

(No. 6071.)

“KAKAPO” (S.S.).

JUDGMENT of a Court of Inquiry held at Cape Town on the 18th, 19th, and 20th days of June, 1900, to investigate the circumstances attending the stranding of the s.s. “KAKAPO” at Chapman’s Bay, on the 25th May, 1900.

The “Kakapo” is a steam vessel of 665 tons, registered tonnage, official No. 104959, belonging to C. H. Cooper, London. It appears from the evidence that the “Kakapo” left Swansea under the command of Niels Peter Fischer Nicolaysen, bound for Sydney, New South Wales, *via* Cape of Good Hope, on the 26th April, 1900, in coal ballast, with a crew of 20 hands all told, and was well found and equipped, and fully manned. All went well until May 25th, 1900, when the “Kakapo” went ashore in Chapman’s Bay, to the southward of Cape Town, where she is now lying hard and fast, several attempts to tow her off having failed. At 12 noon, 25th May, 1900, the position of the ship according to the master’s statement was found by observation to be latitude 33° 20’ S., and longitude 17° 17’ E., and the course set was S.E. by S.  $\frac{3}{4}$  S. This course was steered till 4.20 p.m., when it was altered to S.S.E., the weather at this time being thick with strong and increasing wind. At 4.30 p.m. the weather cleared slightly, and land, supposed to be Table Mountain, was sighted, and a bearing was taken, distance estimated about 25 miles. At 5 p.m. the man at the wheel complained that he could not keep the ship on her course owing to the compass swinging about. At 5.35 p.m. the wind and sea had greatly increased, and the weather was thick with heavy rain. At 6.30 p.m. the captain suddenly observed what looked like breakers close ahead, and he at once gave the orders “hard-a-port” and the engines “full speed a-stern,” and the next moment the ship struck on a sandy beach.

The Court, having carefully considered the evidence and the circumstances above stated, finds as follows:—

That, owing to error of chronometer or other cause, the position of the vessel at noon, 25th May, 1900, was not correctly ascertained.

That the weather was thick and stormy after 4 p.m., and the compass erratic.

That the vessel was kept at 9½ knots, being full speed, up to the time of the stranding.

That the lead was not used.

We are of opinion that the vessel was not navigated with proper or seamanlike care after 4 p.m., and that the captain was not justified in keeping his vessel at full speed in spite of thick and stormy weather, and the erratic behaviour of the compass, and in not using the lead, and that the stranding of the “Kakapo” was due to his act or default. We do therefore adjudge that the certificate of the master, Niels Peter Fischer Nicolaysen, be suspended for a period of three months.

W. M. F. FISCHER,  
R.M., Cape.

WILLIAM H. WEST,  
Master of s.s. “Penarth.”

WILSON CURTIS,  
Master of s.s. “Blanefield.”

Cape Town, 20th June, 1900.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 10th day of August, 1900.)