

(No. 6093.)

"MAREOTIS" (S.S.).

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

In the matter of a formal investigation, held at the Municipal Offices, Liverpool, on the 18th and 19th days of September, 1900, before W. J. STEWART, Esquire, assisted by Captains KENNETT HORE and COSENS, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British Steamship "MAREOTIS," near Codroy, Newfoundland, on 25th June, 1900.

*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 and loss of the said vessel were due to the default of the master, Mr. William Easterbrook, but the Court for the reasons also stated in the Annex refrains from dealing with his certificate.

Dated this 19th day of September, 1900.

W. J. STEWART, Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

KENNETT HORE, }  
WILLIAM COSENS, } Assessors.

*Annex to Report.*

The "Mareotis," official number 110,616, was a British steamship of the Port of Liverpool. She was built of steel, at Sunderland, in 1899. She was 330.5 feet long, 46.1 feet broad, and 25 feet deep. She was fitted with 3 triple-expansion engines of 307 horse power nominal. Her registered tonnage was 2054.01 tons, and she was owned by the Moss Steamship Company, Limited, Mr. George Harding, of 31 James Street, Liverpool, being registered as her manager.

The "Mareotis" left Quebec on June 23rd, 1900, bound for Liverpool with a cargo of 4,750 tons of timber and deals. She had a crew of 27 hands all told, and was commanded by Mr. William Easterbrook, who holds a certificate of competency as extra master. At 5.55 p.m., on June 24th, Fame Point was abeam, distant 2½ miles. The course of the vessel by the Standard compass was S. 38° E., which was equivalent to S. 65° E. true, the master allowing 2° for windage. At 8 p.m. Cape Rosier was abeam, distant 10 miles, and the vessel was kept on the same course, which the master calculated would take her from 8 to 10 miles off Cape Ray, which he expected to sight about 5 p.m. on the 25th. At 9 a.m. on the 25th a sounding was taken which gave no bottom at 75 fathoms. The wind was S.W., a moderate breeze, freshening up at times, but towards noon the weather became rainy and the wind fell light, and about 5.30 p.m. altered to the S.E. At noon no observations were obtained, but a cast of the lead gave no bottom at 80 fathoms, and the position of the vessel ascertained by dead reckoning was taken to be 47° 47' N. and 60° 35' W. The master estimated his distance from his position at noon to Cape Ray abeam at 52 miles. The weather was rainy and hazy during the afternoon and they could see about 3 miles ahead, but about 4 p.m. it set in thicker, and a man was put on the look-out. No land was in sight and the master considered he could only see half a mile. At 4.2 p.m. the order "Stand by" was given to the engine-room, and the master hauled the vessel 10° to the southward. As the fog became dense at 4.15 p.m., the speed was reduced to half speed, and at 4.25 p.m. to slow, the 2nd officer being ordered to take a cast of the lead. Before the result could be reported breakers were seen ahead, and the helm was put hard-a-port, and the engines stopped and reversed, but without avail, as the vessel stranded almost immediately.

Referring to these facts, which were given in evidence, it will be seen that the course of the vessel as set by the master from off Fame Point was S. 65° E. true, the

course by compass being S. 38° E., the error 25° and 2° being allowed for the tide or current. This 2°, as the master explained, was allowed for the set to leeward from the effect of the wind on the deck cargo, which was very high, being some 13 or 14 feet above the deck level, there being about 1,300 tons of her cargo being carried on deck. Taking the position of the vessel from off Cape Rosier at 8 p.m. to where she stranded at 9.30 p.m. the next day, she evidently made a S. 72° E. course instead of S. 65° E., and was some 21 or 22 miles to the northward of where she was expected to have been in a run of about 200 miles, and the master accounted for this by saying he thought there must have been a strong set of current to the northward which he was not aware of. At sunrise on the morning of the 25th, the weather being fine and clear, the chief officer took the rising amplitude of the sun and found the error of the compass on the S. 38° E. course which they were steering to be 24°, so there can be no doubt the compass was correct, and the proper allowance of error applied to the course. At 9 a.m. the weather had become thick and cloudy with rain, and a cast of the lead was taken, which gave no bottom at 75 fathoms. At noon another cast of 80 fathoms, and no bottom was taken, and the weather being still thick and cloudy with rain, no sights for latitude could be obtained, but the position of the vessel was assumed (and laid down) to be in latitude 47° 47' N. and longitude 60° 33' W. by dead reckoning. Looking back from this position to the course the ship was supposed to have made, the cast of the lead at 9 a.m. should have shown 35 to 50 fathoms, but as there was no bottom at 75 fathoms, it should have been quite clear to the master that the ship was not in the place he supposed her to be. She had made nothing to the southward of her course, but was probably northward of the line steered, and hence more caution would be required in approaching the land, as they could see no distance, the weather being thick with rain and fog, and knowing also how dangerously close a vessel can approach Cape Ray in such weather without obtaining soundings to determine her position. No notice, however, seems to have been taken of the 9 a.m. soundings not having agreed with the position laid down at noon, and the same course and speed was continued up till 4 p.m., when the weather became so thick that they could not see half a mile ahead, and by which time, if the vessel had made a northerly course, she must have been dangerously near the land. At 4.2 p.m. the course was very properly altered, but the speed was not reduced until 4.15 p.m., by which time there was a dense fog.

