(No. 5864.)

"CATTERSTY" (S.S.).

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

In the matter of a formal investigation held at the Committee Room in the Municipal Buildings, in the Borough of Middlesbrough, on the 2nd and 3rd days of March, 1899, before Charles James Coleman, Esquire, Judge, assisted by Captain Kennett Hore and Captain Henry Parsell, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship "Cattersty," of Middlesbrough, on or near Boulmer Stile, Northumberland, on or about the 7th February, 1899.

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 of the ship was caused by the neglect of the master to use the ordinary precautions of seamen in using the lead while steering too fine a course up the coast in thick and hazy weather. The Court finds the master, George McLaren, alone in default for such stranding, and suspends his certificate (Home Trade Mate, 1894, No. 103,690) for the period of four months from the date of the casualty.

Dated this 3rd day of March, 1899.

Charles James Coleman, Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

Kennett Hore, H. Parsell, } Assessor.

Annex to the Report.

This was an inquiry into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship "Cattersty," of Middlesbrough, near Boulmer Stile, Northumberland, on the 7th of February last, and was held at Municipal Buildings, Middlesbrough, on the 2nd and 3rd days of March, 1899, before Charles James Coleman, Esq., Judge. Mr. Burton, of Newcastle-on Tyne, appeared for the Board of Trade, and Mr. Wallace, of Sunderland, represented the owners, and Mr. G. McLaren, master of the vessel. Mr. MacKay, the chief officer, was not represented by counsel but appeared in person, and the other witnesses were H. Defty, the engineer, T. Harrison, 2nd mate and boatswain, S. Wedderburn and T. Hill, A.B.'s, and the compass adjuster, Mr. Wm. Stanley, of Messrs. Pickering & Co., Middlesbrough.

The "Cattersty," official number 98,784, is a steel screw steamer, built at Sunderland in 1894, by Messrs. T. L. Thompson & Sons, her length being 155 ft., breadth, 26·8 ft., and depth of hold 11·7 ft. Her gross tonnage is 491·02 tons, and the deductions, 329·70 tons, leave her registered tonnage at 161·32 tons. She is fitted with three triple expansion engines, by Messrs. John Dickinson, of Sunderland, of 13 ins., 21 ins., and 34 ins., respectively, and her indicated horse-power is 300 and N.H.P. 60.

She is owned by the Skinningrove Iron Company, and managed by Mr. Thos. Charles Hutchinson, of Middlesbrough, in the county of York, as per advice, under seal of the Skinningrove Iron Company, Limited, dated May 2nd, 1894. She had two compasses; one, by which the vessel was navigated, was on the top of a house amidships; the other, a steering compass, placed before the steering gear inside this iron house. Only the upper one was adjusted, the lower one, being shut in by the house, was only used for steering purposes.

The "Cattersty" left Skinningrove on the 7th of February last, with a crew of 12 hands all told, bound for Grangemouth, to which place she was a regular trader, with a cargo of about 460 tons of pig iron, her draught of water being 9 feet forward and 12 feet aft. She was under the command of Mr. George McLaren, who held a Home Trade Mate's certificate, dated September 10th, 1894, numbered 103,690. The compass, which had been adjusted on the 21st of January, 1899, had been sent on shore with the steering compass, to the adjuster, on her return to Skinningrove, to have the pins re-polished, as they were a little sluggish, but no alterations were made in the adjustments in any way.

The master stated that he had averaged 180 passages up and down the coast in the year, and that he had been three years and four months in the vessel, and this fact alone tends to show that the compasses had been and were well adjusted. At 1.45 p.m., when well outside the piers, a course was set N. ½ W. magnetic, from almost off Huntcliff, to a position 4½ miles off and abreast of Souter Point, and the engines were set away at full speed, which was stated to be 7½ to 8 knots per hour. The weather was fine, but hazy over the land, and the wind from south to south-west, with a heavy south-east swell.

At 5 p.m. the vessel was abreast of Souter Point, and the weather was so thick with haze and smoke that the land could not be seen, and instead of being 4½ miles off, they judged themselves, by the noise of the siren, to be only 1 or 1½ miles off the point. This they accounted for by bad steering and the inset of the tide. No cast of the lead was taken to verify or determine the distance the vessel was off the shore, although it could easily have been done, but the course was altered N. ¼ E. magnetic, the same course they would have steered and intended to steer if the vessel had been 4½ miles off Souter Point, instead of 1 or 1½ miles. The weather still continued thick, with haze and smoke, and was very dark, the wind being about S.W., but light and variable, and the sea moderate. Nothing was seen of the coast or the lights at Tynemouth, and the course was still continued at full speed, without any attention being paid to the lead. At 6 p.m. the mate took charge of the deck, and he stated that the course they were steering was about N. by the upper bridge compass, and which would be N. ¼ W. magnetic; there is therefore a difference of half point in the course between the evidence of the master and the evidence of the mate.

At about 7.30 or 7.40 p.m. the Coquet light was seen by the mate abeam, and he sent a man to tell the master, who was in the engineer's room. The master went aft to the cabin to get his boots and coat, and did not get on to the bridge until 8 o'clock, by which time the light was out of sight, having disappeared in the haze on the port quarter. The mate told him they had passed it very rapidly, and that should have warned him they were much too close in. The master, however, assumed they were about a mile and a half off, and still continued his course at full speed, without verifying his position by a cast of the lead.

