

(No. 7698.)

ANNEX TO THE REPORT.

## "ZWEENA" (S.S.).

Straits Settlements,  
Port of Singapore.

## REPORT OF COURT.

THE MERCHANT SHIPPING ORDINANCE, 1910.

Section 288 (4) and Rule 19 of Rules under Section 295.

In the matter of a formal investigation held at Singapore, on the 7th and 8th days of July, 1915, before Edwy Lyonet Talma, assisted by Bertie Angelo Cator, Lieutenant-Commander R.N., John Gibbon Follett, Master Mariner, and George Douglas Rushton, Master Mariner, into the circumstances attending the wreck of the steamship "ZWEENA" in the Madura Strait on the 8th day of June, 1915.

The Court having carefully inquired into the circumstances attending the above-mentioned shipping casualty, finds, for the reasons stated in the annex hereto that—

1. The steamship "Zweena" was properly found and equipped on leaving Singapore on the 12th May, 1915.
2. The vessel was provided with the requisite charts, sailing directions, and navigating instruments.
3. The compasses were last adjusted on the 16th October, 1914, at Singapore.
4. The vessel had her proper complement of officers and crew.
5. The vessel was not navigated in a prudent and seamanlike manner after 5.30 a.m. on the 8th June, 1915.
6. The engines appeared to be in good working order up to the time of the casualty.
7. The vessel was wrecked on the Sirompa Rock in the Madura Strait and subsequently foundered.
8. As far as the conduct of all those on board, excepting only the Malay crew, is concerned, proper steps were taken (i) to save life and (ii) to save the ship.
9. The boats and life-saving appliances were in good order at the time the vessel struck the ground.
10. A period of about 25 to 30 minutes in duration elapsed between the vessel striking the ground and her foundering.
11. (i) Considering the conditions, and the conduct of the Malay crew, the boats were got afloat with proper despatch. (ii) Life-belts were not served out, but steps were taken to render them accessible, which may be considered reasonable in the circumstances.
12. Sixteen (16) lives have been lost; 3 being of European officers of the ship, 2 of cargo coolies employed on the ship, and 11 of native deck passengers.
13. The ship is a total loss.
14. The loss of the ship was occasioned by the wrongful act of the master in setting an unsafe course after passing the Zwaantjes light at 5.30 a.m. on the morning of the 8th June, 1915.  
The loss of life was partly occasioned by the wrongful acts and default of the Malay crew in deserting the ship directly after she struck and refusing to obey the order of the master and chief officer.
15. The Court has suspended the certificate of the master, Walter Douglas McCraith, for a period of three months, and recommends that a certificate of a first mate be granted to him for that period.

Dated at Singapore this 12th day of July, 1915.

EDWY L. TALMA, *President*.

B. A. CATOR	} <i>Assessors</i> .
JOHN G. FOLLETT	
GEORGE D. RUSHTON	

1. The British steamship "Zweena," Official No. 96,400 of Singapore, gross tonnage 1,470, net tonnage 941, Master W. D. McCraith, Certificate No. 013780, owned by Messrs. Heap Eng Moh Steamship Co., Ltd., of Singapore, sailed from Buleleng on the 7th June, 1915, for Sourabaya and Singapore with a cargo of general merchandise of the weight of about 900 tons and a crew of 90 all told and 37 passengers. The Zwaantjes light was passed abeam port at 5.30 a.m., distant  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles by 4 point bearing. Course was then altered for the Sourabaya pilot light vessel, intending to pass between  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile south of the Sirompa Rock. At 5.55 a.m. weather fine and clear, wind calm with flood tide, the vessel struck heavily on the Sirompa Rock, but did not remain fast, and the master headed the vessel for the shallow water inside the pilot light vessel about six miles. Water rapidly gaining in the ship. Boats were immediately ordered to be swung out and lowered to rafts. After steaming for about 15 to 20 minutes the vessel became unmanageable. Four boats were swung out and cleared away with several of the crew and passengers, but before another could be got out ship foundered by the head in about 20 fathoms of water taking with her about 25 persons. Nine were rescued by the ship's boat, manned by men from the Dutch torpedo boat "Vos," which stood by to render assistance, and 16 lost their lives, viz:— 2nd officer John Kynoch, Chief Engineer Thomas Hunter Hutcheon, 2nd Engineer U. De Sousa, 2 cargo coolies and 11 passengers (5 females). The survivors were conveyed to Sourabaya and landed there by the "Vos." The master and crew subsequently returned to Singapore in the Company's steamer "Wilhelm," arriving there on the 15th June, 1915.

2. At the investigation held at Singapore on the 7th and 8th days of July, 1915, into the casualty, the Court found that it was occasioned by the wrongful act of the master in setting an unsafe course after passing the Zwaantjes light and the following is an extract from the finding of the Court:—

"The Court is not satisfied that the position given off the Koko light was more than approximate, but even assuming that position to be correct, the course set would take the ship not more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile clear of the Sirompa rock, and the Court finds this to have been an unsafe course.

The observation of the lightship taken at 5.45 a.m. was not laid off on the chart and the Court fails to see the advantage of taking such an observation if it be not intended to lay it off. It certainly seems to have agreed with what the master expected, but if it had been laid off on the chart, it must have shown at once that the ship was on a course which would take her within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of the Sirompa rock, and any prudent navigator must have recognized that this was unsafe."

