

THE "LISMORE" INQUIRY.

Story of the Loss.

SOLE SURVIVOR'S EVIDENCE.

From Our Own Correspondent.

DUBLIN, Monday.

Mr. Geo. P. Cussen, District Justice, assisted by Capt. J. H. Webb and Capt. Brady, master mariners, as assessors, opened an inquiry here this morning into the circumstances attending the loss of the City of Cork Steam Packet Company's steamer *Lismore*, which foundered on July 10 last at midnight, when 16 miles off the Hook Head, Co. Wexford.

Mr. E. A. Swayne, K.C., and Mr. Costello (instructed by the Chief State Solicitor) appeared for the Department of Industry and Commerce; Mr. A. K. Overend, K.C. (instructed by Messrs. D. & T. Fitzgerald), appeared for the owners.

Mr. SWAYNE said that the *Lismore*, which was built this year at Ardrossan, left Cork with a cargo in comparatively fine weather on July 10, and at midnight was lost through, as they believed, capsizing. The cause of the loss must be due either to something in the construction of the ship, loading of the cargo, or possibly to her having struck a submerged object, to faulty navigation, or a combination of two or more of these causes, or all of them.

On July 10 a considerable number of motor parts were taken on board the vessel at Ford's Wharf at Cork. A good deal of these were in large wooden cases, while a considerable quantity was put upon the weather deck and some more into No. 1 hold, which was not filled with the motor parts. The vessel then proceeded to Penrose Quay further up the river and took on board 271 head of cattle, some sheep, and ten tons of axles. The total cargo which she had on board when she left Penrose Quay that evening being 212 tons 18 cwt.

Some days after the occurrence a ship's derrick weighing about ten tons was washed ashore near Roches Point, and it might be suggested that the *Lismore* struck it, causing damage which created the list or added to the existing list. Evidence would be given that the vessel was what was called a tender ship, and liable to go to port or starboard, which made it the more necessary to have the cargo properly stowed. This vessel was of very much lighter draught than was usual in vessels of her length, this being necessary for her trade with the port of Wexford. In a previous voyage the vessel showed signs of tenderness in the Manchester Ship Canal, and to correct a list to port they had to fill with water.

QUESTIONS FOR THE COURT.

The questions which he would ask the Court to consider, after they heard the evidence, were:—

Was the vessel properly constructed and in a good and seaworthy condition?

Was the cargo properly trimmed and secured from shifting?

What was the amount and description of the cargo carried on deck, and was it properly stowed and lashed?

What was the quantity and description of the cattle and sheep carried and were they properly penned?

Was the cargo properly stowed in accordance with the loading plans supplied by the builders?

Was the amount of cargo excessive?

Had the vessel at any time during loading or before she left the port (a) a list to starboard, or (b) a list to port?

Had the vessel when leaving port a list to port? If so, was the master justified in proceeding on the voyage without taking steps to correct such list?

Did the vessel take an increased list to port during the voyage? If so when and to what extent did this occur? What was the cause of the vessel taking such an increased list?

Were prompt and proper measures then taken by the master for the safety of the vessel?

What was the cause of the loss of the vessel?

Was the vessel navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

Was the loss of the vessel caused by the wrongful act or default of the master or other officer of the vessel and to what per-

sons (if any) did blame for the loss of the vessel attach?

A "TENDER" SHIP.

JOHN CARNEY, in his evidence, said that his age was 48, and he had spent most of his life at sea. He joined the *Lismore* at Ardrossan and was on her trial trip.

Mr. SWAYNE: Had you noticed anything peculiar about the ship?—WITNESS: I did. She was a "tender" ship, and would take a bit of a list with a breeze of wind, no matter what course she was on.

On any trips, did you observe any signs of tenderness?—When the cargo was in she would be all right; in fact, with the cargo "below" she was the finest ship I was ever on. In the Manchester Ship Canal she had part cargo only and she had a list to port. To correct the list I had to fill the starboard lifeboat with water. It used to take us all our time to watch her going up the canal. We had special fenders to prevent her touching her rails and gunwales.

Leaving Penrose Quay, Cork, after having taken in cargo at about 10 minutes past six, the vessel had a list to port. He was on watch until 8 o'clock that night and the list was still noticeable when they passed Roches Point. He returned on deck at a few minutes to 12 to go on watch and he at once saw that the list had increased very much.

Do you know what caused the list—did anything happen?—Nothing happened to her and she touched nothing.

You didn't hear her striking anything?—No, there is no truth in the suggestion that she struck anything.

Continuing, WITNESS said that the moment he got on deck he saw that their position was dangerous and he was frightened when he walked along the deck because the list being so great he thought the "lashings" of the deck cargo would give out. He went along to try and clear the scuppers but there was too much water and he could not do anything. The captain came down, having had a look round, shaking his head he said, "It is all up. She is going over." The captain then went on the bridge and blew a long blast of the whistle.

At that time did you see a ship in the distance?—Yes, the lights of a ship about three-quarters of a mile away, but she did not change her course.

Were there any signals sent up?—No, sir.

A SUDDEN END.

Continuing, WITNESS said that the list was increasing all the time, and the second mate ordered him to cut away the lifeboats and give them a chance of floating when she went over. As he had the lashings of the starboard boat cut away the ship rolled over and he had just time to whip off his sea boots before she went down. "I went down," continued witness, "with her, and when I came up to the surface I managed to get hold of one of the ship's hatches which was floating and eventually pulled myself on top of it and then lashed myself to it with my muffler.

"In a quarter of an hour's time I heard some one singing out, and recognised Mr. Cole's voice (second officer). I called out and asked if it were him, and he replied that it was, and I saw him on top of some wreckage 40 yards away, and he asked me to keep close to him, but we drifted apart and I saw no more of him. The only other voice I heard was that of my mate, but I did not see him." Carney remained on the hatch all night, and the tides carried him into the coast at Glade Bay at midnight, and he went ashore at a place called Porter's Gate. Eventually he received assistance in a farm cottage.

To Mr. Swayne, the WITNESS said that if they had two more of a crew they could have got away all the lifeboats, and in a heavy vessel like the *Lismore* they should have had two more seamen. If they had had these two extra hands they could have put the deck cargo overboard and if necessary some of the cattle. He did not think the captain was on the bridge when witness got on deck at a few minutes to twelve, because if he were he would have called on all hands to come on deck.

Mr. SWAYNE: Were some of the men down below?—Yes. Some were in their bunks at the time.

Mr. CUSSEY congratulated the witness on the impartiality of his evidence and on his great courage, endurance and resource.

The hearing was adjourned.

21

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