

(No. 4977.)

"CRETE" (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1887.

IN the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Town Hall, Falmouth, on the 27th, 28th, and 29th days of August 1894, before Captain GEORGE HENRY BAYNES REED, R.N., and JAMES HENRY HUNT, Esquire, assisted by Captain EDWARD BROOKS and Commander JOHN THRELFALL BRAGG, R.N.R., into the circumstances attending the damage sustained by the British steamship "CRETE," of Newcastle, through striking rocks at or near Isle de Vierge, Finisterre, France, on or about the 13th day of August 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 master committed a grave error of judgment in not making due allowance for the tide, and therefore severely censures him, but taking into consideration his long and good service and the fact of his bringing his vessel safely into port, they refrain from dealing with his certificate on this occasion. The Court makes no order as to costs.

Dated this twenty-ninth day of August 1894.

(Signed) GEORGE H. BAYNES REED, } Justices of the
JAS. HY. HUNT, } Peace for the
Borough of
Falmouth.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) EDWARD BROOKS, } Assessors.
J. THRELFALL BRAGG, }

Annex to the Report.

This inquiry was held at the Town Hall, Falmouth, on the 27th, 28th, and 29th days of August 1894, before Captain George Henry Baynes Reed, R.N., and James Henry Hunt, Esquire, assisted by Captain Brooks and Commander Bragg, R.N.R., Nautical Assessors.

Mr. W. Jenkins appeared for the Board of Trade, and Mr. Harry Tilly represented the master.

The "Crete," official number 88,760, is a British screw steamer, built of iron by Messrs. Joseph L. Thompson and Sons, at Sunderland, in 1883. She is of the following dimensions:—Length, 260 ft.; breadth, 36 ft.; and depth from tonnage deck to ceiling amidships, 18'55 ft.; her tonnage being 1,379 gross and 1121'45 tons nett. She is fitted with compound surface-condensing engines of 140 N.H.P., constructed by the Wallsend Shipway and Engineering Co., Limited, at Wallsend-on-Tyne. She is rigged as a schooner, and is the property of the Coban Shipping Company, of 7, Sea View, Blythe, in the county of Northumberland, but her port of registry is Newcastle-on-Tyne, and Mr. John Dent, of that port, is registered as her managing owner.

The "Crete" having embarked a full cargo consisting of 624 standards, about 1,560 tons of timber, at Sundsvall, she, on the 4th of August 1894, left that port bound for Algiers and Sfax, in the Mediterranean, her draft of water being 16 ft. 5 in. forward and 17 ft. 8½ in. aft. She was commanded by Mr. Enoch James, whose certificate of competency as master is numbered 82,857, and had a crew of 19 all told. She was at that time fully equipped with boats and life-saving appliances, according to the requirements of the Board of Trade, had 3 compasses, which were sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel, and was otherwise well found. On her voyage down the Baltic and North Sea she encountered the usual winds and weather of the season, and put into the Tyne to refill her bunkers with coals. At 9.45 p.m. of the 10th of August, her coaling being completed, she left the Tyne, and proceeded on her voyage, and at

10 a.m. of the 13th of August the Casquets bore south-south-east by standard compass, which on the point upon which the vessel was being then steered had ½ point of easterly deviation, thus making the bearing south by east ½ east magnetic, distant 9 miles; from this position, ascertained by running a 4-point bearing, a course west-south-west by standard compass, equal to west by south ½ south magnetic, was set and steered, the vessel proceeding at full speed. At 8 p.m. the chief officer came on watch, with Charles Hansen, A.B., and Olaf Bruce, A.B., as the watch on deck. At 8.35 p.m., the weather in the meantime having been moderate but hazy, and the wind westerly, the patent log showing 88½ miles from the Casquets, the course was altered to west ½ south magnetic, and the speed continued after this time. The master stated, and his statement was corroborated by others, that to seaward, namely, to west-north-westward, he could see a light 6 or 7 miles, whilst they did not see the lights on the French coast, which they must have passed well within their range. The vessel was steered on the last mentioned course, namely, west ½ south magnetic, and nothing was seen until about 10.30 p.m., when Bruce, the look-out man, who had been relieved from the wheel at 10 p.m. by Hansen to go on to the look-out, saw some object which he reported as a ship a little on the port bow and a short distance off. The master, who had been on the deck with the chief officer since 8 p.m., at once saw it was a small islet, and ordered the helm to be put hard-a-port and the engines to be reversed full speed. The vessel paid off to the north-north-west, but when pointing in that direction she grazed over something, the shock being scarcely perceptible. The lead was hove and 23 fathoms of water got. The holds were at once sounded, and it was found that the vessel was making water rapidly. The master, who immediately decided to bear up for Falmouth, put the engines ahead and steered a course with that object in view, and they arrived at that port at 2.30 p.m. on the 14th August.

