

OCEANA IS BLAMED FOR CHANNEL CRASH

British Court Decides Against B. and O. Company and Exculpates German Craft.

CAUSTIC COMMENT ON CASE

Not Pleasant for Britons to Learn That the Pisagua, a Sailing Ship, Was Better Navigated.

Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

LONDON, May 4.—The average Englishman's complacent confidence that everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds has received some rude shocks of late. One is in the finding in the case of the Oceana-Pisagua collision in the English Channel on March 16, which was brought by the Peninsular and Oriental Company against the owners of the Pisagua for damages. The President of the court found the Oceana alone to blame and gave judgment against the Oceana.

The President pointed out that the vessels were on nearly opposite courses. The Captain of the Oceana was not on the bridge when the collision occurred, and the pilot had gone to his cabin, leaving the chief officer and a supernumerary second officer on the bridge, within about five minutes of the collision. The chief officer left the bridge for the chartroom, and in his absence for about a minute the supernumerary second officer was the only person left. But he said that he did not at any time regard himself as responsible for the navigation of the vessel.

The result was that it was difficult for court to decide who had control of the navigation at the time. The chief officer said that although he gave the order to port the helm when he saw the vessel was showing a flare, it was then for the pilot to give further orders.

A Lascar lookout on the Oceana said that he saw the Pisagua's green light three-quarters of a mile away, and sounded the gong. The officers' estimate of distance differed, and the lights were differently described. The chief officer actually stated that he was waiting for the Pisagua to alter her course, although he knew she was a sailing ship, and the obligation was on him.

Between a bad lookout, divided authority, and the chief officer's conception of his duty, the vessels were nearly on top of each other, the President said. He held that the Oceana was quite starboarded and gone under the Pisagua's stern, and no blast was blown and no indications given to the Pisagua of the Oceana's course.

The President said he was struck with the appearance of the witnesses for the Pisagua, and believed their story.

The Star says it is not pleasant reading for the British public to find this German sailing ship more skillfully and carefully navigated than a P. & O. steamer.

"It strikes us that more is due to the public than the irony of an action for damages brought by the culprit against the victim. We have got to wake up in our mercantile marine."