TORONTO ADMIRALTY DISTRICT. 1896

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN.....PLAINTIFF; April 16.

VS.

THE SHIP "*CITY OF WINDSOR*".....DEFENDANT.

AND

GEORGE ALLAN SYMES..... PLAINTIFF;

VS.

THE SHIP "*CITY OF WINDSOR*".....DEFENDANT.

Maritime law—Crown's rights in enforcing maritime lien—Priority of master's lien—Writ of Extent—Costs.

Where the Crown invokes the aid of a Court of Admiralty to enforce a maritime lien, it is in no higher position than an ordinary suitor, and its rights must be determined in such court by the rules and principles applicable to all claims and suitors alike.

2. Where the Crown had sued the owners of a steamship for damages to a Government canal occasioned by the ship colliding therewith, but had obtained judgment subsequent in date to one obtained by the master of the ship upon a claim for wages and disbursements accrued and made after the time of such collision, the latter judgment was accorded priority over that held by the Crown.

3. Where a party in an action *in rem* has incurred costs which have benefited not only himself but parties in other actions against the *res*, the costs so incurred by him will, if the proceeds of the property are insufficient to satisfy all claims in the various actions, be paid to him out of the fund in court before any other payment is made thereout.

Semble, where the Crown pursues its remedy by Writ of Extent against the owners of a ship, it can only take under the Writ of Extent the property of the debtor at the time of the issue of the Writ. If the debtor has assigned his property before that, the Crown can realize nothing under the Writ in respect to the *res*.

THIS was a motion made on behalf of the Crown in the cause first above mentioned. In this action the

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Crown recovered judgment against the said ship for the sum of $3,581.65, and costs of action, and the said ship, her tackle, apparel and furniture was condemned in the said sum and the costs of the action.

Prior to this action an action was instituted against the said ship on behalf of one George Allan Symes and judgment was given in his behalf for the sum of $1,341.04; the facts in regard to which are set out more particularly in the judgment of the Local Judge in Admiralty reported in 4 Ex. C. R. 362, which judgment was affirmed on appeal to the Exchequer Court (1).

The present motion was one made on behalf of the Crown to settle the question of priority between these two claims as against the proceeds of the said ship, which were insufficient to satisfy both claims.

The motion came on for argument on the 26th day of March, 1896.

R. Gregory Cox for the Crown:

The claim of the Crown is twofold. It is based upon the maritime lien of the Crown for injury to the Crown's property, and is also based upon the Canal Regulations. The question in dispute is the priority of this lien over the master's wages.

The accident occurred through the faulty condition of the engine or the negligence of the engineer.

A lien for damages takes priority to claims ex-contractu and the master's claim is ex-contractu. [*Williams & Bruce* (2) and cases there cited; The *Elin* (3).]

A lien for subsequent wages was postponed to a lien for damages. The cases supporting this relate to foreign ships, but the rule is the same, I submit, in the case of British ships (4).

(1) *See* 4 Ex. C. R. 400.
(2) Adm. Prac. 2nd ed. 80.
(3) 8 P. D. 39, 129.
(4) Stockton's Adm. Dig. 120, and citations from *Roscoe*.

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Argument of Counsel.

As to the effect of the Canal Regulations, I refer you to section 29 thereof.

The defence sets up the giving of a bond, but see the *Merle* (1), and see the *Enterprise* (2) as to priority of lien for damages over master's wages.

As to the costs of sale and the costs of the writ and arrest, these I admit should be paid in priority of all claims.

J. F. Canniff for George A. Symes.

The priority of a damage lien to a lien ex-contractu is only allowed in those cases where the ship is a foreign one, and the owner is not bankrupt. But in this case the evidence shows the ship is a British one, and the owner is insolvent. The Crown took possession under its statutory right to seize and sell the ship. The ship was then released upon a bond being given for $5,000, the bondsmen being indemnified by the mortgagees of the ship who intervened in the case of *Symes* v. *Windsor* (3). The bond was taken because the Crown knew that the ship might become subject to other maritime liens. The Crown having then set free the ship to incur these liens, first protecting themselves by the bond, should not be given priority over the master's claim for wages, &c., accruing after the date of the accident to the canal; the master having no other source to look to for his claim. The *Elin* (4); the *Chimæra* (5); the *Linda Flor* (6); the *Benares* (7); the *Duna* (8).

