

(No. 7476.)

"IVERNIA" (S.S.).

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

IN the matter of a Formal Investigation held at Liverpool, on the 18th, 19th, 20th, and 22nd days of July, 1911, before the Stipendiary Magistrate, STUART DEACON, Esquire, assisted by Captain JAMIESON ROBERTSON, F.R.G.S. and Commander C. K. McINTOSH, R.N.R., into the circumstances attending the damage sustained by the British steamship "IVERNIA" through striking on or near Daunt Rock, off Queenstown, County Cork, Ireland, on or about the 24th May, 1911.

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 "Ivernia" struck on or near Daunt Rock at or about 11.49 a.m. on the 24th May, 1911, and was seriously damaged thereby, in consequence of the wrongful act and default of the master, Thomas Potter, in navigating the vessel at too great a rate of speed in the increasingly thick weather which was experienced after the Old Head of Kinsale had been passed, and in neglecting to verify the actual position of the vessel from time to time by means of the lead. The Court, however, is satisfied that the course set by the master from the Old Head of Kinsale was, in itself, a safe and proper course had it been made good, and believes, that such course was not made good owing to some unknown error in the compass, for the non-discovery of which neither the master nor any other officer of the vessel appears to be to blame.

The Court having taken these later circumstances, and also the long length of service and great experience of the master in the transatlantic trade into its most careful consideration, considers that it is in this case freed from the painful necessity of dealing with the master's certificate, but hereby severely censures the master, and orders him to contribute the sum of £50 towards the costs of this Inquiry.

Dated this 22nd day of July, 1911.

STUART DEACON, Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

JAMIESON ROBERTSON, } Assessors.
C. K. McINTOSH. }

Annex to the Report.

This Inquiry was held at the Magistrates' Room, Dale Street, Liverpool, on the 18th, 19th, 20th, and 22nd days of July, 1911, before Stuart Deacon, Esquire, Stipendiary Magistrate, assisted by Captain Jamieson Robertson, F.R.G.S., and Commander C. K. McIntosh, R.N.R. Mr. Paxton (Avison, Morton and Paxton) appeared for the Board of Trade, Mr. John Furniss (Hill, Dickinson & Co.) represented the owners of the "Ivernia," the Cunard Steam Ship Company, Limited, Mr. A. H. Maxwell, barrister, represented Mr. Thomas Potter, the master, and Mr. L. S. Holmes (Miller, Taylor and Holmes) watched the proceedings on behalf of Mr. T. Allan Chester, the third officer.

The "Ivernia," Official No. 110643, is a steel twin screw steamship, registered at the Port of Liverpool, and owned by the Cunard Steam Ship Company, Limited, of 8, Water Street, Liverpool. Mr. Andrew Daniel Mearns, of the same address, being designated

the person to whom the management of the vessel is entrusted by and on behalf of the owners by advice received the 13th June, 1907, under the seal of the said company.

The vessel was built by Messrs. C. S. Swan & Hunter, Limited, Wallsend-on-Tyne, in 1900, and is of the following dimensions:—length from fore part of stem to the aft side of the head of the stern post 582 feet, main breadth to outside of plating 64.9 feet, depth in hold from tonnage deck to ceiling amidships 21.85 feet, her gross tonnage being 14210.28 tons, and registered tonnage 9117.13 tons. She is clincher built, schooner rigged, has four decks and a shelter deck, 11 bulk-heads, and 14 water ballast tanks, the capacity of which is 4554 tons.

She has two sets of quadruple expansion surface condensing engines, each set having four cylinders of 28½, 41, 58½, and 84 inches diameter respectively, and 54 inch stroke. Steam is supplied from nine steel boilers having a pressure when loaded of 210 lbs. per square inch. The nominal horse power is 1,200, and the indicated horse power 10,000, developing a speed of 16 knots. The engines and boilers were constructed by the Wallsend Slipway and Engineering Company, Limited, of Wallsend-on-Tyne, in 1900. The vessel had three Lord Kelvin compasses, all in good order, was supplied with sufficient charts and sailing directions, and was fitted with wireless telegraphic apparatus.

