

(No. 4604.)

## "CYRUS" (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1887.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Board Room of the Sunderland School Board Offices, John Street, in the Borough of Sunderland, on the 26th and 27th days of October 1892, before GEORGE ROBERT BOOTH and WILLIAM THEODORE DOXFORD, Esquires, two of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the said Borough, assisted by Captains COSENS and RICHARDSON, nautical assessors, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship "CYRUS," of Grangemouth, off the coast of Norway, on or about the 4th day of October instant.

*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 stranding was caused by careless navigation. The Court finds the master, John Peterkin, and the chief officer, Thomas Richard Williams, and the second officer, John Thomas, in default for such stranding; but taking into consideration the previous long service of the master, and his freedom from casualty, and his conduct after the stranding, severely reprimand him, but does not deal with his certificate. The Court also severely reprimand the chief and second officers, but does not deal with either of their certificates.

Dated this 27th day of October 1892.

(Signed) GEO. R. BOOTH,  
Wm. THEO. DOXFORD, } Judges.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) WILLIAM COSENS,  
GEO. RICHARDSON, } Assessors.

*Annex to the Report.*

The "Cyrus" is a British steamship, built of steel, at Grangemouth in the year 1883, and registered at the Port of Grangemouth, her official number being 81,134, and her dimensions as per register are:—Length 240.5 ft., breadth 33.1 ft., and depth 14 ft. She is rigged as a schooner, and fitted with two compound surface-condensing engines of 130 horses-power combined, the diameter of the cylinders being 30 and 54 in., with a length of stroke of 36 in., and her tonnage, after deducting 383.52 tons for propelling power and crew space, is 698.78 tons.

This vessel is owned by Mr. James Kish and others, Messrs. James Kish and Edward Kish, of Sunderland, being the managing owners, and was under the command of John Peterkin, who holds a certificate of competency as master numbered 22,906.

This vessel is fitted with three compasses, namely, a standard compass on the upper bridge, a steering compass in the wheelhouse, and one in the binnacle aft. She is also furnished with steam steering gear on the upper bridge, which could have been used if required, and appears to have been in good order and well found in all other respects.

The master, Mr. John Peterkin, joined this vessel at Liverpool on the 1st of September 1892, this being his first voyage in her; he states to the Court that when he joined the vessel he asked the former master about the compasses, and was informed by him that they were all right, but that the one in the wheelhouse was sluggish, and was at that time ashore getting "touched up." He also states that the owners had instructed him to have the compasses adjusted at Liverpool if he thought it expedient to do so, but that being satisfied with the late master's report about the compasses, he did not think it was necessary to have them adjusted, more especially as he was furnished with the deviation cards in use since the last adjustment. The master took the ship from Liverpool to Archangel round by the north

of Scotland, and during the passage out found the compasses fairly correct. He took one observation only by a compass adjuster, which he had on board, when on a north-easterly course, and found that the observation corresponded with the deviation shown on the card.

The spirit compass in the iron wheelhouse appears to have been at all times sluggish in fine weather.

On the 27th September last the "Cyrus" left Archangel, bound to London, having on board a cargo of about 1,000 tons of deals. Her crew consisted of 18 hands all told, and her draught of water was 15 ft. 6 in. forward and 16 ft. 2 in. aft when in fresh water, and the master stated that the vessel would rise 4 or 5 in. when in salt water. She carried about 40 or 50 tons of deals as deck cargo, which appear to have been properly secured.

Nothing worthy of note occurred, and at noon of the 2nd of October the vessel, as shown by the log-book, was in latitude 67°42' north and longitude 12°10' east, and was steering south-west by south by the standard compass, which was correct magnetic. This course was continued, and on the following day (October 3rd) at noon her latitude (by observation) was 64°32' N. and longitude 8°30' E. In the log-book the longitude is stated to have been 9°30' E., which, however, appears to have been an error. According to the master's statement a W.S.W. course, by the standard compass, which was magnetic, was then set. This course is marked on the log as S.W. by S., and this is corroborated by the evidence of the officers. This course was continued, the master remaining on or about the deck until between 9 and 10 o'clock p.m., when he went below, leaving the chief officer in charge, but he does not appear to have given him any definite orders as to the navigation of the ship. At midnight the chief officer obtained a four-point bearing of a light, supposed to be the Kirtholm Light, which was then abeam at a distance of (as stated in the log-book) twelve miles; he then hauled the ship out a point to the westward; this he did on his own responsibility, and although, when relieved shortly afterwards, he saw the master and told him that he had seen the light, and that the ship appeared to be drawing in to the land, and the master told him to keep her out a point, which he appears to have already done, but he did not mention that fact to the master.

He gave the vessel in charge to the second officer, and, pointing to a light on the port bow, said to him, "Keep a good look-out, as there are rocks leading out from that light."

