

(No. 4933.)

"S T. K E V I N" (S.S.)

AND

"T H E D U K E" (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1887.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Magistrates' Room, Liverpool, on the 1st, 4th, and 5th days of June 1894, before W. J. STEWART, Esquire, assisted by Captain PARISH, Admiral GRANT, C.B., and Captain BRAGG, into the circumstances attending the damages sustained by the British steamships "St. Kevin," of Dublin, and "THE DUKE," of Glasgow, through collision in the River Mersey, on or about May 10th, 1894, whereby loss of life ensued.

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 damage to the "St. Kevin" and "The Duke" and the subsequent loss of the life of William Moulds, were caused by a collision between the "St. Kevin" and "The Duke," which was brought about by the sudden disablement of the "St. Kevin," owing to the wheel chain being jammed in the quarter block by a fender lanyard.

Dated this 5th day of June 1894.

(Signed) W. J. STEWART, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) ALFRED PARISH, HENRY D. GRANT, J. THRELFALL BRAGG, } Assessors.

Annex to the Report.

The "St. Kevin," official number 81,446, is a British screw steamship of the port of Dublin. She was built of iron in 1883 at Belfast. She is fitted with two compound engines of 75 horse-power nominal. Her length is 178 feet, her breadth 26.2 feet, and her depth 12.8 feet. Her gross tonnage is 455.55 tons, and her registered tonnage 225.16 tons. She is owned by Mr. J. M. Inglis and Mr. W. Heivat, of Dublin, who are registered as her managing owners. On the occasion in question she was on a voyage from Dublin to Garston, in water ballast, her draught of water being about 9 feet aft and 5 feet forward. She had a crew of 13 hands all told, and was commanded by Mr. J. G. Candlish, who held a certificate of competency as master.

"The Duke," official number 97,659, is a British screw steamship of the port of Glasgow. She was built of iron in 1890 at Paisley. Her length is 160.2 feet, her breadth 23.2 feet, and her depth 10.8 feet. She is fitted with one triple-expansion engine of 60 horse-power nominal. Her gross tonnage is 387.51 tons, and her registered tonnage 155.16 tons. She is owned by Mr. John Hay, of Glasgow, who is registered as her managing owner. On the occasion in question she was on a voyage from Garston to Sligo, with a cargo of 415 tons of coal. She had a crew of 11 hands all told, and was commanded by Mr. Robert Gifford, who held a certificate of competency as master.

The "St. Kevin" crossed the bar of the Mersey about midnight on the 9th-10th of May, and proceeded up the river on the western side until she was nearly abreast of the Herculaneum Dock. Her helm was then starboarded to take her across the river to the eastern side, along which runs the Garston Channel. The weather at this time was fine and clear, and wind from S.W. She then appears to have ported so as to straighten her up the river, and proceeded at full speed, making with the tide, which was an hour before high water, about 9 1/2 to 10 knots. When abreast of the

Herculaneum Dock, the master noticed the three lights of "The Duke" one to two points on his port bow, and also saw the bright and red lights of a steamer which proved to be the "Temple," about four points on his starboard bow. "The Duke" was a little over half a mile away, the "Temple" was not so distant. The master then starboarded into the Garston Channel, bringing his vessel's head to about E.S.E. "The Duke" was then about two points on his starboard bow, her three lights being still visible. The "St. Kevin" proceeded at full speed on this course for about two minutes, when the master gave the order "Hard-a-port," in order to get over to his proper side of the channel, and to get the red light of the "Temple" on his port side. Unfortunately, after one turn was taken on the wheel, it was found to have become jammed, and the vessel continued to go off slightly to starboard. In that position, seeing that he ran the risk of a serious double collision if he reduced his speed, the master kept the "St. Kevin" going at full speed, and blew two blasts of his whistle to indicate that he was going off to port. He was however unable completely to clear both vessels, but so far succeeded that the "Temple" only just grazed his starboard quarter, whilst almost simultaneously "The Duke" ran into the bluff of the starboard bow of the "St. Kevin," driving in some of her plates, one of which killed a fireman, William Moulds, who, unknown to those on deck, was asleep in his bunk at the time. The master then ran the "St. Kevin" on to the beach as the best thing to do, as she had received substantial injury to her bow. It had meanwhile been ascertained that the disablement of the wheel was due to the jamming of the wheel-chains in the quarter block, owing to the negligence of one of the crew, who, in getting a fender ready, carelessly threw it down with the lanyard over the wheel-chain, by which it was caught and taken into the quarter block.

