

(No. 7198.)

"GRENADIER" (S.S.).

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

In the matter of a Formal Investigation held at the Moot Hall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on the 18th, 19th, and 21st days of September, 1908, before WILLIAM COWELL and RICHARD OLIVER HESLOP, Esquires, two of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace acting in and for the City and County of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, assisted by Captains A. WOOD and OWEN R. MITCHELL (Nautical Assessors), into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship "GRENADIER," of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on a reef off Langeoog Island, on the 20th day of July, 1908.

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 of the vessel, whereby she sustained serious and material damage, was due to her making a southerly course and the master mistaking the Norderney light vessel light for the Heligoland light, and neglecting to use the lead to ascertain and verify the vessel's position. The Court finds the master, Thomas Ridley Howe, in default, and hereby suspends his certificate, No. 103554, for the period of six months from the date hereof.

Dated this 21st day of September, 1908.

WM. COWELL, } Judges.
R. OLIVER HESLOP, }

We concur in the above report.

A. WOOD, } Assessors.
OWEN R. MITCHELL, }

Annex to the Report.

This was an inquiry into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship "Grenadier," of Newcastle, and was held at the Moot Hall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on 18th, 19th and 21st days of September, 1908, before W. Cowell and R. O. Heslop, Esquires, assisted by Captains A. Wood and O. R. Mitchell (nautical assessors).

Mr. Burton appeared for the Board of Trade, Mr. Dixon Jacks represented the master, and Mr. Middleton watched the case on behalf of the owners, but did not take part in the proceedings.

The "Grenadier" (Official Number 104282) was a steel screw steamship, built at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the year 1895 by Messrs. Wigham, Richardson, & Co., Limited. She was schooner-rigged and of the following dimensions:—Length 240 feet; breadth 30.2 feet; and depth in hold 14.75 feet; and was of 1004.25 gross and 591.31 net registered tonnage. She was fitted with triple-expansion engines of 165 n.h.p., constructed by Messrs. Wigham, Richardson, & Co., Limited, at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the year 1895. She was owned by the Tyne Tees Steam Shipping Company, Limited, Mr. Richard Welford, of 25, King Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, having been appointed manager on the 18th March, 1904. She was, on the

voyage in question, in good condition and well found, and carried the lifeboats and other life-saving appliances in accordance with the Act. A passenger certificate, dated 13th May, 1908, was issued by the Board of Trade, under which she was certified to carry 133 passengers.

She was supplied with a blue-back chart for the North Sea, published by Messrs. Imray, Laurie, Norie, and Wilson, Limited, in 1908, and sailing directions for the North Sea for 1904. There was also a list of lights on board, and the master was familiar both with Heligoland light and with the light on Norderney light vessel, having seen these lights on previous voyages.

The vessel had three compasses, which were adjusted on the 30th of May last, and are particularly described in the answers to the questions.

The "Grenadier" left the Tyne on the 18th of July last, bound for Hamburg, with a crew of 22 hands all told, under the command of Mr. T. R. Howe, who held a master's certificate for home trade passenger ships, numbered 103554.

The chief officer had a master's certificate, but the seaman, Edward Hutchinson, who was doing second officer's duty, was uncertificated. There were 12 passengers on board and 285 tons of general cargo, the vessel's draught being 11 feet forward and 17 feet 9 inches aft.

At 5.10 p.m. on the 18th of July last the "Grenadier" passed the Tyne pier-heads, a course S.E. by E. $\frac{3}{4}$ E. being then set for Heligoland by the standard compass, which stood on the upper bridge in front of the wheel. The deviation-card, which was produced and stated by the master to have been always found correct, showed that there was practically no deviation on this compass on any course. The patent log (a harpoon-log) was streamed as the vessel passed out of the river, and the engines were put at full-speed, the vessel making from 11 to 12 knots through the water. The wind was strong from the northwards, and there was a considerable amount of sea on the port beam.

At 3.40 a.m. of the 19th the fan engine eccentric rod broke and the slide rod got bent, and, while these defects were being made good, the speed of the vessel was somewhat reduced till 8 a.m., when the engines were again going full-speed.

At noon on the 19th the patent log registered 196 miles, and the master stated that the latitude he obtained from a meridian altitude of the sun was 54° 27' N. At 2 p.m. the course was altered from S.E. by E. $\frac{3}{4}$ E. to E.S.E. (magnetic), the wind then being N.N.E., with slightly hazy weather and beam sea.

About 10.45 p.m. a light was sighted, bearing E. $\frac{1}{2}$ S., being 1½ points on the port bow. This light came suddenly in sight and was seen independently about the same time by the master on deck and the chief officer, man on look-out and helmsman, who were all on the upper-bridge.

