

The Stranding of the s.s. Lady of Gaspé.

An enquiry was held at Quebec, Oct. 20, by Capt. L. A. Demers, Dominion Wreck Commissioner, assisted by Capt. C. Koenig and L. R. Demers, as nautical assessors, into the causes of the stranding of the Gaspé Steamship Co.'s s.s. Lady of Gaspé near the Quebec Bridge site on Oct. 13.

The master, J. B. Deslauriers, stated that the Lady of Gaspé was an iron built, schooner rigged vessel owned by the Gaspé Steamship Co., with compound engines, capable of a speed of $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour, drawing 13 ft. forward and $15\frac{1}{2}$ ft. aft, carrying a crew of 32, including one certificated officer beside himself. She was 1,189 tons gross and 705 tons net, official no. 78554. They left Montreal at 8 p.m. Oct. 12, and about 7.30 a.m. on the following day he saw the fog coming, and the engines were put standby. They were at this time off St. Basil, and proceeded at half speed and slow, the tide then being flood, one hour from high water. When the north end of the Quebec Bridge was sighted about a point on the port quarter the engines were placed at half speed. Shortly after, upon land being perceived, the order of port was twice given, but the ship touched. The engines were stopped, but no attempt was made to go astern. As some time afterwards the engineer reported the ship was making water fast the boats were lowered in readiness for transferring the passengers, but they were not used as a tug was sent by the owners for that purpose. He further stated that the second officer acted as pilot and gave instructions with regard to the navigation of the ship from Montreal to Quebec at least.

The second officer, who holds no certificate, corroborated the master's evidence in so far as weather conditions were concerned, but added that he gave instructions with regard to steering and courses. He did not look at the compass, but steered by objects such as lights, etc. He did not know what error existed in the compass, and stated that the course he was steering when passing the bridge was E. by N. He did not know whether the captain had detailed a man on the lookout, nor whether there was one, but the fog signals were sounded. He averred that the ship lies as she grounded and he finds that she is now heading E. N.E., but cannot account for this. He intended to anchor and steered in close in order to make the wharves.

The wheelsman said that he relieved the wheel some five or ten minutes prior to the grounding, finding it starboarded, and he received the order to port twice and the ship grounded. He did not know how she was heading at the time, but thinks she altered a point under the port helm.

The lookout man, who was 16 years of age, stated that he had been four months on the Lady of Gaspé, as sailor, wheelsman and lookout; that he was at the wheel from 6 o'clock until ordered to notify one man from the main deck to relieve him. Meantime the ship was being steered by the second mate. He then went on the lookout, but did not see any sight of land through the fog until after the grounding.

The engineer said that after standby was ordered some ten minutes he came on deck, but did not notice the weather conditions. Various orders were given and executed. At the time of the grounding the engines were going about half speed, which would be about seven knots.

The court's finding is as follows:—The evidence again brings to the court's attention the peculiarly unseamanlike navigation system which appears to prevail on certain

types of vessels. We notice that logs are kept, but very little importance seems to be attached to them, as there is not sufficient information contained in them to verify the statements made before the court. Any copy book at hand seems to have answered the purpose as a log book, and to satisfy the owners, who in this case, appear to look on such important documents with a marked degree of indifference. We cannot help expressing our astonishment at the fact that the master, through the system adopted on board this vessel, is subservient to the instructions and directions of a so called pilot,—second officer,—without even a cer-



Pier Derrick at Grand Trunk Pacific Railway's Ship Repairing Plant, Prince Rupert, B.C., Capacity, 50 Tons.

tificate of competency of any kind. The court heard the master say that he spoke to the pilot, or second mate, about anchoring before they reached the Quebec Bridge, but evidently the so called pilot deferred the anchoring to a later period with the result that he came to grief, although he, the pilot, stated that he sailed or steered a course to get near the wharves in order to anchor; but apparently only when he himself thought proper. The said pilot proved to be a man who was not even versed in the elementary navigation duties involved in handling a vessel, and showed lack of knowledge of distances, and in the opinion of this court was not a person to be entrusted with any duties respecting navigation. The master appeared to be an intelligent man, anxious to do well; but unfortunately influenced by the conditions indirectly imposed upon him by the management. Since he was satisfied to submit to a system which he must have known to be of

a pernicious nature, he must accept its responsibilities.

The ship having a number of passengers on board it was the duty of the captain to assert his authority, and order the anchoring of his vessel in the vicinity of St. Basil, when he saw the dense fog approaching him. Having failed to do so, and being aware of the eddies forming around the piers of the Quebec Bridge, which had a tendency to cause bad steering, he should have taken a broader course passing more in the centre of the channel. It is shown that the vessel must have passed 150 ft. at the utmost from the north pier, whilst at that place there is a width of 1,800 ft. between the two piers. The court cannot come to any other conclusion than that the grounding of this vessel was due to lack of prudence and bad navigation on the part of the master, whom it holds solely to blame, and therefore suspends his master's certificate, 7253, for one year from Oct. 20; but recommends that a mate's certificate for passenger steamers and fore and aft rigged sailing vessels in the coasting trade be granted to him from Apr. 1, 1916, until expiration of his suspension. The court has dealt leniently with the master owing to the peculiar conditions existing on board his vessel regarding piloting of same. As the second mate had no certificate we cannot deal with him.

The court wishes to remark that in its point of view, the employment of an officer without a certificate, or even with one, with a verbal understanding that he is to act as pilot and advise the captain, deserves condemnation, as the influence of such arrangements is contrary to all common sense and is fraught with danger owing to its effect on the mind of the master, who, when he has secured an appointment must, even though conscious of the illogical system, submit to it in order to retain his position. We have every sympathy for a master who finds himself tied down to such conditions; but we, nevertheless, in accordance with our duties, hold him alone responsible for any mishaps. If a master takes command and is unacquainted with the river he should insist that a properly qualified pilot be engaged, irrespective of cost to the owners, and we are of opinion that the sooner the owners of small craft plying the river in charge of masters unfamiliar with the conditions existing, are made to realize that the economy practiced in this manner is not conducive to any good, the better it will be for the reputation of our St. Lawrence route. The court is also of the opinion that whenever it has to deal with such a peculiar condition, that the owners should be called upon to defray the costs of investigation, as in this case the owners are indirectly responsible for this mishap.

Loss of the s.s. Donnacona.—Reports were received at the end of October that Canada Steamship Lines' s.s. Donnacona had foundered in mid-ocean, the crew having been saved. The Donnacona operated on the Great Lakes for several years and was one of the company's vessels which entered the Atlantic trade at the commencement of this year. She was built at Newcastle, Eng., in 1900 and was screw driven by triple expansion engines. Her dimensions were, length 245 ft., breadth 42 ft. 6 ins., depth 20 ft. 8 ins.; tonnage, 1,906 gross, 1,222 register. She was originally owned by R. O. & A. B. Mackay, Hamilton, Ont., and subsequently by Inland Lines, Ltd., Richelieu and Ontario Navigation Co., and Canada Steamship Lines, Ltd.