

THE LOSS OF THE MAILE.

NO HOPE FOR THE VESSEL.

SOME NEW FACTS. 24

WAS THE SCHOONER SEA-WORTHY?

THE three-masted schooner Maile, of Auckland (Captain W. S. Lane), to-day 64 days out from Launceston (Tas.) for Auckland, is now given up for lost at sea with all hands. Mr M. T. Lane, registered owner of the Maile, called on us to-day and supplied us with authentic information as to the condition of the Maile when she left Launceston for Auckland, from which it appears that she was quite capable of reaching here in safety under anything but very extraordinary circumstances. Mr Lane informs us that the Maile was not coming across to Whangaroa for repairs. Captain Lane had instructions to come across to Auckland for repairs here, and to call at Whangaroa if the wind was favourable. Messrs Lane and Brown, who built the Maile, have a ship-building yard at Whangaroa, and they wished Captain Lane to call in there on his way to Auckland, in order to allow them to inspect the vessel and see what the damage was, and also to place a new false keel on board the vessel for conveyance to Auckland, where she was to be docked and thoroughly repaired. Captain Lane was also bringing a large anchor over from Launceston for Messrs Lane and Brown, and he wished himself to call in at Whangaroa in order to see his brother and Mr Brown on business. Besides this, Messrs Lane and Brown wished him to call there in order to get his advice as to the rigging of a new vessel which they are at present building. The Maile was to be refitted at Auckland.

When the Maile left Launceston the charterer (Captain W. C. Daldy) had to find ballast, and Captain Lane was at liberty to take any quantity he chose without cost to himself. The crew's articles expired in Launceston — they could all have left if there had been the least dissatisfaction. The Maile has been under charter to Messrs J. T. Arundel off and on for nearly three years, and Captain Daldy vouches that there was not a better-found vessel out of this port, and the captain was one of the ablest and most careful masters known, and was respected by all. Captain Daldy acted as agent for Mr Arundel.

Mr Lane states that, with reference to various rumours going the rounds regarding the unseaworthiness of the Maile, there was no foundation for them. She had been surveyed in Launceston, and there was nothing to prevent her from coming across here. As to the statement that the vessel was insufficiently ballasted, Mr Lane says that while admitting that Capt. Lane may possibly have committed an error of judgment, he could have taken as much ballast as he liked, for he did not have to pay for it, but he evidently considered that he had taken enough. He had the greatest faith in his brother's judgment in matters of this kind.

CORRESPONDENCE FROM CAPTAIN LANE.

Writing to Mr M. T. Lane from Bet Islet (Great N.E. Channel), on the North Queensland coast, under date of December 12, 1892, Captain Lane wrote regarding the Maile:—"We have again to thank God for answer to prayer, as we have just got off the reef where we were stranded, when there was every probability of our being stuck there till next spring, if she did not become a total wreck in the meantime. We unfortunately ran ashore at the top of high water springs. She was aground here (in the Coral Sea) fore-and-aft at low tide, with 12 feet of water on the side she listed (port). On the other side the rocks were just awash at low water. She is leaking badly about six inches per hour." Captain Lane was beating between Bet and Coconut Island, against the flood tide, keeping the lead going, when the Maile went ashore. There is only one tide in 24 hours up in that locality.

Writing subsequently from Gladstone (Queensland), where the vessel arrived after getting off the reef, Captain Lane wrote to his brother, under date January 17th, 1893:—"When the Maile got off the reef, there was a hump in the deck and rail, which, however, has gone back somewhat since. She was making six inches per hour, but now it has returned to about the usual thing. No doubt the copper is off more or less, and the shoe will be adrift." Captain Lane goes on to say that it was his use of the lead which really put him on to the reef. "Yet, had I not used the lead," he added, "and struck, I should have been blamed. Our mainsail and mizzen are badly in need of relief, but they will carry us to Auckland if the weather is not too bad."

The Maile arrived at Launceston (Tasmania) early in February last, after a fine passage from the North Queensland Coast, making a voyage of between 2,000 and 3,000 miles with a large cargo of guano in safety. This fact, Mr Lane says, showed that she had "taken up," and she was seaworthy enough for the trip to New Zealand. She ballasted at Launceston for Auckland. "The cargo is not damaged to speak of," wrote Capt. Lane. "There is no damage visible to the vessel, except that the copper is wrinkled a little on the bottom. I am practically well, but cannot stand much exertion." Capt. Lane further sent across a copy of some accounts, from which it appears that she was surveyed at Launceston. The Maile's articles (which were for six months) were expired before she reached Launceston, and the whole crew could have walked ashore if they liked with no one to hinder them. However, all except the cook preferred to come across to New Zealand in her.

Mr Lane admits that the vessel was leaking slightly, but says the leakage was nothing extraordinary for a craft like the Maile. He says that had the vessel been in a bad condition Captain Lane would have had her repaired at Launceston instead of risking the voyage across to New Zealand. Some of the vessel's sails were in a bad condition, but there were some spare sails on board, and with favourable weather the Maile should have met with no mishap on her voyage.

The general opinion is that the Maile was capsized and foundered between the Australian and New Zealand coast during one of the terrible gales which raged in February last.

It is not likely now that anything more will ever be heard of her. 284