

STEEL BARS OR ROPES FOR HATCHES.

CONTROVERSIAL POINT IN THE HARTLEY INQUIRY.

A FINE SEA BOAT.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

MIDDLESBROUGH, Friday.

WHEN the Board of Trade inquiry into the loss of the Hartley was resumed here to-day, the chairman intimated that if it was convenient he and the three assessors would like to visit Smiths' Dock Shipyard, at South Bank, on Monday, to see the sister ship, which is in the last stage of construction. Mr. Cairns, the shipyard manager, said he would be pleased to make arrangements for the visit.

Continuing his evidence Mr. Cairns said in many instances owners of ships in the colliery trade insisted on rope lashings of hatchways, rather than iron-locking bars. In the case of the Hartley's sister ship, the Hamsterley, they were asked to use locking bars.

Mr. Cairns further explained that the question of rope lashings was discussed with the Hartleys owners, who insisted upon rope because they were efficient, easily handled, and not so liable to damage as tarpaulin. Many people to-day swore by rope lashings, he added, but in his opinion steel bars were superior.

Mr. Reuben Nixon, representing Captain Pearson's brother, asked: Is it true that a considerable number of this type of vessel has been lost?

Mr. Cairns.—I believe so.

Questioned regarding the sizes of hatchways, witness did not think the matter assumed greater importance if the hatchways of the Hartley type of vessel were disturbed, as compared with a boat with smaller hatchways.

THE HUMAN ELEMENT.

Answering Mr. Fenwick, for the owners, witness said as far as locking bars were concerned, his view was that of a shipbuilder, but he recognised that an owner had to look at it from the human element. He agreed tarpaulin coverings and wood hatchways were easier to handle. There was considerable volume of opinion in favour of wire rope lashings. When Lloyd's representative

approved of the vessel he would see her with her hatches battened down. It was possible, that following the inrush of the water into No. 3 & 13, the hatchway of No. 4 might be ballooned.

Witness expressed the view that the Hartley's list before foundering would be 12 degrees, and not 20 as stated by the Machaon's officers.

Replying to Mr. Carmichael, witness said the Hartley more than fulfilled Lloyd's requirements.

Mr. Cairns' evidence occupied six hours.

AN IDEAL SHIP.

After the luncheon adjournment evidence was called as to the extent of the coal cargo. Mr. Thomas Penny, of Barry Dock, supervisor for the Employers' Clearing House, who supervised the loading of the vessel prior to her last voyage, said she was regarded as a first-class trimming ship by the Cardiff Trimming Board.

Mr. Patrick English, supervisor of the Joint Control Board of Employers and Trimmers, described the Hartley as an ideal self-trimming vessel.

Mr. Percy Shelley, Board of Trade officer at Barry, said on November 25th he asked the chief officer of the Hartley if he had any provision for lashing the hatchways. He replied he had not used any previously, but if it was the Board's desire he would certainly put lashings on.

Mr. Burton.—Did he say what sort of lashings?—Yes; rope. The chief officer told witness he did not agree to rope lashings because they damaged the tarpaulin. The chief officer expressed the view that the Hartley was the finest sea boat he had ever been in, and added that he had never had any water on the hatches.

LASHING DOWN CONTROVERSY.

Mr. Fenwick, as the means of fastening down the hatchways had been raised he would like to call two witnesses who had been signatories to the Board of Trade Committee report, but Mr. Burton objected on the ground that it would widen the scope of the inquiry, as there was a difference of opinion as to the best means of lashing down the hatchways.

Mr. Harold Halvorsen, joint owner, said he had never received an unfavourable report from the master or engineer. After the loss of the Hartley they considered the provision of additional precautions, and decided upon locking bars for the Hamsterley, though they were not content with locking bars alone.

Mr. K. S. M. Scott, superintendent engineer to the owners, was unable to give the number of self-trimming vessels lost in recent years, but said there seemed to have been an increase during the last three or four months. The inquiry was adjourned until to-morrow.



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