

(No. 3922.)

“EARL OF ERNE” (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, on the 5th, 6th, and 7th days of November 1889, before THOS. STAMFORD RAFFLES, Esquire, Stipendiary Magistrate, assisted by Captains WARD and BRAGG, Nautical Assessors, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship “EARL OF ERNE,” of Dundalk, at or near Cooley Point, Dundalk Bay, County Louth, on or about the 11th of October last.

*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 casualty was caused by the vessel being steered on a course towards the land in a dense fog without the lead being used. The Court suspended the certificate of the master, Mr. John Adair, for three calendar months.

Dated this 7th day of November 1889.

(Signed) T. S. RAFFLES, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) C. Y. WARD,  
J. THRELFALL BRAGG, } Assessors.

*Annex to the Report.*

This was an inquiry into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship “Earl of Erne,” of Dundalk, at or near Cooley Point, Dundalk Bay, County Louth, on or about the 11th October last. Mr. Paxton, solicitor, appeared for the Board of Trade, and Mr. Norman Hill (Hill, Dickinson, & Co.), for the owners and master of the vessel.

The “Earl of Erne” is an iron paddle-wheel steamer, built at Glasgow in 1855, and registered at Dundalk, the property of the Dundalk Steam Packet Company, Limited, and Mr. Thomas Connick was the manager. She is of 652.31 tons gross and of 273.62 tons registered, and of 300 horses-power combined. She is engaged in the trade between Liverpool and Dundalk, making two, or sometimes three voyages a week. She was commanded by Mr. John Adair, who holds a master's certificate of competency, No. 25,923, dated 4 June 1864, and she had a crew of 24 hands all told. She left Liverpool about 10.30 p.m. on the 10th October last, drawing 10 ft. 3 in. forward, and 11 ft. 8 in. aft, with 15 passengers and about 100 tons of general cargo, the weather being then fine. They passed the bar about 0.20 a.m. on the 11th, about half a mile to a mile N. of the lightship, when the master set the course N.W.  $\frac{1}{2}$  W. by the steering compass, being N.W. by W. magnetic, which was the usual course in similar weather, it being then 45 minutes past high water. They put the patent log over and went nearly full speed, making 10 $\frac{1}{2}$  knots an hour. At the bar lightship, the chief mate took charge. The

master said that he turned in about 2 a.m. About 7 a.m. the master said it was a fine morning, the Morne mountains being visible from the window in his berth. He was called a little before 8 a.m., a dense fog having set in, and going out immediately he was told that the patent log shewed 86 miles from the bar lightship. At that time he expected they would be about 12 or 13 miles from the land, but he took no soundings, though the lead was ready at hand. At 7 a.m. the engines were eased down by order of the engineer, the speed being reduced to about 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  knots. They continued the same course for about an hour, when at 9.15 the vessel took the ground near Cooley Point. The master gave orders to reverse full speed, but the water was found to be coming into the fore-hold, the engines were stopped, and the boats were got out, and the passengers landed at Cooley. The fog was very dense. Eventually the vessel was got off with assistance, and she is now at Glasgow undergoing repairs, having been materially damaged.

On the close of the evidence, Mr. Paxton put in the following questions:—

1. Were the errors of the compasses known to the master, and the proper corrections applied to the courses?
2. Was a safe and proper course set and steered from the bar lightship, and due allowance made for tide?
3. Was the speed of the vessel sufficiently reduced after the fog set in?
4. Was the master justified in proceeding on his course so long after the fog set in without using the lead?
5. Was a good and proper look-out kept?
6. What was the cause of the casualty?
7. Was the master in default in regard to any of the above matters?

And he stated that the Board of Trade were of opinion that the master's certificate should be dealt with.

Mr. Hill addressed the Court for the master.

The Court gave judgment as follows:—

1. The errors of the compasses were known to the master, and the proper corrections applied to the courses.
2. A safe and proper course was set and steered from the bar lightship, and due allowance made for tide.
3. The speed of the vessel was not sufficiently reduced after the fog set in.
4. The master was certainly not justified in proceeding on his course so long after the fog set in without using the lead.
5. A good and proper look-out appeared to have been kept.
6. The casualty was caused by the vessel being steered on a course towards the land in a dense fog without the lead being used.
7. The master was decidedly in default, and his certificate was suspended for three calendar months only, the Court taking into consideration his long and good character in the same service.

(Signed) T. S. RAFFLES, Judge.

We concur in this report.

(Signed) C. Y. WARD,  
J. THRELFALL BRAGG, } Assessors.

Liverpool, 7th November 1889.