

(No. 7839.)

"CITY OF NAPLES" (S.S.)

THE MERCHANT SHIPPING ACT, 1894.

FINDING AND ORDER OF A NAVAL COURT.

Finding and Order of a Naval Court held at H.B.M. Consulate-General at Yokohama on the 23rd day of June, 1926, to investigate the circumstances attending the stranding of the British Steamship "City of Naples," of Liverpool, O.N. 127921, on the 15th June, 1926, in lat. 33 degrees 57 minutes N., long. 138 degrees 57 minutes E., on the Zenisu Rock, and to inquire into the conduct of the master, officers and crew.

The "City of Naples" was a steam vessel, schooner rigged, of 3,714 registered tonnage, O.N. 127921, belonging to the Port of Liverpool.

It appears from the evidence given to this Court that she sailed from Middlesbrough on or about March 15th, 1926, bound for Yokohama with a cargo of general merchandise and a crew of 74 hands all told, and no passengers.

That all went well until the vessel left Kobe at 4 p.m. on June 13th in a strong wind and overcast sky, the visibility being poor. The vessel proceeded safely to Ichiemisaki, which was abeam at 12.5 a.m. on June 14th at 7 miles distance. Course was then set by compass S. 30 E. and order was given to 2nd officer, who was in charge, to report to the master when Shiomisaki light was abeam. At 3.30 a.m., it being surmised that Shiomisaki light should be abeam, the master was called and the course altered to N. 70 E. The ship would not come up to her course until 7.50 a.m., when course was altered to N. 55 E. At noon the latitude by the sun was taken and longitude estimated by dead reckoning. At 5 p.m. the chief officer took a cross bearing of the land and fixed the vessel's position 13 miles ahead of the noon position direct on the course set. The master at 5.15 p.m. altered course to N. 60 E. At this time there was a strong gale and high confused sea, heavy rain squalls, and the vessel labouring heavily. At 7 p.m. the master altered course to N. 70 E., there then being a north-easterly gale, overcast sky, high confused sea, poor visibility and heavy rain squalls. At midnight weather and conditions were similar with wind backing to N.N.W. At 2 a.m. on the 15th June a north-west gale, overcast sky, poor visibility and high confused sea. At 2.55 a.m. an object was sighted by the 2nd officer which he took for a junk. He ordered the helm "hard a-port" and rang the engines full astern, the speed of the ship then being about 6 knots. The second officer then saw other objects which he realised to be rocks, telegraphed a double ring astern and called the master, who immediately came on the bridge and took charge. The master kept the engines going full speed astern, but before the vessel lost way she struck upon a rock which would be submerged at high water and awash at low water. The engines were stopped and vessel began pounding on the rocks. S.O.S. signal was sent out, all hands called, life-belts issued and boats swung out. Rockets were fired. The vessel listed towards port, and gradually submerged from the bow to the bridge. About 4.30 a.m. vessel split in two amidships and no further measures could be taken pending the arrival of relief.

That, in the opinion of the Court, the master would have done better to have set a more northerly course

after cross bearing taken at 5 p.m. on June 14th, in view of the distance of the land at the time and of the poor visibility making it inadvisable to place too much reliance on the said bearing, in order to counteract the abnormal current against which warning is given in the "Japan Pilot," page 130, edition 1914, in which an instance is given of the steamship "Oriental" having been set 27 miles south under similar conditions. The Court, however, giving due regard to the fact that the master had not previous experience of this coast and that the current experienced proved abnormal even for these weather conditions, as shown by the evidence of the master of s.s. "Glentara," and to the fact that the master had no opportunity of verifying his position after 5 p.m. on June 14th, exonerates the master from all blame and finds that the vessel was lost owing to an abnormal set and rate of current caused by the weather conditions at the time. The Court further finds that the master did everything in his power to avert the casualty when inevitable.

That the 2nd officer navigated the vessel while in charge thereof in a seamanlike manner and took the proper steps on sighting the rocks and until the master took charge.

That the officers and crew appear to have conducted themselves properly and to have used the utmost exertions.

That proper discipline appears to have been maintained.

That upon the evidence the vessel appears to have been well-found, sufficiently manned and seaworthy. That her cargo appears to have been well and properly stowed. That she was not overloaded.

That the official log book and charts used for her navigation were not available for the consideration of the Court, having been lost with the vessel, but that a chart identical with that actually used in the neighbourhood of the casualty was produced to the Court, said chart being an Admiralty chart entitled "Kii Suido to Tokyo," dated 1914, and corrected to date.

That the Court desires especially to direct the attention of the Board of Trade to the signal services rendered by the Japanese s.s. "Chefoo Maru," by the Japanese Naval Training Ship "Kasuga" and by the Japanese Destroyer "Urakaze," and more particularly to the seamanship shown by the master of the s.s. "Chefoo Maru."

The Court, in pursuance of the powers vested in it by Section 483 of 57 and 58 Vict. c. 60, orders that the sum of £9 1s., being the costs of the proceedings before the said Court, be paid by the master of the s.s. "City of Naples," being one of the parties thereto, and he is hereby ordered to pay the said amount accordingly.

The expenses of this Court, fixed at £9 1s., are approved.

Dated at Yokohama this 23rd day of June, 1926.

E. HAMILTON HOLMES,
H.B.M. Consul-General. President of Naval Court.

J. RAMSAY, Master s.s. "Agapenor."	} Members.
H. W. KENT,	
BRICE D. THOMAS, Master s.s. "Skegness."	

(Issued by the Board of Trade in London,
on Monday, the 30th day of August, 1926.)

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