

(No. 6000.)

"ISMORE" (S.S.).

JUDGMENT of a Court of Enquiry appointed by His Excellency the Governor in Council for the purpose of investigating the circumstances attending the wreck of the transport steamship "ISMORE," official number 110575, owned by Messrs. BATES & Co., which occurred off Columbine Point in the district of Malmesbury, Cape Colony, on the 4th December, 1899, during the course of a voyage from Liverpool to Cape Town, held in the Court of the Resident Magistrate, Cape Town, at Cape Town on the 15th December, 1899, before us, WILLIAM MARTIN FLEISCHER, Esquire, Resident Magistrate of the district of the Cape, JAMES ROSE, Esquire, Master of the Castle Royal Mail steamer, "Roslin Castle," and EDWARD A. SYLVESTER, Esquire, master of the Union Royal Mail steamer, "German," duly appointed to constitute the said Court of Enquiry by Attorney-General Office letter No. 5419, dated 14th December, 1899.

The "Ismore" was a steam vessel of 5014 tons burden nett. Official No. 110575, belonging to Sir Edward Bates & Co., of Liverpool, but worked by the Johnston Line of steamers, with draught on leaving Liverpool of 22·4 feet forward and 24·2 feet aft. It appears that the "Ismore" sailed from Liverpool on the 6th November, 1899, for the Cape, as a troopship with about 231 officers and men of the 18th Hussars, the 63rd Battery of Artillery and a number of officers and men of the Royal Medical Army Corps, and was well found and equipped and fully manned.

On the afternoon of the 6th November, 1899, the "Ismore" was compelled to put into Moelfre Bay on account of heavy weather, and remained there until Wednesday the 8th November, 1899, at 9 o'clock p.m., when the weather abating, she put to sea, but next day put into Milford Haven owing to sickness among the horses of which there were 350 on board.

The "Ismore" left Milford Haven on Saturday the 11th November, 1899, at 7 o'clock p.m., for Las Palmas, and arrived on Thursday, the 16th November, 1899, at 10 o'clock p.m., and remained at the anchorage at Las Palmas until midnight 16th November, 1899, and then sailed direct for the Cape. All went well until 2·38 o'clock a.m. on 3rd December, 1899, when the "Ismore" struck on the Columbine Rocks and became a total wreck.

It appears from the evidence that at 12 o'clock noon Saturday, the 2nd December, 1899, the "Ismore's" position was found by observation to be latitude 30° 41' S.,

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longitude 15° 30' E., and the course set by standard compass was S. 3° E., the error of the compass being 33° W. giving a true course of S. 36° E. This course was steered till 5 p.m. when it was altered to S. 4° E., the error being the same. This course was steered until midnight when it was again altered to S. 5° E., the error still remaining the same. The second officer relieved the bridge at midnight taking over that course. At this time the vessel had made 144 miles since noon 2nd November; allowing this distance on a S. 37° E. course it will be seen on reference to the Admiralty chart that the vessel was drawing near a dangerous coast, and the lead should have been used. In our opinion the use of the lead at any time after 1 a.m. would have shown the dangerous position of the vessel and averted the disaster.

We find, after a careful consideration of the evidence, that the vessel was at midnight about 13 miles inside the course, the result of apparently a strong set to the N.E., but no allowance was made for this set which was clearly shown on the chart and in the sailing directions, Africa Pilot, part II., nor did the master or the second officer examine the chart or take any steps whatever to use the lead.

We are of opinion that the vessel was not navigated with proper or seamanlike care after midnight, and that the master should have made allowance for the set of the current and exceptionally hazy state of the weather and used the lead; and we find that the loss of the "Ismore" was due to the wrongful act or default of the master, and we do adjudge that the certificate of the master, Frederick Crosby, be suspended for a period of six months.

We further are of opinion that the second mate was to blame in not ascertaining at midnight the position of the ship on the chart or even looking at the chart of the coast, although his orders were to look out for land during his watch, and that he did not act in a seamanlike manner at about 2·30 a.m. 3rd December, 1899, when he saw a black appearance on his port bow, which he should have known was land, by not at once porting his helm, and reporting to the master, and we do adjudge that the second mate Patrick George Lewis be censured.

The certificate of the master having been lost is not attached, and the certificate of the second mate is returned to him.

W. M. FLEISCHER,
Resident Magistrate, Capc.

EDWARD A. SYLVESTER,
Master Mariner.

JAMES ROSE,
Master Mariner.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the
13th day of February, 1900.)