

(No. 2354.)

“JEANIE” (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of the formal Investigation held at the Moot Hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne, on the 5th of November 1884, before H. C. ROTHERY, Esquire, Wreck Commissioner, assisted by Captains BEASLEY and COMYN, as Assessors, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the steamship “JEANIE,” near Ostergarns Lighthouse, on the Island of Gothland, in the Baltic, on the 25th of July 1884.

Report of Court.

The Court, having carefully inquired into the circumstances of the above-mentioned shipping casualty, finds, for the reasons annexed, that the stranding of the said ship was due to the wrongful act and default of Thomas Webster, the master, and it accordingly suspends his certificate for six months, but recommends that during the period of such suspension he be allowed a first mate's certificate.

The Court is not asked to make any order as to costs.

Dated this 5th day of November 1884.

(Signed) H. C. ROTHERY, Wreck Commissioner.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) THS. BEASLEY, } Assessors.  
D. R. COMYN, }

Annex to the Report.

This case was heard at Newcastle on the 5th of November 1884, when Mr. Israel Davis appeared for the Board of Trade, Mr. Tilly for the owners, and Mr. Forster for the master of the “Jeanie.” The first and second officers were present, but were not represented by either counsel or solicitor. Six witnesses having been produced by the Board of Trade and examined, Mr. Israel Davis handed in a statement of the questions upon which the Board of Trade desired the opinion of the Court. Mr. Forster then addressed the Court on behalf of the master. The second officer was heard on his own behalf, and Mr. Israel Davis having replied for the Board of Trade, the Court proceeded to give judgment on the questions on which its opinion had been asked. The circumstances of the case are as follow:—

The “Jeanie” was an iron screw steamship, belonging to the Port of Hartlepool, of 1,815 tons gross, and 1,172 tons net register, and was fitted with engines of 180 horse power. She was built at Hartlepool in the year 1882, and at the time of the casualty, which forms the subject of the present inquiry, she was the property of Mr. John Coverdale, of Ratcliffe Terrace, Hartlepool, and others, Mr. Coverdale being the managing owner. She left Cronstadt on the 23rd July last with a crew of 21 hands all told and about 2,000 tons of grain in bulk, and having a deck cargo of wood, bound to London; and at 3.30 a.m. of the 25th was off Dagerort Lighthouse, which bore S.E. by E., distant about 16 miles. From there a S.W. by S. course was steered by the pole compass, which, allowing a deviation of about three-quarters of a point on that course, would, he said, be equivalent to a S.W. ¼ S. course magnetic. They were not able, we are told, to get an observation that day, but at noon the log showed 30 miles from Dagerort. The vessel was continued on the same course, still going at full speed, and making from 9 to 9½ knots an hour; and at 3.30 p.m. a lighthouse was seen, which the second mate, whose watch it was, took to be Ostergarns Lighthouse, and so reported it both to the chief officer, when he came on deck at 4 o'clock, as well as to the master, when he came up at half-past four. The vessel then continued her course, and at 5.50, the weather having become foggy, the master,

who was on deck, ordered the engines to be put down to half speed, and at the same time altered the vessel's course half a point to the southward. From that time the engines were kept at half speed until nearly 7, when the fog beginning to lift, the master ordered the engines to go on full speed ahead; but he had hardly done so, when he observed land on his starboard bow, upon which he at once gave the order to hard-a-starboard the helm, and telegraphed to the engine-room to put the engines at easy; but almost immediately afterwards the vessel took the ground; and it was subsequently found that she had struck on some rocks on the mainland off Katthammarsvik, some 4 miles inside of and to the westward of Ostergarns. On finding that the vessel was aground, the captain gave orders to go full speed astern, and at the same time directed the deck cargo to be jettisoned; but all their efforts were unavailing, and the vessel remained fast aground. After a time they obtained assistance from the shore, and having discharged about one-third of the cargo she came off, and was towed to a small place called Slitchamn. There the remainder of the cargo was discharged, and the vessel having been temporarily repaired, was taken to Stockholm, where she was put into a proper condition to resume her voyage; and the cargo, having been re-shipped, she left, and arrived at her destination in safety.

