

The Vanguard Court-Martial.

(BY SPECIAL TELEGRAM TO THE BROAD ARROW.)

The Vanguard court martial opened today (Friday 10th Sept.), the prisoners being Captain Dawkins, Lieut. Hathorn, Navigating Lieut. Thomas, and the rest of the officers and crew who were put on their trial for the loss of the ship. Rear Admiral Lord John Hay presided.

Captain Dawkins stated that he had to disapprove of the conduct of Captain Collins, of the Royal Marine Light Infantry. Captain Dawkins then put in a statement of the loss of the ship, in which he detailed the morning's experience and his going below safe. At 12.43 he was told that a dense fog had set in, and he then gave orders to blow the steam whistle three or four times; hearing no response from the *Iron Duke* he thought that she was still further off than the three cables; he reduced the speed from eight to six and five knots. Had heard no signals from the *Iron Duke*. Just before signalling a dense fog came, and he ported to avoid collision with a vessel. While issuing this order he found a ship abaft the beam, which proved to be the *Iron Duke*, and in a few seconds he was run into.

In reply to question by the President, Captain Dawkins said: At half past eleven the fleet altered to columns of divisions. At 12.43, when he came on deck, he could not see more than his ship's length. Though he put extra look out men on to watch, made no signal to the *Iron Duke*, showing that he had stopped the engine, owing to want of time. Never heard the whistle of *Iron Duke* during the fog. The *Iron Duke* was supposed to be three cables exactly in his wake. No signal was reported from the admiral as to the speed after the fog came on. The President: How do you account for the *Iron Duke* running into the Vanguard on the portside, when you stated that the course of the Vanguard was not altered more than one and a quarter point to port when clearing the strange vessel?—Witness: I know how the collision occurred, and why it occurred, the whole of it from my own knowledge. A little after half past twelve, when the fog came on, the *Iron Duke* gave a broad shear out. At the time of the collision he gave a general order to close the water tight doors, and when the signal to form columns of divisions was made, the squadron were doing seven knots. They had not attained their station abeam of the admiral. When the fog came on we were about three cables astern. The interval of time which elapsed from the *Iron Duke* being sighted to the moment of collision, was a short minute. When he saw the *Iron Duke* he ordered a full speed ahead, both engines. He gave no orders as to helm, but the mate of the watch, or the officers of the watch, called out "Port" or "Hard aport." Know this to be a right order, and not to make confusion he said nothing. The helm was shifted immediately. He was nearly beam of the Admiral when he knew. It is an Admiralty order to go slow in fogs. He judged that speed would get him into station, and that the Admiral, as soon as he possibly could, would probably have fired a gun indicating a reduction of speed, and he should have kept his station by sound as well as by judgment. Never heard any steam blow off in the Vanguard, which would have prevented his steam whistle being heard at two cables length. Sailing with a squadron, not to blow off if possible, which in this case it was, from the position of the collision on the chart and the place of foundering; the ship drifted 2½ miles S. and by

W.; he attributed it to the tide, which sets directly over Kish Bay. He did not know the ship which caused them to stop. She appeared to be a sailing vessel, would not say how she was steering. Passed her pretty close. Fired no guns as signal before the collision; the admiral was present, and there was no time considered. The steam whistle could have been heard from six to eight cables off certainly, on the day of the collision. They might have cleared the stranger without altering course, but to alter was an order of which he approved, on a sail being reported right ahead in a fog. Had no signal guns loaded—had no time to order it; but it was the custom in the Vanguard, in fogs at night, to have guns loaded on both sides of the ship. Heard no signal from the admiral after the fog set in besides the pennants. When he heard the admiral's pennants made, should think his vessel—the *Warrior*—was six cables off. At the time he estimated the *Iron Duke* to be most certainly not less than the same distance she was off before the fog—viz., three cables. As he could hear the admiral's pennants when made at about six cables distant, and as the *Iron Duke* did not make her pennants after he made his, he most assuredly assumed the *Iron Duke* had dropped astern during the fog. He knew there was no vessel astern of the *Iron Duke*, and he concluded that on hearing his whistle and the full blast of his cowel, he would have kept at a judicious distance in such a fog. The court then adjourned.

