

(No. 6269.)

“ NUMIDIA ” (S.S.).

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

IN the matter of a formal investigation held at Glasgow on the 23rd and 24th days of October, 1901, before WILLIAM GEORGE SCOTT - MONCRIEFF, Esquire, Advocate, Sheriff Substitute of Lanarkshire, assisted by Captains COSENS and HUGHES, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British s.s. “ Numidia ” of Glasgow on the Brothers Reef, in the Red Sea, on 20th July, 1901.

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 stranding of the s.s. “ Numidia ” was due to improper navigation on the part of the second officer of said ship, while approaching the Brothers Island. Further the Court is not satisfied that sufficient care was exhibited by the Master in navigating his ship after sighting the Brothers Light. The Court suspends the certificate of the second officer, Mr. James Tulloch (No. 013,710), for the period of nine months, but recommends that during the period of suspension he be granted a mate's certificate.

Dated this 24th day of October, 1901.

W. G. SCOTT-MONCRIEFF,
Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

WILLIAM COSENS, } Assessors.
E. M. HUGHES, }

Annex to the Report.

This inquiry was held at the Jury Court, County Buildings, Glasgow, on the 23rd and 24th days of October, 1901.

Mr. Alexander McGrigor, writer, Glasgow, appeared for the Board of Trade; Mr. A. M. Bannatyne, writer, Glasgow, for the owners; Mr. H. A. Roxburgh, writer, Glasgow, for the master; and Mr. Joseph Martin, writer, Glasgow, for the second officer.

The “ Numidia,” official No. 113,942, is a British screw steamship, built in the early part of this year by Messrs. D. and W. Henderson & Co., Limited, of Partick, Glasgow, at which port she was registered. She was owned by the Anchor Line, Limited, Mr. William Meiklereid, of No. 4, La Belle Place, Glasgow, being designated managing owner on the 28th of February, 1901. She was built of steel and is of the following dimensions, viz.:—Length 450·8 ft., breadth 55·2 ft., depth of hold 30·1 ft. She is schooner rigged and has water ballast capacity for 1746 tons. She was propelled by triple expansion engines of 560 horse power, the engines and boilers having been built by Messrs. D. and W. Henderson & Co. Her gross tonnage is 6399·07 tons, which after deducting 2280·85 tons, for propelling space, crew, &c., gives a nett register tonnage of 4188·22 tons. The “ Numidia,” being a new ship, was fully equipped with boats, life-saving apparatus, and everything requisite for the voyage.

The “ Numidia ” left Liverpool on the 6th day of July last, under the command of Mr. John Craig, with a crew of 97 hands all told, no passengers, and a general cargo of about 7000 tons, bound for Calcutta, her draught of water being 25 ft. 3 ins. aft and 24 ft. 6 ins. forward. The vessel proceeded on her voyage passing through the Suez Canal. Leaving at about 2.48 a.m. on the 19th July she proceeded down the Gulf of Suez, and at about 6.53 p.m. Shadwan Island being abeam, distant two miles, a course S. 31° E. true was set and steered for a distance of 47 miles by the patent log. At this time the weather was fine with a fresh breeze from N.N.W. and

so continued until the vessel stranded. At 11 p.m. the course was altered to S. 30° E. and steered until 1 a.m. on the 20th July, when the light on the Brothers Island being in sight, a little on the port bow, the master, being on deck and observing its bearings, again altered the course to S. 27° E. true and informed the second officer, who was in charge of the watch, that this course would take the ship over one mile to the westward of the Brothers Island. The master then left the bridge, leaving instructions to be called when the Brothers light was abeam, taking with him the night order book. At about 2.10 a.m., the master, feeling the shock of the vessel crashing on the rocks, hastened to the bridge, when he found the ship hard and fast on the north part of the Northern Brothers Island, and about one and three-quarter cables distant from the lighthouse. On looking at the compass he found her head to be south. The helm was hard-a-port, and the engines were going full speed astern. They were kept so going for two hours, and finding they had no effect in moving the vessel, they were then stopped. On sounding the tanks and holds it was found that the vessel was rapidly filling, being hard and fast on the reef from the after part of No. 1 hold to the after part of No. 3 hold, with deep water aft and forward. The boats were then swung out and provisioned and preparations made to abandon. At about 7.30 a.m. the s.s. “ Rhipens ” hove in sight, and in response to signals from the “ Numidia,” came as near as possible, when she was boarded and despatches sent to Suez, reporting the casualty, and requesting assistance. At this time the wind was strong with a heavy sea, and attempts were made to communicate with the island by means of rockets but failed. At about 2 p.m.—the wind and sea having very much subsided—the lifeboats were sent on shore with the crew's effects, and a steel hawser being made fast to the rocks and hove tight afterwards served as a means of communication with the island. Assistance soon arrived, but against every effort made the vessel remained fast on the island. She has since been abandoned to the underwriters. The master remained on the island for about seven weeks, and succeeded in salvaging the greater portion of the cargo.

