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(No. 4875.)

"RESOLVEN" (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1887.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at Cardiff on the 28th February and 1st and 2nd days of March 1894, before THOMAS WILLIAM LEWIS, Esquire, Stipendiary Magistrate, assisted by Captain WARD and Captain HORE, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the steamship "RESOLVEN," of Cardiff, on the Caister Shoal, off Caister, Norfolk, on the 9th February 1894.

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 vessel stranded in consequence of the master neglecting to inform himself of the altered position of the W. Cockle Spit buoy, and shaping a course too far to the southward. The Court finds the master in default, and suspends his certificate for three calendar months.

Dated this 3rd day of March 1894.

(Signed) T. W. LEWIS, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) C. Y. WARD, } Assessors. KENNETT HORE, }

Annex to the Report.

This case was heard on the 28th February and the 1st and 2nd March 1894, when Mr. Waldron appeared for the Board of Trade and Mr. Vachell for the master.

Six witnesses having been examined on behalf of the Board of Trade, certain questions were submitted by Mr. Waldron, who stated that in the opinion of the Board of Trade the certificate of the master ought to be dealt with.

Mr. Vachell addressed the Court on behalf of the master, and Mr. Waldron having been heard in reply, the Court proceeded to consider its judgment.

The "Resolven," official number 86,484, was an iron screw steamship of 1,643.93 tons gross and 1,032.59 tons registered tonnage, and was built at Jarrow in 1882. She was registered at the port of Cardiff, and was the property of Messrs. John Cory & Sons, of Cardiff, and others, Mr. John Cory, the younger, being the managing owner.

Her length was 265 feet, breadth 36 feet, and depth 19 feet, and she was rigged as a schooner. She had two inverted direct-acting compound surface-condensing engines of 190 horse-power combined. She was classed at Lloyd's, and was in good and seaworthy condition when she started on her last voyage.

She left North Shields with a cargo of 1,880 tons of coal and 300 tons of coal in her bunkers, bound for Lisbon, at 3 p.m. on the 8th of February last. She had a crew of 21 hands all told, and was under the command of Mr. Julius Merlin, who held a certificate of competency as master, dated 3rd February 1887, and numbered 012,142. Her draught was on leaving 18 ft. 10 in. aft, and 18 ft. 6 in. forward.

At 11.55 a.m. on the 9th February, Winterton Ness buoy was half a mile distant on the starboard beam, and a course of S. 2° W. magnetic was set for West Cockle Spit buoy. At 12.15 there was a S. westerly gale with moderate sea, and W. Cockle Spit buoy bore E., and was about a quarter of a cable's length distant. Then a course of S.E. by S. magnetic was set and steered.

At 12.25 the vessel took the ground on the north end of the Caister Shoal, the weather then being clear, the wind S. westerly with a moderate sea, and the tide being one hour after high water, the Cockle Spit Lightship bearing E. by N. ½ N. and one mile distant, the S.E. Cockle buoy bearing E. by N., and the N. Caister buoy S.E. by S. ¾ S.

The witnesses all stated that no signals were made from the Cockle Spit Lightvessel.

On taking the ground the engines were at once reversed, but the ship remained fast.

A stream and a kedge anchor were laid out astern and hove upon with winches.

At 1.30 all hands were set to throwing cargo overboard, and 150 tons were jettisoned out of No. 1 and 4 holds. At 4.30 p.m. on the 9th, three tugs came to the assistance of the vessel and endeavoured to tow her off, but the efforts made were unavailing. At 1.30 a.m. on the 10th attempts to tow her off were given up, and the engines were stopped. At 4.30 a.m. on the 10th the funnel fastenings carried away, and the funnel came up two feet. The main steam-pipe then carried away, and the engines were totally disabled. The stoke-hole and engine-room began to fill with water, and at midnight the water in the ship was level with the water outside. At 11 a.m. on the 11th the sea was breaking over her, and the ship gave signs of breaking up amidships.

The Caister lifeboat took the crew on board and the ship was finally abandoned.

It remains to be added that in the opinion of the Court the master was not justified in attempting to take a vessel of the size and draught of the "Resolven" through the Swatchway. This was also the view of Mr. Thorpe, the Superintendent of Trinity service, stationed at Yarmouth, it only being considered safe for vessels of 12 or 13 feet draught of water.

The following are the questions submitted to the Court:—

1. Whether the vessel was properly supplied with charts and sailing directions when she last left North Shields?
2. Whether a safe and proper course was set at or about 11.55 a.m. of the 8th February, and thereafter steered, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?
3. Whether safe and proper alterations were made in the course at or about 12.18 p.m. and from time to time thereafter, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?
4. Whether proper measures were taken, especially after 12.18 p.m., to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel?
5. Whether a good and proper look-out was kept?
6. Where did the vessel strike, and what was the cause of the casualty?
7. Whether the vessel was navigated with proper and seaman-like care?
8. Whether the master and officers are, or either of them is, in default?

The following are the answers given to the foregoing questions:—

1. When the "Resolven" left North Shields on the 8th February, the master had on board a copy of Norie and Wilson's Sailing Directions for the East Coast of England, published in 1881, and an Admiralty Chart published in 1885, and corrected to September 1890. These certainly did not constitute an adequate or proper equipment for the navigation of the east coast of England.

But the master, before leaving North Shields, was also supplied with a "Notice to Mariners," issued by the Board of Trade, and dated January 1st, 1894, which—had he consulted it—would have enabled him to correct, with respect to the channel he used, the errors of his superseded Sailing Directions.

2, 3, and 4. The course of S. 2° W. magnetic, set by the master at or about 11.55 a.m., on the 9th February, was a safe course from the Winterton Ness buoy to the W. Cockle Spit buoy, but having regard to the draught of the vessel and the state of the weather, it was imprudent to attempt to proceed by the Spit buoy and through the Swatchway. Having however proceeded as far as the W. Cockle Spit Buoy, which at 12.15 bore E., and distant, according to the captain's evidence, a quarter cable, the helm was put hard-a-starboard. The vessel rounded the buoy to go through the Swatchway.

This brought her head up to S.E. by S., and the master continued on this course for ten minutes and then she stranded.

This course, although attended with risk, might, if the buoy had been in the position assumed by the master,

have brought him safely through the Swatchway, but as the buoy had been moved 2½ cables to the S.W., the course, as shown by the result, was neither safe nor proper.

If, as above stated, the master had consulted the "Notice to Mariners" with which he was supplied at North Shields, he would have seen the alteration made in the position of the buoy, and the danger of the course he set at or about 12.15 would have been obvious to him.

Such allowances for tide as were required were duly made.

5. A good and proper look-out was kept.

6. The vessel stranded on the north end of the Caister Shoal in consequence of the master's neglecting to inform himself of the altered position of the W. Cockle Spit buoy, and shaping a course too far to the southward and on to the shoal.

7. The vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care after 11.55 a.m., when Winterton Ness buoy was abeam.

8. The master alone is in default, and his certificate is suspended for a period of three months.

(Signed) T. W. LEWIS.
C. Y. WARD.
KENNET HORE.

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