

## HARTLEY INQUIRY ENDS.

### QUESTIONS TO THE COURT.

#### DECISION ON WEDNESDAY.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

MIDDLESBROUGH, Saturday.

**A**PART from the inspection of the sister ship at Smith's dock by the chairman and the assessors on Monday afternoon, the inquiry into the loss of the Hartley was concluded at Middlesbrough to-day.

Mr. Fenwick received permission to recall Harold Halvorsen, who said that after the disaster it came to his ears that the survivor, Francis Adams, had offered some criticism respecting the tarpaulin and wedges. Witness was satisfied that Adams' criticism could not have any substance.

A graphic account of the vessel's fatal trip was given by Francis Adams, Haigh-street, Dunston-on-Tyne. He joined the Hartley on the second voyage, and she proved a good sea-boat. She was a dry ship and easy to steer.

#### BATTENING THE HATCHES.

Coming to the ill-fated voyage, witness gave particulars of the batten down of four hatchways; Nos. 1, 2 and 3 hatchways were covered with tarpaulins and rope lashings; No. 4 hatchway was not lashed down when the heavy sea was running, and extra lashings were put on at 9 a.m. Witness found the tarpaulin of the third hatch had been ripped, almost from end to end. Then the hatch-board was swept away, and large volumes of water rushed into the hold. Just as they received the order to stand by the lifeboat witness was washed off the deck into the alley way. Nineteen men got into the lifeboat after the distress signal had been sent out. When the crew left the edge of the Hartley the deck was level with the sea, and her bulwarks were under water.

While they were being drawn alongside the Machaon an Arab tried to jump on to the ladder, but missed his footing, and as there was danger of his being crushed he was pulled back on board, and that, in witness's opinion, was the cause of the lifeboat capsizing.

Witness said that only once previously had rope lashings been used on the hatches.

#### WATER IN THE BUNKERS.

Questioned by Mr. Fenwick, witness said that from the conversation between the chief officer and the donkeyman, he learned that there was water in the bunkers. He added that some of the wedges were too small, and some were washed away. The bunker tarpaulins were secured before leaving Barry. He could not account for the water getting into the bunkers.

Concluding his evidence, Adams expressed his gratitude to the master, officers and men of the Machaon for their kindness and generous treatment.

James Keogh, aged 20, was on watch from four o'clock and after bailing out the water from the starboard alleyway, he took the wheel. Their speed was seven or eight knots. The captain repeatedly altered the ship's course, but there were times when she was not answering to the helm.

#### "EVERY MAN JACK FOR HIMSELF."

The captain and witness were alone on the bridge, and lifebelts had been distributed, when the former remarked: "Hadh't you better look out for yourself? It's every man Jack for himself; the ship's done."

Witness got into the lifeboat, which was then being lowered, and the captain was the last to leave. In his view, the Arab who tried to climb the ladder became entangled and fell back into the lifeboat, and this seemed to cause the captain to lose his head, and the captain leaving the tiller the boat turned broadside on and capsized.

Mr. Burton put in the records of the St. Catherine's lighthouse, as follows:—Nov. 27, 6 a.m., wind S.S.W., force 8, squally, rain; 9 o'clock, S.W., 8, squally; noon, W.S.W., squally, day's highest wind force 5.

Mr. Cairns, Smith's Dock Yard manager, recalled, expressed the opinion that the Hartley had a reserve of buoyancy of seven to eight hundred tons. The pumps had a capacity of 164 tons an hour.

#### QUESTIONS TO THE COURT.

Amongst the questions addressed to the court by Mr. Burton were those relating to:—

Construction of hatchways and the means provided to ensure safety.

Cause of the tarpaulins being damaged and water getting into the hold; and

Loss of life.

Mr. Fenwick asked that there should be no precipitate decision or recommendation respecting the use of iron bars, pointing out that when properly applied, having regard to the human element, ropes were probably as efficient. The disaster came at a moment when some anxiety was felt regarding self-trimming ships. The Hartley's hatches were as strong as the ship's deck, so that the controversy really raged about the method of keeping the hatch boards in position.

The chairman commented on the splendid behaviour of the crew.

The court's decision will be given on Wednesday.



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