The ship proceeded on her course, and in due time passed close to the Ona Light, the master coming on deck about the same time saw the light on the port quarter, and at the same time observed what he took to be land, he thereupon ordered the helm hard-a-port which was done, and the ship's head came round to the W.S.W., and immediately took the ground at about 3 a.m. of the 4th of October. Soundings were taken, and it was found that the ship was on a rocky bottom, with three fathoms of water amidships, five forward and seven aft. The vessel soon commenced to leak, and the engines were worked astern for a short time and then stopped, and the second engineer came to the master and informed him that it was of no use for him to ring the telegraph as he had received orders from the chief engineer not to move the engines as should the ship float off the rocks she would go into deep water and sink. The master ordered the second engineer to go to the engines, the donkey pump was put on, and subsequently the circulating pump, by which means the water was kept down until the ship arrived at her destination. The engines were set going astern, and a portion of the deck cargo having been jettisoned the ship came off the ground at about 7 a.m. and proceeded on her voyage, and arrived at London on the 9th of October where the cargo was discharged, and the ship brought to Sunderland for repairs.

The Court is at a loss to understand how the master, knowing his close proximity to a dangerous coast, could have left the deck without giving proper instructions to the officer of the watch, or how when the chief officer informed him that the ship was drawing near to the land, and that the light had been seen, he did not at once go on deck and ascertain the exact state of affairs. The conduct of the chief mate in giving up charge, and of the second mate in taking over the charge, under the circumstances, is also incomprehensible to the Court.

According to the evidence, the chief engineer refused duty almost immediately the ship struck, and

the master ordered the second engineer to take charge of the engines, and subsequently whilst the vessel was on the passage to London, and when the weather had become worse, the chief engineer incited the other men to demand that the ship should be put back to Bergen, and they came to the master and requested him to put back, but he refused, and pointed out to them on the chart that they were then nearer a Scotch port than they were to Bergen. He continued on his course in spite of their protests, and this fact following his previous difficulty with the chief engineer, has influenced the Court in its decision.

At the conclusion of the evidence, the solicitor acting for the Board of Trade desired the opinion of the Court on the following questions:—

1. What number of compasses had the vessel on board, where were they placed, and were they in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel?

*Ans.*—There were three compasses on board, namely, a standard compass on the bridge, by which the courses were set, a spirit compass for steering in the wheelhouse, and one aft. The standard and after compass were in good order. The steering compass is said to have been sluggish in fine weather. They were sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel.

2. When and by whom were they made, and when and by whom were they last adjusted?

*Ans.*—The standard compass was made by Mr. I. W. Plumb, of Sunderland, and the steering compass by McGregor & Co., of Glasgow, and they were last adjusted by Mr. Plumb, of Sunderland, on the 26th September 1891.

3. 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 corrections to the courses applied?

*Ans.*—The master only once took the trouble to ascertain the deviation of his compasses by observation, and that when on a north-easterly course. According to the deviation cards in use, there was no error on the courses steered up to this time.

4. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about noon of the 3rd October?

*Ans.*—Proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about noon of the 3rd October.

5. Whether a safe and proper course was then set and thereafter steered, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?

*Ans.*—Having regard to the position of the ship at noon, as recorded in the log-book, the course then set was not a safe and proper one. No allowance was made for tide and currents.

6. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about and after midnight of the 3rd-4th October?

*Ans.*—Proper measures were taken at midnight to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel.

7. Whether safe and proper alterations were made in the course at or about and after midnight of the 3rd-4th October, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?

*Ans.*—The alteration then made in the course was in the right direction, but was not sufficient. No allowance was made for tide and currents.

8. Whether the second officer, during his watch from midnight of the 3rd-4th October, saw that the course given him was properly steered?

*Ans.*—The second officer appears to have seen that the course given him was properly steered.

9. Whether the master was on deck when the safety of the vessel demanded his personal supervision?

*Ans.*—The master was not on deck when the safety of the vessel demanded his personal supervision.

10. What were the lights seen at or about 2.35 a.m. of the 4th October, and whether the master then took prompt and proper measures to keep the vessel off the land?

*Ans.*—The Court is of opinion that the lights seen about 2.35 a.m. of the 4th October were the Bjoisund and Ona Lights. The measures taken, namely, porting the helm one point, was not sufficient to keep the vessel off the land, but immediately before the ship struck the helm was put hard-a-port, but it was then too late.

11. Whether the total neglect of the lead was justifiable?

*Ans.*—Under the circumstances the lead was not required.

12. What was the cause of the casualty?

*Ans.*—Careless navigation.

13.—Whether the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

*Ans.*—The vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care.

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

*Ans.*—The master and first and second officers are in default.

(Signed) GEO. R. BOOTH,  
WM. THEO. DOXFORD, } Justices.

We concur in the foregoing report.

(Signed) WILLIAM COSENS,  
GEO. RICHARDSON, } Assessors.

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