Had the speed been reduced earlier in the afternoon so that soundings could have been taken quicker and with greater certainty, they would most probably have found out before the vessel stranded that they were not in the position they supposed themselves to be. When the vessel was eventually slowed down for a cast of the lead at 4.25 p.m., the lead was no use, breakers were in sight, and before anything could be effectually done to stop her headway and get her astern, she stranded on the rocks south of Cape Anguille and near Codroy, Newfoundland, some 20 or 21 miles to the northward of her supposed course. Boats were put out and soundings taken round the ship, but all efforts to move her by the engines were soon found to be useless, and by midnight she was so badly damaged that the holds and engine-room were full of water. At 1 a.m. of the 26th the crew left in the ship's boats with the consent of the master, as she was then bumping heavily. The master, chief officer and boatswain, together with three fisherman from the shore, remained on board, and at 6 a.m. the wind shifted to the N.W. and blew a gale, the sea breaking over the ship and driving her heavily on the rocks. The next day the weather moderated, but on the 30th of June and the 1st and 2nd of July heavy weather again set in, seas breaking over the vessel, and washing away the greater portion of the deck cargo. On July the 3rd salvage assistance arrived and endeavours were made to save the cargo. These operation were carried on until July the 12th, when all further efforts to save the ship were given up, and she was finally abandoned on July the 13th, no lives being lost.

The Court, taking into consideration the difficulty of obtaining reliable soundings in thick weather after the vessel had passed the Bird Rock banks, refrains from dealing with the master's certificate, but at the same time strongly censures him for continuing at full speed

up to 4.15 p.m., considering the state of the weather and seeing that he was unable to verify the position of the vessel either by soundings or observations of the sun.

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

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. Was the position of the vessel correctly ascertained at or about 8 p.m. on the 24th June? Was a safe and proper course set and steered therefrom, and was due and proper allowance made for tide and currents?
4. Were proper and sufficient measures taken at 9 a.m. and again at noon on the 25th June to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel?
5. At what time on the last mentioned date did the weather become thick? Was the speed of the vessel then reduced, and was a safe and proper alteration made in the course?
6. Was the lead used with sufficient frequency?
7. Was a good and proper look-out kept, and was the vessel navigated with proper and seamanlike care?
8. What was the cause of the stranding of the vessel?
9. Was the stranding and loss of the "Mareotis" caused by the wrongful act or default of the master and officers, or of either of them?

Mr. Miller having addressed the Court on behalf of the master, the Court gave judgment as above, and returned the following answers to the questions of the Board of Trade:—

1. The vessel had three compasses. They were in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel. They were last adjusted in October 1899, when she was new and being fitted out in Sunderland.
2. The master did ascertain the error of his compass from time to time, and the errors were said to have been correctly ascertained and properly applied to the courses steered.
3. The position of the vessel at 8 p.m. on the 24th June was correctly ascertained by a four-point bearing being taken off Cape Rosier, which placed her at a distance of 10 miles off the lighthouse. A course of S. 65° E. true was set and steered from this point, which, if made good, would have been a safe and proper course to steer, and an allowance of two degrees was made in this course for the set of the current.

4. Proper measures were carried out to ascertain the position of the vessel at 9 a.m. and at noon on the 25th June by a cast of the lead being taken; at 9, 75 fathoms, and at noon 80 fathoms being sounded and no bottom found in either case. The weather being thick with rain at 9 a.m. and at noon, further measures by observation of the sun for latitude and longitude were impossible. The position of the vessel by account at noon was assumed to be in latitude 47° 47' N., and longitude 60° 33' W.

5. The weather by the evidence was said to have been overcast and hazy at noon of the 25th of June, and it was estimated they could see about three miles from the ship. The log book states that the weather set in with steady rain from 8.30 a.m. until 4 p.m., then fog, and at 4.15 a dense fog. However, at 4 p.m. the weather was so thick with fog that they could not see half a mile, and a man was placed on the look-out. The speed of the vessel was not reduced until 4.15 p.m., when the engines were put at half speed and the course altered 10 degrees to the southward.

6. The lead was not used with sufficient frequency during the day.

7. A good and proper look-out was no doubt kept, but that they did not see the land before the vessel struck shows how thick the weather must have been for some time previous to the stranding. The speed of the vessel not being reduced until 4.15, it cannot be said that she was navigated in a proper and seamanlike manner.

8. The stranding of the vessel was caused by her not having made the course set from off Cape Rosier, and by the master continuing his course in thick weather, after it had become impossible to ascertain whether the vessel was making that course correctly or not.

9. The stranding and loss of the "Mareotis" were caused by the default of the master, but the Court, appreciating the difficulty which the master experienced in checking his course by soundings, refrains from dealing with his certificate, but strongly censures him for not reducing the speed of the vessel earlier.

W. J. STEWART, Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

KENNETT HORE, } Assessors.  
WILLIAM COSENS, }

Liverpool, 19th September, 1900.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 19th day of October, 1900.)

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IN the matter of a County Building days of September SCOTT MONCRI Substitute of ALEXANDER W the circumstance the British stea on the coast of 1900.

The Court, having cumstances attending casualty, finds, for hereto, that the str vessel was caused William Sinnet Jone said default cannot sidering the excellen the straightforward evidence, and the ca the navigation of hi while censuring hi certificate.

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