

(No. 2070.)

"ALUDRA" (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of the formal investigation held at the Sessions House, Westminster, on the 30th day of January 1884, before H. C. ROTHERY, Esquire, Wreck Commissioner, assisted by Captains HIGHT and RONALDSON, as Assessors, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the steamship "ALUDRA," near Texel Island, on the 12th of December 1883.

*Report of Court.*

The Court, having carefully inquired into the circumstances of the above-mentioned shipping casualty, finds, for the reasons annexed, that the stranding of the said ship was due to the violence of the gale, which forced her on to a lee shore, she being at the time light and high out of the water, and that the master took the proper course in running her into the inlet, where she grounded, instead of allowing her to drive broadside on to the beach.

The Court is not asked to make any order as to costs.  
Dated this 30th day of January 1884.

(Signed) H. C. ROTHERY,  
Wreck Commissioner.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) EDWARD HIGHT, } Assessors.  
A. RONALDSON, }

*Annex to the Report.*

This case was heard at the Sessions House, Westminster, on the 30th of January 1884, when Mr. McConnell appeared for the Board of Trade. The managing owner and the master of the "Aludra" were present, but were not represented by either counsel or solicitor. Six witnesses having been produced by the Board of Trade and examined, Mr. McConnell handed in a statement of the questions upon which the Board of Trade desired the opinion of the Court. The managing owner then addressed the Court on his own behalf, and Mr. McConnell having been heard for the Board of Trade, the Court proceeded to give judgment on the questions on which its opinion had been asked. The circumstances of the case are as follow:—

The "Aludra" is an iron screw steamship belonging to the Port of Shoreham, of 1,502 tons gross, and 966 tons net register, and is fitted with engines of 140 horse power. She was built at Sunderland in the year 1879, and at the time of the casualty, which forms the subject of the present inquiry, she was the property of Mr. Robert Horne Penney, of Southwick, in the county of Sussex, and others, Mr. Robert Horne Penney being the managing owner. She left Hamburg at about 9 a.m. of the 10th of December last with a crew of 21 hands all told and in water ballast bound to Cardiff, and at 11.30 a.m. of the following day was off the Borkum Lightship, which she passed, leaving it on the starboard hand at the distance of about half a mile. A W.N.W. course was then steered to make Terschelling Lightship, which, according to the master, they sighted at about 5 p.m., bearing south, distant about 7 miles. The same course was continued till 11 p.m., when it was altered half a point to the west, to W. by N.  $\frac{1}{2}$  N., but at midnight, thinking that he had got a sufficient offing, the master put her upon a W. by S.  $\frac{1}{2}$  S. course down channel, and she continued on that course till 3 a.m. the following day, when a strong gale sprang up from the N.W., which forced her head off to the S.W. Finding that she could make no way with her engines the master ordered the main trysail and main staysail to be set to bring her head to the wind,

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but we are told that they had very little effect. At 3.30 a.m. they sighted the light on Texel Island, bearing S. by W., distant from 8 to 10 miles, and from that time the vessel seems to have drifted bodily before the gale in a S.S.E. direction. At about 6 a.m. the master, fearing that she would go broadside on to the beach, and that in that case they would in all probability be all lost, determined, after consulting his officers, to run for an inlet just north of Texel Island. Accordingly he ordered the main trysail to be taken in, but in doing so it was blown to pieces, and having set the fore staysail the helm was put hard-a-starboard, and she was headed direct for the land. She passed the Texel Light, and after bumping over the banks became fast at about 8.30, with the Texel Light bearing about W. by S., distant  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles. There she remained till 5 a.m. of the following day, when a fishing boat took them all off and landed them at a place called Coksdrop; and the crew having refused to return, they were on the 18th sent home, the captain and two officers alone remaining by her. There, we are told, she still remains in charge of the chief officer, whilst the captain and the second officer have come to this country to attend the inquiry. I should add that, according to the statement of Mr. Penney, the managing owner, the vessel had originally cost them, including extras, 20,200*l.*, and at the time of the casualty the hull was insured for 19,000*l.* and the freight and outfit for 1,000*l.*; so that whether she comes off or not will not make much difference to Mr. Penney and his co-owners, for if she becomes a total loss they will get the value of a new ship after running her for about 5 years, and if she comes off she will be repaired at the expense of the underwriters.

These being the facts of the case, the first question on which the Board of Trade have asked for our opinion is, "Whether the vessel was properly and sufficiently ballasted?" It seems that she had three large water-ballast tanks capable of containing 280 tons, besides a small ballast tank aft holding 20 tons, making a total of 300 tons. Besides this, her engines and boilers may be taken to have weighed about 140 tons, and she had, according to the chief engineer, about 97 tons of coal on board at the time of the casualty, making a total dead weight on board of between 500 and 600 tons altogether. With this, we are told, she drew 8 feet 9 forward and 12 feet 10 aft, which, according to the owner, would put the top of the propeller about a foot under water. The question, then, is whether, with this amount of dead weight on board, she was properly and sufficiently ballasted. It is a question purely for the assessors, and on which I should not venture to offer any opinion. They tell me that a sailing vessel of 1,500 tons would probably not have more than between 500 and 600 tons of ballast in her, and that she was probably as well, if not better ballasted than a great number of steamers that run up and down the coast. On the other hand, we are told by the master that, after the gale commenced, the propeller was hardly ever in the water, so that the engines, although working at full speed, had no effect on her. Whilst, then, the assessors are of opinion that it might perhaps have been better if she had had more ballast, having regard to the fact that it was mid-winter, and that with the wind from the westward she would have the Dutch coast under her lee, they are not prepared to say that she was not properly or not sufficiently ballasted.

The second question which we are asked is, "Whether proper courses were set and steered after passing the Borkum Light, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tides and currents, and proper steps taken to secure the safety of the vessel?" In steering a W.N.W. course after passing the Borkum Lightship, and then when she had got a sufficient offing a W. by S.  $\frac{1}{2}$  S. course, the master in our opinion steered proper courses, and all proper steps seem to have been taken to secure the safety of the vessel.

The third question which we are asked is, "Whether on the morning of the 12th of December, when it was found that the vessel was drifting to leeward, every possible effort was made to keep the vessel off the land?" It was not until the gale struck her, and caused her head to pay off to S.W., that there was any danger of her going ashore. And in setting the main trysail and the main

staysail to bring her head to the wind, and in afterwards setting the fore topsail and running for the inlet just north of the Texel Light, the assessors think that the master acted quite properly; for, had she gone broadside on to the beach, in all probability they would all have perished. It was suggested whether it would not have been well to have dropped both anchors, but the assessors think that with the wind blowing as it was dead on shore, they would not have held her.

The fourth question which we are asked is, "What was the cause of the stranding?" The cause of the stranding was the violence of the gale, which forced her, being at the time light and high out of the water, towards the shore, leaving the master the option either of letting her go broadside on the beach, or of running her into the inlet, and in our opinion he took the proper course.

In answer to the fifth question, "Whether the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?" We can only say that in our opinion she was.

The sixth and last question is, "Whether the master is in default?" and it is added that, "the Board of Trade are of opinion that the certificate of the master should be dealt with." In our opinion no blame attaches to the master, and we shall consequently not deal with his certificate.

The Court was not asked to make any order as to costs.

(Signed) H. C. ROTHERY,  
Wreck Commissioner.

We concur.  
(Signed) EDWARD HIGHT, } Assessors.  
A. RONALDSON, }

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