These are all cases of foreign ships where there was no suggestion of the owner's bankruptcy.

Maclachlan on Shipping (9); *Coote's Ad. Prac.* (10);

(1) 2 Asp. ML. C. 402.
(2) 1 Lowell 455.
(3) 4 Ex. C. R. 362.
(4) 8 P. D. 129.
(5) Ibid.
(6) Swab. 309.
(7) 7 Not. of Cas. (Suppl). 53.
(8) 5 L. T. N. S. 217.
(9) 4 Ed. p. 742.
(10) P. 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142.

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Kay on Merch. Shipping (1); *Foards on Merch. Shipping* (2); and Mr. Coote's article in 49 *Law Magazine*, p. 146-153.]

The Crown having submitted to the jurisdiction of the court must conform to its rules and practice relative to the disposal of the ship's proceeds.

[*Attorney-General* v. *Radloff* (3); *Zoe* (4); *Secy. State for War* v. *Chubb* (5); *H. M. S. Thetis* (6); *The Athol* (7).]

Then as to the costs, the master is in any event entitled to his costs of the action up to and inclusive of procuring the payment of the proceeds into court; these costs having been incurred by him for the benefit of all claimants to the fund.

[*The Panthea* (8); *Immacolata Concezione* (9); *The Sherbro* (10); *Williams and Bruce's Ad. Prac.* (11).]

R. Gregory Cox, in reply.—I cite *Merchants Bank* v. *Graham* (12); and *The Gordon Gauthier* (13).

As to the effect of taking a bond it is well known that the taking of security does not release the statutory lien unless it is the intention of the parties.

McDougall, L. J., now (April 16th, 1896) delivered judgment.

This is a motion to determine the priorities between the claims of the plaintiffs in the above two actions, and came on to be argued before me on the 25th March last. A brief recital of the facts is necessary to a consideration of the questions involved. The *City of Windsor* is a British ship. She plied on Lake Ontario, between St. Catharines and Toronto in the summer of

(1) P. 380, 519, (1894).
(2) P. 217, (1880).
(3) 10 Ex. 84.
(4) 11 P. D. 72.
(5) 43 L. T. N. S. 83.
(6) 3 Hagg. 14.
(7) 1 Wm. Rob. 374.
(8) Asp. Mar. Law Cases, 133.
(9) 9 P. D. 37.
(10) 5 Asp. Mar. Law Cases, 88.
(11) P. 468.
(12) 27 Grant. 524.
(13) 4 Ex. C. R. 354.

1894. Her owner, who was insolvent, was one S. T. Reeves. The Third National Bank and the Peninsular Savings Bank, both of Detroit, were mortgagees for a sum in excess of her value. On the 30th May, 1894, through the negligence of the engineer of the *City of Windsor* the vessel ran into and greatly damaged the gates of one of the locks of the Welland Canal, a government work. The *City of Windsor* was immediately seized by order of the Government Superintendent of the Canal and held to answer for the damage occasioned by the collision. This seizure was made pursuant to Section 29 of the Canal Regulations which is as follows:—

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"29. All vessels.....as aforesaid shall be liable for any injury or damage they may do to any lock, bridge, boat .....whether the same may arise from the fault, neglect or mismanagement of the master or person in charge or from his inattention to the Canal Regulations or from accident; and every penalty which may be duly imposed under these regulations by the superintending engineer and declared in the regulations as against the owner, navigator or person in charge of any vessel.....as aforesaid, whether the same be for non-payment of tolls or for any fine duly imposed, or for any sum demanded by the superintending engineer, or person in charge, of any canal as compensation for any injury done shall be chargeable upon such vessel.....as aforesaid. And the superintending engineer of the canal is authorized and required to seize and detain any such vessel.....as aforesaid with her cargo and appurtenances at the risk of the owner or owners until the payment of such tolls, penalty or compensation as aforesaid, and in default of such payment thereof the superintending engineer or person in charge of the canal may proceed to sell by public auction any such vessel.....after