These being the facts of the case, the Board of Trade have put to us the following questions:—

1. What was the cause of the stranding?
2. Was the deviation of the compasses properly ascertained, and if not, who is in default?
3. Whether the proper corrections to the courses and bearings were applied?
  - 3a. Whether the master was on deck at all times when the safety of the vessel needed his personal supervision, and when the said supervision could reasonably be required?
4. Whether an observation could have been taken, and if so, who was in default for not taking it?
5. Whether the second officer was justified in neglecting to report to the master when the vessel arrived off the lighthouse, or supposed lighthouse, about 3.30 p.m. on the 25th July?
6. Whether, when this report was made to the master at 4.30 p.m., he was justified in assuming that the light passed at 3.30 p.m. was the Ostergarn Light, and whether he then took proper measures to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel?
7. Whether a safe and proper alteration was made in the course at 5.30 p.m.?
8. Whether due and proper allowance was made for tides and currents, and whether the speed of the vessel was properly and sufficiently reduced?
9. Whether, when land was sighted, proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel, and whether she ought to have been stopped and a proper alteration then made in the course?
10. Whether the total neglect of the lead was justifiable?
11. Whether a good and proper look-out was kept?
12. Whether the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care? and finally,
13. Whether the master and officers are, or either of them is, in default? And it is added that “the Board of Trade are of opinion that the certificates of the master, the first and second mates, should be dealt with.”

Now I do not propose to answer all these questions *seriatim*, but I shall go at once to the principal and almost only point in the case, namely, how was it that this vessel, whose course ought to have been some miles outside of and to the eastward of Ostergarns, got some four miles inside of and to the westward of it. The master's statement is that, when he came on deck at half-past four o'clock, the second mate, in whom he said he had full confidence, reported to him that they had passed Ostergarns Lighthouse at half-past three o'clock. Let us see whether this was any justification for letting the vessel run ashore where she did. He told us that at noon the log had shewn that they had run 80 miles from off Dagerort, being an average of about 9½ knots an hour from 3.30 a.m. that day. He

was then asked to lay down his course on the chart, and to mark on it his position at noon, and then his position at 3.30 p.m., assuming that the vessel had kept on at the same speed, namely,  $9\frac{1}{2}$  knots an hour, for that time. On doing so it appeared that at 3.30 p.m. he must have been some 15 miles short of Ostergarns, for the distance of the point from which he had taken his departure off Dagerort to abreast of Ostergarns is about 129 miles, whilst the distance which she would have run in the twelve hours from 3.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m., at  $9\frac{1}{2}$  knots an hour, would be only 114 miles. If, then, the master had laid down his course and position on the chart when the second officer reported that they had passed Ostergarns at 3.30, he would have seen that it could not possibly have been that lighthouse. What, then, should he have done? He ought at once to have taken measures to ascertain his position, and this he could have done at once by taking a cast of the lead. Had he done so, he would have found that he was in some 20 to 30 fathoms of water; whereas, if he had been on his proper course to pass outside of Ostergarns, he would have had from 50 to 60 fathoms; and he would then have known at once that he was out of his course. He had had no observation that day at noon, and no opportunity, he says, of taking an azimuth; and knowing, if he had thought of it, that he could not have passed Ostergarns by 3.30 that afternoon, he ought to have taken every means in his power of verifying his position.

