

(No. 6418.)

"DELANO" (S.S.).

Court House,
St. John's, Newfoundland,
22nd August, 1902.

To His Excellency Sir CAVENDISH BOYLE, K.C.M.G.,
Governor of Newfoundland and its Dependencies.

SIR,

IN the matter of the s.s. "Delano," wrecked near Renew's on the 14th inst., I have the honour to return herewith Your Excellency's Commission constituting me a Marine Court of Inquiry, under 1 Ed. VII., Cap. 4, to investigate the circumstances connected with the loss of the said steamship, and requiring me to report thereon to Your Excellency for transmission to the Board of Trade.

I have held the inquiry pursuant to my commission, and have been assisted therein by two Assessors of nautical skill and experience, Captains English and Baxter, and I beg to submit herewith the evidence taken before the Court, as well as some recorded evidence received in the course of former investigations under similar circumstances, to which the promovents crave attention as germane to the issue.

Judgment.

"The decision of the Court, in which the Assessors concur, is that the certificates of master and officers are not to be dealt with; that there was no default on his or their part calling for censure or the least disparagement of the honourable distinction which their certificates confer; but that, as calling for the inquiry, they should pay the costs thereof."

Summary of the Evidence.

The s.s. "Delano," of Sunderland, 1920 tons register, owned by the Neptune Steam Navigation Company, built in 1892, and classed A1 at Lloyds', left Rotterdam on the 1st August inst., drawing 23 ft. greatest draught, with a load of steel billets.

She called at Sunderland for coals and provisions, and left that port on the 4th inst. for Baltimore.

She was furnished with four boats, 29 cork jackets, and eight lifebuoys. She had three compasses in position and two spare ones. The steering compass, a "Standard," was on the top bridge, the second was in the wheel house immediately below, the third aft on the poop close to the wheel.

They were adjusted outside Sunderland on the 4th inst., were carefully watched by the master and mate, the errors carefully ascertained and applied during the voyage. She had two chronometers, the Admiralty chart and blue backs, and for this coast an American hydrographic chart, which is forwarded herewith, "A.—J.G.G."

Her crew were 27 all told.

Her captain, John George Gray, has been master of her 3½ years, in the same trade. The weather was clear all the way across until half an hour before the casualty; and the ship was as nearly as possible on the Great Circle track, as nearly as possible on same track as in her former voyages from Rotterdam to Baltimore.

When she struck the wind was S.S.E.; no vessels or fishing boats had been seen that morning, nothing to indicate the nearness of the land.

(It would appear that the boats could not ride on the Cape Ballard Bank that day for the tide running to northward, see evidence of Captain Jackman.º)

It was clear weather and there was no look-out except at night, and the man on the night-watch came off with the lights at 4.30 a.m.

On the afternoon of the 13th, the captain and both mates took sights, and comparing them, found them to agree practically.

The captain, in the presence of these two officers, marked the position on the chart (*Vide A.—J.G.G.*) and laid off the course, a course to take the ship from 20 to 30 miles off Cape Race. This was at 5.15 p.m.

At 7.30 a.m. on the 14th, the weather came in hazy and the captain altered his course out from the S.W. a point S.W. by S., and ordered the lead to be prepared for sounding; eased the engines and put her half speed. At 7.45 ran into a dense fog; slowed down dead slow, making 2 to 3 knots, when ran into fogbank; in the fogbank about five minutes when she struck on a reef three or four ship lengths from the land, which at the time was invisible. The master and the second officer were on the bridge at the time.

The second engineer, who was in charge, got the order "full speed astern" and obeyed it without effect. It cleared in about three-quarters of an hour and no boats were to be seen at sea.

No whistles were heard. The captain ascribes the accident to a strong current setting to the N.W. broad on his port bow, and partly to local magnetic attraction on that part of the coast, drawing his ship to the land. In this conclusion he is supported by the evidence of local men well acquainted with that coast and aware of the conditions prevailing at the time of the casualty.

My Assessors and I are fully satisfied that the "Delano" was in good condition in respect of hull, machinery and equipment, and was navigated with proper seamanlike care, the course laid out being quite safe; that the mishap was due to the causes alleged by the master and his local witnesses, to which views certain experiences (here offered by way of confirmatory evidence) in the course of previous inquiries deposed to, give strong support.

The Court ventures to avail of this opportunity to express its conviction of the grave necessity for organized observations by skilled mariners upon the tides and currents on the coast near Cape Race, and begs respectfully to suggest that the naval ships on this station might, without inconvenience to the service and with great advantage to commerce, be occupied during a part of each season in this secularly important work.

I have the honour to submit herewith the evidence of the master, first officer, the two officers in charge at the time of the casualty, the carpenter, and the two local witnesses, Jackman and Cashin; also certain supplementary documents "A" to "E" referring to the conduct of coastal currents in the neighbourhood of Cape Race; and (a) Chart "A.—J.G.G."; (b) the "Scrap log"; and (c) the first officer's deviation book, with card of deviations.*

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your Excellency's most obedient Servant,
J. G. COUROY,
Stipendiary Magistrate for Newfoundland.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the
10th day of October, 1902.)

* Not printed.