

(No. 3881.)

“SIERRA PEDROSA.”

REPORT and Finding of a Court of Inquiry held at Cape Town on the 5th August 1889, to inquire into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British Ship “SIERRA PEDROSA” in Table Bay on the 30th July 1889.

The “Sierra Pedrosa” arrived here with a cargo of coal on the 25th ultimo, and was boarded by the harbour authorities and pilot, and shewn where to anchor. The captain says the pilot pointed out the place, but this must be a mistake, as section 21 of Act 16 of 1867 requires the port captain to attend to that duty. She remained there until Tuesday the 30th, when she was driven ashore during a heavy gale. The captain and officers seem to have done their best to save the vessel, but it is to be regretted that the third anchor and cable could not have been got ready so as to have been let go when the first cable parted. It would also have been well if the upper yards and masts were sent down on deck, but it would appear that this was too heavy a piece of work for so small a crew at the time, especially as one watch is said to have been busy with the third anchor. Vessels anchoring in Table Bay in winter should, we think, be told to have all their anchors and cables ready for immediate use, as it is just possible that had this vessel been able to let go her third anchor immediately the first one parted she might have been saved.

The captain says that the vessel parted through one of the large baulks of timber from the breakwater striking the cable and parting it, but there is really no evidence of this. He also said that the vessel was “considerably under the lee of the breakwater and its influence,” and “she rode smoothly, and no danger was to be apprehended from the sea,” and “This continued until part of the breakwater was washed away, leaving a large breach for the sea to come through.” He has withdrawn the latter statement, and is contradicted by Mr. Thwaites and his own crew in the other statements.

There can be no doubt that the loss of the vessel was caused by the violent gale and heavy sea, and the exposed position in which she was placed beyond the protection of the breakwater.

(Signed) JAMES M. CROSBY, R.M.
M. P. O'CALLAGHAN,
Commander, R.N.