

“DHOOLIA,” (S.S.)

Report of Court.

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of the formal investigation at the Board of Trade Offices, Poplar, on the 12th, 13th, and 15th January 1877, before H. C. ROTHERY, Wreck Commissioner, assisted by Commander G. H. FORSTER, R.N., and Captain J. S. CASTLE, as Assessors, into the circumstances attending the abandonment of the British steamship “DHOOLIA,” while on a voyage from Gibraltar to Hull, on 23rd December 1876.

Judgment.

The Commissioner. In the observations which I am about to make I shall not lose sight of what Mr. Ravenhill has told us is the wish of the Board of Trade, for it appears to me that this case is well deserving of attention, not only on account of the large interests at stake, but because it shows more than any other case which has yet come before me the value of these inquiries.

The “Dhoolia,” which is the subject of the present inquiry, was a screw steamship of 2,659 tons gross and 1,726 net register. She was built at Sunderland in the year 1872 by Messrs. T. R. Oswald and Company, and was originally intended for the passenger trade through the Suez Canal between England and Calcutta. She had engines of 350 horse power, and seems to have been built at very considerable expense.

In September 1873, within a year after she had been launched, she ran aground in the Red Sea, and sustained very considerable damage to her bottom. Having been got off, she was purchased by her late owners, Messrs. Hill and Smith, of Hull, and having been brought to this country she was thoroughly and efficiently repaired by Messrs. Earle’s Shipbuilding and Engineering Company at Grimsby. Captain Hill, one of the owners of the ship, who has been examined before us, has stated that apart from the purchase money and the expenses of bringing the vessel to this country they spent no less than 14,000*l.* in her repairs.

That the work was efficiently performed there can be no doubt. We have a certificate from the general manager of Earle’s Shipbuilding and Engineering Company, in which it is said that “the frames were doubled for a considerable length, in the way of the defective part, actually making the parts stronger than at first;” that the “lower deck beams in the boiler room were strengthened with large bracket plates at their ends, strongly connected to the stringer plates;” that “three new beams were fitted in the holds with strong bracket plates connecting them to the stringers,” as well as “two new double ones in the bunker space;” and that “all the ironwork was done under the inspection of the Liverpool Underwriters, and Board of Trade Surveyors, and to their entire satisfaction.” He adds that “all defective parts of the ironwork were made good and thoroughly efficient, and that after these repairs were completed the vessel was quite as strong as when she was new, and in parts stronger; for instance, where the double plates were fitted to the floors, and where the new beams were fitted in the holds.”

The certificate of Messrs. Earle is strongly confirmed by two letters dated in February and March 1875 from the Surveyors of the Underwriters Registry for Iron Vessels at Sunderland and Hull; one of them thus expresses himself: “I have to say that the repairs lately completed in and on board this vessel have been done in the most thorough manner; that all our requirements and suggestions have been promptly and efficiently carried out; and that the work was undertaken by you in a spirit evidently liberal and painstaking.” The other certificate from the Surveyor at Sunderland is nearly in the same terms, it says: “The vessel is generally quite equal to her condition when new, and so thoroughly has the matter of her strength been considered in effecting her repairs, that in some respects she is stronger and better than a new vessel.”

This is still further confirmed by the survey of the Board of Trade Surveyor at Hull, Mr. Spear, who was examined before us, in which he says: “This vessel having been on shore has since been thoroughly overhauled, and extensively repaired, the engines out and refitted.” And he accordingly gave her a certificate. There can be no doubt,

therefore, that whatever damage she sustained when she ran on shore in the Red Sea was thoroughly and completely repaired. After the vessel had been thus thoroughly repaired by Messrs. Hill and Smith she was sent on a voyage to Calcutta and Colombo, whether with passengers or without, I do not know; but in going out she again took the ground in the Suez Canal. That was in April 1875. She does not, however, appear to have sustained much damage, for she went on and completed her voyage, and on her return she was again overhauled and thoroughly repaired; and we have the certificates of Messrs. Jordan and Seddon of the Underwriters Registry for Iron Vessels, which say that all the recommendations which they made had been satisfactorily carried out and completed. This is still further confirmed by a report of Mr. Saunders, the Board of Trade Surveyor, who examined her on the 15th of September 1875, and gave her a certificate for the six ensuing winter months.