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having first given two weeks notice of the day of such intended sale, such notice to be inserted in one or more of the public newspapers published in or near the place where such seizure shall have been made, at least two clear weeks prior to the day of sale."

Section 30 enacts that:—Any vessel incurring a fine or doing damage in any of the canals may be stopped or detained until the fine or compensation for injury done shall be paid or until security be given for the payment thereof.

On the 21st day of June, 1894, the Superintendent of the Canal took a bond from the owner in two sureties in the penal sum of five thousand dollars to secure the payment of the sum of thirty-five hundred dollars, the estimated damage. The bond contained a clause that the taking of such bond would in "no wise release or discharge any maritime or other lien on said vessel for the said damage." The condition of the bond was that if the obligor should pay the full amount of damages, costs and expenses within thirty days after an account thereof in writing should have been delivered or sent by mail to the obligors or one of them, the obligation was to be void; otherwise to remain in full force.

On the 27th of August, 1894, the mortgagees, the Third National Bank and the Peninsular Savings Bank, took possession of the vessel under their mortgages. On the 31st day of August, 1894, the master commenced an action against the *City of Windsor* for wages and disbursements. On the 3rd day of December, 1894, an action was commenced by the Crown against the ship *City of Windsor* for the damages occasioned by the collision in May, 1894. In January, 1895, the action of the master against the *City of Windsor* was tried, and subsequently judgment was pronounced in favour of the plaintiff for $1,341.04 and costs, and the

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vessel directed to be sold pursuant to the usual practice of the court. An appeal was taken from this judgment to the Exchequer Court, which appeal was subsequently dismissed on the 7th day of September, 1895.

On the 18th day of July, 1895, the case of *The Queen* v. *The City of Windsor* was tried; the master, Symes, and the mortgagees, The Third National Bank and the Peninsular Savings Bank of Detroit, intervened as defendants, and a decree was pronounced in favour of the Crown for $3,581.65 and costs, and the vessel directed to be sold. But a clause in the decree directed that if the sum realized by the sale should be insufficient to realize the plaintiff's claim, the rights of the plaintiff against the sureties in the bond should not be affected. The defendants, The Third National Bank and the Peninsular Savings Bank, were ordered to pay the costs of the action; and a further clause of the decree directed that all questions of the priority of the liens and marshalling of the assets and costs against the defendant Symes should be reserved. The plaintiff in the action of *Symes* v. *The City of Windsor* conducted a sale of the said vessel as having obtained the first decree. The vessel was sold on the 6th day of December, 1895, $3,500, being a sum insufficient to satisfy all the claims against her, covered by these judgments. This motion is now made for further directions and to determine the rights and priorities of the successful plaintiffs in the above actions to the fund in court, which consists only of the proceeds of the sale of the ship. At the outset of the argument Mr. Cox, counsel for the plaintiff in *The Queen* v. *The City of Windsor*, conceded that the costs of the warrant, arrest and costs of the sale should be allowed as a first charge upon the proceeds in court, as all the parties benefited by this expenditure; but he claimed priority for the lien for damages in the action of *The Queen* v. *The*

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City of Windsor to the claim of the master for wages and disbursements, and for any costs other than as above admitted. He argued that a claim for damages took precedence to a claim ex-contractu, citing *The Elin* (1).