The master of the "Ivernia" on the voyage forming the subject of this Inquiry was Mr. Thomas Potter, who holds a master's certificate of competency, No. 95589, and he joined the vessel as master in August, 1909.

The "Ivernia" sailed from Boston, U.S.A., bound for Liverpool via Queenstown, at noon on the 16th May last, the weather being fine, and her draught being 30 feet forward and 30 feet 9 inches aft. She carried a crew of 281 hands all told, 728 passengers and a general cargo of about 7,400 tons. Moderate weather was experienced during the voyage across the Atlantic. On the 23rd May the weather was overcast, no observations for position or for compass error obtainable, and these weather conditions continued till the following day, when the vessel was approaching the Irish coast. At 6.30 a.m. of the 24th May a cast of the lead was taken, and a depth of 60 fathoms with fine sand was obtained; at 7 a.m. a second cast gave 50 fathoms sand and rock; and at 7.30 a.m. a third and last cast was taken, giving 38 fathoms, rocky bottom. At 7.45 a.m. the fog signal on Mizzen Head was heard, and at 8.5 a.m. the Fastnet was abeam to the southward and was passed at a distance of about half a mile. The weather conditions then were thick with haze and fog to such an extent that the Irish coast was not visible until shortly before 11 a.m., when the land was seen in the vicinity of the Old Head of Kinsale. This was sighted through the haze broad on the port bow. The vessel was hauled in towards the land for the purpose of getting a four-point bearing to verify the ship's position. At 11 a.m. the lighthouse on the Old Head of Kinsale bore abeam one mile off, from whence a course was set by standard compass N. 64° E. upon which an allowance of 7° easterly deviation was made, making N. 71° E. magnetic, or directly towards Daunt Rock Light-vessel. Referring to the state of the weather at this time, the evidence as to the range of visibility was conflicting, several witnesses estimating the range at two to three miles, and others, during clear intervals, five to six miles. In view of the fact that no part of the coast line was seen after passing Kinsale Head, and as the line of course the vessel made took her two miles off at the Little Sovereign and one mile off at Reanies Head, it is evident that the range of visibility could, at no time, have exceeded these distances off the land. The master in his evidence stated that the courses he steered between the Fastnet and Kinsale Head took the vessel too far off the land, rendering it necessary to haul her in when Kinsale Head was sighted, from which he concluded that the amount of easterly deviation he had allowed between the Fastnet and Kinsale Head was too small. At 11 a.m. when the course was set N. 71° E. magnetic, the tide, according to Admiralty Chart No. 2049, was setting about E.N.E., and this course was maintained for 38 minutes at full speed (15 knots) during which

time it was estimated the vessel had run a distance of about 9½ miles. At this time (11.38 a.m.), the weather having set in very thick, the speed was reduced to half speed, and two minutes later (11.40 a.m.) to slow, and the whistle sounded. The master stated that he could only see about two or three of his own ship's lengths, and consequently had stationed the fourth officer, Mr. Davis, at the submarine telephonic receiver to listen for the sound of the submarine bell of the Daunt Rock Light-vessel, but this could not be heard. No alteration was made in the course nor soundings taken, and seven minutes later (11.47 a.m.) the buoy marking the Daunt Rock was reported by the men on the look-out, and was also seen by the master and officer on the bridge, bearing about one point on the starboard bow at an estimated distance of about two ship's lengths (1,100 feet). The helm was immediately put hard-a-port, the starboard engine rung full speed astern, but the vessel was so close to the danger that this turning manoeuvre was not undertaken in time to avert her proceeding inside the buoy, striking on or near Daunt Rock, passing over part of it without losing headway. After getting clear it was found that the vessel was making water in Nos. 2 and 3 holds, and also in the stokehold. Immediately this was known, a course was set for Roches point, and the engines put full speed ahead, the weather now clearing. A pilot boarded at Roches point and the vessel was subsequently anchored in Queenstown Harbour, where the passengers were landed.