The master stated he made this light out to be Heligoland light and that the chief officer confirmed him in this opinion. On the other hand, the chief officer stated that, though when he first saw it he might have admitted that it was Heligoland, nevertheless when he counted the flashes he could see it was Norderney light ship, and that he repeatedly expressed this opinion to the master, who answered him "brusquely" that it was Heligoland. The master denied this, and said that the chief officer never made the slightest suggestion to him that the light was any other than Heligoland. The man on the look-out and the helmsman, who stated that they could generally hear the conversation between the master and officer of the watch, both said that on this occasion they heard no dispute about the lights. The Court accepts the master's version, and is of opinion that had the chief officer strongly represented to the master that he was mistaken in the light and had been answered as suggested, these men would have heard the conversation.

The man at the wheel, who was a very intelligent witness, stated that the light he saw was a "three flash light." Why the master and chief officer should

have mistaken this light for Heligoland the Court is at a loss to know. As described in the Admiralty List of Lights, Part II, the light on Norderney Light Vessel "shows groups of three flashes every fifteen seconds, thus:—

Flash, a quarter of a second; eclipse $3\frac{1}{2}$ seconds;
flash, a quarter of a second; eclipse $3\frac{1}{2}$ seconds;
flash, a quarter of a second; eclipse $7\frac{1}{4}$ seconds."

This light is exhibited 52 feet above sea level and is visible in clear weather 13 miles.

The light on Heligoland is placed 269 feet above high water mark, is visible in clear weather to a distance of 23 miles and shows a bright flash one tenth-of-a-second in duration every five seconds.

The chief officer's subsequent conduct is not in accordance with his statement that he was aware of the dangerous course the vessel was on and had pressed this fact on the master's notice. When relieved by the second officer, he does not appear to have said anything to him about the master mistaking the lights, and after he left the bridge he went below, took off his clothes, and retired to rest. If he really believed the vessel was running into danger this was a most reprehensible part for the chief officer of a vessel to play, and was aggravated in this case by the circumstance that there were passengers on board.

The course E.S.E. was continued till 11.40 p.m. when the vessel being abreast of Norderney light vessel, it was altered to S.E. by E. and continued till midnight, being then changed to S.E. The weather is described as being hazy with light rain, but it could not have been very thick as the light on Norderney light vessel had been sighted at about its full range. The course S.E. was continued and the engines kept at "full speed" till about 1 a.m. on the 20th, when the vessel ran aground. The engines were reversed but without effect, and they were subsequently worked ahead and astern. The vessel was striking the ground heavily, and, shortly after stranding, the fan engine broke down, the water service pipes got choked up with sand, and the main bearings became hot. At about 2 a.m., the rudder and propeller were carried away, thus rendering the engines useless. The port anchor was let go and all the cable veered out when it parted at the hawse-pipe. The starboard anchor was then let go with like result. Signals of distress were made, in response to which three lifeboats arrived from the shore. The passengers all left the vessel and were landed at Spikeroog Island. The crew remained by the "Grenadier" till 7 p.m., when the engineers and firemen landed from the vessel, but returned on board on the 22nd. Lighters were brought off and part of the cargo was discharged into them. On the 29th the vessel floated and was towed by two salvage boats to Spikeroog roads, where the remainder of the cargo was discharged. The "Grenadier" was then towed to Hamburg where temporary repairs were effected, after which she was brought to Hartlepool and fully repaired. The vessel had received very serious and material damage, but no lives were lost.

It has to be noted that when the light which the master mistook for Heligoland was sighted at 10.45 p.m. on the 19th, a single cast of the lead would have clearly shown the mistake that was being made.

Even had the light passed by the "Grenadier" been that on Heligoland, the distance run from 11.40 p.m. to 1 a.m. and the course steered would have put the vessel ashore at the mouth of the Elbe. Although no light corresponding to that on the Elbe light ship was sighted, the "Grenadier" was kept going full-speed after passing the position in which the master in his error should have expected to have found it had he properly considered the matter.

A most unsatisfactory feature in this case is a false entry made by the master's orders both in the chief officer's and engineer's log books under date 20th July, 1908. In the chief officer's the entry is as follows:—"0.50 a.m., stopped engines and took a cast of the lead, $4\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms water was reported." In the engineer's log is entered:—"12.50 a.m., stopped for soundings."

The chief officer and the chief engineer were off duty at the time this sounding was said to have been taken and made the entries in question on information supplied by the master. These entries are declared to be false by the second officer, who was on the bridge at the time, and by the donkeyman, Thomas Davidson, who was in charge of the engine-room.