3. The Court also found that the loss of life was occasioned by the conduct of, and disobedience of orders by, the Malay crew.

Not all the evidence possible was called in this question, as the Court was informed that some members of the Malay crew were being prosecuted on charges under the Merchant Shipping Ordinance and it was not desired to take any steps which might prejudice them in their defence.

4. It appeared, however, from the evidence taken that, as soon as it was recognised that the ship was likely to founder, the crew of Malay deck-hands, with the exception only of a quartermaster on duty at the wheel, got into one of the life-boats and lowered it to the water's edge, whereas it was part of their particular duty to get out all necessary boats.

Not only did they desert from this duty, but they refused to return on board when ordered to do so, except only a second quartermaster who returned, when ordered, to assist in raising signals of distress.

5. The first of these quartermasters joined the rest of the Malay crew in their boat directly he was allowed by the master to leave the wheel, and the second also appears to have returned to the boat directly after raising the signals. Neither of them lent a hand in getting out other boats.

6. The balance of the evidence goes to show that, having secured a boat, the Malays would not allow any others of the crew or passengers to enter it, except only the ship's carpenter, a Chinese. And when the ship went down, they made no effort to pick up any of those cast into the sea, although there was ample room in their boat for more.

7. The Malays formed the part of the crew which is trained to deal with the boats, and, in their absence, the engine room staff, the cargo-coolies and the passengers did their best to get boats out, and succeeded in getting three afloat. All but 25 souls were, consequently, enabled to leave the ship before she finally went down, and of the 25 thrown into the sea nine were subsequently picked up alive.

8. On the evidence before the Court, there can be no doubt that, had the Malay crew remained at their posts, or even returned to the ship, when ordered, a sufficient number of boats would have been got afloat to save all souls with ease. Had they even allowed others to get into their boat, it is probable that there would have been no loss of life. And had they even at the last tried to pick up those cast into the sea, there would have been less loss of life.

9. The Chief Officer, Mr. Ernest Jones, was specially commended by the Court for his brave efforts to save life.

Dated at Singapore this 12th day of July, 1915.

EDWY L. TALMA, *President*.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Was the steamship "Zweena" properly found and equipped on leaving Singapore on May 12th, 1915?

2. Was the vessel provided with the requisite charts, sailing directions, and navigating instruments?

3. When and where were the compasses last adjusted?

4. Had the vessel her proper complement of officers and crew?

5. Was the vessel navigated in a prudent and seamanlike manner after 5.30 a.m. on the 8th June, 1915?

6. Were the engines in good working order up to the time of the casualty?

7. What was the nature of the casualty and where did it occur?

8. After the ship struck the ground were proper steps taken (i) to save life, (ii) to save the ship?

9. Were the boats and life-saving appliances in good order at the time the vessel struck the ground?

10. What period of time elapsed between the vessel striking the ground and the foundering?

11. (i) Were the boats got afloat with proper despatch? and (ii) were life-belts served out?

12. What lives have been lost?

13. Is the ship a total loss?

14. By whose wrongful act or default (if any) was the casualty and subsequent loss of ship and life occasioned?

15. Decision of the Court in respect to the certificates of the master and officers concerned.

#### ANSWERS.

1. Yes.
2. Yes.
3. On the 16th October, 1914, at Singapore.
4. Yes.
5. No.

The Court is not satisfied that the position given off the Koko light was more than approximate; but even assuming that position to be correct, the course set would take the ship not more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile clear of the Sirompa rock, and the Court finds this to have been an unsafe course.

The observation of the lightship taken at 5.45 a.m. was not laid off on the chart and the Court fails to see the advantage of taking such an observation if it be not intended to lay it off. It certainly seems to have agreed with what the master expected, but if it had been laid off on the chart, it must have shown at once that the ship was on a course which would take her within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of the Sirompa rock, and any prudent navigator must have recognised that this was unsafe.

6. Yes.

7. The ship was wrecked on the Sirompa rock in the Madura Strait and subsequently foundered.

8. (i) Yes, so far as the conduct of all on board was concerned, excepting only the Malay crew. The Court desires specially to commend the chief officer, Mr. Ernest Jones, for his brave efforts to save life. (ii) Yes.

9. Yes.

10. About 25 to 30 minutes.

11. (i) Yes, under the conditions and considering the conduct of the Malay crew. (ii) No, but steps were taken to render them accessible, which, in the circumstances, seem reasonable.

12. 16 lives; being of 3 European officers of the ship, 2 cargo coolies, and 11 native passengers.

13. Yes.

14. The casualty was occasioned by the wrongful act of the master in setting an unsafe course at 5.30 a.m. on the 8th June, 1915.

The subsequent loss of the ship was an unavoidable result of the casualty.

The loss of life was occasioned by the conduct of, and disobedience of orders by, the Malay crew.

15. The Court suspends the certificate of the master, Walter Douglas McCraith for a period of three months, and will recommend to His Excellency that he be granted a first mate's certificate for that period.

Dated at Singapore this 8th day of July, 1915.

EDWY L. TALMA, *President*.

B. A. CATOR		
JOHN G. FOLLETT		<i>Assessors.</i>
GEORGE D. RUSHTON		

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 7th day of September, 1915.)