

(No. 6991.)

"PRINCESS VICTORIA" (S.S.)

AND

"CHEHALIS" (Tug).

In the matter of a formal investigation into the causes which led to the collision between the steamer "PRINCESS VICTORIA" and the tug "CHEHALIS," in the Narrows, Burrard Inlet, British Columbia, on the 21st of July, 1906, held pursuant to the provisions of the Shipping Casualties Act, 1901, and amendments thereto, at the City of Vancouver, on the 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 28th, 29th, 30th, and 31st of August, 1906, before the Honourable Mr. Justice MORRISON, Deputy Local Judge in Admiralty, Commissioner, and Captain A. T. HUNT, R.N., and Captain J. G. COX, Assessors

The Court, upon the termination of an exhaustive enquiry, and after affording the officers of both vessels full opportunity of defence, finds as follows:— That the tug "Chehalis" a low-powered vessel, making about eight knots, length 59.3 ft.; beam 13 ft.; depth 6.5 ft.; freeboard about 2 ft.; gross tonnage 54, and certified to carry fifteen passengers; owners, the Union S.S. Company of Vancouver; master, Captain House, whilst chartered to convey eight passengers to a point on the north coast of British Columbia, departed outbound from North Vancouver at 1.55 p.m., Saturday, July 21st, 1906, taking and maintaining the usual course followed by craft of her dimensions outbound from North Vancouver. The master in charge of the "Chehalis" holds a certificate of competency as master of a passenger steamer in the coasting trade. She was duly inspected.

That the "Princess Victoria" is a 21 knot twin-screw passenger boat of 6000 h.p., owner, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, plying between Vancouver, Victoria and Seattle, U.S.A., master, Captain Griffin. Her dimensions are: Length 300 ft.; breadth, 42.6 ft.; depth, 17.6 ft. She is fitted with steam steering gear; telegraph having an automatic tell-tale on each side. She had been duly inspected. Her life-saving apparatus, boats and other equipments in best of condition and order, and in accordance with the rules and regulations. The captain and other officers had been fully notified and instructed in writing by the owners, to observe the greatest caution as against accidents, and to subordinate the running schedule, and the making up of time, to the safety of the ship and passengers. She took her departure outbound at 2.02 p.m., from her berth at shed No. 1, at the company's wharves, Vancouver, carrying 219 passengers. The full-speed bell was rung at 2.06; the full-speed astern bell rung at 2.11½; engines stopped at 2.13. The day was fine and clear with a light westerly breeze. There was unobstructed view of the north shore of the harbour, and of the harbour between Brockton point and North Vancouver, along which the "Chehalis" was shaping her course. Both vessels were making for the Narrows, the "Chehalis" being in full view of the "Princess Victoria" and ahead of her and well to starboard.

Proceeding around Brockton point outbound ahead of the "Princess Victoria" and on her port bow, was a small gasoline launch.

The master of the "Princess Victoria" noticing the "Chehalis" shortly after leaving the wharf, and before reaching the buoy on Burnaby shoal, erroneously

made up his mind that, as she was apparently steering down the Narrows and appeared sufficiently far over on the north side, he need not take any more notice of her as he intended to pass close round Brockton point and keep along the south shore of the Narrows, heading inside Prospect point. It appears that the motor launch on the port bow was not noticed by the officers in the pilot house of the "Princess Victoria" until the helm was put to starboard to round Brockton point, and then their attention was rivetted on the launch and the "Chehalis" was forgotten. The helm of the "Princess Victoria" was steadied sooner than was intended so as to clear the launch, and when this was accomplished by a narrow margin, the "Princess Victoria" was heading probably straight through the Narrows, but no doubt swerving a little before steadying down on her new course; at this moment, the "Chehalis" was suddenly found to be within a ship's length and apparently crossing the bows of the "Princess Victoria." She may have swerved in her course by use of her helm or otherwise, or the "Princess Victoria" may have done so in the act of steadying; anyhow, it was suddenly discovered by the "Princess Victoria" that a collision was extremely probable, and two blasts were blown which should have indicated a use of starboard helm, whereas, the engines were put full astern instead, and the helm kept amidships. The collision took place apparently within thirty seconds of the "Chehalis" being, as it were, re-discovered by the party in the pilot house of the "Princess Victoria." Both vessels were on the wrong side of the channel, but the "Chehalis" was steering, more or less, the only practical course for a vessel of her power, that is, she was gradually edging over from the eddy, on the north side, to the eddy on the south side of the Narrows. Being the overtaken ship, she would have every reason to believe that the "Princess Victoria" would, even at the last moment, pass under her stern, especially knowing what a handy vessel she was. When the collision appeared very probable, at the time the two whistles were blown, the "Chehalis" did her best to minimise the danger by putting her helm hard-a-port; and it would appear that had the "Princess Victoria," at this moment, put her helm hard over one way or the other, or put one screw only full astern, the collision would not have occurred. The causes which led to the "Chehalis" getting into such close proximity to the "Princess Victoria" are as follows, but these causes were not allowed for by the "Princess Victoria," though the "Princess Victoria" should have known of them and their effect:—