The ship's pumps being unable to control the leakage it was considered necessary to beach her to prevent her sinking where she was anchored.

Salvage operations were undertaken by the Liverpool Salvage Association, and the vessel was ultimately refloated and taken to Liverpool to be permanently repaired.

During this Inquiry there have been specially before the Court five points, viz.:—(1) the deviation allowed on this occasion when setting the course from off Kinsale Head; (2) the effect of tide; (3) the non-use of the lead; (4) the efficiency of the fog signals on Daunt Rock Light-vessel; and (5) the sounding of the "Ivernia's" own whistle.

Since the adjustment of the compasses in January last, the courses set by the standard compass between Kinsale Head and Daunt Light-vessel have been: 1st voyage, N. 68° E.; 2nd voyage, N. 68° E.; 3rd voyage, N. 64° E.; 4th voyage, N. 62° E.; and the voyage in question, N. 64° E.; the largest difference between these courses thus being six degrees. The master attributed these rather large differences to two causes, first, to the bridge structure being chipped subsequent to the last adjustment, and second, it was his opinion that the adjustments carried out in the Port of Liverpool compared unfavourably with adjustments at other ports owing to the existence of "great local attraction." With regard to the first of these causes the Court is in agreement with the master in considering that the chipping referred to would be likely to cause a disturbance in the vessel's magnetism, but is unable to accept his second statement that there is any special local attraction that would account for compass adjustments being carried out less efficiently in Liverpool than at other ports, provided always, that adjustments are not made in any dock where extensive railway tracks are laid, or where iron sheds, iron structures, or iron or steel vessels are in close proximity. When adjusting in the river there is, of course, an obvious difficulty of swinging a large vessel with sufficient slowness and steadiness in a strong tideway to be considered.

Regarding the tide and its effects on a fast steamer steering between Kinsale Head and Daunt Light-vessel, the master stated that it was never his practice to make any allowance for either indraft or outset, his experience being that none was necessary, and that the only appreciable effect of tide was simply to slightly accelerate or retard his progress. The Court sees no good reason to differ from the opinion expressed by the master in this matter.

On the course set between Kinsale Head and Daunt Light-vessel the depth of water is over 20 fathoms until about three miles from the light-vessel, when the depths decrease towards the Daunt Rock and inside of the light-vessel. On the course the "Ivernia" made the 20 fathom line of soundings was crossed about four miles from Daunt Rock, so that had the lead been used ample warning would have been given that the

vessel was inside her proper course as set—also, as the 20 fathom line passes only about one mile outside the Daunt Light-vessel, had that depth been kept all danger would have been avoided.

During the hearing of this case much adverse criticism was expressed regarding the efficiency of the fog signals on Daunt Light-vessel, the master of the "Ivernia" and his officers declaring that they had never heard the submarine bell in fog though it was always listened for. This was not due to any defect in the receiving apparatus on board the "Ivernia," because the other submarine bells passed in the course of her voyages were heard distinctly, one, the North West Light-ship bell, having been heard at a distance of 12 miles.

William Ankers, an experienced Liverpool pilot, who is constantly employed piloting steamers of the White Star Line between Liverpool and Queenstown, stated that though he had heard the bell on the Daunt Light-vessel during fog, he had never heard it until he got within three miles of it, and that, therefore, in his opinion it was inefficient. The witness stated that he heard the submarine bell on the North West Light-vessel 18 miles away.

In view of this evidence the Court is of opinion that this matter should be inquired into by the proper authority, and hereby directs the attention of the Board of Trade to it.

The attention of the Court was also drawn to the gun used on the Daunt Light-vessel, the report of which was not heard until after the "Ivernia" had struck Daunt Rock, and was thus only 1½ miles away.

One witness only, Long, A.B., stated that he heard the gun on the light-vessel before the buoy on Daunt Rock was sighted, but as no other member of the crew supported this statement and Long did not report to anyone his having heard the gun, the Court does not attach any importance to his evidence.

