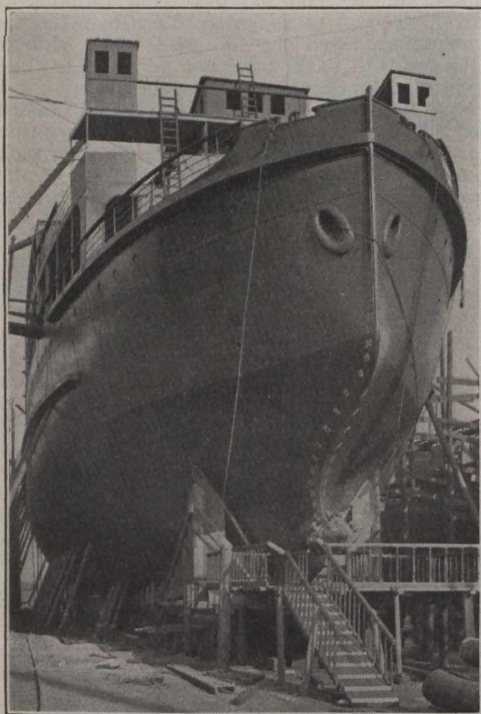


## Grounding of the s.s. Romney.

A formal investigation was held at Quebec, June 29, by Capt. L. A. Demers, Dominion Wreck Commissioner, assisted by Capt. J. A. Murray, harbor master, Quebec, and Capt. F. Nash, Montreal, as nautical assessors, into the causes of the grounding of the British s.s. Romney on Green Island reef, in the St. Lawrence River, June 24.

The master, Thomas Moss, stated that the Romney is a single screw, steel built vessel, of 2,316 tons net, with triple expansion engines, capable of a speed of 11 knots, carrying a crew of 56 all told, and is provided with all the necessary navigation instruments, including four compasses, one



Bow of Car Ferry s.s. Prince Edward Island, just before launching.

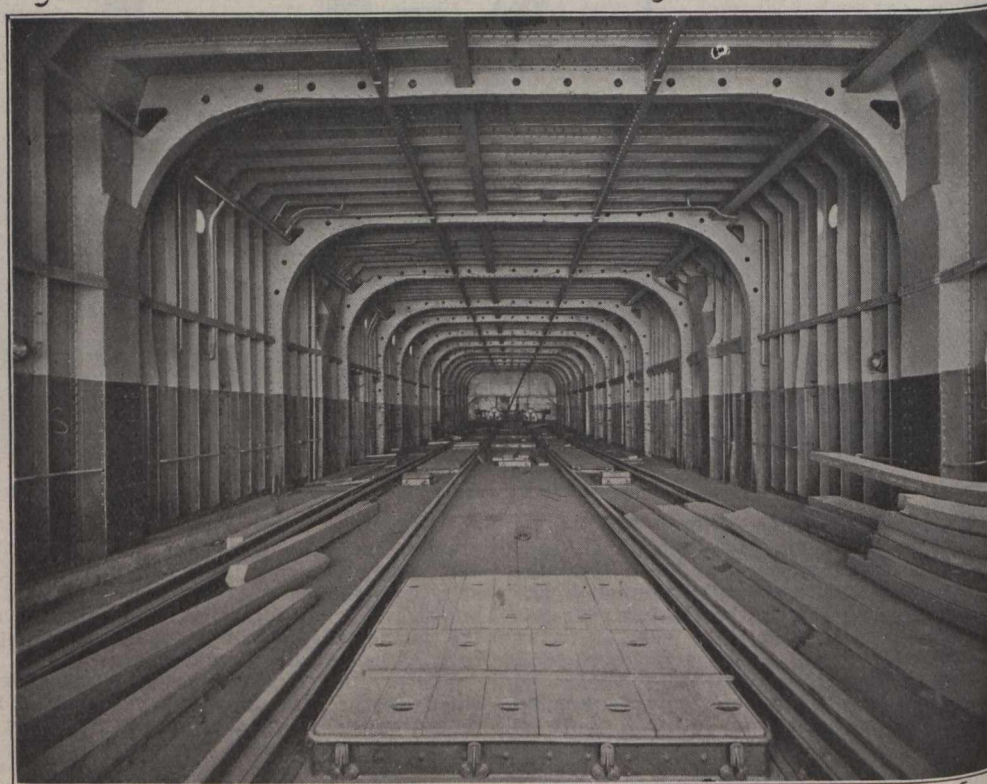
of which is of Lord Kelvin's make, upon which there is very little deviation. From the time he left Liverpool he encountered more or less misty, thick weather. During the 10 days crossing until Sydney was reached, he had scarcely any rest, all hands having been kept on the alert while the vessel was in the war zone. After leaving Sydney, where he had gone to bunker, he encountered misty weather. He first sighted Cape Gaspe, then Cape Chatte, and finally made Father Point. He was on the bridge constantly during this time, and after having boarded the pilot, and passing Bic Island, he left the bridge about 11.30 p.m., after having given verbal orders to be called if the weather became thick or misty. He did not retire to his room until 12.30, the weather being then overcast, with fresh wind from a northeasterly direction. He had informed the pilot that on the course s 67 w there was but one degree of deviation, which was not worth considering. He was awakened by the ship striking, and rushed up on deck, and found that orders for the engines to be put full speed astern had been given by the pilot, but notwithstanding this the ship remained fast. The tide was then ebbing, and soundings were immediately taken, and a call for assistance was sent by wireless, and the s.s. Lady Evelyn arrived and made efforts to pull the vessel off without success, until that night, when the ship was floated at high water, and proceeded to Quebec.