At 8.5 p.m. some lights came in sight on the port bow, and these lights the master stated he took to be trawlers' lights, although how he expected to find trawlers engaged in fishing on that bearing inside of Coquet Island is not clear. The lights seen were, in fact, the lights in the cottage windows of Boulmer village, and at 8.10 the vessel, while going full speed, suddenly struck and remained fast. The engines were immediately ordered full speed astern, but without effect, the tide, which was rising, carrying her further on to the rocks, where, bumping heavily, she finally settled down, and began to fill with water, The boats were got ready for lowering, and signals of distress were shown by rockets and blue lights. In answer to the signals, two rockets were fired from the shore, but these failed to reach the vessel. The lifeboat was then launched, and came off to them, and finding they could do nothing more to save the vessel, they left her at 10 p.m., and all hands were safely landed by the lifeboat at Boulmer village.

The Clyde Salvage Company eventually came to their assistance on the 11th of February, and after jettisoning about 180 tons of cargo, she was finally towed off the rocks by the aid of two tugs and her own steam and taken to Amble on the 14th. There, after temporary

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repairs, she proceeded to Sunderland, where she is at present in dock.

From the foregoing facts it is clear that this casualty was brought about by the neglect of the master to use the lead, and that had ordinary precautions been used the stranding of this vessel would in all probability have never occurred.

In conclusion the Court cannot refrain from expressing the opinion that this vessel should have been supplied with proper means and appliances in the shape of instruments and tables for finding the deviation of the compasses, and her latitude, especially as she was in the habit of carrying iron cargoes, and had made a vogage to Rotterdam and back with nothing more than a deviation card to determine the errors of her compass.

These were the facts as gathered from the several witnesses, and at the conclusion of the evidence the Board of Trade desired the opinion of the Court upon the following questions :—

1. What number of compasses had the vessel ; when and by whom were they last adjusted ; and when the vessel left Skinningrove on the 7th February last, were they in gocd order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel ?

2. Was the master justified in proceeding to sea without having the compasses re-adjusted after being repaired by the makers ?

3. 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 ?

4. Whether a safe and proper course was set off Skinningrove at or about 1.30 p.m. of the 7th February, and thereafter steered, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents ?

5. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about 5 p.m. of the 7th February, whether a safe and proper alteration was then made in the course, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents ?

6. Whether proper measures were taken by the master to ascertain and verify the position of the ship at or about 7.40 p.m. of the 7th February ?

7. What were the lights seen at or about 8.5 p.m. of the 7th February, and was the master justified in taking them to be the lights of fishing vessels ?

8. Whether having regard to the state of the weather and atmosphere after 5 p.m. of the 7th February, the vessel was navigated at too great a rate of speed ?

9. Whether the lead was used before the vessel stranded, and, if not, whether in the opinion of the Court it should have been used ?

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

11. What was the cause of the casualty ?

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

13. Whether the serious damage to the s.s. " Cattersty ' was caused by the wrongful act or default of the master and chief officer or either of them ?

To which the Court replied as follows :—

1. There were two compasses on board the " Cattersty." They were both in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the ship on the 7th February last. The Standard compass was adjusted by Mr. Stanley, of Pickering & Co., on the 21st January, 1899. The steering compass was not adjusted because it was placed close to the iron bulkhead in the wheel-house, and was only used for steering purposes.

2. The work that was done to the compasses was simply to re-polish or sharpen the centre pins, and did not amount to repairs, nor did it affect the adjustment of the compasses in the least.

3. The master did not ascertain the deviation of his compasses by any other means than an occasional bearing of some well-known point of land. He had no compass adjuster on board, no tables, no sextant or instrument of any kind to find the errors or ascertain the deviation. The only guide he had on board was the deviation card fcr the Standard compass, and by this he set his courses up and down the coast. The master stated in his evidence that he had been three years and four months in this vessel, and had averaged 90 voyages up and 90 voyages down the coast a year, with pig-iron cargoes, and this fact alone speaks for the efficiency of the adjustment.

4. A safe and proper course (N. ¼ W. magnetic) was set from Huntcliff to a position 4½ miles off Souter Point, but it was not made good. When the vessel was abeam of Souter Point she was estimated to be only a mile and a half off the land instead of 4½ miles, and this was attributed to the inset of the tide and bad steering.

5. No measures were taken to ascertain the ship's position at about 5 p.m. of the 7th of February when off Souter Point. The distance was merely estimated by the sound of the foghorn to be a mile or a mile and a half. A proper alteration was then made in the direction of the course at this time, but not sufficient considering the state of the weather, as they could not see the land for haze and smoke, and were not using the lead.

6. No measures whatever were taken by the master to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at 7.40 p.m. when Coquet Island light was seen abeam. The rapidity at which the light altered the bearing from the beam to the quarter must have warned them how closely they had passed the Island.

7. The lights seen at 8.5 p.m. were the lights in the cottage windows at Boulmer village. The master was not justified in taking them for the lights of trawlers.

8. Considering the alleged state of the atmosphere, and the course the vessel was steering up close to the land, and the non-use of the lead, she was going at too great a rate of speed.

9. The lead was not used at any time ; had it been used off Souter Point, or when Coquet light was seen, the stranding would in all probability never have occurred.

10. A good and proper look-out seems to have been kept.

11. The cause of the stranding was the neglect of the master to use the ordinary precautions of seamen in using the lead while steering too fine a course up the coast in thick and hazy weather.

12. The vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care after passing Souter Point.

13. The serious damage to the s s. " Cattersty " was caused by the wrongful act of the master alone. The Court, having taken into consideration all the facts of the case, feels it incumbent upon it to suspend the certificate of Mr. George McLaren, who holds a mate's certificate in the Home Trade Service, No. 103,690, for the period of four months from the date of the casualty.

The Court makes no order as to costs.

Dated this 3rd day of March, 1899.

CHARLES JAMES COLEMAN,
Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

KENNETT HORE,
H. PARSELL, } Assessors.

(*Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 21st day of March*, 1899.)