

(No. 7032.)

"HARLINGEN" (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

In the matter of a formal investigation held at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, on the 17th day of January, 1907, before R. H. B. MARSHAM, Esq., assisted by Captains RONALDSON and W. H. SINCLAIR LOUTIT, into the circumstances attending the stranding and loss of the British s.s. "HARLINGEN" on the coast of Brazil, about two miles N.W. of Cape Frio, on the 3rd of November, 1906.

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 stranding and loss of the vessel was that the master, Mr. Charles Elms Carlen, set an improper course towards the land, and continued at full speed without taking any precaution to verify his position. The Court finds the master in default, and suspends his certificate, No. 033432, for three months from the 17th instant.

Dated this 22nd day of January, 1907.

R. H. B. MARSHAM,
Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

A. RONALDSON,
W. H. SINCLAIR LOUTIT, } Assessors.

Annex to the Report.

This inquiry was held at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, on the 17th day of January, 1907, when Mr. Raymond Asquith appeared for the Board of Trade, Mr. Raeburn for the owners, Mr. Pritchard for the master, and Mr. Higgs for the chief and second officers.

On the opening of the inquiry the chief officer's name was deleted, at the suggestion of the Board of Trade, he being unable to attend the court through illness, and a doctor's certificate to that effect was put before the court.

The "Harlingen," official number 120606, was a schooner-rigged British screw steamer, built of steel by Messrs. Gray & Co., Limited, at West Hartlepool, in 1905, and registered at the Port of London.

She was of the following dimensions:—Length, 342 ft.; breadth, 49.5 ft.; depth in hold from tonnage neck to ceiling amidships, 22.7 ft. Her gross tonnage was 3,470.62 tons, and her registered tonnage 2,224.52 tons; she was propelled by three inverted direct-acting triple expansion condensing engines of 335 nominal h.-p., giving a speed of nine knots per hour, built by William Gray & Co., of West Hartlepool, in 1905. The diameters of the cylinders were 25½ in., 40½ in., 67 in., with a length of stroke 45 in.; and she had two steel boilers pressed to 180 lbs., built by the Central Engine Works, West Hartlepool, in the same year.

She was owned by William Gray & Co., Limited, and Charles W. Harrison, the last named being designated managing owner, as per advice dated 18th day of September, 1906. She was fitted with steam steering gear, carried four boats, two of which were lifeboats, with their requisite equipment, and

was sufficiently supplied with life-saving apparatus in accordance with the statute.

In regard to navigating instruments, she had two compasses in position, viz., a Lord Kelvin's patent, on the roof of the wheelhouse, by which the courses were set and the vessel navigated, and a second compass by the same maker in the wheelhouse, by which she was steered. There was also a spare compass, carried in one of the lifeboats. These compasses were in good order, and were last adjusted in September, 1905, at West Hartlepool, by Kelvin & White, Ltd. No record of this adjustment or of the observations taken to ascertain the errors of these compasses was produced, these documents having been lost when the vessel foundered.

She was also furnished with a Walker's patent log, and with the requisite Admiralty charts and sailing directions of the seas, through which she was being navigated, and was in all respects well found.

The "Harlingen" left Barry Docks on the 11th day of September, 1906, for Buenos Ayres, with a cargo of coal, after discharging which she left there in water ballast on the 28th day of October, 1906, for Port Eads, U.S.A., under the command of Mr. Charles Elms Carlen, with a crew of 25 hands all told. She proceeded on her voyage, experiencing fine weather, and on the 31st day of October, at noon, her position, by observation of the sun, was 28° 49' S. lat., 48° 49' W. long., her course being N. 40° E. by compass. At 1.10 p.m. of that day Cape St. Marta Grande Lighthouse was abeam, distance eight miles, and at 3.26 p.m. Tacami Island was abeam, distant seven miles, by a four-point bearing, this being the last land sighted before the casualty.

At midnight, the 31st October, the course was changed to N. 42° E. by compass, and so continued to noon of November 1st, during which time the weather was described as cloudy and overcast, with a fresh N.E. breeze. The course was then altered to N. 62° E. by compass, the position by observation of the sun being 25° 58' S. latitude, 46° 24' W. longitude, the distance made good being 214 miles, nearly 9 knots per hour. During the ensuing twelve hours the vessel experienced overcast and cloudy weather, with a slight head sea, and, for the first part of the 2nd November, light variable winds, with slight head swell. Towards noon of that date, the weather became overcast and cloudy, with a slight haze. No observations being obtained, the position by dead reckoning was assumed to be 24° 17' S. latitude, 48° 40' W. longitude, distance run by log, 194 miles.

The course was now changed to N. 69° E. by compass, and so continued to 3 a.m. of the 3rd November.

The weather from noon of the 2nd of November to 4 a.m. of the 3rd continued to be overcast and cloudy, with light variable winds, affording no opportunity for obtaining either solar or stellar observations to check the vessel's position, and in the opinion of the master the course he then set (at noon of the 2nd November) should have taken his vessel within the radius of Cape Frio light at about 11.30 p.m. of that date. Accordingly at that time, he came on deck to look out for the light, but failed to make it, although the weather was favourable for doing so, being clear but overcast, and the vessel had averaged nearly nine knots per hour by the patent log from the preceding noon.

