

(No. 3691.)

“VICTORIA” (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at Glasgow, on the 21st and 22nd days of December 1888, before ALEXANDER ERSKINE MURRAY, Esquire, Advocate, Sheriff-Substitute of Lanarkshire, assisted by Captains PARISH and BAIN, Assessors, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship “VICTORIA,” of Glasgow, at or near Groomsport, Co. Down, on or about 28th ultimo.

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 total loss of the “Victoria” was caused by her having been kept too close to the shore after passing Mew Island.

The Court finds the master, Peter Jacobs, in default, and suspends his certificate of competency as master for three months, and the mate, Ferdinand Grott, also in default, and suspends his certificate as extra master for six months, but recommends that a mate's certificate should be granted to each of them.

Dated this twenty-fourth day of December 1888.

(Signed) A. ERSKINE MURRAY, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) ALFRED PARISH, } Assessors.
JOHN BAIN, }

Annex to the Report.

This inquiry was held at Glasgow on the 21st and 22nd days of December 1888, when Mr. Donald appeared for the Board of Trade, Mr. Campbell for the master of the “Victoria,” and Mr. T. A. Fyfe for the owners.

The “Victoria” was a steamship, built of iron, at Maryhill, Glasgow, in the present year, and was on her first voyage at the time of the casualty. She was registered at Glasgow, official number 96,009, net tonnage 20'38, and gross tonnage 53'58. She was rigged as a fore-and-aft schooner, and was fitted with one pair of compound engines of 20 horse-power combined.

She had one boat, which was lashed on the fore-hatch, three life buoys, and one life belt, which belonged to the master. She had two pumps, one on the poop aft, and one on the forepart of the boiler space. Mr. Charles Chastenet, of St. Lucia and of London, was registered as the sole owner; but his ownership was not to commence until the delivery of the vessel at St. Lucia, and until which time she remained the property of the builders, Messrs. Swan. Her voyage out to St. Lucia was to be made under sail only, and although the engines were in her, they were not connected, and her propeller and funnel were unshipped. She had on board about 23 tons of coal as ballast, and at 2 30 p.m. on the 27th of November left Greenock for St. Lucia, her draught being 6ft. 3 in. aft and 6 ft. ½ in. forward, under the command of Mr. Peter Jacobs, who holds a certificate of competency as master, number 20,850, and with a crew of five all told, namely:—master, mate, one A.B., one cook and O.S., and a boy. The mate, Ferdinand Grott, held a certificate as extra master, number 05,405, dated 1858. Mr. Swan, the builder, and Buchanan, a rigger, were also on board when she left Greenock, being desirous of proving her sailing qualification.

The wind in leaving was light from the N.E. Mr. Swan, being satisfied with the trial of the craft, gave the tiller to the master, who proceeded on his voyage. The Cloch Lighthouse was passed, but the vessel took

the ground in Inverkip Bay. A kedge was got ready, but before it could be run out her sails took aback and she came off.