The story told by "The Duke" agreed substantially with that told by the "St. Kevin." "The Duke" left Garston Dock a little before 1 a.m. on May 10th, her draught of water being 12 ft. 9 in. aft and 10 ft. 6 in. forward, and proceeded down on the starboard side of the channel at full speed, making about 4 1/2 knots over the ground. About 1/4 mile below Garston Dock the three lights of the "St. Kevin" were seen about one point on the port bow, and distant about 1 1/2 miles. Almost immediately the green light of the "St. Kevin" was shut out, and the two vessels were approaching red light to red light for one or two minutes. Then the green light of the "St. Kevin" came into sight, and the red light was shut out. In order to give the "St. Kevin" more room, under the impression that the vessel would also port and try to pass up between the "Temple" and "The Duke," the master of "The Duke" ordered his helm to be ported, at the same time blowing one blast, and, as there was risk of collision, also ordered the engines to be reversed full-speed, and blew three short blasts. Both orders were at once obeyed, but a collision was inevitable, and the two vessels struck as already described. The bows of "The Duke" were stove in and her stem carried away to starboard right down below the water. Her forward compartment filled, and the master deemed it prudent to beach her. Both vessels were subsequently floated off without further damage.

At the conclusion of the evidence Mr. Paxton, for the Board of Trade, submitted the following questions for the opinion of the Court:—

- 1. Did Article 21 of the Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea apply, and, if so, did the master of each vessel comply with the same?
2. Did the master of the "St. Kevin" take prompt and proper measures to comply with Article 16 of the above Regulations?
3. What was the cause of the vessel not answering her helm when the order "Hard-a-port" was given?
4. When the master found that the helm would not answer, was he justified under the circumstances in proceeding at full-speed and attempting to cross the bows of "The Duke"?
5. Was the master of "The Duke" justified in altering her course to starboard when he saw the green light of the "St. Kevin"?
6. Did he comply with Article 18 of the above Regulations?

- 7. Was a good and proper look-out kept on board either or both of the above vessels?
- 8. What was the cause of the casualty and subsequent loss of life?
- 9. Were either or both of the masters in default in regard to any of the above matters?

The Board of Trade state that in their opinion the certificates of both the masters should be dealt with.

Mr. Collins for the master of the "St. Kevin," and Mr. Dickinson for the master of "The Duke," having addressed the Court, the Court gave judgment as above, and returned the following answers to the questions of the Board of Trade:—

1. Article 21 of the Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea did apply.

The master of "The Duke" did comply with the same, and the master of the "St. Kevin" endeavoured to do so, but in porting his helm, the wheel chains became foul.

2. For the reasons stated in the above answer the master of the "St. Kevin" was unable to comply with Article 16.

3. The cause of the vessel's not answering her helm when the order was given to "Hard-a-port," was that whilst preparing the hawsers for docking at Garston, one of the crew had thrown a fender on to the coil, and

the lanyard of that fender fouled the wheel chain and choked the quarter block.

4. When the master found that the helm could not be put to port, he was justified, having regard to his position relative both to the "Temple" and "The Duke," in proceeding at full speed.

5. The master of "The Duke" was justified under the special circumstances in acting as he did when he saw the green light of the "St. Kevin."

6. The master of "The Duke" did comply with Article 18 of the above Regulations.

7. A good and proper look-out was kept on board both of the above vessels.

8. The casualty was caused by the fouling of the wheel chains of the "St. Kevin" at a critical moment, as described above. "The Duke" striking the "St. Kevin" on the starboard bow, drove in a plate and killed the fireman William Moulds in his bunk.

9. The Court finds that neither of the masters were in default in regard to any of the above matters.

(Signed) W. J. STEWART, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) ALFRED PARISH,
HENRY D. GRANT,
J. THRELFALL BRAGG, } Assessors.

Liverpool, 6th June 1894.

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