I think, therefore, that we may dismiss from our minds any idea that the loss of this vessel was due to the damage which she sustained in the year 1873 or 1875, as those damages were thoroughly and effectually repaired. Indeed, the evidence shows us that when this vessel left the country on her last voyage she was, as far as her owners knew, in a proper and efficient state of repair.

After her return from Colombo she went two voyages to New Orleans, one voyage to Odessa, and two to Alexandria, and it was on the second trip from Alexandria that she was lost. We have not been told whether on the voyage from Odessa, and on the previous voyage from Alexandria, she carried grain, but I presume that she did.

Before, however, I proceed to deal with the incidents of the second voyage from Alexandria, it will be necessary that I should say something about the construction of this vessel, about the disposition of the cargo, and about the arrangement of the shifting boards, for it is to those parts of the case that our attention must be more particularly directed.

It seems that the vessel was originally built for three decks, but two only were laid. She had three holds, the fore hold, the main hold, and the after hold, and in addition to that, she had a small hold quite aft, called the bullion hold. She had also five watertight bulkheads extending from the bottom of the ship to the main deck. There was first the collision bulkhead, separating the fore part from the fore hold, then there was a bulkhead between the fore and main holds, then another watertight bulkhead between the main hold and the engine-room, another bulkhead aft of the engine-room, and the fifth bulkhead was in the after part of the after hold. I mention these facts as it is important to ascertain where it was that the water came in which ultimately led to her loss. The height of the tween decks was about 8 feet; the depth of the lower holds was 17 feet, and the distance of the hold beams, on which, as I have stated, it was originally proposed to lay a third deck, was about 8 feet below the main deck. There were iron stanchions running down the centre of the ship, both between decks and in the lower holds, at intervals of about 10 feet from one another.

So much for the vessel below the tonnage deck. Above the tonnage deck there was in the fore part of the vessel the fore-castle. In the after part was the saloon, which extended about 100 feet forward from the stern. In the centre was the deck-house, raised about 7 feet above the main deck, the top of which constitutes the hurricane deck. This deck-house was in all about 76 feet long, the after part of it was about 6 feet aft of the engine-room space, and the forward part about 20 feet forward of the engine space. Between the deck-house and the bulwarks were alley ways about 4 feet wide. On the starboard side, opposite the engine-room hatchway, were the officers’ berths. In the plan which has been given to me they are described as being the engineers’ berths, but I think that that is a mistake. On the starboard side I think were the officers’ berths and on the port side were the engineers’ berths. The engineers’ berths opened from the engine-room; the officers’ berths opened from the alley way. I think that that is so Mr. Ravenhill?

Mr. Ravenhill. Yes, Sir, the officers’ berths opened from the alley way.

The Commissioner. At the back of the officers’ berths was a bulkhead separating them from the engine-room hatchway. The length of this hatchway was about 14 or 15 feet, the width across from the back of the officers’ berths to the engineers’ cabins on the port side was about 12 feet. On the top of the engine-room hatchway was a

skylight, to give light to the engine-room, the bulkhead of which I have spoken, and which separated the engine-room hatchway from the officers berths, stood upon and was flush with the iron bulkhead separating the engine-room space from the coal bunkers; but instead of being of iron, as the lower bulkhead was, it was constructed of inch and inch and a half plank, and was secured by a batten of from two to three inches square nailed upon the floor of the officers berths, that seems to have been the only security which it had.

Having now described the construction of this vessel, I must next state of what the cargo consisted and how it was stowed. It seems that it consisted chiefly of cotton seed; there were small portions of other grain, but the bulk was cotton seed. The fore and main holds, as well as the after hold, were all full, both between decks and in the lower holds. There was grain also in what is called the midship bunker in the engine-room, which is generally filled with coal when the vessel is destined for a long voyage, but on this occasion it was filled with grain. There was also something like 45 tons of seed in bags, which was distributed between the saloon and the bullion hold. The whole of the cargo was from 2,700 to 2,800 tons; a full, indeed I may say a large cargo for such a vessel.

