

LISMORE TRAGEDY.

WILL INQUIRY PREVENT RECURRENCE?

THE OWNERS' CONTENTIONS.

With the speeches of counsel for the various interests concerned yesterday, there closed the inquiry into the circumstances under which the Lismore, a City of Cork Steam Packet Co.'s almost new steamer, turned turtle and foundered off the Wexford coast on the night of July 10th of this year.

A special day had been set apart for arguments, and now all that remains is for Mr. G. Cussen, the president of the Court, and the four nautical assessors, to consider the evidence in the light of the speeches based upon it.

At a later date the judgment will be issued.

Mr. Overend, for the Steam Packet Co., expressed the view that if a result of the inquiry were the elucidation of what is as yet an unsolved mystery, or if it would prevent a recurrence of such a tragedy, the time spent would have been well employed.

(From Our Own Reporter.)

DUBLIN, Wednesday.

ADDRESSING the Court on the loss of the Lismore, Mr. Overend, counsel for the owners, said if they arrived at a conclusion which would elucidate what was still an unsolved mystery, and help to prevent a recurrence of such a tragedy, the time spent on the inquiry would have been well employed. All the evidence pointed to the fact that at the commencement of the voyage the list was so slight as, in the words of some witnesses, to be almost imperceptible. The list, said Carley, would be noticeable to a sailor, but he would not say it would amount to a degree. At 12 20 a.m. there was a heavy list, but Carley did not notice any while in his bunk. If there had been a serious list he must have noticed it. He only noticed the heavy list when he got on the deck to watch.

Counsel submitted that the list had increased in the quarter of an hour that elapsed from the time Carley was called till the time he got on deck. The whole matter was of rapid development. Counsel believed Captain Sayle was in no way anxious about the vessel's safety before it went down; if so, he would have called all hands from below. In the traditions of the Mercantile Marine there was not a single instance of the captain or officer letting men remain below without giving warning of danger.

PROBABLE CAUSE OF LOSS.

There was not a particle of evidence that the cargo had shifted; on the contrary, they had it that the cargo had not shifted up to a few minutes before the disaster. The vessel might have struck a floating submerged wreckage, but he did not suggest the vessel struck a sunken wreck. No evidence was given of the water in the hold. The greater probability was the loss of the vessel was caused by access of water. As to the suggestion of improper stowage he contended the evidence of Mr. Perry as to the distribution and stowage was correct in every material particular.

All the witnesses with practical knowledge had given evidence that the vessel was a splendid one. Would a man of Captain Sayle's experience put to sea in a vessel of unseaworthy condition? The vessel was not loaded to capacity, and only loaded 6½ inches less than the Plimsoll mark. The stability conditions were such that the captain was justified in loading as was done. These conditions supplied by the builders were not the extreme limits of safety. She was a normal vessel, requiring no special loading or handling.

Counsel suggested the loss was caused by water through the hull from some unexplained accident. As to navigation, everyone spoke of captain, officers, and crew as trustworthy, careful, and competent men. There was no suggestion they did not take every reasonable precaution. There was no evidence that blame attached to the owners, captain, or crew.

" CARELESS LOADING."

Mr. Horgan, solicitor for the consignor of cattle, alleged that there was evidence showing the ship was loaded carelessly and quickly. If the Ford machinery had been put in the holds instead of on the poop and forecastle the disaster would never have occurred.

Mr. Costello, for the Ministry of Commerce, said the Department looked upon the inquiry as important. To a great extent the witnesses produced by the company were interested parties, either employees or others. It was the business of the Department to sift the evidence given by these companies, and it was proved beyond doubt that the vessel had a list on leaving Cork, and that she heeled over six hours afterwards. They also had it that the vessel had never been constructed to carry cargo on the poop and forecastle. There was cargo in and above the exempted spaces. For the first time cattle were carried in No. 2 hold.

When the court found a number of improprieties, some of which he had mentioned, and when the vessel was found, from some unexplained reason, heeling over, they were bound to assume that the cumulative effect of these matters showed that there was impropriety in loading and handling. The evidence given by the stowdore was biased regarding the stowage. Having regard to the stability conditions supplied by the builders the vessel was in a most dangerous state when she left Cork, having an appreciable list noticed by sailors and shoremen.

The Court passed a vote of condolence with the relatives.



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