

(No. 6973.)

"C. B. K. F."

AND

"TASSO" (S.S.).

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

IN the matter of a formal investigation held at the Guildhall, Plymouth, on the 16th and 18th days of August, 1906, before ORLANDO J. H. DAVIS and CORNELIUS C. DUKE, Esquires, Justices of the Peace for the Borough of Plymouth, assisted by Admiral RODNEY LLOYD, C.B., Commander W. F. CABORNE, C.B., R.N.R., and Captain HENRY HIGGINSON, into the circumstances attending the loss of the British ship "C. B. K. F." of Padstow, through collision with the British s.s. "TASSO," of Bristol, about 12 miles N.E. of Longships Lighthouse, Bristol Channel, on or about the 21st June last, whereby loss of life ensued.

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 cause of the collision and loss of life was due to the thick fog prevailing and the "C. B. K. F." being neither seen nor heard by the "Tasso" until it was too late to avert the casualty.

The Court is of opinion that the master of the "Tasso" committed a grave error in withdrawing the lookout from the fore-castle head immediately before the collision occurred and accordingly reprimands him very severely.

The Court orders John Patrick Quinlan, the master of the "Tasso," to pay £5 to the Solicitor of the Board of Trade towards the costs of this inquiry.

Dated this 18th day of August, 1906.

ORLANDO J. H. DAVIS, }
C. C. DUKE, } Justices.

We concur in the above Report.

RODNEY M. LLOYD, }
W. F. CABORNE, } Assessors.
HENRY HIGGINSON, }

Annex to the Report.

This inquiry was held at the Guildhall, in the Borough of Plymouth, on the 16th and 18th days of August, 1906.

Mr. Harold Wolferston conducted the case on behalf of the Board of Trade, Mr. Gilbert Robertson, of Cardiff, appeared for the master of the "Tasso," Mr. H. Lawrence Spear watched the proceedings on behalf of the owners of the "Tasso," and the master of the "C. B. K. F." and the second officer of the "Tasso" attended in person, but were not professionally represented.

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The "C. B. K. F.," official number 83,854, was a British sailing vessel, built of wood at Falmouth, in the County of Cornwall, in 1881, by Mr. Charles Burt, and was registered at the Port of Padstow. Her dimensions were as follows:—Length, 74.05 ft.; breadth, 19.95 ft.; and depth in hold from tonnage deck to ceiling at midships, 9 ft.—her gross tonnage being 70.35 tons and her registered tonnage 56.20 tons. She was Ketch rigged, was in good order and condition, was furnished with a 15 ft. 6 in. boat and its necessary gear, and was supplied with two compasses, two lifebuoys, and four lifebelts. The "C. B. K. F." was owned by Messrs. William Hutchings, Robert Chapman, (her master), and Charles H. Nurse; Mr. William Hutchings, of Middle Street, Padstow, in the County of Cornwall, being her managing owner.

It may be added that her estimated value was £550, and that at the time of her loss she was insured for £300.

The "Tasso," official number 117,719, was a British screw steamship, built of steel at Campbeltown, in the County of Argyll, in 1904, by the Campbeltown Shipbuilding Company, and was registered at the Port of Bristol. She was rigged as a fore and aft schooner, and her dimensions were as follows:—Length, 272 ft.; breadth, 40 ft.; and depth in hold from tonnage deck to ceiling at midships, 19.3 ft.—her gross tonnage being 1,858.82 tons, and her registered tonnage 1,119.89 tons. She was propelled by triple expansion engines of 176 nominal horse-power and 1,500 indicated horse-power, designed to drive the ship at a speed of 11 knots, the diameter of her cylinders being respectively 22 ins., 36 ins., and 59 ins., and the length of stroke 39 ins., while she was fitted with two steel boilers having a working pressure of 180 lbs. to the square inch; both the engines and the boilers having been constructed in 1904 by Messrs. David Rowan and Company, of Glasgow. She carried three boats, (two of them being lifeboats) with their requisite equipments, 6 lifebuoys, and about 26 lifebelts, was in good order and condition, and was owned by the Bristol Steam Navigation Company, Limited, of 50, Prince Street, in the City of Bristol, Mr. Frederick Taylor, of the same address, being the person to whom the management of the steamer was entrusted by and on behalf of her said owners, under the seal of the Company, as recorded on the 27th of October, 1904.

