

(No. 920.)

"ROSALIND." (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Public Board Room, Post Office Chambers, Middlesbrough, on the 23rd and 24th days of February 1881, before CHARLES JAMES COLEMAN, Esquire, Judge, assisted by Captains JOHN S. CASTLE and C. VAUX, into the circumstances attending the material damage sustained by the screw steamer "ROSALIND," through stranding east of Dunnose, Isle of Wight, on or about the 8th of January last.

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 "Rosalind" stranded through an error in the compass, after passing the Ower's Light.

Dated this 24th day of February 1881.

(Signed) CHARLES JAMES COLEMAN,
Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) JOHN S. CASTLE, } Assessors.
C. VAUX, }

Annex to the Report.

The "Rosalind," official number 80,548, is an iron screw steamer, and was built in 1879, and is of 750.28 gross and 608.84 net registered tonnage. She is schooner rigged, and fitted with two compound direct acting engines, of 98 horse-power combined. She is owned by Messrs. George Fenwick and C. F. Jackson.

She sailed from Middlesbrough on the 5th January last bound for Bilbao, in water ballast, with a crew of 17 hands, including the master, Mr. John Grieves, who holds a certificate of competency, No. 96,196.

At the time of sailing, the vessel appears to have been well found and equipped, and was apparently well fitted in every respect for the voyage. She had four compasses, namely, the pole compass, which was used as the standard, by which all courses were given; the steering compass on the lower bridge, the after compass, and a tell-tale in the cabin. It appears the vessel was swung off the mouth of the Tyne, in March 1880, by Mr. Robert Liddell, a compass adjuster, and at that time there was very little deviation on any of the compasses. The master has made thirteen voyages from Middlesbrough to Bilbao and back in her, and he stated that he always found the compasses to be correct. The chief officer, who had been nine months in the vessel, said that he had always found the compasses accurate.

After leaving Middlesbrough, the "Rosalind" experienced bad weather for some little time, but it afterwards improved. At 10.45 p.m. on the 7th, the vessel was abreast of the Ower's Light, it bearing N.N.E. by pole compass, and distant about four or five miles. The weather at that time was fine, the sea smooth, and there was a light breeze from the north-east. The engines were going at full speed, making nine knots, and no sail set. The same course which they had been steering from, the Royal Sovereign Light Ship, was continued, namely, W. $\frac{1}{4}$ N., which being corrected for deviation, as shewn by the card produced, would be W. by N. magnetic. This deviation, however, according to the master's evidence, has decreased slightly since the vessel was last swung, and was, at the time of the casualty, not more than two degrees easterly. This course, however, had brought the ship safely from half a mile south of the Royal Sovereign, passing three miles outside of Beachy Head, and five miles outside the Ower's. After passing the Ower's Light, the master went below, leaving the deck in charge of the second officer, who holds a second mate's certificate, giving him instructions

to keep a good look out, and to pass orders to the chief mate to call the master at 4 a.m. It also appeared that there was a general order for the master to be called on all occasions if the weather became thick, or if any important change took place. The Ower's was last seen at 11.20 p.m., but bearings were not taken.

At midnight the sea was still smooth, and the weather calm, when the chief mate took charge. There were no lights in sight, and the chief mate stated that the weather was clear and frosty; nothing however was seen until about 12.50, when the chief mate, who was looking out through his night glasses, suddenly saw something black a little on the starboard bow. He at once ordered the helm to be put hard-a-starboard, and telegraphed to the engine room to "stand by," and then to "stop;" but before anything could be done the vessel took the ground.

Soundings were taken round the vessel, and they found from 10 to 12 feet with sandy bottom. The engines were put astern and kept going; the after tank was pumped out, and in about thirty minutes the vessel floated and was taken into Yarmouth Roads, and subsequently into Southampton, where it was found that she had received considerable damage, her keel being broken and one of her plates bilged.

The opinion of the Court was requested by Mr. Howard Smith, on behalf of the Board of Trade, upon the following questions:—

1. Was a W. $\frac{1}{4}$ N. course steered by the pole compass after passing the Ower's?
2. If yes, was such course a proper one to steer?
3. Were the vessel's compasses in good condition?
4. Was the vessel navigated with proper and seamanlike care?
5. Were the first and second officers justified in continuing their course at full speed considering the haze that existed?
6. Ought not the first officer to have summoned the captain when the weather thickened and St. Catherine's Light did not come into sight?
7. What was the cause of the stranding of the vessel?

8. Having regard to the above questions, was the stranding of the vessel and the material damage to her thereby occasioned caused by any wrongful acts or defaults on the part of the master, first officer, or second officer?

In the opinion of the Board of Trade, the certificates of the first and second officers should have been dealt with.

To which the Court replies as follows:—

1. Yes, if made.
2. Yes.
3. Up to a certain time they were.
4. As regards the second officer, Yes; but not with seamanlike care by the chief officer in not calling the captain when the vessel had run a distance to bring her within range of St. Catherine's Light.
5. This question is answered by answer 4.
6. Yes.
7. Running on shore at Dunnose Point.
8. By an error of judgment on the part of the first officer.

The evidence given by the master was to a great extent corroborated by the second officer, who said that when he took charge of the ship the Ower's Light bore N. by E. about five miles distant. The course given by the master, W. $\frac{1}{4}$ N., was steered until midnight, when the second officer was relieved by the chief officer, to whom he gave the course, and mentioned the master's instructions that he should be called at 4 o'clock, or sooner if the weather changed. The night was bright and starlight, the sea smooth and seaward, the weather was clear, but a haze hung about the shore. When the chief officer relieved the second officer at midnight he stated that he had expected to see St. Catherine's Light, and looked for it with his glass, but was unable to find it. There was a haze about the shore, and he could only see a distance of about two miles.

In the circumstances it was the duty of the chief officer to have called the captain and reported the fact that although the vessel had run the distance which would have brought the St. Catherine's Light clearly into view, he was unable to discover it. Instead of doing this, he continues the vessel's course at full speed,

and at 12.50 she strands, and although she was speedily got off, nevertheless she sustained damages to the amount of above 1,000l.

If the evidence given be correct, the course set was a proper course; and the only way that the vessel could have been brought into the position in which she was was by a sudden deviation of the pole compass; and even, taking this view of it, the Court cannot wholly acquit the chief officer of all blame in the matter, for he must have had a doubt in his mind as to the actual position of the ship soon after he took charge of her, and he ought to have carried out the master's orders and called him.

The chief officer bears a good character as a seaman, and has been 30 years at sea. The Court is not disposed, therefore, to treat the case as one of gross negligence,

and deal with the chief mate's certificate; but impossible to free him altogether from blame in the matter. He certainly has been guilty of an error of judgment.

It would be better for him in future to attend strictly to any orders that may be given by the master of the ship in which he may happen to serve.

The Court makes no order as to costs.

Dated this 24th day of February 1881.

(Signed) CHARLES JAMES COLEMAN

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) JOHN S. CASTLE, } Asses
C. VAUX, }