

## THE GOLDEN CROWN AND WILLIAMS COLLISION.

The Steam Navigation Board commenced an investigation yesterday, at the Harbour office, into the circumstances attending the late collision between the excursion steamers Golden Crown and Williams. All the members of the board were present, Captain Payne presiding. Mr. Purves, instructed by Mr. Croker, appeared on behalf of the master of the Golden Crown; and Mr. O'Loghlen, instructed by Mr. Sandilands, for the master of the Williams.

The first witness called was

Thomas James Liley, who deposed,—I am master of the Golden Crown. I have held a master's certificate of competency for 11 years. I have been a master for 37 years. It has never been suspended. I remember the 24th January. I started from Sorrento at half-past 3 p.m., and am advertised to leave Queenscliff at a quarter-past 4 p.m. The Williams started from Portsea. After starting from Sorrento, I saw the Williams leave the Portsea jetty about 17 minutes to 4 o'clock, which I considered to be two minutes before her time, and I took a good look at it. I was bound for Queenscliff pier, and was going at the rate of about 11 knots an hour. On approaching Queenscliff I went easy, as I had only 10 minutes to wait. The Williams had 25 minutes to wait. She started directly for the baths. I was then about a quarter of a mile of the baths. The Williams was about one length ahead. She altered her course and shut me out from passing her on the port side. I found it impossible to get past her. I then telegraphed "Ease her, and go slow," and told the mate to port and come astern of the Williams, which order was obeyed. She answered her helm immediately. The Williams then put her helm hard-a-port, and she came suddenly round. The Williams was still ahead. I did not see any probability of a collision. I was outside the Williams, but she suddenly took a broad sheer out. I then ported and stopped the engines. Both vessels were moving. There was no time to do anything else before the Williams was across our bow. The Williams was going full speed. Our vessel had head-way on. The collision took place before I could go astern. As the Williams ran past us she gave us a sliding blow forward, knocking the stem on one side and forward. The collision gave the Williams a cant out, and she cleared us. I then went alongside the pier. The Williams went right round the Albatross, which was lying about 200 yards off, at the mooring buoy, and came on the other side of the pier. At the time of the collision the Williams was heading for the Albatross. We were midway between the baths and one-eighth of a mile off the pier. Had I gone ahead at the time of the collision, instead of stopping my vessel, I should have struck the Williams about the paddle-box. I was two or three years as master of the Williams. She is very quick with her helm. She would make two circles while we were going around. I admit she wants a good deal of watching in steering altogether. Had the Williams continued her course she would have gone on straight to the pier, and the collision could not have taken place. I attribute the collision to the master of the Williams porting his helm. The damage done to our ship is, our stem was torn forward on the port side, and forward and split, which necessitates the removal of the stem. There are chafing boards adfixed to the Williams. The wood of the stem on the top is slightly perished by the water dripping on it. I cannot account for the Williams steering for the Albatross. It was evident that the Williams wanted to get alongside before me. When I "ported" I went half speed, as I had given up all idea of getting in before the Williams. I stopped when the Williams crossed our bow. I did all I could to avoid a collision. I left Queenscliff to my time. I reached Sandridge at the proper time. There was nothing to prevent the Williams going direct alongside the pier. The practice is that if I am at the pier first the Williams holds back until I go off, but if I was likely to be long, then we accommodate each other, so that both can take passengers at the same time. We were about one-third of a mile from the pier when I ported. There was plenty of room for me to pass the Williams and get to the pier.

Laurens Laason, chief officer of the Golden Crown, stated that he was at the wheel at the time of the collision, and corroborated the evidence of the previous witness.

John Monkhouse, engineer of the Golden Crown, stated,—On the 24th inst., on approaching Queenscliff, I was ordered to "slow," and the engines were slowed. The next order was a "little faster," then "slow" again, after which "stop." A few seconds after the engines were stopped I felt the shock of the collision. The collision took place a few minutes after 4 p.m. A few seconds only occurred between each order. We were going at the rate of 11 knots before we slowed. I have been driving the engines at racing speed, but not on this occasion. That was on the trial trip. We have never driven the engines at full speed when running with passengers. There was not time to reverse the engines before the collision took place.