I have procured a certificate from the Registrar which shows that as to the master's claim, items amounting to $260.68 are for items for indebtedness which arose before the date of the collision with the canal gates in May, 1894; but that items amounting to $1,080.36 represent the wages and disbursements which accrued after the 30th May, 1894, the date of the collision. It was admitted that the claim of the Crown constituted a maritime lien; it was also admitted that if the canal authorities had chosen to pursue their statutory powers they could have sold the *City of Windsor* at the time they seized the vessel if the owner refused or neglected to pay the sum the Superintendent assessed as the amount of the damage done to the lock. This course was not followed, but the vessel was released and the bond taken. It is true that the Crown in the bond expressly reserved their maritime lien, but they are now compelled to come into court in order to realize their lien, and invoking the aid of the court and being now before it, they are in no higher position, I take it, with reference to their claim, than any private suitor and must have their rights determined by the rules and principles applicable to all claims and suitors alike (2). This is not a proceeding by Writ of Extent but is an action by the Crown to realize, acccording to the usual practice of the court, a maritime lien for damages arising from a collision causing injury to Crown property. A Writ of Extent, as such,

(1) 8 P. D. 129.

(2) *Attorney-General* v. *Radloff*, 10 Exch. 93; *Zoe*, 11 Prob. 72; *Clarkson* v. *Attorney-General of Canada*, 15 O. R. 632; also reported 16 Ont. App. 202; *Secy. of State for War* v. *Chubb*, 43 L. T. N. S. 83.

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will only bind the owners' interest in the ship and will not touch the interest of the mortgagees. The Crown can only take under the Writ of Extent the property of the debtor at the time of the issue of the writ. If the debtor has assigned or transferred his property, of course the Crown cannot take it (1). Here the owners' interest in the ship at the time of the injury was practically nothing, for the mortgages, executed by the owner long before the collision, were far in excess of the value of the ship. The Crown could not retake the ship under its statutory powers having taken security and released her. The ship was under arrest in another action in December, 1894, when the Crown commenced its action, and the present contest, therefore, relates entirely to the proceeds which have been brought into court in the case of *Symes* v. *City of Windsor*. To reach these funds the Crown is compelled to come into court, and as I have said before, is, I think, bound to submit to the practice of the court as to the disposition of the proceeds.

Then as to the priority of the liens for damage or liens in the nature of reparation for wrongs done, how do they rank? *Maclachlan on Merchant Shipping* (2), says:

> They have their origin in positive law and in the policy of quieting strife, by distributing compensation for injuries done at the expense of the wrongdoer. They are severally co-extensive with the statutory tonnage rate, and failing a fund otherwise supplied, rank against ship and freight. Of two successive collisions with the same ship, sufferers by the earlier standing to the sufferers by the later in no relation of demerit or obligation, retain their priority of claim against the fund on the principle of the legal maxim, *Qui prior est tempore, potior est in jure.* Such liens rank against the ship and freight in derogation of any rights of ownership, or rights by mortgage or beneficial lien existing at the time of the collision. They acquire thereby priority over mortgages, prior bottomry, wages, pilotage, towage and salvage and subsist adversely to proprietary interest and claims.

(1) *Ex-P. Postmaster General*, in Re Bonham, 10 Chy. D. 595 and 603.

(2) 4th ed. p. 741.

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The writer then goes on to say:

A far more difficult question relates to the attachment on the *res* of subsequent beneficial liens. These considered in relation to merit appear *primâ facie* entitled to priority over all interests of any kind that have shared in the advantage, and taking into account the fact that damage-plaintiffs are not confined to a suit *in rem* for their remedy, there would be like difficulty in according to beneficial liens this precedence but for the case of foreign ships and the bankruptcy or insolvency of a British owner.

In the case of foreign ships subsequent wages have been refused priority over damage-plaintiffs (1), because the mariners could recover against the foreign owners.

