

(No. 3796.)

“LADY CATHCART” (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of a formal investigation held in the Sheriff Court, Aberdeen, on the 10th and 13th days of May 1889, before Sheriff BROWN, assisted by Captain BAIN and Captain HORE, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship “LADY CATHCART,” of Aberdeen, at or near Johnshaven, Kincardine, on or about the 21st of April 1889.

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 said steamship was stranded and lost through the fault of the second officer, William Gray, in deviating from the course set by the master. The Court accordingly suspends the certificate of the said William Gray, No. 13,880, for 12 months.

Dated this 13th day of May 1889.

(Signed) W. A. BROWN, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) JOHN BAIN, }
KENNETT HORE, } Assessors.

Annex to the Report.

This was an inquiry into the circumstances attending the stranding and loss of the British steamship “Lady Cathcart,” at or near Johnshaven, Kincardine, on the 21st of April last, held at the Court House, Aberdeen, before Sheriff Brown, Mr. Peterkin, solicitor, appearing for the Board of Trade, Mr. A. E. Smith, advocate, for the owners, Mr. C. Ruxton, advocate, for the master, and Mr. J. M. Ferguson, solicitor, for the chief mate. The second mate and the first engineer were not professionally represented.

The “Lady Cathcart,” official No. 84,365, was an iron screw steamer, built at Aberdeen in 1882 by Messrs. A. Heale & Co., and was a two-masted schooner-rigged vessel of 625·54 gross and 402·60 tons registered tonnage, which allows 222·94 tons as the total deductions for propelling power and crew space, as per Board of Trade certificate of survey, dated 31st day of January 1889. She was 180·0 ft. long, 26·25 ft. broad, and had 14·1 ft. depth of hold, and was fitted with two compound surface condensing inverted engines of 75 horse-power combined by Messrs. Blaikie Brothers of Aberdeen, the diameter of the cylinders being 24” and 42” inches, and length of stroke 30 inches, and she was owned by the Aberdeen Line Company, Mr. Andrew Baxter, of Aberdeen, being the managing owner. The “Lady Cathcart” was under the command of Mr. Alexander Ross, who holds a master’s certificate of competency, No. 011,123, and who appears to have had command of her since she was built. The vessel had three boats, all properly supplied with masts, sails, oars, rudders, &c., and ready for immediate use. She had three compasses, two on the bridge and one aft. They were all in good order and condition, and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel. She had the usual deck and engine-room pumps, and was in every respect well found, fitted, and properly equipped for the trade in which she was engaged.

The “Lady Cathcart” left Kurretpans, in the Firth of Forth, at 5.40 p.m. on the 20th of April 1889, bound for Aberdeen, with a cargo of 750 tons of coal, and drawing 12 feet 10 inches forward, and 15 feet 4 inches aft, the weather being at the time fine and clear, and the wind south-westerly. At 11 p.m. she passed the North Carr, which bore W.N.W., distant about one or one and a half miles, and from this position a course was set by the master N.E. $\frac{1}{2}$ N., which was N.E. magnetic. The master then left the deck in charge of the chief mate, and went below to lie down on the sofa in his room. The vessel proceeded and passed inside of the

Bell Rock Light from a mile to a mile and a half, and at midnight was about N. by E. of it, distant four or five miles, and Montrose Light in sight on the port bow, and all sail set. The second mate then took charge of the deck, and received the same course from the chief mate, viz., N.E. $\frac{1}{2}$ N., Montrose Light being pointed out to him. The chief mate went below reporting to the master that all was well, according to custom, at the end of each watch. At about fifteen or twenty minutes past midnight, the wind hauling slowly round aft from the port quarter, and the sheets of the sails being on the starboard side, the second mate told the man at the wheel to keep the vessel in $\frac{1}{2}$ a point (N.E. by N.), till they could get the sails brailed in, and leaving the man at the wheel, went down off the bridge to get the sails brailed in and made fast, and calling the man off the look-out, they proceeded to do this by themselves. Finding the sheets of the sails were blowing round the masts on to the port side, and that they could not get the sails in, the second mate called out to the man at the wheel, from the main deck, to “Keep her in yet,” so that the sails should keep full with the wind on the port side, till they could get the sails taken in and properly stowed. This was done, and then the order was given to keep her on “her course again,” and the second mate went on the bridge, by which time it was 1.20 or 1.30 a.m., and the ship had been running in off her course for about an hour towards the land, and by running in had got into the influence of the tide, which was edging her in towards the shore, being on her starboard bow. Moreover the vessel had all this time been virtually left to the man at the wheel and without a look-out, as there were only three men on deck altogether, the second mate and the look-out man having been endeavouring to get the sails in, without calling further assistance. To do this the wind had been kept on the port quarter, so that the sheets should blow on to the starboard side up the masts. When the second mate got on to the bridge again, and the vessel was on her proper course, the wind was on the starboard quarter and the smoke blowing over the port-bow. The weather was fine to seaward, but showery over the land. At 1.50, as the vessel appeared to him to have drawn in considerably towards the land, he ordered the man at the wheel to keep her out $\frac{1}{2}$ a point, viz., N.E., but although he could not see clearly on the port bow for the smoke, he did not call the master or take a cast of the lead, which would at once have shown him the dangerous position the vessel was in, nor did he take a bearing of Montrose Light, but continued the course full speed, at about 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ knots, without endeavouring in any way to verify his position or ascertain his distance off the land, or letting the master know they were so near to the shore. At about 2 a.m. the land was visible through the smoke on the port bow, and a further order was given to the man at the wheel to keep her out $\frac{1}{2}$ a point more, but before this could be done, the vessel took the ground and remained fast, having stranded on the rocks at Johnshaven. The engines were stopped, and then put full speed ahead again by the master when he got on deck, with the idea that she would go over the rocks, and they were then put full speed astern, but the vessel remained fast, and eventually became a total wreck. No lives were lost.