On the vessel's being placed in dry dock it was found that one of the bottom plates under No. 1 hold had a hole right through it, and that three other plates were indented; under No. 2 hold one plate was indented, and under No. 3 hold one plate was cracked and indented. In all seven plates in the vessel's bottom have to be replaced. No lives were lost by this casualty.

At the conclusion of the evidence the following questions were submitted on behalf of the Board of Trade, Mr. Tilly addressed the Court on behalf of the master, and Mr. William Jenkins replied:—

1. What number of compasses had the vessel, where were they placed, and were they in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel?
2. When and by whom were they adjusted?
3. Did the master ascertain the deviation of his compasses from time to time, were the errors (if any) correctly ascertained, and the proper correction to the courses applied?
4. Were proper courses set and steered from the time the vessel left the Tyne on the 10th day of August 1894 until 10 a.m. on the 13th day of August 1894?
5. Were proper measures taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at 10 a.m. of the 13th day of August 1894 when off the Casquets?
6. Whether a safe and proper course was then set and thereafter steered, and whether due and proper allowance was made for the tides and currents?
7. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at 8.35 p.m. on the 13th day of August 1894 and from time to time thereafter?
8. Whether safe and proper alterations were made in the course at and after 8.35 p.m. on the 13th day of August 1894 and thereafter steered, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?
9. Whether, having regard to the state of the weather from 8 p.m. to 10.30 p.m. on the 13th day of August 1894, the vessel was navigated at too great a rate of speed?
10. Whether the omission to cast the lead until the vessel struck the rocks at 10.30 p.m. of the 13th day of August 1894, or until it was cast after she struck, was justifiable?
11. Whether a good and proper look-out was kept?

12. Whether a sufficient number of men formed the night watches during the said voyage?

13. Whether the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care from the time she left the Tyne, as aforesaid, until she struck the rocks, and if not, by whom was she improperly navigated?

14. Where did she strike the rocks, and what was the cause thereof?

The Board of Trade state that in their opinion the certificate of the master should be dealt with.

To which the Court replied as follows:—

1. The vessel had three compasses, namely, one on a pole on the fore part of the upper bridge, by which the courses were set, one on the upper bridge, and one in the wheel-house, under the bridge, by which the courses were steered; they appear to have been in good order and were sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel.

2. On the 4th November 1890, by Mr. Thomas Ainsley, of South Shields.

3. The master stated that he did ascertain the compass deviation from time to time, and the errors appear to have been correctly ascertained and properly applied.

4. From the time the vessel left the Tyne on the 10th of August up to 10 a.m. of the 13th proper courses appear to have been set and steered.

5. A four-point bearing was run, which would closely approximate the vessel's position. This the Court considers was a proper measure.

6. If the course set had been made good, it would have led the vessel well clear of the land, but no allowance was made for the tides or currents.

7. No measures were taken to ascertain or verify the vessel's position at 8.35 p.m. on the 13th inst., nor from time to time thereafter, until after she had struck.

8. The alteration made at 8.35 p.m. on the 13th August was an alteration in the proper direction, but as

the master was unaware that the vessel was so far to the southward, he did not haul her up to the westward sufficiently. No allowance was made for tides and currents.

9. According to the evidence produced, the vessel was not navigated at too great a rate of speed between 8 and 10.30 p.m. on the 13th August.

10. The Court is of opinion that it would have been more judicious to have taken a cast of the lead.

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

12. A sufficient number of deck hands did not form the night watches during the said voyage.

13. The vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care until she passed the Casquets at low water; the master then committed a very serious error of judgment in making no allowance for the strong flood tide, which would take the vessel on the starboard bow and set her to the southward.

14. The Court is of opinion that the vessel struck one of the rocks on the plateau of Lizen du Ven, and attribute the cause to the master's omission to make proper allowance for the tides.

The Court considers that the master committed a grave error of judgment in not making due allowance for the tide, and therefore severely censures him; but taking into consideration his long and good service, and the fact of his bringing his vessel safely into port, they refrain from dealing with his certificate on this occasion.

(Signed) GEORGE HY. BAYNES REED, } Two of H.M.
JAS. HY. HUNT, } Justices for
the Borough
of Falmouth.

We concur.

(Signed) EDWARD BROOKS, } Assessors.
J. THRELFALL BRAGG, }

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