The "C. B. K. F." sailed from Par, in the County of Cornwall, on the 19th of June, 1906, with a cargo consisting of 115 tons of china clay, bound to Weston Point, in the river Mersey, her draught of water being 8 ft. forward and 10 ft. 2 ins. aft. She was under the command of Mr. Robert Chapman, who holds no certificate of competency or service, and had a crew of three hands all told.

At 11 p.m. of the 20th of June, the vessel was off the Longships, and the weather, which had been thick, lifted a little, and bearings were taken of the light, and it was estimated she was three or four miles to the westward of it. The wind was light, the sea was smooth, although there was a ground swell, and a course N.N.E. magnetic was now steered.

Shortly before 4.30 a.m. of the morning of the 21st of June, all plain sail being set, the wind being light from the S.W., the weather very foggy, and the other conditions as before, the whistle of a steamer was heard on the lee bow. All hands were on deck, the master was blowing the fog horn, and the mate was steering, while the side lights were still burning, notwithstanding that it was daylight. The vessel was making about 2½ knots through the water, and under the above-named circumstances a steamer, which proved to be the "Tasso," suddenly loomed up on the starboard bow at an estimated distance of about 50 yards, and before anything could be done to avert the danger, a collision occurred, the steamer crashing into the Ketch's starboard side amidships, cutting in as far as the boat, which was stowed on the main hatch, and causing the "C. B. K. F." to founder in the space of about one minute. Her master succeeded

in reaching a rope thrown overboard from the steamer and was saved, but the other two members of the crew, namely, Edward Lawry, mate, and George Morris, seaman, were never seen again.

The "Tasso" left Swansea, in the Bristol Channel, about 6 p.m. of the 20th of June, 1906, with about 3,000 tons of general cargo and coal, bound for Antwerp, her mean draught being 18 ft. 1 in., she being under the command of Mr. John Patrick Quinlan, who holds a certificate of competency as master, numbered 020779, and having a crew of 19 hands all told.

At 4 a.m. of the 21st of June, the ship at the time approaching the neighbourhood of Pendeen, the master was on the bridge with the second officer.

At 4.10 a.m. the weather, which previously had been hazy, came in very thick, and the engines were put dead slow.

At 4.30 a.m. orders were given to get the lead ready for taking soundings, the second officer left the bridge for this purpose, and the engines were stopped.

At about 4.45 a.m., the weather being very thick, the wind light, the sea smooth, except for a ground swell, and the engines still being stopped, the sails of a vessel were seen almost ahead on the port bow at an estimated distance of about 40 or 50 ft., and simultaneously a fog horn was heard. The master ordered the helm to be put hard-a-port and the engines to be turned full speed astern, but before the latter order could become effective a collision occurred with what proved to be the Ketch "C. B. K. F." of Padstow, which vessel sank almost at once. The engines were stopped, lines were thrown overboard, and the gig, which was stowed under davits in chocks on the port side of the bridge, was got out, (an evolution which occupied about two minutes) and sent away with the second officer and two hands. The chief officer seeing a man in the water near the starboard fore rigging, threw him a line, and thus was the means of rescuing the master of the "C. B. K. F."

The "Tasso" remained on the spot, with her boat searching, for about one hour and a quarter, but as nothing was seen of the missing members of the crew of the "C. B. K. F.," she then proceeded on her voyage.

It was mutually agreed that the position of the foundering was in about Latitude 50° 21' N., and Longitude 5° 47' W., or some 12 miles North of Pendeen.

The foregoing comprise the accounts given by the respective vessels.

The master of the "C. B. K. F." attributed the casualty to the thick fog, and to the "Tasso" proceeding at too great a rate of speed, which he put at some 5 or 6 knots.

The master of the "Tasso," on the other hand, ascribed the cause of the collision to the thick weather, and the absence of the use of, or the inefficiency of, the foghorn of the "C. B. K. F."

With regard to the speed of the "Tasso" when the two vessels sighted one another, the Court is satisfied that she was practically stationary in the water, the evidence clearly showing that the engines had then been stopped for about a quarter of an hour. Moreover, the fact that the master of the "C. B. K. F.," who went down with his vessel, and afterwards came to the surface, was rescued by a line thrown from about the fore part of the "Tasso's" fore rigging, goes far to prove that the latter vessel could have had little or no headway.

