

(No. 6826.)

"CLAN URQUHART" (S.S.).

Translation.

Criminal Court of Magistrates of Judicial Police
for the Island of Malta.

REPORT of the Magistrate, G. B. MIFSUD, L.L.D.,
sitting with the nautical assessors MICHAEL
DE MARIA and GEORGE FURNEAUX, British
master mariners, in the case of the stranding
of the British s.s. "CLAN URQUHART," off St.
George's shoal, Malta.

The s.s. "Clan Urquhart," official number 111219,
Glasgow, of the registered tonnage gross 5854.
James Alexander McPherson, master, was on a
voyage from Bombay to Liverpool with full cargo
on the 27th June, 1905. She was off Malta Har-
bour since midnight awaiting daylight to enter
that harbour for the purpose of coaling. At 1.50
a.m. cross bearings of the two lights, Delimara
and St. Elmo, were taken by the master, and
the ship was consequently put N. 69½ W. true.
four miles away from land. When on that course
the ship was enveloped by a dense fog which,
however, at 2.45 a.m. allowed to make out the
St. Elmo light S. 10° W. The ship then stopped
and made to bear S. 41 W. true. All the time
that the fog prevailed the fog signals were kept
going and leads made use of on both sides, these
always showing no bottom at 10 fathoms. At 3.05
a.m. when the ship was with engines stopped,
the local pilot, John Cutajar, was taken on board.
He had reached the ship after over 1 hour's
time, rowing with his four men guided by the
ship's fog signal in the fog, and, as he had before
been 3½ miles E.S.E. away from Ricasoli Point,
on boarding the ship gave the master to under-
stand that the ship was safe away from land
and could be safely taken further in. When at
3.15 the ship's engines were put slowly ahead,
there loomed in the fog the glimmer of a light
set up by an Italian sailing boat whose crew
called out "Keep to your right, you take the
land." Only the first part of the cry was under-
stood and the ship's helm was put to port to
clear the vessel and the engines stopped.

When the ship had yet way on she struck for-
ward on a rock at a spot where the lead gave a
five-fathom bottom. The engines were immediately
reversed, and though the forepeak ballast tank
filled immediately the ship was turned N. and
then safely, when the fog lifted, taken into har-
bour. Proper bearings were taken, the proper
course followed, and the due precautions of fog-
signalling, stopping and easing the engines ob-
served. The master was led to believe by the
local pilot to be further from land than he actually
was, and that is why, after clearing away from an
Italian sailing vessel in the fog, his ship with
engines stopped but yet with a slight way on

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grazed the five-fathom edge of Mercanti Rock, off
St. Julian's Bay, Malta. In the opinion of the
nautical assessors the master of the "Clan
Urquhart" is not to blame for the casualty and
the Court thereupon acquitted him.

GEO. B. MIFSUD,
Magistrate.

We, as nautical assessors, find that the s.s. "Clan
Urquhart," on the 27th June, 1905, struck a rock
somewhere close to St. Julian's Bay, on the coast
of Malta, at 3.27 a.m.

At 1.50 a.m. a cross-bearing was taken by the
Delimara and St. Elmo lights whereby a due
course N. 72° 30' W. was steered. Then a thick
fog set in when, however, at 2.45 a.m. the St.
Elmo light was found bearing S. 10° W. That
light was again lost sight of on account of the
dense fog and the ship was stopped dodging until
a local pilot was shipped at 3.05 a.m. This pilot
advised the master that he could safely get closer
in and, on the strength of that assurance, the
engines were slowed ahead only to be stopped
a few minutes after as the gloom of a sailing
craft ahead was made out. They were hailed by
that craft to port the helm, which was done, and
on starboarding the ship slightly struck the
bottom. The engines were immediately reversed.
The leads were in use, and a proper look-out kept
during the prevalence of the fog.

The captain might during the fog have kept his
vessel not so much inshore and should not have
trusted the pilot as to the supposed distance he
was from the harbour, but his course N. 72° 30' W.,
when cross-bearings had been taken 4 miles away
from land, was a safe one; and then when St.
Elmo's light at 2.45 bore S. 10° W. his dodging
about was regular, and the lead showed no danger
nor the proximity of the land.

He miscalculated the distance covered in dodging,
which brought him unwarily too much inshore;
and that miscalculation, increased by the pilot's
error as to the spot the steamer actually was,
led to the accident; but these are pardonable mis-
calculations which will make the captain more
wary in future, but which we do not consider to
involve any neglect or blame on the part of the
master of the "Clan Urquhart."

GEO. FURNEAUX,
Master s.s. "Bosnian."

M. DE MARIA,
Master Mariner.

Read in open Court and sworn to by the
assessors.

30th June, 1905.

GEO. B. MIFSUD,
Magistrate.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the
8th day of August, 1905.)