at rates which would more than make up for low passenger prices. The main demand now is for more vessels, most of the companies having their stock depleted by the necessities of the British Government.