

(No. 7239.)

"IRADA" (S.S.).

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

IN the matter of a Formal Investigation held at the Magistrate's Room, Dale Street, Liverpool, on the 26th, 27th, and 28th days of January, before THOMAS SHEPHERD LITTLE, Stipendiary Magistrate for Liverpool, assisted by Vice-Admiral C. R. ARBUTHNOT, Commander G. K. WRIGHT, R.N.R., and Commander F. C. LYON, R.N.R., into the circumstances attending the loss of the s.s. "IRADA" on or near the south-west point of Mizen Head, on or about the 22nd of December last, whereby loss of life ensued.

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 proper measures were not taken to verify the position after the Bull Light was sighted; consequently too fine a course was then set, and was thereafter steered.

Dated this 28th day of January, 1909.

THOMAS SHEPHERD LITTLE, Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

CHARLES R. ARBUTHNOT, } Assessors.
GEORGE K. WRIGHT,
F. C. A. LYON,

Annex to the Report.

This inquiry was held in the Magistrate's Room, Dale Street, Liverpool, on the 26th, 27th, and 28th days of January, 1909, when Mr. Paxton appeared for the Board of Trade, Mr. Wimshurst represented the owners, and Mr. A. Inman watched the case on behalf of the widow of the master.

The "Irada," Official Number 113376, was a British twin-screw steamship, built of steel by Messrs. Workman, Clark & Co., Limited, of Belfast, in 1900, and registered at the Port of Liverpool. She had three decks, four masts, was schooner-rigged, and had a double bottom, eight bulkheads, and 11 water-ballast tanks of a capacity of 2380 tons. Her length from stem to stern was 501 feet, her main breadth 59.3 feet, and her depth of hold, from upper deck to ceiling, 33 feet. She was fitted with two complete sets of inverted direct-acting triple-expansion engines, made by Messrs. Workman, Clark & Co., Limited, Belfast, in 1900, of 900 nominal horse power, and giving a speed of 13 knots. Her gross tonnage was 8124.23 tons, and her registered tonnage 5334.07 tons, and she was owned by the Irada Steamship Company, Limited, Mr. James Hugh Welsford, of 17, Water Street, Liverpool, being designated as the person to whom the management of the vessel was entrusted by, and on behalf of, the owners, by advice received 29th August, 1900, under the seal of the Irada Steamship Company, Limited.

She was fitted with four lifeboats, of an aggregate capacity of 1620 cubic feet, and capable of accommodating 160 persons; also two other boats, of the aggregate capacity of 408 cubic feet, and capable of accommodating 40 persons. She had 105 life belts and 6 life buoys, and other equipments, distress signals, &c., according to the Board of Trade requirements.

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The "Irada" left Galveston for Liverpool on 5th December, commanded by A. W. Roberts, who held a master's certificate, No. 06873, having a crew of 69 hands all told (including the stewardess) and no passengers. She was laden with a cargo of 4750 tons of cotton and 3937 pipe staves.

Owing to the death of the master and the loss of the log-book, charts, &c., the Court desires to point out that the following account of what took place prior to the stranding of the "Irada" is based mainly on the evidence of the chief officer and other witnesses.

It is unnecessary to relate anything which occurred up to December 21st. On that day, owing to the state of the weather, no observations were obtained, and the position of the ship was fixed by dead reckoning only. What that position was the chief officer could not recollect, but he stated that the course then set was S. 63° E. by compass, which would be S. 65° E. magnetic, on which course it was estimated the "Irada" should make the Fastnet Light ahead, passing the Bull Light about 17 miles off. This, however, would not be so, as a S. 65° E. course to the Fastnet Light would only take the ship about 9 1/2 miles off Bull Light when abeam. At 10.10 p.m. the Bull Light was sighted N. 58° E. magnetic, and a sounding was taken, which gave no bottom at 70 fathoms, from which the master appears to have inferred his distance from that light to have been at least 10 miles. In the light of subsequent events it would appear that he must have been mistaken in this inference. Unfortunately it does not appear that he took any other measures to verify his position.

At about 10.15 p.m. the course was altered to S. 56° E. (compass) which would be S. 57 1/2° E. magnetic, and this course was steered until immediately before the "Irada" struck. The weather was misty with drizzling rain, the wind S.S.W. (force 6), with a high sea, and the Bull Light was lost sight of about 2 points abaft the beam without any bearing having been obtained from which to take a safe course. A look-out was kept for the Fastnet Light, but the evidence is that it was not sighted, although the ship must have been within its range for nearly an hour before she struck. At 11.45 p.m. the ship's clock was put on 28 minutes, and at 12.25 a.m., by the new time, the master gave orders that another cast of the lead should be taken, but this order was not obeyed owing to the stranding of the "Irada." From midnight J. Feeney, A.B., was on the look-out in the crow's nest, and at about 12.25 a.m. he saw breakers ahead which he reported. Then he saw the land and again reported. On this the master gave orders to port 3 points, and immediately afterwards said "Let her come to South." The engines were put to slow and then ordered to full speed astern, but whilst this order was being carried out the ship struck. The boats were got out and lowered to the rail, but it was found impracticable to put them in the water owing to the heavy sea that was breaking against the vessel on the weather side, and to the large amount of cotton that was washing about on the lee side. Distress rockets were fired and blue lights burnt; the light of the latter materially assisting most of the crew to get on shore. Some of the men climbed on to the rocks from abreast of No. 2 hatch, and the chief engineer afterwards threw a rope to them, which was secured to a rock about 70 feet up the cliff, by means of which others of the crew swung themselves on shore. The chief engineer made another rope fast round the stewardess and threw it to some of the men already on shore, so that they might pull her up, but, unfortunately, just at this moment the ship gave a heavy lurch, the rope was dragged out of the men's hands and both the chief engineer and the stewardess fell on the deck. The chief engineer made further attempts to save the stewardess, but she was jammed between the bulwarks and the rigging, where she was apparently drowned in about 2 feet of water.

