

(No. 7065.)

JEBBA (S.S.).

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

In the matter of a formal investigation held at the Magistrates' Room, Liverpool, on the 7th, 8th, and 9th days of May, 1907, before W. J. STEWART, Esq., assisted by Commander L. M. WIBMER, R.N.R., and Captain JENKIN THOMAS, into the circumstances attending the stranding and loss of the British s.s. "JEBBA," of London, which ran ashore near Bolt Tail, Devon, on 18th March, 1907.

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 stranding and loss of the said vessel were due to the default of the master, Mr. James John Cornish Mills, whose certificate, numbered 015332, the Court suspends for a period of three months from the date hereof.

Dated this 9th day of May, 1907.

W. J. STEWART,
Judge.

We concur in the above report,

L. M. WIBMER, } Assessors.
JENKIN THOMAS, }

Annex to the Report.

This inquiry was held in the Magistrates' Room, Dale Street, Liverpool, on the 7th, 8th, and 9th days of May, 1907, when Mr. Paxton, solicitor, appeared for the Board of Trade, Mr. W. Bateson for the owners, and Mr. A. Miller for the master, chief, and second officers.

The s.s. "Jebba," official number 109969, was a British screw steamship, schooner rigged, built of steel, by Sir Raylton Dixon & Co., at Middlesbrough, in 1896, and was registered at the port of London.

Her dimensions were:—Length, 352 feet; breadth, 44 feet; and depth, 23 feet. She was of 3812.55 gross, and 2438.86 net registered tonnage, and was fitted with triple expansion surface condensing engines of 253 nominal horse power, three cylinders 24 in., 43 in., and 72 in., with 48 in. length of stroke, all constructed by Messrs. J. Richardson & Sons, Hartlepool, giving a speed of 10 knots. She was owned by the African Steamship Company; Mr. E. B. Coarten, of 21, Great St. Helens, London, being the person to whom the management of the vessel was entrusted by advice received 7th September, 1898. She was fitted with steam steering gear, carried 3 lifeboats, 2 surf boats, and a gig capable of accommodating 263 persons, and, in addition to this, 212 life belts and 6 life buoys, all of which had been inspected by the surveyor appointed by the Board of Trade on 24th December last, and a short passenger certificate granted. Mr. Stevenson in his evidence was perfectly satisfied with the condition of the life-saving appliances. In regard to navigating instruments and compasses she was well equipped and observations to ascertain the deviation of the standard compass had been taken from time to time and were recorded in a book. She was fitted with Sir William Thomson's

patent sounding machine, the ordinary deep sea and hand lead, and a patent log. In the matter of charts and sailing directions for the British Channel she was also well found.

The s.s. "Jebba" left Las Palmas on 11th March, 1907, at 7.30 p.m., bound for Plymouth, under the command of Mr. J. J. C. Mills. She was loaded with a general cargo, and had a crew of 49 hands all told and 79 passengers. All went well till 17th March, when a position at noon was obtained by observations, and at 3 p.m. Ushant lighthouse was abeam distant 6½ miles as ascertained by a four-point bearing. At this time the course was altered to N.E. by standard compass, with 1° westerly deviation, and the patent log was reset. The master stated that he expected to make good this course, which would take him 9 miles east of the Eddystone lighthouse, and he expected to pick up the light about 12.30 a.m. During the night a strong S.W. wind, with misty weather, appears to have been experienced, and at 11.45 p.m. a cast of the patent log was taken, which gave 37 fathoms, with a fine sandy bottom. This being less than the master expected, he concluded that the vessel had travelled more than the 97½ miles registered on the patent log. After midnight the weather seems to have got thicker, and at 12.40 a.m. two steamers were passed steering down Channel, one of which was seen about a mile off. The second one was not visible, and only the steam whistle was heard. At 12.45 a.m. the whistle began to be used at irregular intervals, and the telegraph put at "Stand by," but the vessel continued at full speed till 12.55, when the engines were eased to half speed. At this time the patent log was taken and showed 106 miles, and a cast of the patent lead obtained, which showed 11 fathoms. The master at once gave an order to put the helm hard-a-port, and telegraphed the engines to slow. Shortly after breakers were reported ahead, and the engines reversed to full speed astern, but before this had any effect the vessel took the ground, with her head about S.E., and remained fast. Signals of distress were at once made, and eventually communication with the shore was established by means of the rocket apparatus and lines made fast to the rocks. All the passengers and crew reached the land in safety, but the vessel became a total loss.