From the conflict of evidence it was not possible for the Court to determine what instructions the master left with the second officer when leaving the deck at about 1 a.m. of the 20th July. The Court is of opinion that when the course was altered by the master at that time it should have been to a greater extent, and thus insured the vessel passing well clear of the island, or he should have remained at his post until the light on Brothers Island was passed. As an excuse for the master leaving the deck at the time he did, it was urged that he had been on duty for sixty hours since first sighting the Damietta light. The Court cannot accept such a plea. He might have taken rest while passing down the Gulf of Suez and again between Shadwan Island and the time of making the Brothers light.

It was suggested that the second officer had been asleep, and that thus the vessel had not made good the courses set, but it is certain that he was on the alert at or before 1.30 a.m., when he evidently realised that the ship was running into danger, and, on his own responsibility, altered the course from S. 27° E. to S. 22° E. Why he did not at once call the master, and relieve himself of responsibility, is most inexplicable.

At the conclusion of the evidence, the following questions were submitted on behalf of the Board of Trade, to which the Court gave the answers appended:—

(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?—The vessel had three compasses, viz., a standard, on the upper bridge, by which the courses were set; a steering compass, in the wheelhouse; and also one at the after wheel. These were in good order, and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel. They were last adjusted on 2nd March, 1901, by Messrs. D. McGregor & Co., of Glasgow.

(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?—The master did ascertain the errors of his compasses by observation, from time to time. The errors were correctly ascertained, and the proper corrections to the courses applied.

(3.) Was the position of the vessel correctly ascertained at or about 6.53 p.m. on the 19th July last, was a safe and proper course then set and thereafter steered, and was due and proper allowance made for currents?—The position of the vessel was correctly ascertained when off Shadwan, at about 6.53 p.m. on the 19th of July last, and a proper course was then set and thereafter steered. Due and proper allowance was made for currents.

(4.) Were safe and proper alterations made in the course at or about 11 p.m. on the last-mentioned date, and again at or about 12.45 a.m. on the 20th July, and was due and proper allowance made for currents?—The alteration at 11 p.m. on the 19th July was one degree only,—from S. 31° E. to S. 30° E. (true). At 12.45 a.m. on the 20th July—the light on the Brothers Island being in sight—the course was further altered three degrees, viz., from S. 30° E. to S. 27° E. (true). These alterations were safe and proper, and, if made good, would have taken the vessel about one mile to the westward of the Brothers Island.

The master informed the Court that he expected to have a westerly set.

(5.) Was the master on the bridge at a time when the safety of the vessel required his personal supervision?—The master was not on the bridge when the safety of the vessel required his personal supervision, and the Court cannot hold it proved that he left sufficient definite orders with the second officer, who was on watch.

(6.) Did the master give proper and sufficient instructions to the second officer before leaving the bridge at or about 12.45 a.m. on the 20th July?—The answer to this question is given in reply to Question 5.

(7.) Was the course set by the master steered, and did the second officer take proper measures to ascertain the position of the vessel, from time to time, as she was approaching the Brothers light?—According to the evidence the Court must hold that the course set by the master was steered, although, as appears from the result, not made good. The second officer did not take proper

measures to ascertain the position of the vessel when approaching the Brothers light.

(8.) Was the course set by the master altered by the second officer at or about 1.30 a.m. on the 20th July, and if so, should he have made the alteration without first obtaining the master's instructions?—The course set by the master was altered by the second officer at or about 1.30 a.m. on the 20th July, and that in a proper direction, but he should not have made this alteration without first obtaining the master's instructions or immediately calling his attention to what had been done.

(9.) Was a good and proper lookout kept, and was the vessel navigated with proper and seamanlike care?—A good and proper lookout appears to have been kept. The vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care.

(10.) What was the cause of the stranding of the vessel?—The stranding of the s.s. "Numidia" was caused by improper navigation when approaching the Brothers Island.

(11.) Was serious damage caused to the "Numidia" by the wrongful act or default of the master and second officer or of either of them?—Serious damage to the "Numidia" was caused by the default of the second officer, in failing to keep a sufficient distance from the Brothers Island, and neglecting to call the master when the course was last altered. The Court is not satisfied that sufficient care was exhibited by the master in the navigation of his ship after sighting the Brothers light.

W. G. SCOTT-MONCRIEFF,
Judge.

We concur.

WILLIAM COSENS, }
E. M. HUGHES, } Assessors.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the
12th day of November, 1901.)

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