

On the 19th of February, in answer to Mr. Gourley, Sir C. Adderley said the law and Board of Trade instructions were amply sufficient to prevent improper loading of explosives, and that it was the duty of the Board of Trade Inspectors to inspect ships with a view to ascertain whether they were improperly loaded. He also stated that he was not aware that large quantities of gunpowder were shipped in loose kegs.

On the 22nd of February, in a letter to the *Times*, I described, in support of Mr. Gourley's statement, the mode of stowage adopted in the "Altcar," which consisted in dropping 400 barrels of gunpowder into any opening or crevice that presented itself in a general cargo of spirits, oils, paint, matches, and rod iron, with the natural consequence that at the end of the voyage, as Captain Harvey stated, the barrels were found smashed, and the powder adrift, so that the crew were compelled daily during the discharge to sweep and pack up powder from amid the iron. I pointed out the case of the "Knight of Snowdon," from London with passengers, in which the powder had been stowed in an equally dangerous way. I also gave a case in which the gunpowder had been so carelessly stowed that an action at law was brought by the consignee to recover several cases of powder undelivered, and in evidence upon the trial it was stated that 113 flasks were delivered subsequently, resulting from the sweeping-up of the ship after the cargo had been removed, but that it was very much damaged owing to the admixture of dirt and dust.

On the 24th of February the right honorable gentleman, in answering Lord Eslington, said he adhered to his former answer as to the sufficiency of the law and the Board of Trade instructions to deal with all questions of stowage; and that the cases cited by me had occurred before the law came into operation. This answer somewhat surprised me, as I had in the same letter referred to the "Great Queensland," which left London so recently as August last. As an investigation into the circumstances surrounding this case has been now ordered, and will be made by the Wreck Commissioner early in next week, it would be improper for me to say anything more upon this case. I merely cite it to show that when the law was in full operation a vessel with seventy souls on board did leave the Port of London with a mixed cargo of brimstone, saltpetre, cartridges, spirits, iron, and from 50 to 100 tons of gunpowder.

Finding, then, that Sir C. Adderley was still evidently incredulous, I ventured again to trouble you on the 3rd of March to bring to your notice the case of the "No Name," which left Liverpool bound for Africa so late even as the 15th of February last, and therefore, I should imagine, well within the scope, as regards time, of all the Acts referred to by Sir C. Adderley, extending from 1855 to 1876, and of the Board of Trade instructions. I pointed out that it was owing to the mere accident of the crew mutinying and refusing to work the ship, and the captain having consequently to turn the vessel into the Bristol Channel, that the circumstances in which she had left the important port of Liverpool were brought to light. And then, only upon the crew being charged with neglect of duty, was a survey ordered at the request of the men by the Cardiff Bench. The report of the Board of Trade surveyors showed that the cargo, consisting of 1,000 kegs of gunpowder, 1,000 cases of spirits, paraffin oil in tins, coal, and iron, was found mixed together in the hold in a highly dangerous manner, and that in the four-foot, a place to which the cook must have access every few hours, kegs of gunpowder and tins of paraffin were rolling about at every lurch of the vessel, and that in the event of a light being taken there the result would probably have been the destruction of the ship and all on board.

Can the law and regulations which permit a ship to put to sea under conditions which practically render the blowing-up of her crew a matter of almost absolute certainty be, as Sir C. Adderley says, amply sufficient?

Had the "No Name" and her cargo been handed over to our London *gamins* on Guy Fawkes' Day, it would have been utterly impossible for them to have made more effectual arrangements for the sure blowing-up of their Guys than were made for the blowing into eternity of these poor sailors. Your correspondent, "H.K.," showed that the same reckless mode of stowage was adopted in the "Thomasina MacLellan," a large ship carrying passengers, which sailed in June last from London, with a cargo of coals and 800 kegs of gunpowder, cases of matches, and turpentine, all stowed in close proximity to the coals.

This case, perhaps, more than any other, shows the urgent need of stringent legislation, as it shows only too plainly the little protection passengers and crew have to expect from the officers in command. On the 17th of July the coals on board this vessel were found to be in a very heated condition. On the 19th they were more so, attended by a strong smell of sulphur. On the 20th and 21st their heat increased, and great fear was entertained of spontaneous combustion. One would have thought that a person having charge of the lives of passengers and crew would not have allowed five hours, let alone five days and nights, to elapse, with the cargo of coals momentarily rising in temperature, before throwing all gunpowder and matches overboard. Captain Gibb, however, thought otherwise, as it was not until late in the afternoon of the fifth day, fearing spontaneous combustion, and seeing that part of the cargo stowed near these heated coals consisted of lucifer matches and 800 kegs of gunpowder, that he thought it advisable (—to throw the gunpowder overboard? No—) to make preparations for doing so, and to tack the ship and bear away for Rio de Janeiro. It was not until the 23rd, or seven days after the first warning, that the captain, finding the heat of the coals greatly increased, and smoke issuing from the fore hatch, thought it necessary to throw the gunpowder overboard.

It appears that on the following day, when the vessel brought up in the harbour of Rio, it was found "that the coals were on fire all through."

Upon this case being brought to the notice of Sir C. Adderley by Mr. Ashley, the right honorable gentleman said that—

"The ship not being an emigrant vessel, the case did not come under the Passengers Act, and therefore she was not altogether prohibited from carrying explosives. The shippers, however, had certainly violated in substance the Act of 1875. The Merchant Shipping Act of last year required the Board of Trade to detain any ship improperly loaded, and it was not impossible that such a case might be brought under the Act."