

(No. 1209.)

“ RHONDDA ” (S.S.)

AND

“ ALSACE LORRAINE ” (S.S.)

Report of the Court.

Police Court, 20th December 1881.

The “ Rhondda,” official No. 70,273, is an iron steamship, built at Hartlepool in 1874, and owned by F. Edwards of Cardiff. She left Marseilles in ballast for Samos on the 27th November 1881 under the command of John Powell Stevenson, who holds a certificate of competency as master, numbered 0,765. At about 2 a.m. on the 30th she was rounding the Faro Point at a distance of about half a mile from land, Captain Stevenson being at the time on the bridge. The night was clear and the sea smooth; the Faro Light bore N.W. $\frac{1}{2}$ N., and the ship going at a speed of ten knots. On rounding the point a red light was sighted on the starboard bow. The “ Rhondda” ported her helm, but the ship did not answer, owing probably to the strong current near Faro Point, and to the ship being in ballast. The engines were then stopped and reversed full speed, but this did not prevent the collision, and the other ship, which subsequently proved to be the French steamer the “ Alsace Lorraine,” coming from Brindisi for Marseilles with a cargo of wine was struck nearly amidships, and shortly after she foundered. The “ Rhondda” immediately after the collision sent two boats in quest of the other steamer, but the search proved useless. The “ Rhondda” was damaged in her starboard and port bows and came to Malta to be repaired.

The evidence heard in this inquiry was necessarily limited to the watch of the “ Rhondda,” as the crew of the French steamer were not available at Malta. It appears that the French steamer ought to have kept the Calabrian side of the Straits in going through it from the east, and nothing in the state of the weather justified her keeping so close to the Sicilian Coast. The master of the “ Rhondda,” after sighting the other steamer, did all that a seaman could possibly do to avoid the collision. The Court, however, regrets that in doubling the Faro Point Captain Stevenson did not give it a wider berth, by so doing he would have avoided the strong current near Faro, which probably prevented his ship from answering her helm as promptly as she would have done, and he would, moreover, have sighted the light of the French steamer at a greater distance, and clear of the Messura Lights.

The Court, having carefully inquired into the circumstances of the case attending the above-mentioned shipping casualty, finds that the collision is to be attributed to the strength of the current, which prevented the “ Rhondda” from getting out of the way of the other steamer; and to the French steamer having kept the wrong side of the Straits. The Court therefore must disapprove the course adopted by Captain Stevenson in entering narrow waters in such close proximity to the shore; but finds no reason either to cancel or suspend his certificate.

(Signed) GUG^d. RAPINET,
Magistrate.

We concur.

(Signed) R. C. DYER, R.N., } Assessors.
S. STAINES. }