

(No. 7192.)

“PORT MARIA” (S.S.).

FINDING AND ORDER of a Naval Court held at the British Consulate-General, Kobe, on the 8th day of August, 1908, to investigate the circumstances attending the stranding of, and consequent damage to, the British s.s. “PORT MARIA,” Official Number 111310, of Bristol, while on a voyage from Vladivostock to Tsuruga, and the cause of such stranding, and to inquire into the conduct of the master, officers, and crew.

The “Port Maria” is a steam vessel of 1,449 tons nett registered tonnage, Official Number 111310, built at Leith in 1901, well found, properly manned, and seaworthy, belonging to the port of Bristol. It appears from the evidence given before the Court that she sailed from Vladivostock on the 15th of July, 1908, bound for Tsuruga with a cargo of 300 tons and a crew of 42 hands all told, as well as passengers.

At noon on the 16th of July, observations were taken and, as the ship was found to be making a good course, the same was continued unaltered. The weather at that time was clear, and the wind north-east. At midnight, when the master was called by the third officer, the weather was still fine and clear, the sea smooth, and the moon shining. The master retired again, giving instructions to be called as soon as the Tateishi light became visible. At 3 a.m., when he returned to the bridge, the light was not visible, and the weather had become slightly hazy, with what was apparently a fog bank ahead, but the atmospheric conditions were such that the master thought he could see five miles. But, not seeing the Tateishi light, he slowed down the engines at 3.13 a.m. One minute later he observed broken water ahead, and instantly ordered the helm hard a-port. He then put the engines full speed ahead with a view to the rudder having greater effect, and almost simultaneously the ship struck on a submerged rock, scraping her star-board bilge without losing way, and causing considerable damage from No. 2 hold to the forepart of the engine-room.

Finding the ship was not making much water, the master then made for Tsuruga with all possible speed. On arrival at that port, there was a list of 17 degrees to port, all the port fires being washed out by the water in the stokehold.

The passengers and mails were safely landed. Thereupon, the chief engineer reporting that he could not keep the water under, the ship was beached, port side to the shore.

But for the extraordinary and timely exertions of two German war vessels lying in the harbour, the

master states, the ship might have become a total loss. Owing to the valuable assistance rendered by the said German vessels, however, her cargo was discharged undamaged, and she was refloated by the following evening and brought round to Kobe under her own steam for repairs.

The Court, having regard to the circumstances above stated, finds as follows:—

That more caution should have been used in approaching the land as the weather was hazy, and the Tateishi light had not been sighted at the time expected.

That it would have been more prudent if the master had steered a more southerly course, from, say, 1 a.m., which would have enabled him to use the bank for soundings, and had taken a P.M. observation on that day as a check to the ship’s position.

That the accident was due, under the deceptive atmospheric conditions prevailing, to the over-confidence of the master in steering so fine a course, especially as the soundings were of no use until practically too late.

The Court does not propose to deal with any certificate.

In all other respects the Court finds that the conduct of the master, officers, and crew was seamanlike and proper.

The “Port Maria” appears to have been properly supplied with the usual charts.

The Court, in pursuance of the powers vested in it by section 483 of 57 and 58 Vict., c. 60, orders that the sum of nine pounds eighteen shillings and tenpence (£9 18s. 10d.), being the costs of the proceedings before the said Court, be paid by John Williams, master of the s.s. “Port Maria,” being one of the parties thereto, and he is hereby ordered to pay the said amount accordingly.

The expenses of this Court, fixed at £9 18s. 10d., are approved.

Dated at H.B.M. Consulate-General, Kobe, this 8th day of August, 1908.

HENRY BONAR,
H.B.M. Consul-General, President.

GEO. C. CUNDY, R.N.R.,
Master s.s. “Flintshire,”
W. G. MCARTHUR,
Master s.s. “Eastern,”
H. C. HARRIS,
Master s.s. “Cyclops.” } Members.

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