

# The Argus.

PUBLISHED DAILY.

"I am in the place where I am demanded of conscience to speak the truth, and therefore the truth I speak, impugn it whose list."

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Letters and other communications intended for insertion in the news columns should be addressed to THE EDITOR.

Rejected letters cannot be returned under any circumstances whatever. Correspondents are advised to keep copies of their letters, as this rule will be adhered to strictly.

No notice can be taken of anonymous communications. Every letter must be accompanied by the name and address of the writer, not necessarily for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.

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TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 1891.

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The Customs officers doing service at the wreck of the Joseph H. Scammell are having a very busy time. They have had to be on the *qui vive* night and day, but their industry has been rewarded in effecting a number of seizures of smuggled goods. Cases have been prepared by Detective Christie and Mr. S. J. Priestley, landing waiter stationed at Geelong, and the secretary of Trade and Customs has given instructions for summonses to be issued against seven well-known residents of the Geelong district for the recovery of a penalty of £100 in each case. The cases will be heard at the Geelong Police Court on Saturday next.

Yesterday the members of the Queenscliff Accident Board were able to acquire further information as to the working of artillery. Major Daniells pointed out that if there was danger in slamming the breech of a gun fitted with the percussion lock, there was the same danger from concussion in swinging the breech of a gun fitted with the needle-holder. What was right in the one case could not be wrong in the other. Mr. Service said it was the first time the point had been made clear, and it only served to show the inadvisability of a layman dealing with these professional matters. In giving a reason for the difference between the drill here and in England, Major Daniells said that there being few disappearing guns in England the drill would be brought into harmony with the barbette pattern, while it would be necessary to adopt the drill here that would get best work out of the disappearing guns, as that was the almost universal pattern here.

In consequence of a cable message having been received from Colonel Walker, formerly the officer commanding artillery in Victoria, stating that tubing before closing the breech was not practised in his time, the Queenscliff Board decided yesterday to recall some of the officers who had given evidence on the point. Both Colonel Dean Pitt and Major Daniells declined to give direct contradiction to Colonel Walker's statement, but still held to their former opinions on the point. On reference to the evidence given by Lieutenant Carey, now of the militia, but formerly a warrant officer in the artillery, and Master Gunner Kennedy at the inquiry made at the time of the accident, it was found that both men stated that the first guns fired during Colonel Walker's term of office were tubed with the gun in the loading position and the breech open. On the other hand, Colonel Otter, a former officer in the Victorian Artillery, had no recollection of any such practice, though he admitted Mr. Carey could speak most positively on the point.

The investigation into the circumstances attending the loss of the Joseph H. Scammell on the 7th ult. near the Barwon Heads was concluded yesterday by the Court of Marine Inquiry. Evidence was given that a light on Split Point was an absolute necessity, and that this fact had been pointed out by a special commission in 1880. At present there was a lighthouse at this point but no light. It was also stated by both Pilot Mitchell and Pilot Dennis that the masthead lights carried by the pilot schooners were a great source of confusion and even danger to ship-masters, owing to their similarity to the leading light at Queenscliff, and that the unofficial lights along the shore added to this danger. An unreported current setting towards the shore was also said to exist at the point where the vessel was lost. Mr. Woinarski, who appeared for the Marine Board, said that, notwithstanding these disadvantages, the evidence showed that the captain of the vessel had failed in his duty in not heaving

evidence showed that the captain of the vessel had failed in his duty in not heaving the lead more frequently and in neglecting to show flash lights during the night in order to attract the attention of those on board the pilot schooner. The president, Mr. Nicolson, P.M., announced that the Court would give its decision on Thursday next.

Sea lawyers are not yet extinct in the Court of Marine Inquiry, and the witness of today may be the cross-examiner of to-morrow as Pilot Mitchell and Pilot Dennis demonstrated yesterday. Pilot Mitchell, who held a brief for the pilots generally, had been subjecting every witness to a rigid examination, beginning with the fore-castle hands of the Joseph H. Scammell and ending with his colleague, who was in charge of the

schooner Rip on the night of the wreck, but Pilot Dennis had his turn when his learned friend was placed in the witness-box, and he plied him with questions which even such a marine authority as Mr. Croker acknowledged were most abstruse. They were technical to a bewildering extent, but they went to show that Pilot Mitchell was in error in supposing that the captain of the vessel would have derived no advantage, considering the nature of the cross bearings which he took, if he had also cast the lead early in the night of the 7th inst. Pilot Mitchell also said in his evidence that even captains of mail steamers were confused by the pilot schooner's lights at times, and made the remarkable statement that they sometimes could not tell which was the bow of the schooner and which was the stern. The device of hanging a light over the stern was adopted in order to convey to them this necessary information. Pilot Mitchell and Pilot Dennis steered their case to a very satisfactory conclusion, both Mr. Woinarski and Mr. Croker agreeing that they had acted in accordance with the regulations on the night in question.

During the inquiry yesterday into the loss of the Joseph H. Scammell, Pilot Mitchell laid great stress upon the statements made by the captain of the vessel to the press re-

by the captain of the vessel to the press reporters immediately after the occurrence, when Captain Chapman said that he had been flying a flag for a pilot all the day, and that if a pilot had been on board the vessel would have been saved. Captain Chapman, when examined on the point, denied that he had ever stated that the pilots had not done their duty. He also said that he did not now blame the pilots for their conduct at the time of the wreck. Mr. Woinarski, in summing up the evidence, made the observation that it had been stated in all the journals that the default of the pilots was the cause of the loss of the ship. So far as *The Argus* is concerned this is incorrect. The captain's version of the affair was given merely as his statement, but his view was not recorded or vouched for as correct. He approved of the statement in manuscript before it was published.

The first meeting of the board appointed to inquire into the behaviour of the lifeboat crew at the wrecks of the ships *Craigburn* and *Joseph H. Scammell* was held yesterday afternoon, at the offices of the Marine Board, Mr. R. Reid in the chair. It was decided to examine the Melbourne witnesses, Mr. A. W. Musgrove, Superintendent Dickson, Captain Anderson, of the s.s. *Lady Loch*, Captain Fearon, of the tug *Racer*, and Pilot Blanchard, on Wednesday afternoon next, and to visit Queenscliff on Friday evening, in order to examine the lifeboat crew on the following day.

with recommendations for the next Melbourne