

(No. 2648.)

"SUCCESS" (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

IN the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Sheriff Court House, Dundee, on the 11th and 12th days of August 1885, before JOHN CAMPBELL SMITH, Esquire, Sheriff-Substitute, assisted by Captains CURLING and HARLAND, into the circumstances attending the stranding and loss of the steamship "SUCCESS," in the Gulf of Finland, near to the Kalbaden Lightship.

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 and loss of the said ship was due to the default of Thomas Alexander Dykes, the second mate, in respect of his having taken the ship into seen danger. The Court therefore suspends the certificate of the said second mate for twelve months from 12th August 1885.

The Court makes no order as to costs.

Dated this Twelfth day of August 1885.

(Signed) J. C. SMITH, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) WILLM. CURLING,
R.N.R.,
ROBERT HARLAND, } Assessors.

Annex to the Report.

This case was heard at Dundee on the 11th August 1885, when Mr. Johnstone appeared for the Board of Trade, Mr. Thomas Thornton for the owners, and Mr. W. B. Milne for the master of the "Success." Nine witnesses were examined at the instance of the Board of Trade and cross-examined on behalf of the master. Mr. Johnstone handed in a statement of the questions on which the Board of Trade desired the opinion of the Court. Mr. Milne addressed the Court on behalf of the master, and Mr. Johnstone was heard in reply. The Court, in respect of the lateness of the hour and the peculiarities of the evidence, adjourned till one o'clock of the following day, in order that judgment might be prepared and delivered.

The circumstances of the case are as follow:—

The "Success" was an iron screw steam vessel, schooner-rigged, belonging to the Port of Dundee, built at Sunderland, in the County of Durham, in the year 1871. Her gross tonnage was 1,135·71, registered tonnage 733·22, underdeck tonnage 909·77. She was fitted with two compound inverted cylinders of 50 and 27 inches in diameter, of 98 horse power combined. She was owned by John Machan, Esquire, of 53, Dock Street, Dundee (who was appointed managing owner on 2nd November 1875), and several others. Her dimensions were, length 250 feet, main breadth 30 $\frac{3}{10}$ feet, and depth of hold 16 $\frac{9}{10}$ feet. She appears to have been a good vessel, well found, and thoroughly equipped in all respects. She had four boats, two of which were fitted as lifeboats, three compasses, viz., 1 pole compass elevated about 20 feet above the deck, 1 steering compass on the bridge, and 1 aft. They were adjusted at Dundee, in the month of June last, by Mr. P. A. Feathers, professional adjuster, and deviation cards were produced in Court.

She left Cronstadt about noon on the 10th July last with a cargo consisting of wheat and oats, and a deck-load of lathwood for London. Her draught of water was 15 feet forward and 18 feet 7 inches aft. Her crew consisted of 19 all told, under the command of Mr. Alexander Glass, who holds a certificate of competency

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as master, numbered 88,037. The pilot being discharged, the vessel proceeded on her voyage under the charge of the master. At midnight her position was 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ mile distant from Rodskar Light, which bore about S. by E. A course was then set W. $\frac{3}{4}$ S. by the pole compass (magnetic) for Reval Stone Lightship, which was distant about 60 miles. About this time the master went below, giving orders to the mate, who repeated these orders to the second mate on being relieved by him, viz., to steer W. $\frac{3}{4}$ S. by pole, and to report any change of the weather to the master. According to the evidence of the two helmsmen, Charles Adamson and Louis Hansen, this course was steered, and at 3 h. 23 m. a.m., it being then daylight, a lightship was seen nearly ahead, or a little on the port bow, which the second mate concluded was the Reval Stone Lightship, and reported it as such to the captain, who was taking his rest in the chart house. According to the second mate's evidence, the captain told him to keep the same course and call him again when abreast of the lightship. The second mate did not call any more, but continued his course, and as he drew near the light vessel he altered the course to W. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. without consulting the captain, and shortly after that to W. by N. $\frac{1}{4}$ N., which course he continued until the vessel struck on the Kalbaden Shoal at 3.50 a.m., going full speed. The vessel dragged across the reef without stopping. The captain was roused by the striking of the vessel, and was almost immediately on deck. The vessel, under his direction, was taken off the reef towards the south. The pumps were sounded, and at first the vessel seemed to have made no water, but shortly afterwards, after sounding again, several feet of water was found. All the steam pumps were put on, the vessel proceeding at full speed for more than three hours, but the leak gained so fast that it became necessary to get the boats ready, and at 7.30 a.m., the main deck being under water forward, the water in the stock hold being up to the knees of the firemen, the crew were compelled to take to the boats and abandon the ship. The boats remained by or near the ship until she foundered, about 15 minutes afterwards, when they proceeded to Reval, where they arrived safely at 9 p.m. same day. The crew returned to England by the ship "Delta."

The questions submitted to the Court by the agent for the Board of Trade are set forth in a paper apart, as are also the answers thereto, to which reference is respectfully made, which paper is also annexed, and is signed as relative hereto.