Jules Lamarre stated that he had been a Quebec branch pilot for some 12 years, having had but one accident previously, which was not made the subject of an investigation, as it was trivial. He had piloted the Celtic King down the day before and landed at Father Point on June 23, and attempted to rest, but owing to pains in his legs could not obtain any sleep. The same evening he took charge of the s.s. Romney, and steered the usual courses to Bic, and after passing that point shaped a course s 67 w, which in ordinary circumstances would lead him between Red Island lightship and Green Island. He saw a light half a point on his starboard bow, but could not distinguish its character, owing to the smoke from the ship obliterating its brilliancy, the wind being aft, or a little on the port quarter. The lookout reported breakers ahead, the helm was put hard astarboard, engines ordered full speed astern, and the ship grounded. Prior to this, he assumed that the light in sight was the lightship, but did not make sure by means of the glasses, that such was the case.

Upon being recalled, in answer to a question from the court if it was not the case that he was asleep, or sleepy from the time he saw the light, he replied that such was the case, and that he had pains in his head, reiterating that he had no rest the day before.

The lookout man averred that he reported

respect to the pilot, Jules Lamarre, the court cannot,—in view of his evidence, and admission that he might have been drowsy or sleepy at the time, due to lack of sleep the day before, occasioned by pains in his legs,—exercise any leniency. Though many years a pilot, he evidently has not yet realized the extent of the responsibility he assumed when taking charge of a ship. We claim that it was his duty to inform the master of his temporary physical disability. Had he done so, it is not probable that the master would have left the bridge. We assume, and rightly so, that the statement that the smoke obscured the light is but an excuse, and not a valid one. We know that there are intermissions in the emission of smoke from the funnel, and during those intervals the light must have been visible sufficiently to show the difference between the light exhibited on Green Island and the one on the lightship, or on Red Island, each one of which is of a different type. Accepting the evidence adduced that the lightship and Red Island lights were not visible, owing to mist, the difference in the exhibition of those lights and their character is great enough to observe in a moment, especially in the almost normal climate conditions which existed that night, lights being seen at a distance of four miles. We cannot conceive for a moment how such a mistake could be made by any one, unless under aberration, momentary or otherwise, or whilst under a sleepy spell, the pilot having admitted being in the latter state. Leniency is out of the question, and there-



Car deck on Car Ferry Steamship, Prince Edward Island.

two small lights indistinct on the starboard bow, then another nearer ahead on the starboard side, then two lights which he assumed were lanterns, on the shore. The quartermaster said the ship steered well, and he showed such remarkable memory for details that the court did not attach much importance to his statement.

The court finds that Capt. Moss has given satisfactory reasons and explanations for his absence from the bridge prior to and up to the moment of the accident, and therefore exonerates him from blame. With

fore, for his lack of attention to duty, which has caused a loss of thousands of dollars, we suspend Jules Lamarre's pilot's license for six months, from June 29 to Dec. 29, and further order him to pay \$100 towards the costs of the investigation. With regard to second officer Cooper, we find that he showed a marked indifference in the navigation of the ship. His orders were to call the master if it became thick or hazy. If the character of the light could not be discerned owing to smoke obscuring it, we are of opinion that it was his right and duty to