According to the evidence of the master, his officers, and one quartermaster, the fog whistle of the "Ivernia" was sounded at regular intervals when the speed was reduced at about 11.38 a.m. and continued to be sounded until the vessel struck. Two witnesses, Long and Peberdy, A.B.'s, stated that the whistle was not started until after the casualty occurred. The Court, however, is satisfied that the fog whistle was in fact sounded.

During the hearing a letter was put in by Mr. Maxwell on behalf of the master, which had been written by the master of the White Star Steamer "Cymric," bearing sworn testimony to the indraft of the tide outside Queenstown Harbour on the forenoon of the 24th May last. This letter stated that on this date the "Cymric," on her course from off Ballycotton to Roches Point, felt an unusual indraft, but as this vessel was steering in a direction which necessarily brought the full strength of the flood tide on her port bow, the Court, after careful consideration, concluded that the tide effect was only such as was to be expected at the time and place.

At the conclusion of the evidence, Mr. Paxton, for 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) 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?
- (4) Were proper measures taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel when abeam of the Old Head of Kinsale at about 11 a.m. on the 24th May last, was a safe and proper course then set and thereafter steered, and was due and proper allowance made for tides and currents?
- (5) Having regard to the state of the weather after 11.38 a.m. on the 24th May last:—
 - (a) Ought the vessel to have been continued on the same course?
 - (b) Was the vessel navigated at too great a rate of speed?
 - (c) 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 vessel striking on or near Daunt Rock, at or about 11.49 a.m. on the 24th May last? Was she seriously damaged thereby?

(8) Was the vessel navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

(9) Was serious damage to the s.s. "Ivernia" caused by the wrongful act or default of the master?

Mr. Maxwell having addressed the Court on behalf of the master, the Court gave judgment as above and returned the following answers to the questions of the Board of Trade:—

(1) The vessel had three compasses made by Messrs. Kelvin and James White, Limited. They were placed, one on the top of the wheelhouse, one inside, and one on the bridge in front of the wheel. The compass on top of the wheelhouse was the standard, and by it all the courses were set. All three compasses were in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel, and were last adjusted on the 3rd January of this year by Chadburn's (Ship) Telegraph Company, Limited, at Liverpool.

(2) The master did, up to the time of getting the Old Head of Kinsale abeam, ascertain the deviations of his compasses from time to time; the errors were correctly ascertained and the proper corrections to the courses applied.

(3) The vessel was supplied with proper and sufficient charts and sailing directions.

(4) Proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel when abeam of the Old Head of Kinsale at about 11 a.m. on the 24th May last.

The course then set and thereafter steered was a safe and proper one had it been made good, but having regard to the fact that the weather experienced after 11 a.m. became increasingly thick, and such that it did not permit of any bearings being obtained to correct possible compass error, the Court is of opinion that

the course set was too fine to be safely continued under such circumstances, particularly with the vessel going at full speed, and in the absence of any fog signals being heard from the Daunt Light-ship.

No allowance was made for tide or currents.

(5) Having regard to the state of the weather after 11.38 a.m. on the 24th May last:—

(a) the vessel should not have continued on the same course;

(b) she was navigated at too great a rate of speed;

(c) the lead was not used, and it should have been used.

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

(7) The causes of the vessel striking on or near Daunt Rock at or about 11.49 a.m. on the 24th May last were:—

(a) the course set off the Old Head of Kinsale not being made good owing to an unknown error in the compass;

(b) the vessel being navigated at too great a rate of speed in thick weather; and

(c) to the non-use of the lead. The vessel was seriously damaged thereby.

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

(9) The serious damage to the steamship "Ivernia" was caused by the wrongful act and default of the master.

STUART DEACON,

Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

JAMESON ROBERTSON, }
C. K. McINTOSH, } Assessors.

Liverpool, 24th July, 1911.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 22nd day of August, 1911.)