The following questions were submitted by the Board of Trade for the opinion of the Court:—

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?
2. When and by whom were they last adjusted?
3. Were the errors of the compasses correctly ascertained, and the proper correction to the courses applied?
4. Was the vessel properly and sufficiently manned?
5. Were proper measures taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about 11 p.m. of the 20th April?
6. Whether a safe and proper course was then set and steered, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?
7. Were there sufficient hands in the second officers’ watch for the safe navigation of the vessel?
8. Did the second officer alter the course at or about 0.20 a.m. of the 21st April? If so, was he justified in so doing, especially for so great a length of time, and was such alteration a safe and proper one?

9. Was the second officer justified in himself taking in sail, and leaving the man at the wheel to navigate the ship and keep the look-out?

10. Were proper measures taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about 1.15 a.m. of the 21st April?

11. Was a safe and proper alteration made in the course at or about 1.15 a.m. of the 21st April, and was due and proper allowance made for tide and currents?

12. Was the master on deck at a time when the safety of the vessel required his personal supervision?

13. Was a good and proper look-out kept?

14. Was the lead used, and if not, was such neglect justifiable?

15. Was the vessel navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

16. Whether the master and officers are, or either of them is, in default?

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

To which the Court replied as follows:—

1. The "Lady Cathcart" had three compasses on board. Two were placed on the bridge, and one was aft. They were in good order, and sufficient for the safe navigation of the ship.

2. They were last adjusted in the month of October last year by John J. Wilson, of Sunderland.

3. The deviations were from time to time correctly ascertained, and the corrections properly applied.

4. We return our answer to this question in connection with Question 7.

5. Measures were not taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at 11 p.m. of the 20th April by cross bearings, but the master estimated his position by the eye, and the Court has no reason to doubt that he did so accurately.

6. A safe and proper course was set, and steered up till about 12.20 a.m. of the 21st of April, and due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents.

4 & 7. The Court, upon the evidence, feels justified in affirming that the vessel generally was properly and sufficiently manned, and that the hands in the second officers' watch were sufficient for her safe navigation under ordinary circumstances. But the Court is of opinion that there were not sufficient hands on deck when the second mate proceeded to take in sail, in view of the difficulty alleged in the operation, and that he was not justified in doing so with the force at his disposal, and particularly was not justified in leaving the bridge.

8. The second officer altered the course at about 12.20 a.m. of the 21st of April. He was not justified in doing so, and the alteration was not a safe and proper one.

9. The second officer was not justified in himself taking in sail and leaving the man at the wheel to navigate the ship and keep the look-out.

10. Proper measures were not then taken.

11. An alteration of the course of the vessel was made at about 1.15 a.m. of the 21st of April, but it was not sufficient to counteract the previous deviation from the proper course.

12. The master was not on deck at the time of the casualty, but the Court is of opinion in the circumstances proved in evidence that he was justified in being below, having left the vessel, after setting a proper course with the necessary directions, under charge of a certificated officer in fine weather.

13. A good and proper look-out was not kept in the second mate's watch.

14. The lead was not used until after the vessel struck, and the neglect to use it when the proximity of the vessel to the land was disclosed was not justifiable.

15. The vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care in the second mate's watch.

16. The master is not in default. In the opinion of the Court, as already stated, he was justified, in the state of the weather, in going below after rounding the North Carr, and setting the proper course. His knowledge that on previous occasions the second officer had deviated from the instructions given him is not, in the opinion of the Court, sufficient to involve him in fault, as there is no evidence that on the occasions referred to the second mate exceeded the discretion which may be exercised by a certificated officer in charge of the vessel.

The first mate is not in default. The first engineer is not in default.

The second mate is in default. In the opinion of the Court he was not justified in leaving the bridge and proceeding to take in sail with the force at his disposal on deck without calling the master. Further, he was not entitled in carrying out this operation to deviate from the course given him by the master, for which separately there was no necessity, and having steered the vessel for a considerable period upon courses widely different from the course set by the master and given him by the first mate, with the result of bringing her within the action of the tide and currents, and in close proximity to the land, he failed in his duty in not taking measures to verify the position of the vessel. In his subsequent attempt to regain the proper line of course, the second officer did not sufficiently haul the vessel off the shore.

In the circumstances the Court feels bound to deal with the certificate of William Gray, the second officer, and having regard to the extent of his culpable and unseamanlike conduct, and the disastrous consequences which resulted from his neglect of duty, the Court suspends the said certificate for a period of twelve months.

(Signed) W. A. BROWN, Judge.
JOHN BAIN.
KENNETT HORE.

"LADY I

The Merchan

In the matter of a fo
Room of the St
in the Borough
days of Januar
WILLIAM WILS
Justices of the
of Sunderland.
RICHARDSON, M
stances attend
steamship "L
Newbiggin, N
January 1889.

The Court, havi
stances attending
alty, finds, for the
that the stranding
caution, and the
the master, Wil
stranding, but, ta
good character, su
dar months only
that he be grant
meantime.

Dated this 24th

We concur i

(Sign

The "Lady I
iron, at Sunderl
at the port of
81,487, and he
length, 211 feet
depth of hold, 3
tonnage, after d
crew space, was
and had two i
condensing eng
respectively, wi
being of 90-hor

The vessel
Mr. Thomas J
manager.

She had thr
equipped and
four compasses
courses were s
wheel-house, l
a spare compa
Mr. Plumb, c
swung for a
Mr. Wilson, in

At the com
Katherine" be
consisting of
that port on t
Sunderland, c
with a crew o
(seamen), und
who holds a
20,459, and d

At the time
good order, an
of water bein
aft.

The "Lady