

The Steamship Whakatane's Collision with a Wharf in the St. Lawrence.

Commander H. St. G. Lindsay, R.D., R.N.R., Dominion Wreck Commissioner, gave the following decision Oct. 17, which was concurred in by Captains F. Nash and R. S. Clift, assessors:—The British steamship Whakatane, official no. 11648, on a voyage from Cardiff, South Wales, for Montreal, via Sydney, N.S., and apparently well manned and equipped in every respect, arrived at Father Point, Gulf of St. Lawrence, on the afternoon of Sept. 12 and took on board a licensed pilot and proceeded at once on her voyage towards Quebec and Montreal. Fine weather was experienced during the trip up the river until shortly after passing St. Jean light, Orleans Island, which was abeam at 3.20 a.m. of Sept. 13, when slight mist or smoke lying close to the water was met with, and the pilot, who appears to have been in full and complete charge of the navigation of the vessel, ordered the speed to be reduced to half speed and shortly after that to slow. At 3.50 a.m. St. Laurent light was abeam, and the light on Beaumont Shoal buoy, almost opposite on the south side of the channel, was also observed quite distinctly, and the vessel, according to the evidence, although no bearing was taken, passing about midway between these two lights, and the course was then altered by the pilot about half a point to the westward. After proceeding on this course for about 5 or 10 minutes, the course was again altered with the intention of passing to the southward of West Point light at the usual distance off, viz., about half a mile. Shortly after this the master called the pilot's attention to some lights on the south shore, being, as he thought, rather close aboard, and the pilot gave orders to alter the course a quarter of a point to the westward, which was done, and some minutes after the look-outs reported something right ahead, which ultimately proved to be a portion of a wrecked steamer lying on the south bank of the river. Orders were at once given to put the helm aport, full speed astern on the engines, and let go the anchor; but the ship's head had barely started to swing to starboard, under the influence of the port helm, when she ran with great force into Gilmour's wharf at Indian Cove, remaining aground there for some 13 hours, when she was pulled off at high water by tugs and taken into Louise Basin, Quebec, and from there to the Levis drydock, where temporary repairs were effected.

The court, after carefully considering the evidence, which, in some particulars, appears to be of a conflicting nature, is unanimous in its opinion that both the master and pilot are to blame for the casualty, inasmuch as the master did not take sufficient interest in the navigation of his vessel after leaving Father Point, leaving it almost entirely in the pilot's hands, and his example appears to have been followed by the officers, as it would appear that no particular attention was given to the steering, the navigating of the ship being carried out by courses set on the steering compass in the wheelhouse, instead of on the standard compass, and if the times given in the log book are correct, which is, in the court's opinion, very doubtful, no one seems to have taken the true speed the ship was making into consideration, between the various lights, as it would appear that instead of six knots, which the court was informed was the supposed speed of the vessel when passing St. Laurent light, it appears by the time given in the log book to be nearer 12 knots. The time from abeam of St. Laurent light to the time of the stranding is given as 33 minutes, and the exact distance

being six miles between these points, shows in itself how much reliance the court can put on either evidence or log book entries. The court, therefore, not wishing to deal with the certificate of J. H. Squires, the master, taking into consideration his want of experience as master, and his seeming ignorance as to the regulations connected with the St. Lawrence pilotage, severely reprimands him for his unfortunate lack of initiative pertaining to the safe navigation of his vessel, and the court hopes that this reprimand may prove beneficial to him in the future. With respect to the actions of L. T. Delisle, the pilot, which, in the court's opinion, are inexplicable, as the courses steered and given by him in his evidence after leaving St. Laurent light, put the ship exactly where she struck the wharf, and even if he had been misled by the wheelhouse compass being locally affected, which is quite possible, the fact of being able to see the lights on both sides of the river some time before the accident, makes it more difficult for the court to understand how he allowed the vessel to get so far out of her proper course without noticing that fact in time to avert the accident. The court therefore suspends his license for the balance of the present season of navigation, and also orders that he pay all costs and personal expenses pertaining to himself with respect to this inquiry. The court, in taking into consideration the number and similarity of accidents occurring in the St. Lawrence within the last 12 months, cannot but recognize the fact that the masters do not seem to realize that, although a pilot is on board, the responsibility for the safety of the ship still rests with them, just as if no pilot were engaged, as only the payment of pilotage dues is compulsory, and not the employment of pilots. This is clearly set forth in sec. 473, chap. 113, of the Revised Statutes of Canada, 1906, and if those in charge of vessels navigating in Canadian pilotage waters were to live up to this, especially in the St. Lawrence trade, there would be fewer accidents of the like nature. The court also severely criticizes the fact of the pilot leaving the vessel when he did, instead of standing by her to assist in getting her afloat.