At midnight she was off Rothelay, weather calm, and between 4 and 5 a.m. of the 28th November she ran into Lamlash Bay, with the view of landing Mr. Swan and Buchanan, which was done about 6 a.m., in the “Victoria's” boat. The vessel had not been anchored, and it being dead calm, she drifted towards the shore with the falling tide and struck the ground with her keel. With the assistance of a tug she was towed off and, clear of the S.W. end of Lamlash Bay. From Pladda, W. by S. about 7 miles, a course was set S.W. by S. ½ S., to pass to the eastward of Ailsa Craig, the wind being then E.N.E. The wind shifting to the S. eastward, as they neared the Craig, the master became doubtful whether he should weather the Craig, and altered his course to pass round to the westward of it. Having brought the Craig abeam, the ship was again put on to a S.W. by S. ½ S. course, and at 6 p.m. Corsewall Light was abeam, distant about 3 miles, wind S.E. The same course was continued until about 8 p.m., at which time the wind hauled round to S.S.E., and was blowing strong. The weather being threatening and wind heading, the master stated that, after consulting with the mate, he thought it advisable to bear up for Belfast Lough, and with that intention put the vessel on a W. ½ S. course. At about 8.40 p.m. Mew Island Light was abeam, distant about 1 mile, and the course was altered to W. ½ N.; the crew were called to stations, and after taking in all sail excepting the mainsail and stay-fore-sail, the A.B. took the lead, got no ground for a few casts, then 12 fathoms. The mate was below at this time, under circumstances which are detailed hereafter, and the boy was also below from sea-sickness. The remaining hand, i.e., the ordinary seaman, was employed getting ready the anchor. The master had never been into Belfast Lough before, and was anxious to consult his chart for the course up the Lough, which he had not done previously to getting up to Mew Island. He twice called to the mate to come up and relieve him at the tiller that he might go down to examine the chart, and as he got no reply, called a third time for him “for God's sake either to come on deck, or to “give him a course up the Lough.” Finding that the mate would neither come on deck or give the course he desired, the master called the cook to the tiller, gave him a course W. ½ N., and went below, Mew Light bearing E. ½ S. While consulting the chart, which occupied some three or four minutes, he felt from the motion of the vessel that her course had been altered, and on going on deck found that she had come up four points to windward of her course. He immediately put the helm hard up, and while in the act of doing so the leadsman sang out “5½ fathom.” “Hard-a-port the helm!” the master replied, “Hard-a-port it is,” but before she had paid off to her old course she struck on the rocks with her stem and port bow. This was at 9.30 p.m. The wind was then to the southward of S.S.E., weather “dark and hazy.” Finding that the vessel was filling fast all sails were lowered, and signals of distress made. Having no rockets on board, paper torches soaked with paraffin were burned, lights shown, and the bell rung. About midnight the coastguard near Groomsport established communication with the vessel by lines, and the crew were all landed in safety, but with the loss of their effects. The vessel continued striking on the rocks, and has since become a total wreck.

The inability of the mate to fulfil his duties has been prominently before the Court during the inquiry. It appears from the evidence adduced, and also from the somewhat incoherent statements of the mate himself, that he went below about 5 p.m. on the 27th November and remained there until 8 a.m. the following morning, by which time the vessel was being towed out of Lamlash Bay; also that he relieved the master at the tiller occasionally during the day. But from the time of passing Corsewall Point, about 6 p.m., he does not appear to have been on deck until after the vessel struck. The mate attributes his absence from duty to injuries he sustained while the vessel was coming out of the Clyde, while the master and others were of opinion that it was chiefly owing to the effects of drink. Mr. Swan and Buchanan also noticed on the afternoon of the 27th that the mate was under the influence of drink. It may be mentioned

here that four bottles of whisky were taken on board by Mr. Swan and given to the master with a caution to keep them out of the crew's way. They were left on the cabin table, however, and, although the evidence as regards this was of a very conflicting nature, the strong presumption is that the mate helped himself largely from them, so that if, as alleged by him, and as stated in a medical certificate produced by him, he was suffering on the 28th from a fractured rib, which is borne out to a certain extent by the evidence of one of the witnesses, it may well be that the accident was occasioned by his having been in drink.

At the close of the evidence the following questions were submitted to the Court:—

1. What was the cause of the casualty?
2. Whether the vessel was properly navigated after passing Ailsa Craig?
3. Whether safe and proper courses were set and steered, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide, currents, and leeway?
4. Whether about 9 p.m. on the 28th November proper measures were taken to navigate the vessel into Belfast Lough?
5. Whether the chief officer was seriously injured before the vessel left Lamlash, and, if so, whether the master was justified in proceeding on his voyage?
6. Whether the master and mate were at any time during the voyage under the influence of drink?
7. Whether a good and proper look-out was kept?
8. Whether the lead was used with sufficient frequency?
9. Whether the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?
10. Whether the master and mate are, or either of them is, in default?

