

(No. 5798.)

"WINNIE" (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

IN the matter of a formal investigation held at the Municipal Buildings, West Hartlepool, on the 11th and 12th days of November, 1898, before ROBINSON MURRAY and WILLIAM JOHN SIVEWRIGHT, Justices of the Peace for the Borough of West Hartlepool, assisted by CAPTAINS WILLIAM PARFITT and ANDREW CUNINGHAME, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British Steamship "WINNIE" off Harboore, Jutland, on or about the 3rd day of October, 1898.

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 cause of the stranding was the neglect of the use of the lead with sufficient frequency. The serious damage to the "Winnie" was caused by the default of the master alone; but taking all the circumstances into consideration the Court refrains from suspending his certificate, but censures him severely and cautions him to be more careful in future.

Dated this Twelfth day of November, 1898.

W. J. SIVEWRIGHT, } Justices.
R. MURRAY.

We concur in the above report.

WM. PARFITT, } Assessors.
ANDW. CUNINGHAME.

Annex to Report.

The parties to this inquiry were the Board of Trade, represented by Mr. Burton of Messrs. Watson, Dendy and Burton, Newcastle-on-Tyne, the owners of the ship, and the master, Mr. Soren Norby, both represented by Mr. Tilly, and Mr. Herbert Lugg and Mr. Jens Hansen Jensen, first and second mates respectively, who appeared in person, but were not professionally represented.

The "Winnie" was a screw steamer built of steel by the Grangemouth Dockyard Company at Grangemouth, in the year 1889, for Mr. Jens Christian Nielsen, of 12, Cliff Terrace, Hartlepool, and others whose names are set forth in the Transcript of Register, Mr. Hans Nielson being the managing owner. She was registered at the port of Hartlepool, her official number being 88,907, and her principal dimensions were as follows: length 270.3 ft.; breadth, 36.9 ft.; depth in hold, 17.1 ft.; and her registered tonnage, as altered by surveyor's certificate, dated Middlesbrough, 18th January, 1897, after deducting 697.33 tons for spaces required for propelling power and accommodation of crew was 1,200.40 tons. She was rigged as a two masted schooner, and was propelled by three vertical direct acting engines made by Messrs. Hudson and Corbett of Glasgow of 160 N.H.P., and 900 I.H.P., steam being supplied from two steel boilers.

On 1st October last, the "Winnie" left Grimsby bound for Cronstadt with a cargo of 2,400 tons coal. She was commanded, and she had been for the last five and a half years, by Mr. Soren Norby, who held a certificate of competency as master, No. 013,197, and who had been altogether about eleven years in Mr. Nielsen's service. She had a crew of twenty hands all told, and one passenger, the master's wife, and was drawing 18 ft. 5 ins. on an even keel. Before leaving the Humber on this occasion her standard compass on the upper bridge was adjusted by Mr. E. F. Lundy, of Grimsby, and a deviation card supplied to the master. Altogether there were four compasses on board, one being aft, on the poop, one in the wheelhouse on the lower bridge, and a spare one. She was further equipped with Walker's patent taffrail log, Norie & Wilson's charts

(1894), and the ordinary deep sea and hand leads and lines.

At noon on the above-mentioned date a departure was taken from the Spurn light vessel and the course set E.N.E. magnetic for the entrance to the Skager-rack.

The weather was fine but hazy, and the vessel proceeded full speed about eight to eight and a half knots. Owing to the state of the atmosphere on the morning of the 2nd October no observations for time could be obtained, but at noon the latitude was deduced from the meridian altitude of the sun and found to be 55° 32' N., the position by dead reckoning being 55° 38' N., Long. 4° 27' E. The master at the same time determined the error of his compass by the "Pelorus" and found that the deviation on the course he was steering was 3° West instead of 1° W. as given on the deviation card. Accordingly he altered his compass course to E. by N. $\frac{3}{4}$ N. in order to make E.N.E. magnetic.

This course was continued until 8 p.m., when the master, having again determined the error of his compass by an observation of the pole star, which shewed that the deviation had increased to 5° W., altered his compass course to E. by N. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. northerly on which the vessel continued until she suddenly stranded about 20 minutes past four o'clock on the following morning. Though the master had distinct warning by his observation at noon of the 2nd October that the ship was not making her course good he unfortunately did not think it necessary then nor for about fourteen and a half hours after to have recourse to the lead. Had a series of soundings been obtained from noon of the 2nd October at frequent intervals the result could not have failed to convince him that he was very seriously departing from his course, and being carried into a position of danger.

The omission to take soundings is the more unaccountable from the fact that the weather, always hazy, became so thick at 8 p.m. on the 2nd, that the speed of the steamer had to be reduced to "slow," and the usual fog-signals made and so continued with occasional short intervals of clearer weather, until the vessel was found to be ashore. The first sounding was taken at 2.20 a.m. on the 3rd, when 15 fathoms were obtained; in the position in which the master expected to be, he would have had 20 fathoms or 21 fathoms. Hastily concluding that he was on the Little Fisher bank, he continued on the same course, and at 4 o'clock stopped for another sounding, which gave him 13 fathoms. It was now a dense fog and the engines were ordered slow ahead again on the same course, but the vessel had scarcely gathered way when she took the ground so gently that the engineer on duty was unaware of the fact. The master, who had gone into the chart room to compare the soundings with the chart, immediately returned to the bridge and found that the first mate, who had just relieved the deck, had already stopped and reversed the engines full speed, but the ship remained fast, the tide having begun to fall. They continued reversing for about two hours when they were stopped. The ship went ashore at high water, when soundings were taken and 17 feet were found forward and 18 feet alongside and aft, the tide afterwards falling four feet. About 6 a.m. the fog lifted, and the land and breakers were seen about one thousand yards off. About the same time a life-boat came alongside, and it was ascertained that the ship was ashore off Harboore, on the East coast of Jutland, and about 34 miles south-west of Hantsholm lighthouse. The master attributed his being so far out of his course to an unsuspected current during the thick weather he had experienced, but the Court is of opinion that he erred in placing implicit reliance on the accuracy of his observations for deviation, inasmuch as from the circumstances a certain amount of doubt necessarily attached to them; in the first case it was difficult to determine exactly when the sun was on the meridian, in the other it was difficult, from the high altitude of the pole star, to observe its exact bearing. There is also another source of error which the master seems to have overlooked, namely, the change in the variation which is met with in crossing the North Sea, and which, if not allowed for, will cause a ship to make a more southerly course than the one projected from the point of departure. In the present case the event has shown that the sum of the errors indicated above, applied to the ship's original course, would sufficiently account for the disaster, and emphasises the importance of having early