Work on Panama Canal.

By the blowing up of the Gamboa Dyke, the signal for which was given by telegraph from Washington, D.C., by the U.S. President, Oct. 10, the water was let into the Culebra cut, and practical connection made between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The work of excavation was first commenced on the Culebra cut Jan. 20, 1882, by the original French company, and the amount of material removed by it and its French successor was approximately 17,000,000 cu. yds. The U.S. Government took over the work May 4, 1904, and continued the use of the equipment left by the old companies, until it could be replaced by more modern machinery. The first modern steam shovel was put into use Nov. 11, 1904, and the last of the old equipment was displaced by June 16, 1905. Since the U.S. Government undertook the work, 97,049,601 cu. yds. of material have been removed from the Culebra cut, the maximum output being in 1911, when 16,596,891 cu. yds. were dealt with. Considerable trouble has been experienced with earth slides, and the removal of these will be dealt with as a regular part of the dredging work of keeping a clear channel. The total length of the canal is 47 miles.

Vessels will not proceed through the canal under their own steam, but will be towed through by electric locomotives, specially designed for the work. A series

of tests took place recently, with a sample locomotive, with a view to detecting defects and making the necessary modifications and alterations. As a result, 40 locomotives have been ordered from the General Electric Co., at a net cost of \$13,217 each. The first locomotive is to be delivered in seven months from the date of the order, and the remainder at the rate of four a month.

Proposed Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Plant for Sault Ste. Marie.

The project for the establishment of a dry dock and shipbuilding plant at Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., has been before the local authorities for some time, and a bylaw was passed by the ratepayers in 1909 confirming an agreement with J. O'Boyle for the construction of such works, by him or a company formed for the purpose, at an estimated cost of \$500,000. The dimensions of the dock were to be:—Length from sill to head of dock, 620 ft.; width on floor, 53 ft.; width at level of sill, 70 ft.; width at top, 85½ ft., with a depth of water over the sill of 17½ ft. under normal conditions. The city was to pay an annual subsidy of \$5,000 a year for 20 years, the first payment becoming due when \$100,000 had been expended on construction work, and the second payment being due when the dock was completed and ready for operation. A company was formed to undertake the work, under the name of the Sault Ste. Marie Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Co., and in 1911 the city agreed that the terms of the agreement with J. O'Boyle were binding with the company. Nothing was done by the company in connection with the project, and in March, 1912, it was announced that the charter had been acquired by F. H. Clergue, who was formerly connected with the Lake Superior Corporation, and some associates, and that construction would be proceeded with at once, that plans had been deposited with the Dominion Public Works Department, and that \$1,500,000 would be spent on the plant. No steps were, however, taken towards commencing the work, and it was recently stated that the charter had lapsed, and that the whole scheme had fallen through.

Fresh proposals were placed before the city council, Oct. 6, by which the city is asked to give a bonus of \$20,000 a year for 20 years, with exemption from all taxes, except school taxes, for the first five years, a fixed assessment of \$250,000 for the next five years, and a fixed assessment of \$500,000 for the next ten years. It is proposed to build a plant to cost approximately \$2,000,000, to employ 1,500 men when in full running order, and capable of handling vessels of 15,000 tons displacement. F. H. Clergue, Sault Ste. Marie, and F. H. Bromwich, London, Eng., are interested in the scheme, and are reported to have stated that funds are available for the commencement of the work as soon as the city assents to the terms. The Mayor, at a meeting of ratepayers, Oct. 8, stated that the promoters had agreed to deposit \$25,000 with a local bank as evidence of good faith, and had undertaken that construction commence not later than Apr. 1, 1914, and that the plant would be ready for operation in two years from that date. The sum deposited in the bank was not to be released until \$100,000 had been spent on construction, and taxes would be paid on a fixed assessment of \$500,000 for 15 years, instead of as originally suggested. It is also stated that the contract will be undertaken by Sir Douglas Fox and Partners, London, Eng. A bylaw is in course of preparation for submission to a vote at an early date.