

SESSION



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President: SUMMERS HUNTER, ESQ.

Report of Accident in Connection with Oxy-Acetylene Welding Apparatus

BY MR. J. D. FRASER (MEMBER), KARACHI.

The following is an account of the accident which resulted in the death of Mr. Stephens, chief engineer s.s. *Bassano*, and injury to Mr. Fraser at Karachi:—

On or about February 23 I proceeded to the s.s. *Bassano* to survey the damage caused by her collision with the I.G.T.S. *Patrick Stewart*. After the completion of my work on board I got into conversation with the chief engineer of the vessel on the subject of oxy-acetylene welding and cutting machines, and mentioned to him that the one I had in the Port Trust workshops at Manora, did not work satisfactorily. He then told me that his fourth engineer had experience in the working of a similar machine in England for about eleven months and would gladly send him over to work the machine for me. I thanked him for his kind offer and left the vessel. On the 26th morning I went again on board the *Bassano* for the purpose of holding another survey, and before leaving the steamer the chief engineer, Mr. Stephens, informed me that the fourth was ready to accompany me to the Port Trust workshops and show me how to work the machine. I told him that I did not wish the fourth engineer to come with me just then, but that I would be ready for him the following day and have the machine cleaned and opened out ready for inspection. The next day, i.e. the 27th, I went over to the *Bassano* to inspect the repairs to the steamer that were being carried out. After my inspection the chief engineer came to me and again told me that the fourth engineer was ready to accompany me. He also stated that he himself had a little experience in the working of the same kind of machine and might be in a position to point out any small defects, and asked to accompany us. I had no objection to this, and we three left in my launch for the workshops. We arrived at about 10 a.m. After reading the instructions by the makers on the working of these machines the fourth engineer proceeded to charge the generator. This was accordingly done, as well as all the required connections made, and the apparatus was in working order. For experi-

menting a piece of cracked iron was obtained and the flame from the blow pipe directed on to it, the fourth engineer holding the blow-pipe. When the piece of iron had become red hot, but not to a welding state, the flame for some unknown reason went out. I may here state that I worked the machine three times previously myself with exactly the same result. The fourth engineer on looking round to ascertain the reason of the flame going out observed for the first time the hydraulic safety valve and remarked that it was not used on the machine which he had worked and requested that it be removed. I acceded to the request, he being an expert and I practically under his directions. The fourth engineer then handed over the blow-pipe to the workshops foreman, and attended to the regulation cock. The chief engineer and myself were merely standing by. I remember nothing more. The cause of the explosion in my opinion is due to the flame having back-fired into the generator.

J. D. FRASER.

Mr. Fraser was thrown some distance by the force of the explosion across a girder. He was severely bruised and had his ribs broken and was unconscious for six days. It will be gratifying to his many friends to know that he has recovered from the shock and the injuries he sustained.

J. A.