With respect to the "C. B. K. F.'s" foghorn, the master stated that it was a very good one, which had been specially commended by a Board of Trade Surveyor at Gloucester some twenty months previously. He also declared that it was properly sounded on the morning of the casualty, and, while it was not heard on board the "Tasso" until immediately before the collision, the Court has accepted his statement.

Turning to the lookout kept on board the "Tasso," it transpired that some five minutes before the "C. B. K. F." was sighted, the master ordered the fore-castle lookout to go for a block needed in connection with the lead line, and at the same time instructed the man at the wheel, the ship being stopped, to keep

a good look out. It thus happened that the forward lookout was absent from his post at a critical moment, and while the Court is by no means prepared to say that his presence on the fore-castle would have averted the catastrophe, it is probable that he would have seen the "C. B. K. F." a few moments earlier than was the case, (the bridge being some 115 ft. from the stem), and that extra interval of time, if promptly taken advantage of, would have given the engineer a better chance of moving the vessel astern.

Taking into consideration the fact that casualties of a somewhat similar character have frequently occurred, namely, the steamer not hearing the sailing vessel's horn until too late, the Court calls the attention of the Board of Trade to the advisability of sailing vessels being provided with a special "emergency signal" to be used when a steamer is persistently approaching a sailing vessel in such a way as to involve risk of collision.

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

Questions.

- (1) Were both vessels supplied with the boats and life-saving appliances required by the Statute?
- (2) Was the "C. B. K. F." provided with an efficient foghorn, and was it in good working order?
- (3) Was the weather thick with fog at or about and after 4.30 a.m. of the 21st June last? If so, were both vessels navigated at a moderate speed, and did they comply with Article 16 of the Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea? Did the "Tasso" properly sound her whistle, and did the "C. B. K. F." properly sound her foghorn for fog, and did both vessels comply with Article 15 of the said Regulations?
- (4) Was a good and proper lookout kept on board both vessels?
- (5) What was the cause of the collision and loss of life, and was every possible effort made by those on board the "Tasso" to render assistance?
- (6) Were both vessels navigated with proper and seamanlike care?
- (7) Was the loss of the "C. B. K. F." and the loss of life caused by the wrongful act or default of the master and second officer of the "Tasso," or of either of them, and or was it caused by the neglect of the master of the "C. B. K. F."?

Witnesses were then called on behalf of the master of the "Tasso." Mr. Robertson addressed the Court on behalf of the said master, and Mr. Wolferston replied, after which the Court gave judgment as above, and returned the following answers to the questions of the Board of Trade.

Answers.

- (1) Both vessels were supplied with the boats and life-saving appliances required by the Statute.
- (2) The "C. B. K. F." was provided with a mechanical foghorn which the master, the only survivor from that vessel, states was efficient and in good working order.
- (3) The weather was thick with fog at or about and after 4.30 a.m. of the 21st of June last. The "C. B. K. F." was navigated at a moderate speed, and the "Tasso," which vessel had been steaming dead slow since 4.10 a.m. had been stopped at 4.30 a.m. for the purpose of taking soundings, and her engines had not been restarted when the "C. B. K. F." was first seen about a quarter of an hour later; accordingly, both vessels complied with Article 16 of the Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea. The "Tasso" properly sounded her whistle, and the master of the "C. B. K. F." states that he personally properly sounded her foghorn for fog, although the said foghorn was not heard on board the "Tasso" until immediately before the collision. Thus both vessels complied with Article 15 of the aforesaid Regulations

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(4) A good and proper lookout was kept on board the "C. B. K. F." but not on board the "Tasso."

(5) The cause of the collision and loss of life was due to the thick fog prevailing, and to the "C. B. K. F." being neither seen nor heard by the "Tasso" until it was too late to avert the casualty. Every possible effort was made by those on board the "Tasso" to render assistance.

(6) Subject to answer 4, both ships were navigated with proper and seamanlike care.

(7) While not prepared to say that the loss of the "C. B. K. F." and the loss of life was caused by the wrongful act or default of the master of the "Tasso," the Court is of opinion that he committed a grave error in withdrawing the lookout from the fore-castle when he did, and accordingly reprimands him very

severely. The second officer of the "Tasso" and the master of the "C. B. K. F." were in no way to blame for the casualty.

ORLANDO J. H. DAVIS, } Justices.
C. C. DUKE. }

We concur,

RODNEY M. LLOYD, } Assessors.
W. F. CABORNE, }
HENRY HIGGINSON. }

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 11th day of September, 1906.)