

(No. 6976.)

" R O N G A . "

The Shipping and Seamen Act, 1903.

Wrecks and Casualties.

(For Stipendiary Magistrates and Justices of the Peace.)

Colony of New Zealand, } REPORT on a Shipping Casualty to the " RONGA . " to wit.

To the Honourable the Minister of Marine, New Zealand.

I, the undersigned, Stipendiary Magistrate, having been on the 21st day of May, 1906, applied to by John Mills, Esquire, Collector of Customs at the Port of Lyttelton, for a formal investigation, pursuant to section 235 of " The Shipping and Seamen Act, 1903, " and other provisions of the said Act, respecting a shipping casualty to a certain British ship called the " Ronga, " of the Port of Lyttelton, on or about the 22nd day of April last, in Cook's Straits, did duly proceed with the said investigation, to wit, on the 30th day of May instant, and had before me, and examined on oath, divers persons and witnesses, to wit :—

- Thomas Hindmarsh Ker ; Thomas Major Lane ; William John Paine ; Stewart Willis Claude Ferrier ; Malcolm Miller ; Rudolf Andersen ; Charles Green ; William Laird Whitby ; and Frederick William Cox ;

the original depositions of whose evidence are hereunto annexed, signed by me, being assisted therein by Daniel McKenzie, holding a certificate of competency, No. 863, from the Marine Department, New Zealand, and Patrick McConville, holding a certificate of competency, No. 5010, from the Marine Department, New Zealand, who were duly appointed to act as assessors ; and, upon such investigation and examination of witnesses as aforesaid, I find and report as follows, that is to say,—

- 1. That the official number of the said ship called the " Ronga, " is 76076, of which Edward Otto Peterson was master, who held a certificate of competency, No. 5391, issued by the Marine Department, Wellington, and which ship belonged to Thomas Hindmarsh Ker, of Christchurch, shipowner, and Jessie Brownlee, of Havelock, spinster. 2. That the loss or damage herein more particularly mentioned happened on or about the 22nd day of April, 1906, at about unknown o'clock in the Cook's Straits at unknown place. 3. That the loss or damage appears by the evidence to have been caused by the vessel capsizing in a gale of wind. 4. That the nature of the loss or damage done was partial. That the vessel was insured for £1000 in the New Zealand Insurance Company. That the " Ronga " was schooner rigged. Her port of registry is Lyttelton ; her registered tonnage is 92.91. That six lives were lost through the casualty.

In the matter of a formal investigation held at Lyttelton on the 30th day of May, 1906, before me, assisted by Daniel McKenzie and Patrick McConville, into the circumstances attending the loss of the

* Not printed.

schooner " Ronga, " 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 said vessel was capsized in Cook's Straits, but that there is no evidence as to the cause of such casualty.

Dated this 5th day of June, 1906.

(Signed) H. W. BISHOP, S.M.

I concur in the above report.

(Signed) P. MCCONVILLE, Assessor.

I concur in the above report.

(Signed) DAN. MCKENZIE, Assessor.

Annex to the Report.

The " Ronga " left the port of Lyttelton, bound for Havelock, about noon on Saturday, 21st April, 1906. She was in ballast, having some 33 tons of loose coal on board. This coal was well trimmed, but no shifting boards had been used. When she left Lyttelton it was blowing a southerly gale, and this increased considerably towards evening. The vessel probably arrived off Cape Campbell shortly before midnight on the same day, and was then capsized by the violence of the wind and sea. It would appear that when she capsized she had all sails set. She was picked up on the 26th April, bottom up, and, after being righted, was towed to Wellington, where she now lies. It is quite impossible with any degree of certainty, in the absence of direct evidence, to state the cause of the disaster. The " Ronga " had been capsized on two previous occasions, but after the last occasion, her masts had been shortened, and her sail area considerably reduced. She was then considered by competent authority to be thoroughly safe and seaworthy, if sufficiently ballasted, and that ballast properly secured. She is stated to have been sufficiently ballasted with 33 tons of coal on board. As the result of the present inquiry, I desire to direct the special attention of the Hon. Minister of Marine to the evidence herein, with a view to consider whether it does not indicate the necessity for regulations providing for some supervision of vessels of the type of the " Ronga, " so as to ascertain their stability and seaworthiness and sail carrying capacity, before they are allowed to proceed to sea. The Assessors do not consider that such regulations are necessary, and they are of opinion that they would tend too much to hamper trade. They, however, unanimously agree with me in the opinion that the use of shifting boards should be made compulsory in the case of such vessels when carrying loose ballast.

(Signed) H. W. BISHOP, S.M.

A true copy.

GEORGE ALLPORT, Secretary, Marine Department, Wellington.

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