

(No. 70.)

"APOLLO" (S.S.)

In the matter of an investigation held before Captain J. S. CASTLE into the circumstances attending the supposed loss of the British steamship "APOLLO," of Hull.

In pursuance of my appointment, dated the 29th day of June 1894, I held an investigation into the circumstances attending the supposed loss of the above-named vessel at the Local Marine Board Room, Hull, on the 3rd of July 1894, when Mr. Saxelbye appeared for the Board of Trade, the owners not being professionally represented. Having carefully considered the evidence, I beg to report as follows:—

The "Apollo," official number 93,122, was a British screw steamship, built of steel, in the year 1887, by Messrs. Earles & Co., Limited, of Hull, and the vessel was registered at that port. Her length was 330'4 ft., breadth 41'2 ft., and depth of hold 29'5 ft.; under-deck tonnage 3,065'73 tons, gross tonnage 3,163'01 tons, and net registered tonnage 2,054'11 tons. She was rigged as a two-masted schooner and was fitted with three triple-expansion direct-acting vertical inverted cylinder engines of 300 horse-power combined, and was owned by Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Co., Limited, Mr. Charles James Newbold, of Hull, having been appointed manager on the 3rd March 1891.

This vessel was built under special survey to class 100 A1. at Lloyd's, and she has been described as a two-decked ship, with a hood forward, a bridge-house 70 ft. long, which was built of steel, in the fore part of which was the saloon, captain's cabin, and a few cabins for passengers, but she had no passengers' certificate. The officers' accommodation was in a house aft, and there was also a hood over the wheel-house. She had steam steering gear on the bridge, and a spare wheel aft worked by manual power.

She had five hatchways of the following dimensions:—No. 1, 20 ft. x 12 ft.; No. 2, 34 ft. x 14 ft.; No. 3, 8 ft. x 12 ft.; No. 4, 16 ft. x 12 ft.; No. 5, 20 ft. x 12 ft. In No. 1 and Nos. 4 and 5 hatchways there was one cross beam, and in No. 2 hatchway there were two beams, and in each hatchway there were three fore and afters, made of wood, with the exception of No. 3, this hatchway being of small dimensions. The coamings were made of steel and were 21 in. high. The hatches were constructed of 3-in. red pine, and they could be secured with tarpaulins, battens, cleats, and screws, or screw discs, and not with the ordinary wooden wedge. There were fourteen iron ventilators with cowls, fitted on coamings 21 in. high; they were also fitted with steel caps, screws, and canvas covers in case of bad weather. The engine-room skylight and fiddley gratings were raised 3 ft. above the bridge deck, the latter being secured by iron shutters. The entrance to the engine-room was through iron doors, the coamings of which were 20 in. high. The bunker hatches were all under the bridge deck. All these openings appear to have been properly supplied with covers which could be efficiently used when required.

In the hold there were six iron bulkheads, all of which extended to the upper deck, the collision bulkhead being different from the ordinary one as it formed an inner or second bow. There were two water-tallast tanks, one in fore part of engine-room and the other in the after part; the fore tank had a capacity of 357 tons, and the after one of 260 tons; they were about 15 ft. deep; and on leaving New York barrels of colza oil, paints, Liebig, and various other goods were stowed in them. In the fore lower hold permanent shifting boards were fitted from keelson to the main deck with the exception of the hatchways, where there were portable boards, and in the after hold the permanent shifting boards extended from the top of the tunnel to the under part of the main deck, portable boards being also used in the way of the hatches.

The vessel carried four boats, two life-boats and two cutters, which were stowed on chocks on the bridge deck amidships. I had no evidence as to the dimensions of these boats, but there can be no doubt but that there was sufficient boat accommodation on each side of the vessel to carry all persons on board.

There were 10 life-buoys and 54 belts in accordance with the provisions of the Life-Saving Appliances Act.

The Committee of Lloyd's Register, on behalf of the Board of Trade, approved of the position of the disc on the "Apollo," and the following freeboard was assigned to this vessel. With a mean draft of 24 ft. 9 in. she would have a freeboard of 6 ft. 7 in., but as the vessel on leaving New York on the 11th February last had a mean draft of 23 ft. 6 in., she must have had a freeboard of 8 ft. 1 in., which would be in excess of that required by the statute.