The court martial on Captain Dawkins, Lieutenant Hathorn, Navigating Lieutenant Thomas, and the rest of the officers and ship's company of the Vanguard, for the loss of that vessel, was resumed on board Her Majesty's ship *Royal Adelaide*, at Devonport, on Monday morning. The court was composed of the same officers as on previous days, Rear Admiral Lord John Hay, C.B., second in command of the Channel Squadron, again presiding; Mr. W. Eastlake officiated as Deputy Judge Advocate of the Fleet, and Mr. Lishman again appeared for the officers.

Vice Admiral Farleton was then examined, after receiving the usual caution. In reply to the president, witness said he was in command of the Reserve Squadron on the 1st of September. On leaving harbour it was composed of the *Warrior*, *Hector*, *Vanguard*, *Iron Duke*, *Achilles*. The squadron weighed together and left the anchorage in single column, line ahead, and when two miles outside the Kish Light the *Achilles*, which was the sternmost vessel, was detached, and he gave the order to form columns in divisions, line ahead. On the 1st of September the squadron was acting under no orders affecting the case before the court other than are to be found in the signal books supplied to men of war, and the regulations which govern the Service. No special instructions that he was aware of had been issued. His orders were on leaving Dublin Bay to proceed to Queenstown, the distance being about 170 miles. When the Squadron weighed he ordered a speed of seven knots to be provided for and to go, and for this reason, he was anxious to enter Queenstown Harbour with the ebb tide. It was high water at Queenstown on the 2nd at 6.19 a.m., and he made the calculation, therefore, that the squadron should arrive at Queenstown during the forenoon. He did not make any change to the squadron generally by signal in the speed after giving the order for seven knots, but to the *Hector*, which ship remained in company. He gave an order to the *Warrior*, as she did not average seven knots.

The revolutions were increased to thirty three. When he made the signal at 11.10 that the admiral intended to proceed at thirty three revolutions he intended the squadron to understand that he went to go as near as possible in the *Warrior* at a speed of seven knots. Had the weather remained clear it was necessary to be understood by the squadron, in accordance with the practice in the fleet, that this speed would be maintained by the flagship, unless contrary orders were issued by him. In the event of the weather becoming thick, and the vessels of the squadron losing sight of the flagship and of each other, means are provided in the signal book for communicating when the flagship changes her speed; and if the ships had been in their stations and the fog had continued, he should have given orders for regulating the speed of the squadron; but as the Vanguard when last seen from the flagship bore N.E. and by N., ½ N., five points astern of her station, he considered it safer, on the fog so suddenly coming on, to leave the handling of the ship to the individual discretion of the officers in command, whom he had every confidence. The Vanguard bore N.E. by ½ N. at thirty five minutes past noon.

The President: Please explain your meaning as to the handling of the ships being left to the individual discretion of the captains, and whether that was meant to go the length of their going at any speed they might select while they were out of station, and on account of their being enveloped in a fog.

Admiral Farleton: The captains had the instructions for fog to govern them, and were at liberty by those instructions to reduce speed should they deem it necessary. I considered I should distract their attention by doing more than indicating the position of the flagship, which I did by firing guns every half hour, and sounding continuously the steam trumpet.

The president requested Admiral Farleton to point out what part of the fog signal book instructions he referred to as a justification for the captain of a ship not getting into station and maintaining his station.

Admiral Farleton said he referred to Section 2, page 41, in the night for signal book, and Section 7, page 42. The Judge Advocate read the section. The latter section provides that, "during a fog the speed of a fleet, except under such circumstances, should not exceed three to four knots per hour."

Witness continuing, said the squadron was under steam alone at the time. It was right to suppose, as the ships were under steam, that in Article 2, the words, "during a fog the fleet is to maintain the same order and steer the same course as it may have been doing before the fog came on," were the only part of the article which applied to the case before the court. He thought it a matter of opinion that much must be left to the discretion of the officer. Section 7 directs that the speed of the fleet in a fog shall not exceed three to four knots an hour unless under special circumstances. There were special circumstances from the vicinity of the shoals on the Irish coast which induced him to go at a somewhat higher rate of speed, but the captain leading the port division would probably assume that Section 7 was being complied with. The first gun was fired immediately after the fog came on at 12.25, and guns were fired half hourly until half past three. The pennants were sounded by the steam whistle, but to the best of his knowledge were only answered by the *Hector*. He thought it doubtful if they could have been heard by the *Fur-*