To prevent the cargo from shifting the following arrangements were made. In the between decks the shifting boards extended from deck to deck, running right along the centre of the ship; they consisted of upright stanchions, against which were nailed 3-inch planks running fore and aft, the stanchions being supported by shores from the sides of the ship. In the lower fore hold and main hold the shifting boards were constructed in a manner which the master has described as being the Montreal method; there was an upright plank from the deck to the bottom of the vessel, shored up at the bottom and cleated, and on each side of it was a row of shifting boards running fore and aft of the vessel, thus forming a double row of shifting boards. The whole was supported by shores from the sides of the vessel, the shifting boards extended downwards from the deck to the hold beams, a depth of about 8 feet out of 17. It has been pointed out by the master that this form of construction is stronger than the usual form, and that it moreover displaces a greater quantity of cargo. In the lower after hold the shifting boards extended from the main deck to the top of the screw tunnel, and were also constructed on the Montreal method.

Having thus described the construction of the vessel, and the disposition and arrangement of the cargo, I will now proceed to the circumstances of the voyage. The vessel left Alexandria on the 3rd of December, bound I do not know for what port. For what port was she bound?

Mr. Stephens. For Hull, Sir.

The Commissioner. She was bound for Hull. At the time of her leaving Alexandria she drew 22 feet forward and 22 feet 6 aft. At that time the Plimsoll mark as it is called was about six inches out of the water, but as this mark on the vessel's side was about 5 feet 2 inches below the deck, I am advised by my assessors that there is no reason to suppose that she had not a sufficient freeboard. At the time of her leaving Alexandria her crew consisted of 43 hands all told. Her master, John Henry Stephens, held a certificate of competency as master, and had been in the ship since September 1874. The first officer, Edward Meek, also held a certificate as master and had been in her since May 1876. The second officer, Richard Sharpe, held a certificate not of competency but of service as mate, and had been with the master for between 14 and 15 years. In addition to this she had a boatswain, a boatswain's mate, a carpenter, a cook, a steward, 12 able seamen, two ordinary seamen, and a boy. In the engine-room she had three engineers and 15 firemen, stokers, and trimmers. The first engineer, Mr. Thomas Blyth Longley, held a certificate of competency as chief engineer. The second engineer, Henry Dibb, held a second-class certificate. The third engineer, John Chapman, had no certificate at all.

On the voyage from Alexandria to Malta nothing material occurred. She had left Alexandria with 380 tons of coal in her, and upon her arrival at Malta, five days afterwards, she took in, we are told, about 240 tons more. After staying at Malta for two days and a half she proceeded on her voyage to Gibraltar. She left Gibraltar on the 10th and at 8 o'clock the following morning a circumstance occurred to which it is necessary that I should call attention. It seems that whilst the second engineer was on duty the furnace tops of the port forward boiler came down upon the bars. The chief engineer on being informed thereof immediately went to see what was the cause of it, and on seeing the state of affairs he instantly ordered the boiler to be shut off, and himself drew the fires. On subsequently examining the boiler he found that the accident had arisen from a deficiency of water in the boiler, caused as he has informed us by one of the

cocks being three parts open, which would fully account for the boiler being without water. From that time the vessel continued her voyage with only three boilers instead of four, and her rate of speed was reduced from, I think, about 8½ knots to something under 7 knots an hour.

At daylight of the 17th she reached Gibraltar, and having taken in 105 tons of coals she proceeded on her voyage.

