

(No. 7187.)

"VICTORIA" (S.S.).

AND

"DON MATIAS" (S.S.).

FINDING and order of a Naval Court held at Talcahuano, Chile, on 24th and 25th days of July, 1908, to enquire into the collision between the steamer "VICTORIA," Official Number 115316, of Liverpool, and the Chilean steamer "DON MATIAS," of Lota.

It appears that the steamer "Victoria," owned by Messrs. The Pacific Steam Navigation Company, Liverpool, and under the command of Captain E. Thos. Lee, O.C. 020653, sailed from Coronel on the 23rd day of this month of July, about 11.50 a.m., bound direct to Penco, with part cargo, her total crew amounting to 110 men all told, including the master; that there were no passengers on board, and that she appears to have been well found, sufficiently manned, thoroughly seaworthy, &c., &c.

From the evidence given before this Court, all went well on the passage, and nothing particularly noteworthy occurred until 12.20 p.m., when a dense fog set in, and the speed of the "Victoria" was immediately reduced and, so far as this Court has been able to ascertain, all Board of Trade rules and regulations, including the blowing of the steam whistle at regular intervals, were most carefully complied with.

That at 12.35 p.m., a steamer's whistle was heard on the starboard bow; that at 12.40 p.m., the "Victoria's" engines were stopped, and at the same time the helm was set hard a starboard in order to get away from the danger.

That at 12.42 p.m. a steamer loomed into sight, crossing from starboard to port, with considerable headway; that at sight of the on-coming steamer the "Victoria's" engines were put full speed astern, and that one and a-half minutes afterwards the collision occurred.

That there was a decided confusion of blowing the steam whistle on board the "Don Matias," it being quite impossible to describe any signals therefrom, and that there appears to have been general confusion immediately before and at the time of the collision.

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That directly after the occurrence the master of the "Victoria" ordered a boat to be lowered and offer assistance, and at the same time got ready four other boats for immediate assistance in case of need; that twenty minutes afterwards the boat returned, accompanied by the boats of the sunken steamer containing her full crew; that they were taken on board the "Victoria," that every courtesy was offered to them, and that they were subsequently taken back to Coronel and landed there at their own request.

That the Court, after careful consideration of the information it has been able to gather, and after due deliberation, attributes the cause of the collision, firstly, to the density of the fog prevailing at the time; and secondly, to the apparent reckless navigation and want of precaution on the part of the master of the "Don Matias," inasmuch as the steamer under his command was undoubtedly under too high a speed considering the mentioned state of the weather, and that had he taken similar precautions to those adhered to by the master of the "Victoria," and put his engine's full speed astern at sight of the other steamer, his vessel would have been at a standstill and the collision would have been avoided in consequence, and therefore it is of opinion that the captain and officers of the "Don Matias" are alone to blame for the incident.

In conclusion, the Court, having regard for all these circumstances, evidences, &c., &c., exonerate the master and officers of the s.s. "Victoria" from all blame whatsoever in connection with the occurrence, and have pleasure in returning to them their respective certificates of competency.

The Court is pleased to leave on record that the "Victoria's" boats and all life-saving apparatus were proved to be in first class order and condition.

Dated in Talcahuano, this 25th day of July, 1908.

A. E. STEEL, Vice Consul,
President of the Court.

J. SIMPSON,
Master of the British Ship "Colonial Empire,"
O.N. 114848, of London.

WM. MCKINLAY,
Master of the British ship, "East Indian,"
O.N. 102387, of Greenock.

H. J. COKE,
Clerk of the Court.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 22nd day of September, 1908.)