The boatswain and several others of the crew got on shore by climbing up the foremast which was resting against the rocks, the master and one man were attempting to follow, but the mast broke and they did not succeed in getting on shore. The other hands lost, appear to have been washed overboard by seas breaking over the wreck. The master did his utmost to save the lives of the crew, and was the last to quit the deck. The 2nd officer and another hand got into the port lifeboat and remained in her throughout the night, and although she had her bottom knocked out she remained afloat under the lee of the wreck. At daylight, some men employed in the

erection of the new fog station on the top of the cliff, appear to have noticed some of the wreckage in the water. They looked over the edge of the cliff and discovered the survivors below, and, by the aid of ropes, hauled them up the cliff from the ledge. Had it not been for the presence of these men it is doubtful if any would have escaped, as, at this point, the cliffs are so steep that it would not have been possible for the survivors to have climbed from the ledge to the top without assistance.

The following is a list of the members of the crew who lost their lives in consequence of the stranding of the vessel :—

A. W. Roberts	...	...	...	Master.
Michael Connell	...	...	...	A.B.
Lawrence Mathews	...	...	...	A.B.
Frederick Deacon or Deakin	...	...	...	Seaman.
G. Fletcher	...	...	...	Trimmer.
J. Maxwell	...	...	...	Stewardess.

At the conclusion of the evidence, Mr. Paxton, on behalf of the Board of Trade, submitted the following questions 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) Were the deviations of the compasses ascertained 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?

(4) Were proper measures taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel when abeam of the Bull Light at or about 10.32 p.m. on the 21st December last, was a safe and proper course thereafter steered and was due and proper allowance made for tide, currents, wind, and sea?

(5) Having regard to the state of the weather after 10.32 p.m. on the 21st December 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 and what were the circumstances in which six lives were lost?

The Court returned the following answers to the questions of the Board of Trade :—

(1) The vessel had three compasses—one of Lord Kelvin's patent on the bridge by which the course was set and the vessel steered, and two spirit compasses, one in the chart house and one aft. They were in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel. They were last adjusted on August 18th, 1908, by Messrs. John Bruce & Sons, 60, South Castle Street, Liverpool.

(2) The deviations of the compass were ascertained by observation from time to time, the errors were correctly ascertained, and the proper corrections to the courses applied.

(3) Yes, the vessel was supplied with proper and sufficient charts and sailing directions.

(4) Proper measures were not taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel when abeam of the Bull Light at or about 10.32 p.m. on the 21st December last. A safe and proper course was not steered thereafter. There is no evidence that any allowance was made for tide, currents, wind, and sea, or that the question of making such allowance had been considered.

(5) Having regard to the state of the weather after 10.30 p.m. on the 21st December last

(a) the vessel was not navigated at too great a rate of speed.

(b) the lead was not used and it certainly should have been.

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

(7) The cause of the stranding and loss of the vessel was that proper measures were not taken to verify the position of the vessel after the Bull Light was sighted; consequently too fine a course was then set and thereafter steered, despite the fact that, owing to the state of the weather, the Fastnet Light had not been sighted, although the vessel was 10 miles within its range before she struck, and, in addition, no soundings had been taken after passing Bull Light to verify the distance from the land. Owing to the darkness of the night and the heavy sea that was breaking over the vessel, which made it impossible to lower the boats, and the short time that elapsed between the stranding and breaking up of the ship, it is surprising that so few lives were lost. The survivors were saved by scrambling on to the rocks, most of them with the aid of a rope which was thrown ashore by the chief engineer to some of the crew, who made it fast to the cliff.

The captain, who unfortunately lost his life, remained on board, doing all in his power to save the lives of the crew when he might have saved his own had he left the wreck earlier.

Great credit is due to the chief engineer, Mr. Alexander Hay, for the efforts he made to save the life of the stewardess, which, however, unfortunately were not successful.

If it had not been for the fact that men were working at the new fog signal station on the top of the cliff and saw the wreck in the morning, it is doubtful if any of the crew would have survived, as it would have been impossible for them to have scaled the cliffs at this point unaided.

THOMAS SHEPHERD LITTLE,
Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

CHARLES R. ARBUTHNOT,
GEORGE K. WRIGHT,
F. C. A. LYON, } Assessors.

Liverpool, 30th January, 1909.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 19th day of February, 1909.)