

ARREST TWO BLAMED FOR HALIFAX BLAST

Pilot and Captain of Munition
Ship Accused of Manslaughter
on Commission's Report.

NAVIGATION RULES BROKEN

Pilotage Authorities, Chief Port
Officer, and a Second Pilot Also
Condemned for Negligence.

HALIFAX, N. S., Feb. 4.—Blame for the collision between the French munition ship *Mont Blanc* and the Belgian relief ship *Imo*, resulting in the explosion of the former vessel, which destroyed a large part of Halifax on Dec. 6, with the loss of 1,500 lives, was placed upon Pilot MacKay of Halifax and Captain Lamodec of the French ship in a judgment announced today by the Government commission which investigated the collision. The commission held that Captain Lamodec and the pilot violated the rules of navigation as applied to Halifax Harbor.

Pilot MacKay was arrested, charged with manslaughter, the commission having recommended that he be criminally prosecuted and his license canceled. Captain Lamodec also was arrested, charged with manslaughter. The commission had recommended to the French authorities the cancellation of his license and, further, "that he be dealt with according to the law of his country."

Accused Men Are Bailed.

MacKay and Lamodec are specifically charged in the warrant with the death of William Hayes, pilot of the *Imo*. Both were admitted to bail for their appearance tomorrow, Captain Lamodec in \$10,000, furnished in part by French Consul Gaboury, and MacKay in \$6,000, furnished by the Chairman of the Pilotage Commission.

The commission, which consisted of Mr. Justice Drysdale of the Nova Scotia Admiralty Court, Captain Demers, Dominion Wreck Commissioner, and Captain Hose, R. C. N., Nautical Assessor, condemned the pilotage authorities for permitting MacKay to pilot ships since the disaster. Captain Wyatt, Chief Examination Officer of the port, is found guilty for alleged neglect of duty, and Pilot Renner, who had charge of an American tramp steamer on the morning of the disaster, in connection with the assertion that the Halifax pilots vary the rules of the road.

The commission further recommends that competent authorities establish specific regulations for the handling in Halifax Harbor of ships laden with explosives.

Text of the Findings.

The text of the conclusions of the commission follows:

1. The explosion on the steamship *Mont Blanc* on Dec. 6 was undoubtedly the result of a collision in the harbor of Halifax between the steamship *Mont Blanc* and the steamship *Imo*.

2. Such collision was caused by vio-

lation of the rules of navigation.

3. The pilot and master of the steamship *Mont Blanc* were wholly responsible for violating the rules of the road.

4. Pilot MacKay, by reason of his gross negligence, should be forthwith dismissed by the pilotage authorities and his license canceled.

5. In view of the gross neglect of the rules of navigation by Pilot MacKay, the attention of the law officers of the Crown should be called to the evidence taken in this investigation, with a view to a criminal prosecution of such pilot.

6. We recommend to the French authorities such evidence, with a view to having Captain Lamodec's license canceled, and such Captain dealt with according to the law of his country.

7. It appearing that the pilotage authorities in Halifax have been permitting Pilot MacKay to pilot ships since the investigation commenced and since the collision above referred to, we think the authorities, i. e., pilotage authorities, deserving of censure. In our opinion, the authorities should have promptly suspended such pilot.

8. The master and pilot of the *Mont Blanc* are guilty of neglect of the public safety in not taking proper steps to warn the inhabitants of the city of a probable explosion.

9. Commander Wyatt is guilty of neglect in performing his duty as Chief Examination Officer in not taking proper steps to insure the regulations being carried out and especially in not keeping himself fully acquainted with the movements and intended movements of vessels in the harbor.

10. In dealing with the Chief Examination Officer's negligence in not insuring the efficient carrying out of traffic regulations by the pilots, we have to report that the evidence is far from satisfactory that he ever took any efficient steps to bring to the notice of the Captain Superintendent neglect on the part of the pilots.

11. In view of the allegations of disobedience of the Chief Examination Officer's orders by pilots, we do not consider such disobedience was the proximate cause of the collision.

12. It would seem that the pilots of Halifax attempt to vary the well-known rules of the road, and in this connection we think Pilot Renner, in charge of an American tramp steamer on the morning of the collision, deserving of censure.

13. The regulations governing the traffic in Halifax Harbor in force since the war were prepared by the competent naval authorities; such traffic regulations do not specifically deal with the handling of ships laden with explosives, and we have to recommend that such competent authorities forthwith take up and make specific regulations dealing with such subjects; we realize that while the war goes on under present conditions explosives must move, but in view of what has happened we strongly recommend that the subject be dealt with, specifically by the proper authorities.

Pilot MacKay was bringing the *Mont Blanc* into port when the vessel was rammed amidships by the *Imo*, outward bound. The accident set fire to tanks of benzol on the deck of the *Mont Blanc*. MacKay, Lamodec, and the ship's crew took to boats and proceeded at top speed to the shore; landing, they continued to run. They were more than a mile from the water when the ship blew up. Every man in the party was knocked down. Two were struck by flying bits of steel, one being injured fatally.