It appears that the "Apollo" from the time of her being launched until 1889 was employed trading between Hull and Bombay; the outward cargoes consisting of general goods and coal, with machinery on the upper deck, the homeward cargoes were also general with grain in bags. During this period the vessel experienced heavy weather on several occasions and then proved herself to be a good sea boat, shipping very little water; and nothing of any importance happened to either engines or steering gear during that time. In January 1890 the vessel was employed in the New York trade, carrying general cargoes, and on some occasions cattle in the 'tween and upper decks, she having carried as many as 400 head without loss. Since February 1891 the vessel has been trading between Antwerp and New York, and has not been to any port in the United Kingdom since that date. It appears that the "Apollo" has never required any extensive repairs since she has been running, but she has been regularly docked at Antwerp, the last occasion being on the 23rd July 1893, where she remained for three days, and was then in every respect in a good and seaworthy condition.

In February of the present year the "Apollo" was at New York, where she loaded a cargo for Antwerp, the estimated weight of which, as shown by a copy of the manifest, was about 3,442 tons, and there were also 500 tons of coal on board. Of this cargo, 2,416 tons consisted of corn, which was stowed in bulk in the lower holds, the balance of the cargo being general, and some of it, being of a very light weight, was stowed in the 'tween decks. A certificate has been produced, signed by W. A. Ellis, Surveyor to the Board Underwriters at New York, certifying that the "Apollo" had been loaded under his inspection, and that she had conformed to all the Rules of the Board of Underwriters at New York. That her draft of water, as loaded, was 21 ft. 3 in. forward, and 25 ft. 3 in. aft, with a freeboard of 8 ft. 1 in. It appears that one of the rules in force in Messrs. Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Co.'s service, is for the master after the loading is completed, and before leaving port, is to forward a letter to the Marine Superintendent at Hull, describing the nature of the cargo, and reporting upon the stowage, and the general condition of the ship. This letter is also signed by the first and second officers. The letter written on the 11th of February 1894 is as follows:—

"S.S. 'Apollo,' New York,
"11th February 1894.

"Captain J. Rutter,

"Marine Superintendent,

"Messrs. Thomas Wilson, Sons, Limited.

"Dear Sir,—We, the undersigned, hereby certify that the above-named ship, now fully loaded, and about to proceed to sea, is in every way fully equipped and manned. The cargo properly and securely stowed and secured, and the ship herself generally efficient and seaworthy for the intended trip to Antwerp.

"We are, dear Sir,

"Yours obediently,

"T. SYKES, Master,

"E. D. ALLAM, 1st Mate,

"T. E. BRADSTREET, 2nd Mate."

William C. Hall, New York Pilot, states that he took charge of the "Apollo" on February 11th, 1894, at 10.30 a.m., at which time she left the dock at Hoboken, New Jersey. He describes her as a stiff ship and steering well. At 1 p.m. the same day he left her outside the Bar of Sandy Hook in fine clear weather, and everything seemed in first-rate order and condition. Since that time, when the pilot left, she has not been seen or heard of.

She was then under the command of Mr. Thomas Sykes, who had commanded her since December 1890; he held a certificate of competency as master, numbered 08,405; and she had a crew of 35 hands all told.

From the evidence, I consider that the ship was in a good and seaworthy condition, as regards hull, machinery, and equipment, when she left New York. The cargo, as already mentioned, was properly stowed, and as loaded she would have sufficient stability. The vessel was not inclined when built, nor were any calculations made as to her metacentric height with a homogeneous cargo, but Mr. Seeton, the manager of Earles & Co., Limited, informed me that the "Apollo" would not carry a full cargo of that description, as if so loaded the metacentric height would be nil.

The "Apollo" was valued by the owners at the time of leaving New York at 30,000*l.*, and she was insured for that amount—11,000*l.* being insured in London, and 19,000*l.* at the owner's risk. The freight and charges amounted to 2,463*l.*, and was insured—463*l.* being also at the owner's risk.

The cause of the loss of this vessel must remain a mystery, as nothing whatever has been seen of her since the date of her departure from New York. A pilot chart of the North Atlantic in the month of March has

been produced, which shows that on February 13th a storm entered the Atlantic near Sandy Hook, and was joined by a depression from the Chesapeake; at noon (Greenwich mean time) of that date it was central near latitude 39° north, longitude 66° west. Thence it moved easterly and north-easterly, crossing the transatlantic track in nearly 30° west during the night of the 14th. Highest force of wind 11, lowest barometer 28.86 inches.

The "Apollo" in all probability experienced bad weather in the Atlantic, but for a ship well found and laden as she appears to have been, and with a high freeboard, that is not sufficient reason to account for her loss, if properly handled, as no doubt she would have been, the master having had a long experience of the ship. She may have come into collision with another vessel, or with an iceberg, but that is a matter of conjecture, and I have no reliable facts to enable me to form an opinion as to the actual cause of the vessel's loss.

Dated the 9th day of July 1894.

(Signed) JOHN S. CASTLE.

To the Assistant Secretary,
Marine Department,
Board of Trade.