There has, however, been no express decision as to the position of a claim for wages earned subsequent to the collision, where the *res* is a British ship, especially where as here the owner is insolvent. Maclachlan says, at page 742:

Under the bankruptcy of a British owner their claim presents a different aspect suggestive of equitable considerations favourable and unfavourable to the seamen. They have been the active cause of the damage. The sufferer is thereby thrown for compensation upon a deficient fund. That fund, however, such as it is, has benefited by their services. In a very extreme case therefore the court may take account only of the services rendered since the collision happened, disregarding the surplus of the claim due to them at common law and modify even that estimate in consideration of the dividend to be expected from the rest of the bankrupt's estate. *Coote's Admiralty Practice*, at page 142, states "that where the owners of a damaged vessel are insolvent so that the only fund for the payment of maritime liens is the *res* upon which they are charges, it would appear (though I can find no adjudicated case) that the court would apply some different principle.....If, therefore, a different principle, which is not stated, (referring to the *Benares*, 7 Notes of Cases, Supplement 53) applies to cases where the owners of the ship which has done damage are insolvent, it becomes necessary to inquire what such principle is and what are the extent and limits of its application. It can be no other than an equitable principle, and its object must therefore be to protect third parties having a *bonâ fide* interest in the *res* owing to their having conferred a benefit from being left without

(1) *The Elin*, 8 P. D. 129; *The Linda Flor*, 4 Jur. N. S. 172.

remuneration through the all-absorbing claim for damage. But in what way can this be done except at the expense of the suit or in damage? He therefore must abate so much of his claim as will compensate those who have preserved what the law has made his own *res*, or have rendered it available for his use by navigating and bringing it home, *i.e.* wages, pilotage, and towage must be made in the first instance.

Kay on Merchant Shipping at page 380 says:

A wages lien yields priority to the lien which attaches to the ship for damages done by collision *except perhaps in the case of a British ship with respect to wages earned after the date of a collision.* In the case of a foreign ship, the seamen's lien for wages earned after the collision, but not on a subsequent voyage, is postponed to the damage lien on the principle that there is less hardship in leaving a foreign seaman to seek his remedy in person in a foreign court than there would be in leaving a sufferer from collision to the like course, but the result might be modified if the foreign owner were shown to be bankrupt.

Again at page 519 the same author remarks:

The damage lien takes precedence of the liens of pilotage, bottomry and wages except where earned on a British ship subsequent to the collision.

Mr. Coote, the author of *Coote's Admiralty Practice*, in an interesting article in 49 *Law Magazine*, page 153, (1853) says, (speaking of the same subject):

I think it probable that subsequent salvage would be entitled to be paid before the damage in all cases, and wages, pilotage and towage would be equally entitled in cases where the owners are bankrupt and the *res* is insufficient to meet all demands.

It appears to me, in the light of these dicta, and from a perusal of the cases cited in support of the views above propounded, that it may be safely laid down as a principle to be applied to the two cases I am considering, that in the case of a British ship, even where the owner is insolvent, the damage lien will take precedence to all antecedent liens; but that such damage lien will be postponed to a claim for wages earned after the collision on that voyage, and it will also be postponed to the claims for

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subsequent wages, salvage and pilotage. The facts in these two cases against the *City of Windsor*, however show a course of dealing and claims arising thereunder of a different character; the wages or claims for services arising immediately after the collision and relating to the bringing of the vessel into port safely in continuation of the voyage during which the alleged damage is said to have arisen. In this case the vessel was plying between local ports, part of the time making two trips a day. The sufferer from the damage did not allow the vessel to proceed on the voyage after the wrong doing. In pursuance of the extraordinary statutory powers which the Crown possesses, the ship causing the injury was immediately arrested and detained. It was in the power of the Crown within a couple of weeks to sell the vessel, and out of the proceeds of any such sale to satisfy all claims for damage. The vessel was detained for about three weeks and the Crown then chose of its own motion to release her on receiving a bond as security for their claim. The vessel resumed her regular series of voyages and the master employed another engineer in the place of the man guilty of the negligence contributing to the accident causing the damage complained of, and on the faith of the damage claim having been secured by a bond, the master contracted new liabilities and made a number of proper disbursements for the successful management of the ship after the release. He has duly recovered a judgment for these wages and disbursements, and it was declared that he had a maritime lien for the same, and the ship was ordered to be sold to satisfy his judgment in respect of them. After the date of the master obtaining his judgment, the Crown brings its action to trial and recovers a judgment for its damage claim. Under such circumstances would it be equitable or just to postpone it to the later claim of

