

(No. 4266.)

"PERSEVERANCE."

REPORT and Decision of the Marine Board of Queensland on the circumstances attending the abandonment of the schooner "PERSEVERANCE," off Steep Island, on the 9th January 1891.

The Board having heard the evidence of the master, a leading seaman, two A.B.'s, and the builder of the vessel, the shipping inspector at Maryborough, the master, chief officer, and an A.B. on the s.s. "Buninyong," Captains Loudon and Bedford, and also Wm. Carlow, a shipwright, find that the "Perseverance" was a schooner of 163 tons, George Richard Fry, master (Queensland Coasting No. 94), the registered owner being R. M. Hyne, of Maryborough.

She left Maryborough on the 3rd January last for Townsville, and all went well until the 7th, the wind then blowing strong from the E.S.E., squally and thick, with a heavy south-easterly sea. The vessel was put under short canvas, and at 2 p.m. was hove to, Perforated Peak bearing about S.E. 20 miles. It is alleged by those on board that the high sea caused the vessel to labour heavily, and that at 5 p.m. she had two feet of water in her hold. There appears to have been no difficulty in pumping her out, and one pump kept her free till 7 p.m. At midnight it is stated that the lanyards of the fore-rigging carried away, and the foremast went over the side, taking with it the main-topmast. At 4.30 a.m. of the 8th the mainmast was cut away. After that the water she was making is altogether an unknown quantity, as no attempt was made to ascertain by sounding whether it was increasing.

At daylight the s.s. "Buninyong" hove in sight, and in answer to their signals of distress bore down and offered to tow the vessel to the nearest port. This offer was refused by Captain Fry, who stated that his vessel was in a sinking condition, and the crew wished to be taken off as they were all fatigued. This was done by the "Buninyong's" dingy, aided by the "Perseverance's" own boat, proving that the weather could not have been very bad. The crew were subsequently landed at Mackay.

The Board consider that the crew of the "Perseverance" were not in an exhausted condition, and find that the abandonment of the vessel was caused by the wrongful act of the master, and having heard Captain Fry in his defence, have decided to cancel his coasting master's certificate No. 94, and also his pilotage exemption certificate No. 433, and the said certificates are hereby cancelled accordingly.

The Board are satisfied that, had the assistance offered by the "Buninyong" been availed of, the "Perseverance" could have been towed to a place of safety, and are also of opinion that the conduct of the master and crew in deserting their ship was, under all the circumstances, unjustifiable, and most discreditable to them as British seamen.

By direction,
(Signed) SAML. A. PETHEBRIDGE,
Secretary.

Marine Board Office,
Brisbane, 17th February 1891.