

## THE COLERIDGE.

## SAUNDERS v. THE COLERIDGE.

(District Court, E. D. New York. March 3, 1896.)

## 1. SHIPPING—MASTER AND SERVANT—NEGLIGENCE—ACCIDENT.

Injury to a workman engaged in repairing a tank on shipboard, by the falling of a carpenter's tool from a scaffold overhead, in consequence of some unexplained inadvertence on the part of the carpenter, is a simple accident, which involves the ship and her owners in no legal responsibility.

## 2. SAME—FELLOW SERVANTS.

Where one employed to do repair work on shipboard by day's labor sends his servant to do the work in his place, the servant is to be regarded as the fellow servant of the ship's carpenter, in respect to an injury to him resulting from alleged negligence of the carpenter.

This was a libel by Thomas F. Saunders against the steamship Coleridge to recover damages for personal injuries.

Charles J. Patterson and John F. Clark, for libelant.

Edward L. Owen and George H. Gilman, for claimant.

BROWN, District Judge. In the afternoon of the 1st of February, 1894, while the libelant was engaged in making some repairs upon the tank in the hold of the steamship Coleridge, his foot was cut by the fall of a chopper belonging to the carpenter, who was at work on the tank upon a platform or scaffold 22 inches wide, and about 6 feet above the bottom of the tank. The wound was a somewhat serious one, and disabled the libelant for work for several months.

The libelant did not belong to the ship, but was in the employ of Mr. White, a boiler maker, by whom he had been sent to make preparation for putting a patch upon the tank. The carpenter belonged to the ship, and he was employed in repairing the tank by fitting some wooden casings about the place of the patch. The testimony is contradictory between the libelant and Luce, the carpenter, as to whether the libelant was at the time actually engaged in doing his own work upon the tank, or whether he was doing nothing about that work, but assisting the carpenter from time to time in passing the boards up and down in the course of fitting. The libelant testifies that at the time he was hit he was cleaning lead out of some holes in the place where the patch was to go on.

There is no evidence showing any imperfection or fault on the part of the ship, her tackle, or equipment, nor any fault on the part of the owners in employing a suitable person as carpenter. Nor is any fault or defect found with the platform, either in its kind, or the arrangements for using it; nor is there any evidence showing how the chopper came to fall off the platform. It was an ordinary tool, belonging to the carpenter. He had used it, as he says, about five minutes before the accident, in chopping off a piece of one of the boards, and had laid it down upon the platform a few feet from him. In what manner or why it got off the platform and fell is not known. The first the carpenter knew of its fall was when the libelant said he was hurt. It fell, presumably,

in consequence of some unexplained inadvertence on the part of the carpenter, either in stepping about on the platform, or in handling the boards or other tools upon the platform. Inadvertence of that kind is an ordinary incident of such work, of which all workmen working on the same job, or working near each other, take the risk, as one of the risks of their vocation. Such cases are to be, moreover, regarded, I think, as simple accidents rather than as legal negligence, involving ship and owners in responsibility.

From what the carpenter testifies as to the position of the libelant when hurt, it would seem that the latter could not have been at work upon the holes, as he claims. For a part of the time certainly he was not occupied with his own separate work. From his previous work there, and his aid given to the carpenter, it is impossible also that he should not have known of the presence and use of the chopper and other tools, and of the liability of such tools to be knocked off the platform in the course of the work that was going on. And if the case were to be treated as one not of simple accident, but as involving presumed negligence, I think, in the entire absence of any specific proof how the chopper got off, there was presumptively as much negligence in the libelant in remaining unnecessarily where any fall of tools would be likely to hurt him, as can be imputed to the carpenter himself by mere presumption.

I further think, also, that if the case is to be considered as one of presumptive legal fault, the libelant must be deemed a fellow servant with the carpenter, and on that ground precluded from recovery. The authorities cited in his behalf are all cases in which the accident arose from some defect in the ship, or in her tackle, equipment, or loading, and where there was a breach of some implied duty owed by the owners. Here, as I have said, there is no actual fault of any kind attributable to the owners, unless they are to be legally held as warranting against any inadvertence on the part of the carpenter in the handling of his tools, or in his motions while at work. I do not think any such legal warranty exists. The two workmen were engaged upon the same common job,—the repair of the tank,—in the immediate view and presence of each other. The libelant at times voluntarily assisted the carpenter. The negligence, if there was any, on the part of the carpenter was in his personal carriage, or the handling of his tools, or of the boards. Had he himself inadvertently fallen from the platform and injured the libelant, could the latter have recovered from the ship? Accidents from such causes are, as I have said, a risk of the vocation.