On rounding Cape St. Vincent she met with a strong head sea, and soon afterwards, the wind blowing strong from the north-west, and west-north-west, the foretrysail was blown away. The vessel continued her course with the wind four points on the port bow, and I think the master told us about two points to windward of her course, having strong head winds, and a nasty confused sea. By 7.30 p.m. of the 22nd, the day before she was lost, the wind had increased considerably, and the foretopsail, which had got seam rent, was taken in, repaired, and re-set. The wind continued to increase, and at nine the foot of the topsail was blown away, and the sail was split to ribbons. The wind rose to a gale, blowing in squalls. At about a quarter or half-past ten a heavy sea broke over the port side just forward of the bridge. The captain, who was at that time in charge, was standing on the monkey bridge, 18 feet above the deck, and so great was the force of the sea that he told us that he was smothered with the foam. The water, after breaking on board the vessel, rushed through the alley ways aft, filled the deck between the poop and the bridge, and breaking open the doors of the officers berths on the starboard side forced out the bottom of the bulkhead which separated them from the engine-room hatchway, and came down, as the chief engineer has told us, in tons into the engine-room. The captain, who was on the bridge, immediately ordered the foretrysail, which had been re-set, to be taken in, and the forestaysail to be hauled down. The vessel's helm was put down so as to bring her head to the wind, and all hands were sent down into the engine-room to endeavour to secure the bulkhead. On examining the bulkhead, which, as I have stated, was constructed of inch or inch and a half plank, it was found to have parted for its whole length of 14 or 15 feet at the lower end, and to be hanging, as one of the witnesses has described it, upon the top, as though upon an hinge; as the vessel heaved over to port the bulkhead opened, as she swung back to starboard it closed again. The measures which were taken to secure this bulkhead seem to have been superintended by the chief mate, the chief engineer, and the other officers of the vessel. They took the awning poles and the flag-staff and shored them against the opposite side of the hatchway. Handspikes were also obtained and were wedged against the nuts in the cylinder. But all their efforts seem to have been in vain, as fast as one shore was put up another gave way, and the water kept running from the alley ways into the officers berths, and thence down into the engine-room.

In the meantime, and whilst they were endeavouring to secure the bulkhead, the chain extending aft from the midship wheel parted, and the vessel immediately became unmanageable, falling off broadside to the sea. Orders were immediately given by the master to connect the after-wheel, and the relieving tackles being in their places, they were hooked on to the tiller, at least one of them was hooked on, and before there was time to hook on the other the cotter had been inserted into the rudder head, and the after wheel put in gear. The whole thing seems to have been done in about 10 minutes or a quarter of an hour, owing to the fact that everything was ready and in its place; the relieving tackles were ready and were at once applied, the cotter was in its proper place in the box on the top of the rudder head, and no time seems to have been lost in getting the ship again under command. I mention this fact as being very creditable to the master and the officers of this ship, that they should have had everything ready to meet such an emergency as this. In no less than four cases which have recently come before me, where the vessels have been steered from the midship wheel, the chains have parted, and in this case only out of the four have I found that the relieving tackles were ready at hand to ship, or that any measures were adopted to get the vessel again under control. I should add that the master took a step which my assessors advise me was a very proper one; whilst the vessel lay broadside to the sea he ordered the jib to be carried aft, and set on the mizen, with the view of getting her stern round, but so quickly had the after wheel been placed in gear, that there was no time to set the jib.

During all this time the alley ways were continually filled with water, and as the vessel rolled the water naturally found its way through the officers berths down into the engine-room. By 3 a.m. the starboard fires had been

put out, and in about an hour afterwards the port fires were put out; the donkey-engine fire it seems remained alight for a short time longer.

At about 5 a.m. the weather moderated, and the captain, anxious to put his vessel, if possible, on the other tack, tried to wear her, but she would only come round to a little beyond the beam, and there hung. Finding that she was in a dangerous position, the master again brought her head to the wind.

After the fires had gone out the water continued to increase rapidly in the engine-room, so that at 8.30 a.m. there was from 10 to 11 feet of water in her. At about 8 the "Malta" was observed at some distance; signals were accordingly made to her, and on her coming up preparations were made for lowering the boats. The first boat, it seems, left at about 9.30; other boats left at intervals, but it was not until about 2.30 that the master, who had been left alone on the ship with the donkey-man, was taken off in the "Malta's" pinnace. At this time he has told us there were from 16 to 17 feet of water in the engine-room.

