

THE WRECK OF THE FIDES.

The following report from the Collector of Customs, with respect to the loss of the *Fides*, was laid on the table of the Legislative Council on Tuesday :—

"Sir—In compliance with the instructions conveyed in your minute, dated 14th instant, received on the 16th, I have the honor to report on the circumstances which appear to have been attendant on the loss of the *Fides*.

"From the statement made by the survivors, it appears that the *Fides* belonged to the Government of Christianstadt in Finland, and that she left London for this port on 11th January, 1860, laden with a general cargo.

"The voyage up to the time of their passing Cape Borda, the N.W. extremity of Kangaroo Island, on 21st May, was without any remarkable occurrence.

"The Lighthouse on the Cape was observed at 4 p.m., bearing S.S.E., distant about 11 miles, in position A on the chart; the wind at the time being from N. to N.N.E.; at 8 p.m. they sounded in 40 fathoms, with the Lighthouse bearing S.W. nine miles; at 9.30, the wind was N.W., and the vessel appears to have been running up the Strait; the weather at this time being threatening with thunder and lightning, sail was taken in, and the vessel was then under close-reefed topsails. At midnight the vessel was in 31 fathoms water, the weather continuing threatening with light squalls and variable winds.

"At 1 a.m. on the 22nd, the soundings only gave 20 fathoms, and the weather being clearer, sail was made as convenient; at 1.30 the ship was tacked, the wind from the westward being light and variable; at times the vessel would not answer her helm, and sail was set; they again attempted to tack, but the vessel would not come round. They stood on again, and again tried to tack, but in vain. They observed a current set strongly on the land; at 2.30 the vessel went on shore.

"An attempt appears to have been made to get the boats out, which succeeded in the case of lowering the small one.

"The position where the ship struck is about 12½ nautical miles to the eastward of the Light, the coast being steep and of rugged rocks. The vessel soon broke up; by 5.30 she was in fragments.

"The master and nine men were drowned, the survivors being—Andreas Herrmann, Hjulman (mate), Johan Hogmann (steward), Johan Jacob Rosenlund (carpenter), Carl Speth, and Carl Martens (seamen).

"The whole of the cargo was lost, with the exception of a few cases of goods, which had come ashore on the south coast of Yorke's Peninsula, and a few articles which were washed on the beach at the scene of the disaster.

"The survivors continued to support themselves on the body of a sheep, which had come on shore alive.

"The shipwrecked men left the remains of the wreck on the 25th, and arrived at the Lighthouse on the 27th, where they were received with great kindness and humanity by the head-keeper (Mr. Tapley), who, after visiting the wreck, dispatched the survivors to this port in a small boat belonging to the Lighthouse, under the charge of Mr. Johnson, the second keeper, who with much courage volunteered to bring them up at this tempestuous season of the year.

"From enquiries I have made the cause appears to be a very simple one. The vessel having passed the Lighthouse, and being in one of the safest straits known in any part of the world, is allowed to drop to leeward during a dark squally night, on a precipitous coast. On shoaling the water from 30 fathoms to 20 fathoms in an hour, although there was little wind at the time, and that so variable and light that the ship would not answer the helm, she is permitted to get into the turbulent swell on a rocky coast, and finally strikes without an anchor being let go, although two hours before the ship was in 20 fathoms water.

"From my own knowledge of the coast I am of opinion the one anchor, which I have heard was mis-stowed (and the cable ready arranged) would have held the ship; and as the wind, from the statement of the Lightkeepers, came off the land at daylight, there is little reason to doubt but that this catastrophe, whereby the lives of the master and nine men and a valuable ship and cargo were sacrificed, could have been averted.

"It is a painful task for me to undertake, but I feel it is my duty to record it as my opinion, that the whole of the transaction evinces great negligence, irresolution, and want of skill on the part of those entrusted with the navigation of this unfortunate vessel.

"As the loss of the *Fides* may occasion some want of confidence on the part of masters of ships who are strangers to the coast, I trust the Government will take such steps as may be deemed necessary, to point out that this lamentable wreck cannot be attributed to any dangers presented in the navigation of Investigator's Straits. A mere inspection of the chart of that locality will illustrate the extraordinary freedom from all obstacles which the passage offers, better than any written description; but suffice it to say, that the entrance to Investigator's Straits is 26 miles broad, without a single bank or shoal between the Althorpe Island and Kangaroo Island. A lighthouse stands on Cape Borda, 500 feet above the level of the sea, with an optical apparatus of the newest and most approved description, which if kept open of the land offers a safe and unmistakable guide for navigating the Strait for 30 miles.

"The coast on the north side of Kangaroo Island is bold high land, and may be seen at a considerable distance on the darkest night. The soundings are regular, gradually shoaling towards the shore.

The only winds that bring in any sea are those from N.W. to S.W., which to vessels bound to the westward, meeting with adverse gales, will always find shelter under Point Marsden or the Troubridge Island, at the entrance of the gulf. In fact, after many years' experience afloat, and having surveyed the entire coast of Kangaroo Island and the south side of Investigator's Straits, I unhesitatingly pronounce it to be one of the safest passages in the world.

"I have also the honor to report that Andreas Hjulman (mate), Carl Spets (seaman), and Carl Martin (seaman), have proceeded to Melbourne to join the ship *Otto* at that port, and Johan Rosenlund has shipped on board the barque *Norden*, and Johan Hogman on board the brig *Hilda*. Under these circumstances I do not consider it necessary to institute any further enquiries.

"I have the honor to be Sir

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" I have the honor to be, Sir,

" Your most obedient servant,

" B. DOVELAS,

" Collector of Customs."