In the opinion of the Board of Trade the certificates of the master and mate should be dealt with.

Mr. Campbell and Mr. Fyfe addressed the Court respectively for their clients, and the mate was heard on his own behalf. Mr. Donald having replied, the Court answered the questions, and gave judgment as follows:—

1. The cause of the casualty was that the "Victoria" was kept too close to the shore after passing Mew Island.
- 2 and 3. The vessel was properly navigated from Ailsa Craig to Mew Island, and up to that point proper courses were steered, and proper allowances made for tide, currents, &c.
4. Proper measures were not taken about 9 p.m. for the navigation of the vessel into Belfast Lough.
5. The chief mate appears to have been injured to some extent by an accident from the jying of the main-boom, but the master had no reason for thinking that the mate was seriously injured, and therefore was justified in proceeding on his voyage from Lamlash.

6. The mate was certainly under the influence of drink during a portion of the voyage. There is no evidence that the master was.

7. A good and proper look-out appears to have been kept.

8. The lead was used with sufficient frequency.

9. The vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care.

10. The master is in default:—(1) Commencing from the Clyde, we find that with a fair wind and daylight, the master himself being at the tiller, the vessel was run aground beyond the Cloch Lighthouse in Inverkip Bay. (2) When in Lamlash Bay the master showed a want of prudent care in not anchoring his vessel, the weather being calm, before sending away his boat to land Mr. Swan and Buchanan, the rigger, in consequence of which she was ashore for a time, and had had to be taken off by a steam-tug. (3) After deciding, about 8 p.m., to run for Belfast Lough, the master had ample time between then and his arrival off Mew Island to have gone below to consult the chart and ascertain the course by which he should go up Belfast Lough. This he could have done at that time with perfect safety, even though the mate was not on deck, by leaving his A.B. at the tiller. (4) When, after passing the Mew, he found the mate could not, or would not, give him the course or come on deck to take the tiller, having the whole breadth of the Lough to leeward, and an ebb tide setting him off the weather shore, he ought to have hove the vessel to for a short time on the other tack, when he could have studied the chart at leisure. Of these four instances of default on his part, the two first did not, but the two last did, contribute to the final casualty. The Court feels it to be its duty, under these circumstances, to suspend his certificate, but in consideration of his position having been made a difficult one by the incapacity of the mate, and the absence from deck of one of his crew from sea-sickness, does so for the short period of three months only.

As regards the mate, the Court finds that he also is in default, in respect that during a portion at least of the voyage he was under the influence of liquor, and his incapacity for his duties, whether arising in consequence thereof, or in consequence of accidents received by him while he was at least partially under the influence of liquor, contributed in some measure to the final casualty by depriving the master of his services and assistance.

The Court therefore suspends his certificate as extra-master for the period of six months, but in the circumstances recommends that the master and mate be granted mates' certificates during the terms of their suspension.

(Signed) A. ERSKINE MURRAY, Judge.

We concur.

(Signed) ALFRED PARISH, }
JOHN BAIN, } Assessors.

" VICTORIA "

" "

" STORM "

The Mersey

In the matter of George's L... and 1st, 2... Thos. St... Magistrate... CURME, an... into the c... British sa... Liverpool, ship " Gov... " STORM C... on the 13th

The Court, h... stances attendin... finds, for the re... said ship was l... the part of the... she ran into... watch and fol... certificate of M... calendar mont... Thomas, was se

Dated this 4th

We concur

This was an... the loss of the... the "Albert," of Liv... sailing ship "G... the tug "Storm... pool, on or ab... ensued. Mr. P... Trade, Mr. Pi... master of the... cock, solicitor... nor." The "V... schooner rigge... of 61.33 tons... of the Mersey... by them as a... by Mr. R. P... sailing barque... 1877, of 576.0... mouthshire, a... of that place... Williams, and... built at Chepst... tons gross an... property of M... the "Governor... She had two... The "Victoria... 10th May last... Sumner, who h... trade passenger... of eight hands