

(No. 3924.)

“CEYLON” (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at Westminster on the 12th day of November 1889, before R. H. B. MARSHAM, Esquire, assisted by Captains RONALDSON and BROOKS, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship “CEYLON,” on the 27th September 1889, on Kulla Ground, south coast of Sweden.

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 cause of the casualty was that the master, Sidney Richard Parry Caines, mistook his position off Smyge Point. The Court finds the master in default and suspends his certificate for 3 months.

Dated this 15th day of November 1889.

(Signed) R. H. B. MARSHAM, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) A. RONALDSON, }
EDWARD BROOKS, } Assessors.

Annex to the Report.

This Inquiry was held on the 12th November 1889, at the Town Hall, Westminster, when Mr. Ravenhill appeared for the Board of Trade, and Mr. Bucknill, Q.C., for Mr. Harston, the second officer of the “Ceylon.” The captain was unrepresented.

The “Ceylon” is an iron screw steamer, built at Poplar in 1858, and owned by Dr. Michael Drury Lavin, of Heatherden, Iver Heath, near Uxbridge. She is registered at the Port of London, of the gross tonnage 2164.24, and of the net tonnage, 1276.58, and she has engines of 300 horse-power combined. Her dimensions are—length, 306.1; breadth, 40.9; depth, 26.1; and she was commanded by Mr. Sydney Richard Parry Caines, R.N.R.

She was fitted with three compasses, which were adjusted by Mr. Hughes of Fenchurch Street in July last.

She left Stockholm on 24th of September last for Christiania with a crew of 72 hands and 35 passengers, drawing about 17 feet or nearly an even keel. She was well found in every respect, and was on a yachting voyage.

Everything went well till the 27th of September, on which day at 6.30 a.m., Smyge Point, according to the captain, was observed bearing N.W. by W. $\frac{1}{2}$ W. He then set the course W. by N., and made no alteration in it up to the time of the ship striking. At 4 minutes past nine a.m., the ship was estimated by the captain to be 2 to 2 miles and a half off Smyge Point, bearing N. by E.

This distance was obtained by a four-point bearing taken by the captain, assisted by Mr. Henry Frederick James Wyatt, who holds a certificate of competency as master, and was third officer of the ship.

About this time the captain went below for breakfast, leaving the vessel in charge of the third officer, who had just previously looked at the chart with him, when they both estimated that the course W. by N. would take the ship one mile outside the Kulla Grunden Shoal, which was about three miles distant, when the captain left the deck, Smyge Point lighthouse being then abeam.

Shortly afterwards Mr. Theodor Harston, the second officer, who holds a certificate of competency as chief mate, relieved the third officer, who went below to take his breakfast. The only order given to the second officer was that he should steer the same course, W. by N.

In a few minutes the second officer observed something in the water about two points on the port bow, distant about one mile and a half. He looked at it

through his glasses, and made it out to be a pole with three brooms, one above the other. The vessel was going full speed and rapidly approached it. At this time a quartermaster and an A.B. were at the wheel, and a second quartermaster on the bridge. The second officer now ran down to the captain's cabin to call him; but, not finding him there, immediately returned to the bridge. In a moment or so afterwards the ship grated, and the second officer thereupon ordered the helm to be put hard-a-starboard.

The captain, who was at breakfast in the saloon, on feeling the ship striking, rushed on deck, on to the bridge, and finding that the engines were still going full speed ahead, reversed them full speed astern. The ship did not move, and the engines were eventually stopped.

The Norwegian steamer “Bankam,” which was near, was signalled, and the passengers with their baggage were transferred to her, they being eventually landed at Copenhagen.

It was at 9.24 a.m. when the vessel took the ground, the spot being about 2 cables length north of the beacon on the Kullagrunden Shoal. The weather was clear, the wind fresh from the westward.

The vessel made water rapidly, the fires had to be drawn about 10.30 a.m., and eventually the ship nearly filled.

About 4 p.m. a salvage steamer arrived, and with her assistance the “Ceylon” was got off on the 2nd October and was taken to Copenhagen. The expense of the salvage and of the temporary repairs which she underwent at Copenhagen came to about 3,000l. Ultimately the “Ceylon” returned to London.

These were the facts of the case, and on the conclusion of the evidence, Mr. Ravenhill on behalf of the Board of Trade submitted to the Court the following questions:—

1. What number of compasses had she on board, where were they placed, and were they in good order, and sufficient for the safe navigation of the ship? When and by whom were they made, and when and by whom were they last adjusted? Did the master ascertain the deviation of his compasses by observation from time to time? Were the errors of the compasses correctly ascertained, and the proper correction to the courses applied?
2. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about 5.5 a.m. of the 27th September; and from time to time thereafter till she stranded?
3. Whether a safe and proper course was steered after 5 a.m. of the 27th September, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?
- 3a. Whether a safe and proper alteration was made in the course at or about 6.30 a.m., and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?
4. Whether before going below at or about 9 a.m., the master left proper and sufficient instructions with the officer of the watch?
5. Whether the master was on duty at a time when the safety of the vessel required his personal supervision?
6. Whether a good and proper look-out was kept?
7. Whether the lead was used, and if not, whether such neglect was justifiable?
8. What was the cause of the casualty?
9. Whether the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?
10. Whether the master and officers are, or either of them is, in default?

And stated that the Board of Trade was of opinion that the certificate of the master and the second officer should be dealt with.

The captain having said a few words, Mr. Bucknill addressed the Court on behalf of the second officer, Mr. Ravenhill replied, and the Court gave judgment as follows:—

1. She had 3 compasses on board, one—the standard compass—being on the bridge house, another on the deck house, the third—the steering compass—in the wheel house. They were in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the ship, and were last adjusted on 5 July 1889 by Mr. Hughes of Fenchurch Street.

The master ascertained the deviation of his compasses by observation from time to time. The errors of the compasses were correctly ascertained and the proper corrections to the courses applied.

2. Proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel about 5.5 a.m. of the 27th September, and from time to time thereafter till about 1/4 to 9.

3 and 3a. A safe and proper course was steered up to about 8.45 a.m. of the 27th September. No allowance was made for currents.

4. Before going below at about 9 a.m. the master did not leave proper and sufficient instructions with the officer of the watch. The Court is of opinion that the four-point bearing taken off Smyge Point could not have been accurately taken, and that the vessel must have been much nearer in than it was estimated to be.

5. Considering that the ship was passing as close to a well-known shoal, the master ought not to have gone below till that danger was passed.

6. A good and proper look-out was kept on the bridge, but the Court is of opinion that there ought also to have been a look-out forward.

7. The lead was not used, the master being, as he stated, confident of his position.

8. The cause of the casualty was that the master mistook his position off Smyge Point.

9. The vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care from about 8.45 a.m. of 27th September.

The master alone is in default, and the Court suspends his certificate for 3 months. The second officer was much to blame for not sending a quartermaster to call the captain, instead of leaving the bridge himself, and also for not taking sufficient steps to get his ship out of danger when he sighted the beacon on his port bow, and the Court severely censures him for his conduct. The Court thinks that blame attaches to the third officer for not informing the second officer, when relieved for a short time, that the ship was approaching a shoal.

(Signed) R. H. B. MARSHAM, Judge.

We concur.

(Signed) A. RONALDSON, }
EDWARD BROOKS, } ASSESSORS.

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