

(No. 4538.)

“ B E N G A L . ”

REPORT of a Marine Court of Inquiry held at Calcutta, under Section 7 of Act V. of 1883 (The Indian Merchant Shipping Act), as amended by Act VI. of 1891, at the instance of the Government of Bengal, for the purpose of making an investigation into the cause of the stranding of the ship “BENGAL,” of Liverpool, on Palmyras Shoal, on the 23rd March 1892.

The British ship “Bengal,” of 1,254 tons, laden with salt, sailed from Liverpool to the Sandheads on 16th November 1891; her then captain died, and Mr. Deane, who was chief officer, took command on the 27th November 1891. All went well until the 23rd March 1892, when the “Bengal” struck on the Long Sand, to the west of Palmyras Shoal, and had to be abandoned. On the 22nd March 1892 land was sighted at 2.30 p.m., and at 9.30 p.m. the Puri Light was sighted, and then Captain Deane steered E. by S. for 6 hours, sailing about 4 or 5 knots. At 3 a.m. on 23rd March he changed the course to N.E.  $\frac{1}{2}$  E., and continued that course until a little after 8 a.m.; then he changed his course to north, and continued that course until the “Bengal” struck. He had reduced sail, because he wished to go slower and not reach the pilot brig before daylight. About 8.30 p.m. on the 23rd March 1892 he first saw a flare-up, bearing about W.N.W.; he took it for the pilot brig and steered for it. At 7 p.m. he first saw a light, which he took to be the Ridge Light. He took no cast of the lead when he first saw the light which he took to be the Ridge Light; in fact, he admitted he took no cast of the lead at all on the 23rd March; he said he felt so sure of his position that he thought no cast of the lead necessary. The light which he thought was the Ridge Light flashed every 10 or 12 seconds, and if Captain Deane had referred to his light-book he must have seen that this light would not possibly be the Ridge Light. Captain Deane states that the flare-up was 2 miles to the west of the light which he supposed to be the Ridge Light, but if he had looked at his chart he would have seen that the pilot station is some 30 miles to the east of the Ridge Light. Upon the above evidence, the Court framed three charges against Captain Deane, to all of which he pleaded guilty. The assessors upon the evidence consider that Captain Deane is guilty of negligence, and that the three charges were fully proved. On the charts in the possession of Captain Deane the Shortt’s Island Light was not marked, and, as he did not provide the charts, we take this into consideration in the sentence which we are about to pass. The sentence of the Court is, that the certificate of competency as a master granted to William James McCormick Deane by the Board of Trade on the 2nd December 1869, and renewed on the 4th November 1890, and numbered 023,147, be suspended for a period of twelve calendar months from the 23rd March 1892, the date on which the ship struck. Under the provisions of Section 13, Clause 2, of Act V. of 1883, the written opinions of the assessors are hereto annexed. The Court recommends that a chief mate’s certificate be granted to William James McCormick Deane. A

copy of the charges, and the reports upon which the investigation had been directed, were furnished to the master, William James McCormick Deane; an adjournment was granted to him to enable him to meet the charges. The master, William James McCormick Deane, wishes his certificate to be sent to the Board of Trade, London.

(Signed) A. P. HANDLEY,  
Chief Presidency Magistrate.  
J. N. JACKSON,  
Master, ship “Forteviot.”  
R. JENNEY,  
Master, ship “Rajore.”

The 2nd May 1892.

*Opinion of Assessors.*

As the captain of the “Bengal” has pleaded guilty of the charges brought against him, we are of opinion, after carefully going over all the evidence, that he is guilty of great carelessness in the navigation of his vessel several hours previous to the accident. Shortt’s Island Light not being marked on the master’s chart or in the light-book, through no negligence of his own, I trust the Court will take this into consideration.

(Signed) J. BULLOCK,  
Acting Marine Superintendent,  
A.S.N. Co., Limited,  
Nautical Assessor.

I generally concur with the above, but do not think the master was justified in taking that light for the Ridge Light, which is quite of a different character.

(Signed) JNO. MCGHIE,  
Master, ship “Lathom,”  
Nautical Assessor.

*Charge against Master.*

1. That you, Captain Deane, were guilty of negligence in not heaving the lead on the 23rd March 1892, which act would have at once shown you the danger into which the ship “Bengal” was running.

2. That you were also guilty of negligence in not continuing to watch the light which you supposed to be the Ridge Light. If you had done so, you would have discovered from the time of exhibition that it could not be the Ridge Light.

3. That you were also guilty of negligence in supposing the flare-up to be the pilot brig, your chart showing you that the pilot station is 30 miles to the east of the Ridge Light, whereas the flare-up was 2 miles to the west of the light which you supposed to be the Ridge Light. You also say that the flare-up had no other light, whereas the pilot brig has a fixed light besides the flare-up.

(Signed) A. P. HANDLEY,  
Chief Presidency Magistrate.  
R. JENNEY,  
Master, “Rajore.”  
J. N. JACKSON,  
Master, “Forteviot.”

The 27th April 1892.