There is some discrepancy in the evidence as to what occurred after the sounding of 11 fathoms had been obtained. On the one hand both the master and chief officer agreed that the helm was put hard-a-port, and remained so till the engines were put full-speed astern. On the other hand, the quartermaster, who was at the wheel, stated in his evidence that he received an order from the master to port, and shortly after was directed to steady the ship at E. by N. and that after this had been done he received instructions from the chief officer to bring the ship's head to east, which was done, and her head remained in that direction till she took the ground. After careful consideration, the Court is of opinion that the statement of the master and chief officer is most to be relied upon, and that the helm was put hard-a-port, as stated in their evidence. This opinion is strengthened by the fact that from the evidence produced it appears that when the ship grounded her head was in a south-easterly direction.

At the conclusion of the evidence, Mr. Paxton submitted the following questions for the opinion of the Court:—

(1) Were proper measures taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about 3 p.m. of the 17th March last? Was a safe and proper course then set and thereafter steered, and was due and proper allowance made for tide and currents?

(2) Were proper measures taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about 11.45 p.m. of the 17th March last, and from time to time thereafter?

(3) Having regard to the state of the weather after 11.45 p.m. of the 17th March last, was the vessel navigated at too great a rate of speed, and was the lead used with sufficient frequency?

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- (4) Was a good and proper look-out kept?
 (5) Was the Eddystone Light seen and the fog signal heard by those on board the ship before the stranding? If not, to what cause or causes can this be ascribed?
 (6) What was the cause of the stranding and loss of the vessel?
 (7) Was the vessel navigated with proper and seamanlike care?
 (8) Was the stranding and loss of the s.s. "Jebba" caused by the wrongful act or default of the master and chief officer, or of either of them?
 (9) What was the value of the vessel? What were the insurances effected, and how were they apportioned?

Mr. Miller having addressed the Court on behalf of the master, the Court gave judgment as above, and returned the following answers to the questions submitted by the Board of Trade:—

- (1) Safe and proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at 3 p.m. on the 17th March last, by a four-point bearing of Ushant lighthouse. A course was then set to pass 9° East of the Eddystone lighthouse, and the Court is of opinion that, under the circumstances of wind, weather, and the probable time of approaching close to the land, this course in the absence of a chain of soundings was not a safe and proper one. A course should have been steered directly for the Eddystone light. No allowance was made for tide or current.
 (2) Proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the ship at 11.45 p.m. on the 17th March by a cast of the lead, but after that time none were taken till too late to prevent the accident. Had soundings been taken more frequently the master would have been warned of his approach to the land in time to have avoided the casualty.

(3) The vessel was navigated at too great a rate of speed after 11.45 p.m. of the 17th March last, and the lead was not used with sufficient frequency.

(4) A good and proper look-out was kept.
 (5) The Eddystone light was not seen, nor was the fog signal heard by those on board the ship before the stranding, the causes being the state of the atmosphere, and the well-known uncertainty of sound signals.

(6) The cause of the stranding and loss of the s.s. "Jebba" was due to the vessel having over-run her distance, and the failure of the master to ascertain this by a proper use of his lead.

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

(8) The stranding and loss of the s.s. "Jebba" was caused by the wrongful act or default of the master only.

(9) The value of the vessel at the time of the accident was £32,500. She was valued for the purposes of insurance at £36,000. She was insured in outside policies for £30,600, the balance remaining at the owner's risk.

W. J. STEWART,
 Judge.

We concur in the above report.

L. M. WIBMER, } Assessors.
 J. THOMAS, }

Liverpool, 10th May, 1907.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 31st day of May, 1907.)

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