They both stated that the engines were not stopped, but continued at full-speed till after the vessel stranded. The master, however, swore that he was on the bridge and that he stopped the engines, and ordered the second officer to take a cast of the lead, that he did so, and reported to him (the master) that there was $4\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms. The second officer stated in evidence that this was not done. He admitted that he had agreed to a statement, which was read over to him by the authorities in Hamburg, that this sounding was taken before the vessel grounded. He had been led to agree to this as it was only part of a general statement that had been made up from the log books, the greater part of which was correct, and that when he arrived in this country he made his statement to the authorities agree with what he had deposed to in Hamburg, but it was not true that the engines were stopped and $4\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms got before the vessel stranded.

The Court from all the evidence on the subject came to the conclusion that the master did not speak the truth with regard to stopping the engines, and getting a sounding of $4\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms before the vessel stranded.

The conduct of all concerned in this transaction is most reprehensible and deserving of the severest condemnation, and altogether there appears to have been an entire lack of discipline and esprit-de-corps among the officers of the vessel.

At the conclusion of the evidence the following questions were submitted on behalf of the Board of Trade, Mr. Jacks addressed the Court for his client and Mr. Burton replied.

- (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) Was the vessel supplied with proper and sufficient charts and sailing directions and list of lights?
- (4) Was a safe and proper course set and steered after the vessel left the river Tyne at or about 6.20 p.m. on the 18th July last and was due and proper allowance made for tides and currents?
- (5) Were proper measures taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about noon of the 19th July last, were safe and proper alterations thereafter made in the course, and was due and proper allowance made for tides and currents?
- (6) What was the light sighted at or about 11 p.m. of the 19th July last? Was the master justified in taking it for Heligoland light?
- (7) Having regard to the state of the weather after 11 p.m. of the 19th July last
 - (a) was the vessel navigated at too great a rate of speed?
 - (b) was the lead used with sufficient frequency and accuracy?
- (8) Was a good and proper look-out kept?
- (9) What was the cause of the stranding of the vessel and was she seriously damaged thereby?
- (10) Was the vessel navigated with proper and seamanlike care?
- (11) Was serious damage to the s.s. "Grenadier" caused by the wrongful act or default of the master?

To which the Court replied as follows:—

- (1) The vessel had three compasses, viz., a standard compass placed before the wheel on the upper bridge by which the courses were set and the vessel steered, a pole compass which was also on the bridge, and a third placed aft. They were in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel, and were last adjusted off the Tyne on the 30th May last by James Morton, compass adjuster, of South Shields.
- (2) The master, who was engaged in the home trade only, stated he did not ascertain the deviation of his compasses by observation from time to time; but he found from the bearings of shore-lights when entering port that his deviation-cards were correct. The deviation-card for the standard compass which

was produced in Court showed that there was practically no deviation on any course, consequently no corrections were necessary.

(3) The vessel was supplied with proper and sufficient charts, sailing-directions, and list of lights.

(4) A safe and proper course, viz., S.E. by E. $\frac{3}{4}$ E. (magnetic) was set and steered after the vessel left the river Tyne at or about 6.20 p.m. on the 18th July last, but no allowance was made for tides and currents.

(5) Proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about noon of the 19th July last when she was found by a meridian altitude of the sun to be a little to the south of her course. At 2 p.m. the course was altered to E.S.E. (magnetic) and continued to 11.40 p.m. This alteration was safe and proper assuming the vessel's position at noon was correctly given. The alterations made in the course after Norderney Light Ship was sighted were not safe and proper. Proper allowance was not made for tides and currents.

(6) The light sighted at or about 11 p.m. of the 19th July last was the Norderney Light Ship. The master was not justified in taking it for Heligoland light.

(7) Having regard to the state of the weather after 11 p.m. on the 19th July last:—

(a) The vessel was navigated at too great a rate of speed, which should have been reduced when the Elbe light did not appear as it should have done had the light passed at 11.40 p.m. been Heligoland light as assumed by the master.

(b) The lead was not used at all. It should have been used on the master failing to make the Elbe light as mentioned in the last paragraph.

(8) A good and proper look-out appears to have been kept.

(9) The cause of the stranding was the vessel making a southerly course and the master mistaking the Norderney Light Ship light for the Heligoland light and neglecting to use the lead to ascertain and verify the vessel's position.

The vessel sustained serious and material damage.

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

(11) The serious damage to the vessel was caused by the wrongful act and default of the master, Thomas Bidley Howe, and the Court hereby suspends his certificate No. 103554 for the period of six months from the date hereof.

WM. COWELL,
R. OLIVER HESLOP, } Justices.

We concur.

A. WOOD,
OWEN R. MITCHELL, } Assessors.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the
23rd day of October, 1908.)