Notwithstanding this, the same course was continued until 3 a.m. of the 3rd November, when the master came on deck and changed it to N. 50° E. by compass, and stated in his evidence "that he could not understand why Cape Frio light had not been seen, and concluded that his vessel had been set to the south-west of it, as he knew that there were strong currents off the Cape, but he did not judge that they would be so strong."

After changing the course as above, the master remained on deck until 4 a.m., when Cape Frio light still not being visible, he concluded that he was to

the east of it, not to the south-west, and left the deck, going down to his cabin, the weather being still clear but overcast. At 4.20 the master returned to the bridge for a few minutes, then again went below. He stated in his evidence "that his only cause for uneasiness at that time was to have a good fix to clear Cape Thomé." This was the next headland he would have to pass, and to which his present course would lead, assuming that he had cleared Cape Frio. Be that as it may, the master remained in his cabin until about 5 a.m., when he was called by the second officer on account of the vessel having run into a fog bank. The master immediately went on the bridge, and in a minute or two put the engines at half speed.

After the master had been on the bridge about four minutes, breakers were seen ahead at about two ships' lengths off.

The engines were put full speed astern and the helm hard-astern, but before the vessel's way could be taken off, she struck heavily, and remained fast on the rocks, about 1½ mile N.W. of Cape Frio.

Soon after the vessel grounded she made water rapidly, and the master, finding all efforts to move the vessel ineffectual, and that the pumps were unable to cope with the influx of water, gave orders for the boats to be lowered and sent the crew ashore in them, with the second officer, to Lloyd's signal station (close under which the vessel had stranded) for assistance.

The master, chief officer, and chief engineer remained on board till about noon of the same day, when, seeing that the vessel was breaking up and shewed signs of slipping off the reef into deep water, they also left her. A few minutes afterwards she slid off and foundered in about 8 fathoms of water.

No lives were lost, and the crew were in due course sent to the United Kingdom.

The loss of the vessel must be attributed solely to the default of the master in not using sufficient precautions when making a coasting voyage; in particular, his continuing at full speed and his neglect to use the lead, which in this case was of special importance, as, owing to his failure to obtain solar or stellar observations for some forty hours before the casualty, or to get a sight of the land, the position of his vessel was most uncertain for many hours before it actually occurred. The master also ignored the set of the currents in the vicinity of Cape Frio, although due warning of them is given in the sailing directions for this part of the coast.

On the conclusion of the evidence, the following questions were submitted by Mr. Asquith on behalf of the Board of Trade, 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) Were proper measures taken to ascertain and verify the position of the ship at or about 3.36 p.m. of the 31st October last, was a safe and proper course thereafter steered, and was due and proper allowance made for tide and currents?

(4) Were proper measures taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about noon of the 1st November last? Were safe and proper alterations made in the course at this time, at 0.20 p.m. of the 2nd, and 3 p.m. of the 3rd November last, and was due and proper allowance made for tide and currents?

(5) Having regard to the state of the weather after 4 a.m. of the 3rd November last—

(a) Was the vessel navigated at too great a rate of speed?

(b) Was the lead used; if not, should it have been used?

(6) Was a good and proper look-out kept?

(7) What was the cause of the stranding and loss of the vessel?

(8) Was the vessel navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

(9) Was the loss of the s.s. "Harlingen" caused by the wrongful act or default of the master and second officer, or of either of them?

Mr. Pritchard then addressed the Court on behalf of the master, and Mr. Asquith on behalf of the Board of Trade, and the Court returned the following answers to the questions:—

(1) There were three compasses. They were in good order, and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel. One was a standard compass above the wheelhouse; one was in the wheelhouse, by which the vessel was steered. These were both by Lord Kelvin. The third was in one of the lifeboats. They were last adjusted by Kelvin & White, Limited, of West Hartlepool, in September, 1905, soon after she was launched.

(2) The master did ascertain the deviation of his compasses by observation from time to time. The errors were correctly ascertained, and the proper corrections to the courses applied.

(3) Proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the ship at or about 3.36 p.m. on the 31st of October last. A safe and proper course was steered thereafter until noon of the 1st November. Due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents.

(4) Proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the ship at noon of the 1st of November. Safe and proper alterations were made in the course at that time, and, if it had been made good, at 0.20 p.m. of the 2nd of November. Due and proper allowance was not made for current.

At 3 a.m. of the 3rd November an improper alteration was made in the course, and due and proper allowance was not made for current.

(5) Having regard to the state of the weather after 4 a.m. of the 3rd of November last—

(a) The vessel was navigated at too great a rate of speed.

(b) The lead was not used, and it should have been used.

(6) A good and proper look-out was kept.

(7) The cause of the stranding and loss of the vessel was that the master set an improper course towards the land, and continued at full speed without taking any precaution to verify his position.

(8) The vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care.

(9) The loss of the s.s. "Harlingen" was caused by the default of the master and not by that of the second officer. And the Court suspends the master's certificate for three months.

R. H. B. MARSHAM,

Judge.

We concur.

A. RONALDSON,
W. H. SINCLAIR LOUTIT, } Assessors.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 12th day of February 1907.)

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