The "Princess Victoria," on passing the Burnaby Shoal, was passing 15 knots over the ground, the "Chehalis" on her starboard bow was making about 3 knots over the land, and about 3 points leeway, that is, 30 to 40 degrees to port of the direction of her head. This, the "Chehalis" continued roughly to do from the time she was originally sighted until immediately before the collision, the "Princess Victoria" taking it for granted that the "Chehalis" was making in the direction she was pointing. Had the "Princess Victoria" continued to make 15 knots over the land, she would have easily passed ahead of the "Chehalis," but on turning into a 6 knot tide on her port bow, she was not only set slightly over bodily towards the "Chehalis," but also suffered a loss of speed compared with the "Chehalis" of about 7 knots (six being due to current and one to helm). This would, at once, alter the aspect, and would prevent the "Princess Victoria" passing ahead of the "Chehalis." When this fact should have become patent, the whole attention of the "Princess Victoria" was taken up with the motor launch, and the party in the pilot house, on suddenly seeing the "Chehalis" so close, and apparently crossing their bows, imagined she must have suddenly altered course considerably. Whether she did or not, the fact remains that the two smaller boats were converging on one another, and the "Princess Victoria," an overtaking vessel, tried to cut in between them and failed, when there was no reason why she should not have gone under the stern of the "Chehalis,"

having two-thirds of the channel clear, and she would be on the proper side of it in case of getting another ship.

The main causes of the collision were the disregard of the motor launch until it was dangerously close, and the forgetfulness for probably a vital minute on the part of those navigating the "Princess Victoria" that the "Chehalis" existed. Even were the "Chehalis," as contended, undermanned, it did not in any way contribute to the collision.

In the collision which occurred, both vessels came together with a slight impact, the "Princess Victoria's" starboard bow coming in contact with the "Chehalis" about 18 ft. from the stern, the latter careening to starboard, and completely turning over, whilst lying across the "Princess Victoria's" bows, and then sinking. Of the 14 persons on board the "Chehalis," six were rescued. Apparently, the remainder were unable to extricate themselves, and went down with her.

The hull of the "Chehalis" has not yet been located, nor any of the bodies recovered.

The Court, therefore, has come to the conclusion that the collision between the "Princess Victoria" and the tug "Chehalis" on the 21st of July last, was caused solely by the want of care in the navigating of the "Princess Victoria" under the command of Captain Griffin. We find that Captain Griffin displayed ignorance of Article 28 of the Collision Regulations. We also find that every proper care was taken after the collision, on the part of the officers of the "Princess Victoria," to rescue survivors.

The Court is of the opinion that the time has now come when special regulations should be put in force, governing the passing of vessels in and out of the Narrows, at the entrance of the harbour of Vancouver; and it recommends that a commission be appointed to frame regulations to guard against accidents which are bound to occur in the future, owing to the dangerous nature of the Narrows, and the great increase of shipping, especially, as regards small craft, which, at present, have equal rights with large vessels.

The Court suspends the Board of Trade certificate, No. 08770, of Captain Thomas Ormond Griffin, dated May 31st, 1884, for a period of six months from the 21st of July, 1906.

The costs, in regard to the subpoenaing of witnesses and other costs, will follow the event, subject to any decision the Minister may be pleased to come to, in respect thereof.

(Signed) AULAY MORRISON,
Commissioner.

We concur.

(Signed) A. T. HUNT, } Assessors.
JOHN G. COX, }

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the
16th day of October, 1906.)

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