The "Malta" remained as near to the vessel as she could safely do, and it would seem that she must have gone down during that night, for on the following morning she was nowhere to be found, although the "Malta" cruised about the place until about 10 o'clock. She thereupon proceeded on her voyage to Corunna, and ultimately brought all the crew, with the exception of one, to England.

Such are the facts of this case as they have been disclosed before us in the evidence of the master, the two mates, the engineers, the carpenter, and some others of the crew; and the question which we have now to consider is, what was the direct and immediate cause of the loss of this fine vessel, and her cargo? and whether anyone, and if so, who is to blame for the casualty?

And first, as regards the cargo which she had on board. There can be no doubt that this vessel was originally constructed to carry passengers. As a passenger ship she would not be so deep in the water as when laden, as she was on this occasion, with grain. The cargo, too, was a heavy one; insomuch that after she had shipped the heavy sea which broke in the bulkhead she had lost that buoyancy which was necessary to keep her decks free from water. At the same time, looking at the fact that her main deck was nearly six feet out of the water when she left Alexandria, we cannot say that she had not sufficient freeboard, or that she was too heavily laden for safety. Indeed, had it not been for the giving way of the bulkhead we have every reason to believe that the vessel might have prosecuted her voyage in safety.

As regards the stowage of the cargo, we have nothing to complain of. In the between decks the shifting boards went from deck to deck. In the after lower hold the shifting boards extended from the deck to the screw tunnel. In the fore and main lower holds the shifting boards came down to the hold beams, or 8 feet out of 17 feet, nearly 50 per cent. of the whole space. We have no evidence whether the cargo settled after she left Alexandria, and before she went down, for the hatches were battened down, and were not opened, and there appears to have been no means of seeing the condition of the cargo without lifting the hatches. But whether it did settle or not, the arrangements of the shifting boards seem to have been so good that there is no evidence whatever that she had any list at any time up to the moment of her being abandoned more than could be accounted for by the weight of water on the lee side, and the force of the wind and sea heeling her over. There is, therefore, nothing in the stowing of the cargo, or in the arrangement of the shifting boards, for which we could blame either the officers or any person who had anything to do with the loading of the vessel.

Next, as regards the parting of the steering chain, I have already stated that everything appears to have been in its place to meet an emergency of this description. The relieving tackles were ready, and the cotter was in its place, and within 10 minutes after the steering chain parted the after wheel was put into communication.

Fourthly, as to the attempts to secure the bulkhead; here, again, we can see nothing at all to complain of in the conduct of the master, or of any of the officers of the vessel; they seem to have done everything which they could to secure the bulkhead; but in our opinion it was impossible, the bulkhead having once given way, and being but one inch or one inch and a quarter plank, that any shores or struts, or props, or nails, could have secured it against the weight of water which was pressing upon it from the officers berths.

Fifthly, were the master and officers justified in abandoning their vessel when they did so? We are clearly of opinion that they were. It would certainly have been more satisfactory to have known whether there was any water in any other part of the vessel than the engine-room. All that

we have been told is, that in the forehold they found nine inches of water, but that there was so much water about the deck that they were unable to sound either the main hold or the after hold. At the same time, seeing that the engine-room was nearly 50 feet long, and this in the broadest part of the vessel, we have no doubt whatever that if the engine-room space had been full of water it would have been quite sufficient of itself to have sunk the vessel. One of the assessors since our meeting on Saturday has calculated that 1,500 tons of water would have been sufficient to sink this vessel, and that the engine-room alone, making allowance for the space occupied by the engines and boilers, would have contained something like 1,700 tons of water. This, then, is quite sufficient to account for the loss of this vessel without its being necessary to suppose that the water got into any of the other holds. I should add that the master was the last to leave the vessel, the officers had left not long before, and we have the evidence of a very important person, the master of the "Malta," that in his opinion they were justified in abandoning the vessel when they did. And in that opinion we entirely concur.

