

(No. 887.)

“LUMLEY CASTLE.” (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Town Hall, North Shields, on the 27th and 28th days of January 1881, before EDWARD SHOLTON and CHARLES TULLY, Esquires, assisted by Captains HIGHT and BEASLEY, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the screw steamer “LUMLEY CASTLE,” on Horns Reef, on the 20th of December 1880.

Report of Court.

The Court, having carefully inquired into the circumstances attending the above-mentioned shipping casualty, finds, for the reasons stated in the annex hereto, that the stranding of the S.S. “Lumley Castle,” on Horns Reef, on the 20th of December 1880, was caused by the master, John Soy, setting too easterly a course, considering all the surrounding circumstances, and he was not justified in putting his engines full speed ahead after finding only ten fathoms of water on the morning of the said 20th December, and the Court orders his certificate to be suspended for six calendar months from the date hereof, with a recommendation that a chief officer's certificate be granted to him during such suspension.

Dated this 28th day of January 1881.

(Signed) EDWARD SHOTTON, }
CHARLES TULLY, } Justices.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) EDWARD HIGHT, }
THOS. BEASLEY, } Assessors.

Annex to the Report.

The “Lumley Castle,” official No. 60,567, was an iron screw steamer of 1670·03 gross, and 1076·07 registered tonnage, and of 230 horse power, built at Low Walker, in the river Tyne, in the year 1870, and owned by the Northumberland Steam Shipping Company, Limited, Mr. G. A. Laws, of Tynemouth, being appointed managing owner in November 1875. She had four compasses, three of which were placed on the deck house amidships, two before the wheel and forward of the funnel, and the standard one thirty feet abaft the funnel, and one at the after steering wheel. All these compasses were corrected with magnets. She had four boats, two of which were lifeboats. She left New Orleans on the 20th of November 1880, with a crew of twenty-six hands, all told, under the command of Mr. John Soy, who holds a certificate of competency as master, No. 8,131, with a cargo of 4,700 bales of cotton, bound to Revel, her draught of water being 15 feet 2 inches forward, and 17 feet 2 inches aft. She arrived at Falmouth on the 6th of December last, and after taking in 60 tons of Bunker coals proceeded on her voyage. After passing the East Goodwin Light-vessel, a cable's length off on her port beam, at 6 p.m. of the 18th of December, a course north 51 degrees easterly by the standard compass (on which compass it was stated there was no local deviation) was set, and the same course was kept up to the time of stranding, which occurred at about 9 a.m. of the morning of the 20th of December, on what afterwards proved to be Horns Reef. The wind during the whole of the passage after leaving the Goodwin Light-ship being to N.W., blowing hard, and the vessel under foresail, reefed fore topsail, fore trysail and jib, and continuing to do so until the vessel stranded. The weather hazy but not thick. The lead does not appear to have been used up till within a short time of the occurrence, or anything done to verify their position, as the captain states the weather being hazy, and

L 367. 657. 200.—2/81. Wt. 47. E. & S.

not seeing the land at any time after leaving the East Goodwin Light-ship, he had no opportunity of taking any observation. About 9 a.m. of the 20th the vessel was stopped and a cast of the lead taken, the master saying he expected to get 17 fathoms, but instead of this they only got 10 fathoms.

