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(No. 3777.)

“ BIRKSGATE ” (S.S.)

REPORT and DECISION of the Marine Board of Queens-  
land on the circumstances attending the grounding  
of the S.S. “ BIRKSGATE,” official No. 79,337, on  
“ D ” Reef, on the 27th January 1889.

The Board, having heard the evidence of the master, third mate, and man at the wheel, find that the “ Birksgate,” a screw steamship of 916 tons, belonging to the A.U.S.N. Company, Walter R. Fleetwood, master, left Port Douglas for Cooktown at 5.30 p.m. on 27th January, and at 10.40, the night being dark but fine, the master hauled her to the eastward of the line of the Point Archer and Rocky Islet Lighthouses, and steered N. by W.  $\frac{1}{2}$  W. to pass Archer Point. The master was navigating the ship, and the third mate, who had the watch, was on the bridge. After altering the course the master sat down on a chair in the corner of the bridge, and on passing Archer Point at 11.9 the third mate thought he saw the master turn his head round to look at the light. At 11.20, the master not altering the course, he called him, and reported the vessel as having passed Walker's Point. The master, after trying for some minutes unsuccessfully to make out the point of land, headed her inshore N.W.  $\frac{1}{2}$  N. and then N.W. to open out the green light. The light not being sighted, the helm was put hard-a-starboard, and when her head came up to W.N.W. she took the ground on the S.W. edge of “ D ” Reef, at 11.35. The vessel went on the reef smoothly, and having received no damage, came off with the rising tide, after having been aground for four hours.

The master admitted having fallen asleep, having been up most of the previous night, and the heat being too great to allow him to obtain sufficient rest. Both the third mate and himself gave clear and straightforward evidence.

The Board consider the master is entirely to blame for the accident, and that if there was any doubt as to his being able to keep awake, he should have placed the navigation of the vessel in the hands of the officer of the watch, and given him such orders as to calling him, and for the safe navigation of the ship, as he might deem necessary.

The Board therefore censure Captain Fleetwood for his neglect, and caution him to be more careful in future.

Captain Fleetwood has been in command of steamers for six years without meeting with any previous accident.

(Signed) G. P. HEATH, Commander, R.N.,  
Chairman.

Marine Board Office,  
Brisbane, 26th February 1889.