

(No. 6086.)

“DOVE.”

Bahama Islands ; }  
Long Cay, }  
Fortune Island. }

Crooked Island District.

At a Court of Enquiry held this First day of August, One thousand Nine hundred (1900), at the Police Office in the Island of Long Cay, Fortune Island, aforesaid, before me, JOHN MIGUEL ARANHA, Resident Justice for the District of Crooked Island, and one of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace in and for the Bahama Islands.

In the matter of the stranding and subsequent floating of the British schooner “Dove,” Thos. Esdale, master, of Maitland, Nova Scotia, on Bird Rock Reef, on Sunday, the Twenty-ninth day of July instant, at 4.30 o'clock a.m.

*Report.*

The British schooner “Dove” was built in Noel, Nova Scotia, in 1891, and registered 168 tons. She was owned in Noel, Nova Scotia, by Osmond O'Brien and Company. Her official number was 100,333, and she was classed A1 for 12 years. Her draught of water was 11 ft. forward and 10 ft. aft on this voyage. Her crew consisted of seven men, master included. At the time of the stranding the vessel was on a voyage from Bear River, Nova Scotia, to Cienfuegos, Cuba, with a full and entire cargo of lumber, consigned to Messrs. Castano and Company, of Cienfuegos: the shippers were Clarke Bros., of Bear River, Nova Scotia. The value of the cargo was \$2,496.59. It is not known whether the vessel or cargo was insured. The schooner sailed from Digby, Nova Scotia, in the prosecution of her voyage on the 11th July, at about high tide. Nothing of any importance occurred on the voyage until at about 4 o'clock p.m., of Saturday, the 28th July, when Bird Rock lighthouse was sighted, bearing S.W.; the course steered at the time was S.W., but at about 5 o'clock p.m. it was changed to West to give the Bird Rock reef a wide berth. At about 6 or 7 o'clock p.m. the course was changed to S. by W., and at 8 p.m. Bird Rock light bore East, distant about three miles. The wind was blowing about East. At 8.45 p.m. the schooner was tacked and stood to the northward, heading up about N. by E. At 9.30 p.m. Bird Rock light bore East. The schooner was kept on this tack until 2 o'clock a.m. (Sunday the 29th), when the Bird Rock light bore about South. At this hour the schooner was tacked and headed S.S.E. until 4 a.m., when she was kept off S. ½ W., Bird Rock light then bearing S. by E. At 4.30 o'clock a.m., while steering this course, the schooner suddenly fetched up on the Bird Rock reef. It would appear from the evidence that there was no surf on the reef, the wind was fresh from the East, and the vessel's speed from five

to seven knots per hour. At the time of the stranding the schooner was only under her lower sails, the night was rather squally than otherwise, yet the Bird Rock light could be distinctly seen. Shortly after the schooner struck the reef the master ordered the sails to be lowered, and an anchor to be run out astern; the tide being aflood, it was hoped that she could be hauled off without throwing overboard any of her deck cargo. Early in the morning sundry wreckers arrived alongside and offered their assistance in jettisoning cargo and hauling off the vessel, but it wasn't until about 10 o'clock a.m. that the master decided to lighten the vessel by discharging a portion of her deck cargo. The deck load consisted of 62,000 ft., and 30,000 ft. were accordingly thrown over by the Crooked Island wreckers, assisted by the sailors; with that night's high tide another attempt was made to haul her off, but again without success, except that her head was swung out to sea. The vessel remained in this position all night, when at daybreak the remaining portion of the deck load was thrown overboard. During the day, Monday, the 30th, several ineffectual attempts were made to haul her off, but so many hawsers were parted in these trials that it seemed as if the vessel was doomed; spare sails, ropes and portions of the cargo below deck were moved forward to lighten her stem off the reef, that being the only part of the vessel which was then aground, and just after dark another anchor, with 45 fathoms of chain, was run out, and at 10 30 p.m. the vessel was hauled off, and brought to anchor in five fathoms of water, just outside the reef, where she remained until the next morning, when she was got under weigh and proceeded to Long Cay, where she arrived at 5 o'clock p.m. A portion of the lumber which was jettisoned was landed on the Bird Rock light station, but some went adrift.

*Opinion.*

The stranding of the schooner “Dove” may rightly be attributed to gross ignorance and incompetence on the part of the master, for at 8 o'clock p.m., of the 28th July, Bird Rock light bore East, distant about three miles, and yet with this bearing and distance, on which he could have proceeded on his voyage with all safety, the master thought fit to work his vessel back to windward, actually taking her over the course he had already sailed during the first part of the night.

After the vessel had stranded it was clearly the duty of the master to have at once lightened off the deck load, so as to facilitate the work of hauling her off the bottom; and to have attempted to haul her off with a stem warp, without first lightening her deck cargo, would seem to me inconsistent with the knowledge which a master of a vessel should possess, and the judgment which he should use under such circumstances.

It is my opinion that the stranding of the schooner “Dove” must be attributed to gross ignorance displayed by the master in the navigation of the said schooner.

J. M. ARANHA, R.J.

August 6th, 1900.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 28th day of September, 1900.)