and frequent recourse to the lead, when from the state of the atmosphere it seems likely that other observations will not be available.

Having communicated with the shore for assistance, efforts were made in the meanwhile to lighten the vessel by jettisoning cargo. A kedge had also been run out on the starboard quarter, and at 11 a.m. a German trawler came up and for five hours attempted to tow the ship off, but even with the assistance of the ship's own engines she could not be moved. The vessel remained in this position until 6 p.m., when the wind and sea rising fast she began to strike heavily. During the night the wind and sea continued to increase, the ship striking heavily the whole time, shipping water fore and aft, and taking a heavy list to starboard. At 2.30 a.m. on the 4th, in response to signals from the ship, a lifeboat came alongside and took away 10 of the crew, being as many as she could safely carry, on account of the heavy surf on the beach. At 3.30 a.m. the lifeboat returned and took off the remainder of the crew. The strong wind (N.W.) and heavy sea continued until 2 p.m., when it having slightly moderated, a shore boat proceeded to the ship and saved some of the effects of the crew.

During this day the salvage steamer "Fredrikshafen" arrived on the scene, but on account of the bad weather was unable to begin operations. By the morning of the 5th the weather had moderated, and at 7 a.m. the master, with part of the crew, including the engineers, went on board.

About 8 a.m., about 70 labourers came on board and commenced to jettison cargo, and the salvage steamer having made fast commenced to tow the vessel. About 7 p.m. she succeeded in getting the "Winnie" clear of the shoals, and proceeded towards Fredrikshafen roads where she arrived at 5 p.m. of the 6th October. It was found that the "Winnie" was making water in the after peak tank, which was filled. She was eventually towed to Copenhagen, where she arrived about 9 a.m. on the 8th October. She was put into dry dock on the 10th, and on examination was found to have sustained serious damage which was temporarily repaired, and after discharging her cargo, she returned to West Hartlepool, where she arrived safely on 29th October.

At the conclusion of the evidence, Mr. Tilly addressed the Court on behalf of the owners and master, and Mr. Burton replied on behalf of the Board of Trade. The chief and second officers did not address the Court, and the Court replied to the questions as follows:—

Questions

1. What number of compasses had the vessel, were they in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel, and when and by whom were they last adjusted?
2. Did the master ascertain the deviation of his compasses by observation from time to time, were the errors correctly ascertained, and the proper corrections to the courses applied?
3. Whether a proper course was set at or about noon of the 1st October and thereafter steered, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?
4. Whether safe and proper alterations were made in the course at and after noon of the 2nd October, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?

5. Whether proper measures were taken from time to time after noon of the 2nd October, to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel?

6. Whether having regard to the state of the weather on the night of the 2nd October, the vessel was navigated at too great a rate of speed?

7. Whether after midnight of the 2nd/3rd October, the lead was used with sufficient frequency?

8. Whether a good and proper look-out was kept?

9. What was the cause of the stranding of the vessel?

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

11. Whether the serious damage to the "Winnie" was caused by the wrongful act or default of the master, chief and second officers or any of them?

1. There were four compasses on board; they were in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel. The standard on the upper bridge, by which the courses were set, was adjusted before leaving the Humber on October 1st last by E. F. Lundy, of Grimsby. The steering compasses were not adjusted.

2. The master took observations to ascertain the deviation of his compass from time to time; but from the evidence before the Court it is unable to say whether the deviation was correctly ascertained or the proper corrections to the courses applied.

3. A proper course was set at or about noon of the 1st October and steered thereafter till noon of the 2nd October. Due and proper allowance appears to have been made for tide and currents.

4. Safe and proper alterations were not made in the course at and after noon of the 2nd October. There is no evidence that any allowance was made for tide and currents.

5. Neither at noon of the 2nd October, nor from time to time thereafter, were sufficient measures taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel.

6. Having regard to the state of the weather on the night of the 2nd October, the vessel was not navigated at too great a rate of speed.

7. Inasmuch as the master had at no time since leaving the Humber ascertained satisfactorily the position of his vessel, the Court is of opinion that the lead was not used with sufficient frequency on the night of the 2nd/3rd October.

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

9. The cause of the stranding of the vessel was neglecting to use the lead with sufficient frequency.

10. Having regard to the state of the weather, the vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care.

11. The serious damage to the "Winnie" was caused by the default of the master alone, but taking all the circumstances into consideration, the Court refrains from suspending his certificate, but censures him severely, and cautions him to be more careful in future.

R. MURRAY,
W. J. SIVEWRIGHT, } Justices.

We concur.

WM. PARFITT,
ANDW. CUNINGHAME, } Assessors.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the
9th day of December, 1898.)

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