The cause or causes of the deviation of the ship from the course set by the captain have not been explained by the evidence. If the witnesses spoke the truth as to the course set and actually steered the casualty could not have happened. The ship may have been taken out of her prescribed course by the second mate and the two helmsmen, and they may have concealed it by stating what was not true. Nothing could be inferred as to the truth or falsehood of their testimony from the manner in which they gave it. The evidence of the witness Charles Adamson was not satisfactory, for though he was on deck the whole watch before the ship struck, and was said by the other helmsman to have been on the look-out for nearly two hours before she struck, he does not admit to have seen anything at all, and denies that he was on the look-out. The second mate and Hansen both admit that they saw the Kalbaden Lightship. The second mate approached it as he did because in his ignorance he believed it to be the Reval Stone Lightship. Hansen who is familiar with the Gulf, and who knew that this was not the Reval Stone Lightship, nevertheless steered right in amongst the rocks, which, in addition to the lightship, were indicated by four beacons consisting of wooden poles with red flags flying from them. These beacons must in the clear daylight have been visible to both the second mate and Hansen, and if they had given heed to the warning conveyed by them as well as by the lightship, the disaster could not have happened.

The Court was of opinion that the captain was blameworthy, and reprimanded him for placing more confidence in the second mate than he was entitled to do, and for failing to see that he understood what he was expected to do, and to give him proper instructions.

Had the course which the second mate was to take been pointed out to him on the chart he could never have mistaken the Kilbaden Lightship for the Reval Stone.

(Signed) J. C. SMITH.

We concur in the above.

(Signed) ROBERT HARLAND, } Assessors.

QUESTIONS for OPINION of COURT in INQUIRY into loss of S.S. "SUCCESS," of Dundee, and Answers thereto.

1. Were proper measures taken to verify the ship's position about midnight of 10th July, or before the Rodskjar Light was left?

Ans.—The ship's position was not accurately ascertained, but sufficiently for practical purposes.

2. Were proper courses thereafter from time to time set and steered, and was proper allowance made for tides and currents?

Ans.—No allowance was made for tides and currents, and it is not proved that any was necessary. The evidence is, that proper courses were set, but they cannot have been steered or the disaster would not have happened.

3. Was the second officer justified in mistaking the Kalbaden for the Revelstone Lightship?

Ans.—He was not justified.

4. Was the master justified in believing the second officer's report that the Revelstone Lightship was in sight?

Ans.—He was not justified; but we think his conduct not inexcusable in respect that he was probably not fully awake, that the ship had got into a position which he could not have anticipated, and that the second mate did not tell him the time.

5. Should the second officer have made any further reports to the master before the time the vessel struck?

Ans.—He ought to have reported to the captain as he drew close to the lightship, and before he altered the course further to the north. He ought, further, to have seen the beacons in the neighbourhood of the lightship, and to have told the captain that they were being approached. Further, he failed to make the captain understand his first report.

6. Should further or other measures have been taken after Kalbaden was sighted?

Ans.—The error consisted in mistaking Kalbaden for Revelstone. No measure occurs to us that could have obviated the result of this mistake.

7. Was the master on deck at all times when the safety of the ship required his personal supervision?

Ans.—He was not on deck when the ship struck, but his being below in the circumstances known to him was quite consistent with professional usage.

8. Was the neglect of the lead justifiable?

Ans.—The use of the lead could have been of no advantage as the bottom is rocky and the soundings very irregular.

9. Was a good and proper look-out kept?

Ans.—A good and proper look-out was not kept.

10. Was the vessel navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

Ans.—The vessel was not navigated with proper care.

11. What was the cause of the vessel striking on or near the Kalbaden Rocks?

Ans.—The mistaking Kilbaden Lightship for Revelstone Lightship.

12. Was everything done afterwards for the safety of the ship?

Ans.—After the vessel struck everything was done that could be done.

13. Were the master, first and second officers, or any of them in default?

Ans.—The Court is of opinion that the second mate was in grave default, and that the master was not in default, but that he was to blame in not having sufficiently tested the intelligence of the second mate, and in not having given him sufficiently clear and definite instructions before leaving the deck.

14. What was the cost of the vessel to her owners?

Ans.—Between 16,000*l.* and 17,000*l.*

15. What was her value when she left on her last voyage?

Ans.—The vessel was a wreck when the owners purchased her, and she may have been worth more than she cost. Her value when she last sailed has not been definitely proved.

16. What were the insurances effected, and how were they apportioned?

Ans.—The vessel was insured for 13,000*l.* apportioned thus, 7,000*l.* on the hull, 5,000*l.* on machinery, and 1,000*l.* on freight.

Lastly. In the opinion of the Board of Trade the certificates of the master, mate, and second mate should be dealt with?

Ans.—The Court is of opinion that the mate is not to blame, but that the master erred in trusting the second mate without having tested his experience and intelligence, and also in having failed to give him sufficiently clear and definite instructions, and the Court now reprimand him and admonish him to be more careful in future. Further, the Court is of opinion that the second mate was in grave default, and in respect of said default they hereby suspend his certificate for a period of twelve calendar months from 12th August 1885.

The Court finds no expenses due.

(Signed) J. C. SMITH.

We concur in the above.

(Signed) WILLM. CURLING, } Assessors.
R.N.R.,
ROBERT HARLAND, }