The fact that the libelant was a servant of Mr. White does not change this aspect of the case; nor the fact that the carpenter may have been paid by the month, and Mr. White, or the libelant, by day's work. Both were substantially in the employ of the ship-owners, and subject to their control. The work was apparently done in the usual way, by day's work; no independent contract is indicated in the evidence. Had Mr. White, who was employed to do the libelant's part of the repair, done the work with his own hands, and been injured in this way, both would clearly have been

in the same common employment of the ship, and fellow servants. I do not see that the case is changed by the fact that Mr. White, instead of doing the work himself, sent the libellant as his servant to do the same work. The case in that respect is similar to the frequent cases of longshoremen employed by a stevedore, who are injured through some negligence of men furnished by the ship engaged in some part of the common employment. See *Butler v. Townsend*, 126 N. Y. 105, 112, 26 N. E. 1017; *Quinn v. Lighterage Co.*, 23 Fed. 363; *The Harold*, 21 Fed. 428; *The Servia*, 44 Fed. 943; *The Ravensdale*, 63 Fed. 624; *The Bolivia*, 59 Fed. 626. These cases are not precisely parallel; but they involve the same principle, and the cases of *Killea v. Faxon*, 125 Mass. 485; *Tube Co. v. Bedell*, 96 Pa. St. 176; and *Ewan v. Lippincott*, 47 N. J. Law, 192,—seem to be indistinguishable.

The libel is dismissed, but without costs.

#### THE GREAT NORTHERN.

#### BELGIAN AMERICAN MARITIME CO. v. THE GREAT NORTHERN.

(District Court, E. D. Virginia. March 2, 1896.)

1. SALVAGE—TOWAGE ON HIGH SEAS.

Towing a disabled vessel on the high seas, owing to the latent danger from the multiform accidents to which ships are constantly liable, is always a salvage service.

2. SAME—VALUE OF SALVAGE SERVICES.

The value of a salvage service consisting in a towage upon the high seas is to be estimated by the circumstances of the two vessels, and by the conditions of wind and sea prevailing at the time the service is entered upon, and by the casualties which experience teaches practical seamen are liable to happen in the ordinary course of events while the service continues; and the fact that the weather and sea afterwards prove favorable is not a reason for diminishing the award.

3. SAME—AMOUNT OF COMPENSATION.

\$10,000 awarded to a whaleback steamship of about 2,300 gross tonnage, worth \$100,000, bound from Tampico, Mex., to New York, with a cargo worth about \$137,000, for towing to Newport News a steamship of over 3,000 gross tonnage, in ballast, worth \$100,000, which was found with a broken propeller shaft about 14 miles northeast of Cape Hatteras; the service being commenced in a rough sea, and the hawsers of the towed vessel being got aboard of the whaleback with great difficulty and danger; the service lasting nearly 24 hours, and delaying the towing vessel two days on her regular trip.

This is a libel by the owners and crew of the steamship *Sagamore* against the steamship *Great Northern* for an award of salvage.

The *Sagamore* is a steamship of the whaleback type, of about 2,300 tons gross, and 1,801 tons net, with triple expansion, vertical engines of 1,400 horse power indicated, and nominal horse power 350, English register. Her home port is Antwerp, in the kingdom of Belgium, and her owner is the Belgian American Maritime Company. She is built of steel. Her length is about 315 feet, beam about 38 feet, and depth about 25 feet. Her highest carrying capacity is about 3,600 tons; her registered tonnage, English measurement, is 1,379 tons; and she was two years old September 23, 1895. Her speed was about 10 or 11 knots per hour, loaded as she was. On May 25, 1895, while bound from the port of Tampico, Mexico, to New York, with a valuable cargo, she sighted the *Great Northern* off Cape Hatteras, bound from Philadelphia