The Volunteer Review
AND MILITARY AND NAVAL GAZETTE.

A Journal Devoted to the Interests of the Military and Naval Forces of the Dominion of Canada

VOL. V. OTTAWA, CANADA, MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 1871. No. 2.

HER MAJESTY'S SHIP "CAPTIAN."

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COURT MARTIAL ON THE CAUSE OF HER LOSS.

(From the Broad Arrow.)

[CONTINUED.]

On reopening the Court, Captain S. BRANDRETH, Her Majesty's ship, *Lord Warden*, and Flag Captain to Sir A. Milne at the time of the *Captain's* loss, one of the members of the court, was sworn and examined relative to any additional facts bearing upon the *Captain's* loss beyond the evidence already before the court. He said,—I do not think I can bring forward any new point of evidence for the consideration of the court. I was on deck about a quarter after twelve the morning the *Captain* went down. We had a severe squall which split our foresail and foretopmast staysail. The sea was confused, but not heavy, as stated in the log, until about 1.35, when the squalls were heavier. If the *Captain* had furled her sails and used steam she would have been afloat now. Have you sufficient knowledge of the *Captain* to be able to state to the Court whether her appliances for battening down in bad weather were sufficient?—No, I have not.

By Captain Hancock: I should say it would be very doubtful whether the *Captain* would have been safe now if her topsails had been down on the cap before twelve o'clock.

By Captain Rice: There was no ship in sight from the *Lord Warden* at the time of the squall, and, therefore, no signal was made from her as flagship, to the fleet to reef. At 10.30, when the fleet was in sight, I considered the ships were under easy sail for the night, and, possibly, might have to reef without being signalled.

Lieutenant HOARE, R.N, examined: I was Flag Lieutenant to Sir Alexander Milne, and accompanied the Admiral and Captain on board on the day before she was lost. I had some conversation with Captain Burgoyne, Commander Sheepshanks, Lieutenant Purdon, and Sub-Lieutenant Gordon relative to the ship. My conversation with Captain Burgoyne was limited to general questions as to the comforts and capabilities of the ship under sail. I inferred from the remarks he made that the ship, although having no great speed under sail, was remarkably steady, and in every way was perfectly comfortable. Our conversation did not touch on the ship's stability under canvas My conversation with Commander Sheepshanks I do not think I could accurately distinguish from that which I had with the other officers on board whom I conversed with, but my questions in all instances tended very much to the same point. The general impression left upon my mind by these conversations was that the *Captain* was heavily masted, the hurricane deck was rather limited for general work, the ship was very steady, the yards braced up sharper than those of an ordinary ship. One question I put to Commander Sheepshanks as to the ship's capability of beating to windward, after a trial that had just been made, was answered by him to the effect that he thought she could do nothing in beating to windward, but that they all on board had perfect confidence in the ship and the excellence of her sea-going qualities.

Mr. W. B. ROBINSON, Master Shipwright and Chief Engineer of the Portsmouth Dockyard, examined: The weight on board the *Captain* when she sailed on the 10th of May was 2615 tons, and provision was made for a complement of 500 men.

By the President: Forward the draught of water was 24ft. 3in., and aft 25ft. 9in.; height of freeboard at fore turret, 6ft. 4½in., ditto, at after turret, 6ft. 3½in.

President: Was any report made which was signed by her captain as to the official completion of her fittings?—Yes, a copy of which I hand in.

President: Was the ship inclined at Portsmouth Dockyard for the purpose of ascertaining her common centre of gravity by experiment?—Yes. (A lengthy written legal opinion was here read to the witness, the many words in which told the witness that he need say nothing which he might consider detrimental to public polity.)

President: Are you aware who made the subsequent calculations from those experiments?—I am not.

In reply to questions put by the President, Mr. Robinson read to the Court an elaborately prepared essay on shipbuilding, especially with relation to "centres of buoyancy," "water centres," and "centres of gravity," as bearing upon the cause of the capsizing and foundering of the *Captain*. The paper, rapidly read by Mr. Robinson, occupied 55 minutes in delivery, and was illustrated by 16 large diagrams. The paper was then delivered in to the Court, and appended to the minutes of the proceedings. He stated further that the theories of calculations for ascertaining displacements had been well established for many years and proved by experience, and that the performance of vessels of war as a rule agree with the calculations made of them.

President: Glance over the letter handed to you, and the diagram accompanying it, and say whether you suppose the diagram correctly represents the stability of the *Captain*, provided the calculations upon which it is based are correct?—On the supposition that the calculations are correct, yes.

President: Assuming the diagram to be a correct representation of the stability of the *Captain*, I find the angle at which her edges would be immersed to be 14 degrees, and the angle of *maximum* stability 6 degrees more. The ship loses stability altogether at 40 degrees. Do you consider such a ship fit to be sent to sea under sail?—Yes, if properly masted and handled, but from the little I know accurately of the elements of the *Captain*, I am of opinion she was overmasted, and made too much like a regular sailing ship. I say this without facts with which I should like to be acquainted before giving a full and definite opinion.

President: What style of masting would you recommend for a ship of that description?—I should advise the exact kind of mast and quantity of sail which should be given to any particular ship of which the elements might be in my possession. I do not know enough of the *Captain's* elements to do so as regards her.

By Captain Rice: Ships recently built and that have come to this yard under my observation, I cannot say whether they float at their designed line or not, as I am not officially informed of calculations made at the Admiralty. As a naval architect I should not be satisfied with building a ship that would lurch forty degrees without sail on her. I am aware that a high ship might lurch forty degrees without danger, but I had in my mind a low freeboard ship. With a low freeboard ship without masts and under steam only, if her conditions of stability would place her in danger of turning bottom up if she lurched nearly forty degrees, I should not be content as her builder.

By Captain Boys. From the diagram before the Court, of the *Captain's* calculated stabilities, what is your opinion the result would be if she attained a permanent angle of heel of thirty degrees?—She would go over.

By Captain May: The *Captain* floated two feet deeper than her contemplated draught of water. The supposition that the *Captain* was made to float two feet deeper than designed appears to me be unfounded, since it might have been intended by her designer as some fancy draught of water, but the ship was fairly constructed and equipped at the draught she only floated at. If a given ship were made to float at deeper line than that she might at this moment be floating at, and if the weights put on board were