Seeing, then, that none of these causes would appear to have contributed to the loss of this vessel, but that it is due entirely to the giving way of the bulkhead, we must now proceed to inquire whether blame attaches to anyone for this defect in her construction, and if so, to whom? On this point we have had the evidence of Mr. Oswald, the builder of the vessel; Mr. Pearson, who repaired her in 1874, and in 1875, after she had grounded in the Red Sea; of Mr. Jordan, the surveyor in London of the Underwriters Registry for Iron Ships, who surveyed her in 1875; of Mr. Spear, the Board of Trade Surveyor at Hull, who surveyed her in 1874, and again in August last; of Mr. Saunders, another Board of Trade Surveyor, residing at Liverpool, who surveyed her in September and November 1875; and lastly, we have had the evidence of Captain Hill, one of the owners.

Mr. Oswald has produced before us the plan on which the vessel was originally built, and he has told us that in the original construction of this vessel the bulkhead was of wood, an inch or an inch and a half thick; that the bottom of it was flush with the officers berths, and secured only with a batten from two to three inches thick; and that it stood upon and was in a line with an iron bulkhead separating the engine-room from the bunkers; exactly, in fact, as the officers of the ship have described it. He told us that at the time when he constructed this vessel he thought that such a bulkhead would be sufficient, but that having heard the evidence in this case he is now clearly of opinion that it is not, and that if he had to build another vessel of the same description, he would certainly construct that bulkhead of iron; he would build the front and back and the sides of the engine-room hatchway of iron and not of wood; and he said that there would be no difficulty in doing so. The additional cost, I think, would be only 100*l*.

Mr. Pearson has told us that in the repairs which he did to the vessel his attention was never called to this bulkhead. He also said that having heard the evidence in this case, he is of opinion that that bulkhead should have been of iron, and that he should not consider the vessel seaworthy unless that bulkhead was of iron.

The Surveyors to the Board of Trade, as well as the Surveyor to the Underwriters Registry for Iron Ships, stated that in the surveys which they made of the vessel, it never occurred to them to look at this bulkhead, to see whether it was of iron or of wood; but that having heard the evidence in this case they should certainly not again pass any vessel of this description without ascertaining that the internal bulkheads round the engine-room hatchway were constructed of iron.

Captain Hill, the owner, and the officers of the vessel, have all told us that they were under the impression that this bulkhead was of iron; and that they had no reason to suppose that it was otherwise.

The result, then, of this inquiry, and perhaps the most important result, has been to indicate a weak point in the construction of this vessel, of which neither the builder, the owners, nor any of the persons who surveyed her, had ever before any suspicion. Had this bulkhead been of iron, as it should have been, probably this vessel would have reached her destination in safety; and it is satisfactory to find that all the witnesses who have been examined before us admit not only that it is necessary that this bulkhead should be of iron, but the surveyors have stated that they will not again pass any vessel where the bulkheads of the engine-room hatchway are not of iron.

For the defect in its construction, which has led to the loss of this valuable ship and her cargo, Mr. Ravenhill, on behalf of the Board of Trade, has stated that he makes no

charge against either the builders, the owners, the officers, or against anyone, and we think that in so doing he has exercised a wise discretion. We think that under the circumstances it would not be right to charge either the builders or the owners with any culpable neglect on this account. But if after this inquiry any vessel should be built with a bulkhead constructed as this was, or if in any vessel which may now be afloat a thin wooden bulkhead like this is allowed to remain, it would be a question with me whether the builders and owners of that vessel would not be very seriously to blame.

I wish now that I could say that our duty had ended here; but in the course of our inquiry facts have come out which have induced Mr. Ravenhill to bring a charge against Henry Dibb, the second engineer of the "Dhoolia," a charge of drunkenness and neglect of duty on the occasion of the loss of the ship; and it is necessary that we should examine it carefully.

I have already stated that, on the morning after she left Malta, owing to the neglect of the second engineer, who was on duty at the time, the fore port boiler gave way. It was his duty to see that this boiler was properly filled with water, he neglected to do so, and he has admitted that the blame of this accident rests with him. It is true that he has said that the cock was not left three parts open, as the first engineer stated; but he admits that it was partly open, and this is quite sufficient to account for the water having been blown out of the boiler; for this neglect of duty we hold him to blame.