James Sykes, master mariner, stated,—I was walking at Queenscliff on the 24th inst., and saw the collision between the two steamers. The Williams seemed to cross the bows of the Golden Crown. I was advancing towards the Williams, and she sheered off before the Golden Crown was hidden from me. The sheer did not arise from the collision. The Williams ported her helm too much to make the end of the pier. She only took one turn from the baths.

Thomas Hanna, examined by Mr. Purves, stated—I am a licensed pilot, and have had 40 years' experience. On Wednesday, the 24th, I was standing on the pier head at

30 years experience. On Wednesday, the 24th, I was standing on the pier head at Queenscliff when the Golden Crown and Williams came up. The Williams, when I first observed her, was coming up from the baths. I saw them next close together. I did not see immediately before this the Williams swerve around. I was talking to several persons, and I made the remark, or some person said to me, "Oh, the Williams is not coming to the pier." That was said in consequence of the Williams taking a broad sheer around the Albatross. The Williams shot across the bows of the Golden Crown. She was then going about seven knots. When I stood on the pier head the Williams was between me and the Golden Crown. There was plenty of room for the Williams to come to the pier without shooting out. I did not express an opinion as to which of the captains was to blame. I saw Mr. Deane this morning, and had some conversation with him. I only said that it was a very unpleasant affair.

By Mr. O'LOUGHLIN.—I told Captain Richardson I knew nothing about the merits of the case. When I saw the Williams shoot across the bows of the Golden Crown, I cannot say whether it was before or after they touched. I did not know they had collided until afterwards. There was no sheer of the Williams that I could see before the time when it is stated the collision took place.

By the CHAIRMAN.—I did not see the collision. The two vessels appeared to be very close, when the Williams took the "sheer" I speak of. I thought the Williams was going faster at the time than the Golden Crown. At the time the steamers were so close, the Williams appeared to be a little astern.

David M'Kenzie Barry, contractor, stated that he was in the habit of travelling both by the Williams and the Golden Crown. Was a passenger by the Golden Crown on the day of the collision. Immediately before the collision he was standing on the steps of the paddle-box. Remarkd to another passenger (Mr. Shaw) that the Williams was steering very curiously. He said she always steered badly. The Golden Crown was steering straight for the pier. Immediately afterwards the Williams gave a great curve, and the Crown struck her about 15ft. from the figure-head. She hid the pier from us altogether. I made a sketch of the position of the vessels at the time (sketch produced). It indicates accurately, I think, the course of the two vessels. The Williams appeared to be going at her usual rate of speed when the collision occurred. I heard the telegraph going on board the Golden Crown, and I was told she had stopped.

To the BOARD.—My impression was that the Golden Crown was steering direct for the pier, and not yawing in any way. There was nothing to make me believe differently.

W. E. Shaw, of the firm of W. and G. Shaw, stated that he was a passenger on board the Golden Crown at the time of the collision, and corroborated the evidence of

collision, and corroborated the evidence of the witnesses as to the manner in which the collision occurred. It did not appear to him that the Williams was steering for the pier when the collision took place. Noticed that at the time of the accident the paddle-wheels of the Golden Crown were not moving.

George Gordon Blair, registrar of probates, stated that at the time of the collision he was standing on the bows of the Golden Crown. The Williams appeared to change her course across our bows. She first came right across the Golden Crown's bows, and in attempting to take a turn back again the Golden Crown ran into her. The Williams was going very fast. When the collision took place the Williams was not bearing towards the pier.

To the BOARD.—The Golden Crown was going straight to the pier, and did not, as far as I saw, alter her course. I thought a collision inevitable when the Williams was about half a ship's length off.

James Port, timber merchant, in Collins-street, stated that he was standing on the

Queenscliff pier when the collision took place. His evidence corroborated the statements of previous witnesses as to the Williams sheering across the bows of the Golden Crown at the time of the collision. The course the Williams was steering at the time would not have brought her to the pier. Afterwards she had to come into the back side of the pier.

John Gavan Duffy, solicitor, a passenger by the Golden Crown, gave a similar account of the occurrence, as did also William Anderson, commission agent; William Storey, boiler-maker; and Donald M'Leod, shipwright, working on board the Albatross, lying off Queenscliff.

The board at this stage adjourned until 10 o'clock the following morning.