The engines were then set ahead full speed, and the helm put hard a-starboard, but while the vessel was coming round on her starboard helm she took the ground, on what afterwards proved to be the Horns Reef. The engines were then reversed and the sails taken in, but the vessel remained fast. The well was then sounded, and it was found that she was making no water. The carpenter, in his evidence, stated that he sounded the well just after her stranding and found 9 inches in her, and again a quarter of an hour afterwards, and found the same. At this time the starboard lifeboat and cutter were lowered (the port lifeboat having by this time been smashed by the sea), and the hands then called out of the engine room to get into the boats. Whilst these boats were alongside, however, the cutter carried away her painter, and came foul of the lifeboat, in which were the chief engineer and five hands, and capsized her, breaking her adrift. Three of the hands were enabled to get into the cutter, which drifted away, while the chief engineer and the other two men got on to the bottom of the lifeboat, both boats drifting away. At 10.42, according to the second engineer's evidence, the vessel slipped off the reef into five fathoms, and she then began to make water. The engine pumps were set on, but none of the deck pumps appear to have been used, as the crew were engaged in getting out the port cutter, which was sent to the rescue of the men who were adrift in the other two boats, which they succeeded in doing, and they all returned safely to the vessel about noon, after which they appear to have been engaged in provisioning the boats. All this time the water was increasing in the vessel, and about 11.40 a.m. the second engineer reported to the master that the water was rising in the engine-room, and that they could only work the engines about 15 minutes longer. From this time no efforts appear to have been made, except firing rockets and making distress signals, to which no answer was made, and at 6 p.m. they abandoned the vessel in their own boats, the water at the time being up to the cylinder covers, and at 9 a.m. of the following morning they were picked up by some fishermen and towed into Esbjerg, where they all safely landed. The courses alleged to have been steered by the master from the East Goodwin Light-vessel, N. 51 degrees E., on which he states there was no local deviation, we have had no opportunity of checking, as he could not inform us when the vessel was last swung, or were any deviation cards produced; but the course N. 51 degrees E. from the Goodwin, marked off on the chart, would take the vessel ten miles outside the Horns Reef Light-vessel, which, in our opinion, is much too near, considering the state of the wind that was taking him on the port beam, and which, if he had continued, after passing the Horns Reef, would have put him on shore about forty miles to the southward of Hansholm, the place he set his course to pass at a distance of 26 miles off. The distance from the Horns Reef Light-vessel and the East Goodwin is 328 miles, and by his statement, that the vessel was making nine knots, she must have run that distance by 6.30 a.m. of the 20th of December. Why, then, did he not get a cast of the lead, as he could see nothing, and ought to have been in the vicinity of the light, which, had he done this, the casualty would have been avoided. After the stranding of the vessel every one appears to have lost their presence of mind, and all they appear to have wished to do was to get away from the vessel. When she came off the reef there does not appear to have been much water in her, and the engine-room fires were alight, by which they could have kept the steam-pumps going, and having a cotton cargo she would have kept afloat sufficiently long for the master to have beached her in some place of safety between the reef and the mainland, instead of which they remained on board for six hours after she came off, doing nothing whatever to attempt to save the ship.

At the conclusion of the evidence, Mr. De Hamel, on

behalf of the Board of Trade, submitted the following questions:—

The Board of Trade desire the opinion of the Court on the following questions:—

1. What was the cause of the stranding of the S.S. "Lumley Castle," on Horns Reef on the 20th of December?

2. Whether a safe and proper course was set after passing the East Goodwin Light-vessel, and whether due and proper allowance was made for the strong north-westerly wind which had prevailed therefrom, and for the tide and currents consequent thereon?

3. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel from time to time?

4. Whether John Soy, the master, was justified in keeping the vessel so long upon the N. 51° E. course, and

5. Whether the said John Soy was justified in putting his engines full speed ahead, and in neglecting to alter his course after the soundings were reported as 10 fathoms only, and breakers were seen ahead at about 9 a.m. on the said 20th of December?

If the Court consider John Soy, the master, in default, his certificate should, in the opinion of the Board of Trade, be dealt with.

Dated this 27th day of January 1881.

(Signed) LANCEL DE HAMEL,
Solicitor for the Board of Trade.

Judgment.

1. The Court finds that the stranding of the "Lumley Castle" on Horns Reef on the 20th of December 1880, was caused by the master setting easterly a course considering the hazy state of weather, and the strong wind from the W.N.W. which was then blowing, and by not using necessary precautions in approaching so dangerous a coast.

2. The Court is of opinion that there were not.

3. This question has been answered in No. 1.

4. The Court finds that he was not.

5. The Court is of opinion that the master was justified in putting his engines full speed ahead finding only ten fathoms of water at 9 a.m. of the 20th of December 1880.

The Court, therefore, finds John Soy, the master of the "Lumley Castle," in default, and orders his certificate to be suspended for a period of six calendar months from the date hereof, but the Court recommends that a chief officer's certificate be granted by the Board of Trade to the said John Soy during the period of suspension of his master's certificate as aforesaid.

(Signed) EDWARD SHOTTON, }
CHARLES TULLY, } Justice

We concur in the above judgment.

(Signed) EDMUND HIGHT, }
THOS. BEASLEY, } Assessors

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