Another charge against him was, that knowing that this vessel for two or three days before the casualty had been making water from the deck into the engine-room, so that it was necessary to keep the pumps going, he allowed the water during his watch, from 4 to 8 p.m. on the 22nd, to accumulate in the engine-room, having negligently turned the donkey-pump upon the after hold, instead of upon the engine-room and stokehole, so that the water increased in the engine-room to a depth of about 2 feet 6. The chief engineer, who succeeded him on the watch, observing that the water had increased in the engine-room to such an extent, examined the corks, and found, as I have stated, that the donkey-pump was directed towards the after hold, instead of the engine-room. This, again, was a very serious neglect of duty, and for which we consider the second engineer to be alone to blame.

But the gravest and most serious charge of all is that of drunkenness and neglect of duty at the time of the casualty. It seems that the second engineer on coming off duty at 8 p.m. of the 22nd immediately retired to his cabin, and remained there, although everyone on board was doing his best to secure the bulkhead, and to prevent the ship from foundering, until 2 o'clock on the following morning, when he was called by the first engineer. On being called he seems to have gone down into the engine-room, and to have stood by the auxiliary valves so long as the fires remained alight. When, however, the fires had gone out, he again retired to his cabin, and, as he has told us, having a presentiment that the ship would founder, he went into his cabin to prepare himself. After a time he admitted that the preparation which he made for the foundering of the ship was to take a glass or two of grog, or, in other words, to get drunk. How long he remained in that state there is nothing to show, but he left the ship late, and he says that at that time he was sober.

At any rate, however, he was drunk again in the evening, after he had got on board the "Malta." He did not attempt to deny these facts, and on being asked by me whether he intended to employ professional assistance to defend him, he said that he did not, that he had come prepared to lose his certificate, and that he was content to leave the case as it stood. Under these circumstances we have no option but to cancel his certificate. Apart from his neglect of duty on the two occasions, when the port boiler became disabled, and when the water was allowed to accumulate in the engine-room, we think that a man who can so far forget himself as to shut himself up in his cabin and get drunk at a time when the services of every seaman on board were required to endeavour to save the vessel, is not a fit person to serve as an engineer on board a vessel. It is no excuse, in our opinion, to say that he was alarmed; a man who could thus lose his head is not a proper person to hold an engineer's certificate. When, too, it is remembered that if anything had happened to the first engineer this man would have taken his place, and that the only person on board to give him any assistance was a young man, who held no certificate, we think that it is not such a condition of affairs as should be allowed to exist on board such a vessel. We shall, therefore, forward his certificate to the Board of Trade, with an intimation that we have cancelled it.

As regards Captain Stephens, we have been requested by his counsel to state our opinion of him, and we have no hesitation in saying that his conduct throughout the whole of this transaction has been that of a good and able seaman; and we shall certainly recommend to the Board of Trade that his certificate, which appears to have been lost in the vessel, should be renewed. The certificates of the other officers, which have been surrendered pending this inquiry, will be at once returned to them, saving that of Henry Dibb. The observation which I have made about the master applies equally to the officers; they seem all, with the exception of the second engineer, to have done all that was in their power to do, to save this vessel.

There will, of course, be no costs.

(Signed) H. C. ROTHERY,
Wreck Commissioner.

Finding.

The Court, having carefully inquired into the circumstances of the above-mentioned shipping casualty, finds, for the reasons stated in the annexed judgment, that the loss of the "Dhoolia" and her cargo was due to the giving way of the bulkhead on the starboard side of the engine-room hatchway, which was too weak for the purpose; that the master, officers, and crew of the ship were justified under the circumstances in abandoning her at the time they did, but it cancels the certificate of Henry Dibb, the second engineer of the "Dhoolia," for drunkenness and neglect of duty on the occasion of the loss of the said ship.

The Court is also of opinion that there should be no order as to costs.

Dated this 15th day of January 1877.

(Signed) H. C. ROTHERY,
Wreck Commissioner.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) GEORGE H. FORSTER, } Assessors.
" JOHN S. CASTLE, }