And now let us see what course the vessel must have steered to get to the place where she grounded. The master told us that the course steered was S.W. by S. by the pole compass, and that he had allowed three-quarters of a point deviation, making the course S.W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  S. magnetic. Now the authority which he produced for the compass having about three-quarters of a point deviation on a S.W. by S. course was a deviation card, in which it was stated that on that course there was a deviation of half a point south southerly; but on looking at that card it was found to be dated August 1882, since which time we were told that the compasses had not been adjusted. I then called for his deviation book, but that we were told had gone away in the ship, and could not therefore be produced. There was therefore no proof that the compass might not have had a greater deviation, and that it had is we think sufficiently proved by the fact of her getting ashore where she did. If a straight course be laid on the chart from off Dagerort to the place where the vessel grounded it will be seen that it is as nearly as possible S.W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  W., or a little more than a quarter of a point to the westward of what the master thought he was steering. So that, if instead of having three-quarters of a point on a S.W. by S. course, the pole compass had had a little more than a point of deviation, it would account for the vessel having grounded where she did. Such a course too would take her within 8 miles of Holmudden or Faro Lighthouse, which is no doubt the lighthouse that the second officer saw, that being the distance at which he said that they had passed it. This then was the cause of the vessel stranding where she did; indeed the master can only account for it by supposing that he had not allowed sufficient for deviation. But is this any justification for his conduct? In our opinion it is not, seeing that he took no steps to verify his position, as he might have done by a cast of the lead, either when the second officer reported to him that they had passed Ostergarns, or when the weather had come on foggy, and the engines were reduced to half speed, which was rather more than an hour before she took the ground.

A few words will now dispose of the remainder of the questions which have been put to us. Of course it was

the master's duty to ascertain from time to time the proper amount of deviation on his compasses; and it is to his neglect in applying the proper correction to the course that the casualty is in great part due. At the same time we do not think that the master was absent from the deck when the safety of the vessel required his personal supervision, for from the time the weather set in foggy he seems to have been continually on the bridge, directing the navigation of the vessel. We have also no reason to think that there was not a good lookout being kept; nor that, when land was sighted, all proper measures were not taken to prevent her going aground. The fault of the master was for not having made sufficient allowance for deviation, and for not having taken a cast of the lead, and for this there is no justification.

Lastly, it is said that the Board of Trade are of opinion that the certificates of the master, and of the first and second mates should be dealt with. As regards the chief mate we cannot see that any blame attaches to him for the stranding of this vessel. As to the second mate, no doubt it would have been better if he had at once reported the lighthouse which he took to be Ostergarns Lighthouse when he first sighted it at 3, or at all events when they were abreast of it at 3.30 p.m., but he did report it to the chief officer, when he relieved him at 4, and he subsequently reported it to the master, when the latter came on deck at 4.30; and for his omission in this respect we should not think of dealing with his certificate. The chief blame for this casualty rests with the master for not making the proper allowance for deviation when he set his course, and for holding on in a thick fog without taking any means to ascertain his true position, although a little care and attention would have shewn him that he was out of his course. Now Mr. Tilley, who appeared for the owners, has told us that Captain Webster has been in their employment for about 20 years, and that he was authorised by them to say that he has always given them the greatest satisfaction, and that they had the fullest confidence in him. On my questioning, however, the master as to his antecedents he admitted that the first vessel that he ever commanded was the "Ocean," of London, and that he had lost her in 1867. He stated also that during the time he had been in Mr. Coverdale's employ he had commanded four of their ships, the "Rosa Mary," the "Minnethorpe," the "Jeanie," and another; that the "Rosa Mary" had gone aground whilst under his command some seven years ago in the Red Sea; that the "Minnethorpe," whilst under his command, was lost some three years and a half since on the coast of Spain, between Cape Finisterre and Corunna; and, lastly, we have the "Jeanie," which has now been put ashore on the coast of Gothland under circumstances which do not redound very much to the master's credit. We hardly think that this is a very satisfactory record to shew. Now Mr. Forster has contended that this casualty was due merely to an error of judgment; but, in our opinion, it was due to over confidence and to neglect of duty, and under these circumstances we have no option but to deal with this master's certificate, and we shall, therefore, suspend it for six months.

The Court, on the application of the master's solicitor, agreed to recommend that during the suspension of his master's certificate he be allowed a chief mate's.

The Court was not asked to make any order as to costs.

(Signed) H. C. ROTHERY,  
Wreck Commissioner.

We concur.

(Signed) THS. BEASLEY, }  
D. R. COMYN, } Assessors.

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