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the Crown for damages? The principle which underlies all the decisions establishing the priority of damage claims is that the person receiving the injury is commonly without redress except by proceeding against the ship itself, and further, as to wages due at the date of the collision, the master and seamen's existing claims for wages are postponed to the damage claim because being in charge of the ship at the time of the doing of the damage they are themselves considered wrong-doers and the sufferer from their assumed negligence has therefore upon ordinary equitable principles a prior right to be paid his damages.

No real question arises in the present cases as to wages earned before the date of the collision, the master's whole claim for wages and disbursements, except to the extent of $260.68, (according to the certificate of the Registrar) accrued after the collision. It may be that if priority is given to the master's claim and costs, beyond the sum of $260.68, the effect will be to practically absorb the whole fund in court. If this is the result, it is unfortunate; but it must be remembered that the Crown still possesses a remedy upon the bond given by the owner, the giving of which by the owner procured for him release of his ship. The owner was shown by the evidence to have been insolvent at the date of the collision; and during the period when the master's present claim accrued. The master's lien for wages and disbursements for which priority is sought arose after the collision. The best opinion I can form is that all claims arising after the release of the vessel in the nature of the maritime liens for wages earned or disbursements made by the master in or in preparation for the subsequent voyages, should take priority to the claim of the Crown for damages arising from the collision on the 30th May, 1894, and

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represented by their judgment recovered in this court on the 18th July, 1895.

Next arises the question as to the master's costs, whether these should not be given priority in any event? The general doctrine may be stated to be that where a party in an action *in rem* has incurred costs which have benefited not only himself but parties in other actions against the same property, the costs so incurred by him for the benefit of all, will, if the proceeds of the property are insufficient to satisfy all claims in the various actions, be paid to him out of the fund in court in priority and before any other payment is made thereout (1). In the present cases, the fund has been placed in court as a result of the action of *Symes* v. *The City of Windsor*. It is admitted by counsel for the Crown that costs of the arrest and possession money, and costs of sale, should be allowed priority; but he contends that the costs in connection with the master's action down to the decree, other than as above, should not be allowed priority but should form part of his general claim and rank with it. This, no doubt, might be a proper direction if the ship had been sold prior to decree and before the trial of the master's action and the proceeds brought into court, but in the present cases the mortgagees who had intervened would not consent to any sale of the ship and the ship was accordingly in the possession of the marshal until the final decree was pronounced in *Symes* v. *City of Windsor* and until after the appeal from that judgment had been heard and adjudicated upon.

I do not see in view of these facts how I can with justice make any apportionment of these costs, but must hold that both as to the costs of his action and the costs of the arrest and the sale of the said ship, the

(1) The *Panthea*, 1 Asp. Mar. 9 P. D. 37. The *Sherbro*, 5 Asp. L. C. 133. *Immacolata Concezione* Mar. L. C. 88.

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master is equally entitled to a first claim therefor on the fund in court. As to the costs of this motion, I direct that the costs of the proctor for the master be taxed and allowed him and paid out of the fund in court, and after that is paid, the amount of the master's said judgment and costs, except the said sum of $260.68. If there is any portion of the fund remaining in court after these payments, I direct that the costs of the Crown on this motion shall be first paid out of such balance, and any further balance remaining in court should be paid out to the Crown on their judgment in the action for damages in priority to the said $260.68, the part of the master's judgment herein which accrued before the date of the collision.

Judgment accordingly.

Solicitors for G. A. Symes: *Caniff & Caniff.*

Solicitor for Crown: *J. C. Eccles.*

Solicitors for ship and interveners: *Wigle & Rodd.*