

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 460

Press
~~Mis.~~

Dated

16. 9. 1859

Not to be folded or roughly handled

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*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Marine Department,
from 10th to 16th September 1859.*

No. 29. Read the following letter from J. B. CROWTHER, Esq., Assistant Superintendent of Marine; to T. PYCROFT, Esq., Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George, dated Madras, 7th September 1859, No. 3552.

With reference to that part of the Proceedings of the Madras Government marginally noted, where it is directed that the Master Attendant at Cochin shall be called upon through this Office to explain, why he failed to afford the late Captain Robertson any assistance towards procuring a new yard for the Pattimar "Pownah" and providing her with an efficient Crew, I have the honor to state that in reply to the desired explanation, Mr. Castor has forwarded the enclosed letter and accompaniments, in which, I am instructed by the Superintendent to observe, he appears to have fully and satisfactorily relieved himself from the charge in question.

From JOHN CASTOR, Esq., Master Attendant; to Captain J. B. CROWTHER, Assistant Superintendent of Marine, dated Cochin, 24th August 1859, No. 139.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, dated 15th Instant, No. 3210, enclosing copy of a letter from the late Captain Robertson to the Acting Collector of Tinnevely. Before I proceed further, I beg respectfully to observe that, I write under some disadvantage, arising from the lamentable and melancholy circumstance of the loss of the "Pownah" with all hands on board. In replying to the letter of a Gentleman whom I greatly regret is no more, I am constrained, from a feeling of respect, to refrain from noticing many points which, in justice to myself, I should have been led to do, were I writing under different circumstances.

2. The "Pownah" was taken charge of by me on the 4th December 1858, and in taking charge of the craft, I examined her hull above water, she then appeared staunch, and was very tight, and made no water whatever. The only defect, which was apparent, was the main-yard, and that was broke. She did not appear to require any further repairs. The Native Officer who came in charge of her from Bombay gave a good character of the Vessel.

3. In paragraph 1. of Captain Robertson's letter, it is alleged that, I made ill-health a "plea." Whether the plea was feigned or otherwise I beg to refer you to the enclosed documents.* I was confined to my bed by sickness—sickness contracted in the discharge of my duty to a Ship which was burnt in Port. In January last I was urged to seek a change, but I was unwilling to leave my post until the Shipping season closed.

4. It is stated that I "threw" the "Pownah" entirely on the hands of Captain Robertson. This would imply that, there was much to be done to the Vessel, and that I shrunk from the work. The "Pownah" needed no repairs here, consequently there was no work to be thrown on any one. There was absolutely nothing done to her here, not even by Captain Robertson, as he thought, with me, she appeared staunch. The main-yard was the only work required, and that was executed through my orders† after the spar had been brought from Alleppee.

5. In obedience to the orders of the Superintendent of Marine, I was preparing to send the Pattimar round to Tuticoreen, when I received a letter from Captain Robertson to detain her a little. At this period the funds for which I had applied, to enable me to disburse the expenses, had not reached me, which delayed me a little from engaging a Crew, and replacing the main-yard. This trifling delay, I thought, was of no consequence, as I knew the North East Monsoon would still be strong in the Gulf of Manaar.

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6. On Captain Robertson's arrival here I was scarcely able to stand from rheumatism.* I promptly placed all my establishment† at his disposal, and recommended several spars well adapted for the main-yard of the Pattimar, and which I had selected myself and kept in view. Captain Robertson saw them,‡ but would not purchase any of them and determined to go to Alleppee—unadvised by me. I did not see the remotest necessity for this step, involving both delay and expense. I offered him every facility on the spot, and abundant of good spars were in the market at the time.§ Even in his letter he does not state that he failed to procure a spar here, nor does he show any reason how he came to seek for it in a foreign market, while suitable ones were to be had in the Port where the Vessel was lying. As Captain Robertson had assumed charge of the "Pownah," I could not interfere any further in the matter.

7. The new main yard only carried the "Pownah" out from the inner harbour to the outer roads, and in performing this trivial service it broke in two. Captain Robertson called on me to inform me of the accident, and we decided that he should go on board, and see if the yard could be scaped, or, if a new one be necessary, he was to have brought the dimensions ashore. He went on board, and instead of abiding by what was proposed by both of us, and without making his intentions known to me, and finding the wind fair, he got underweigh and left the Port with the remaining sails—leaving behind some of his accounts unadjusted, which was afterwards done through me. How he was able to foresee that "further assistance could not be depended upon at Cochin" I cannot say. When assistance was offered, it was set aside. I must here mention that when the Pattimar was leaving the Port I was anxious to know Captain Robertson's intentions, and sent the Master Attendant's Cutter after here—but she was unable to overtake her. This abrupt departure surprised me not a little.

8. In paragraph 11. Captain Robertson states that the Crew of the "Pownah" were "worthless." The Crews in this Port are invariably brought to my Office to sign their agreements in my presence; but, on the occasion of the "Pownah's" Crew being engaged, I ordered all the men to be brought to my private dwelling as I was unwell at the time, that I may assist Captain Robertson in the selection. The selection was made in my Verandah by Captain Robertson himself, and in my presence, from a number of smart men who were kept in readiness for the "Pownah," and I am free to confess that I thoroughly approved of the men whom he selected. I would not have hesitated to have gone to Sea myself with the same Crew as left this Port in the "Pownah." As for the Syrang,|| he was a smart Seaman as far as I was able to judge of him in Port, as he worked under me. He held very high testimonials from different Commanders, with whom he served in different climes, and

he was well known in this Port.

9. If Captain Robertson had not come to Cochin, the Pattimar would have been sent round to Tuticoreen in independent charge of this Syrang, and the same Crew would have been engaged for her. I must conscientiously declare that, in this Port, I could not have selected myself, or recommended to others, a better set of men,¶ than those engaged by Captain Robertson, who, I was told, never before sailed with a Lascar Crew. I cannot account for the difference of opinion, between that Officer and myself, regarding the Crew, in any other way but that Captain Robertson, I believe, was unfortunately unable to communicate his commands or his wishes to his Crew in any of the Native languages, and his Crew were ignorant of English. From past experience with native Crews I can assert that, this disadvantage creates much confusion and inconvenience in working a Vessel, particularly in critical moments.

10. The enclosed depositions upon oath, taken before the Magistrate, and other documents which I have enclosed, will, I trust, prove that, notwithstanding my illness, Captain Robertson

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received every assistance which it was in my power to afford. In fact there was *nothing done to the Vessel here*, excepting making a main-yard and engaging and provisioning the Crew, which should have been the work of a week, yet the Vessel was here three weeks after I had made over charge of her.

No. 30. ORDER THEREON, 16th September 1859, No. 460.

The Government are satisfied with the explanation afforded by Captain Castor, Master Attendant at Cochin, in respect to his proceedings in connection with the Pattamar "Pownah."

(Signed) T. PYCROFT,
Chief Secretary.

sd. A. P. W. Begbie.

No. 460. 16 September 1859

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JF

The Superintendent
of Marine ^{with} ₂₀₀₀ ^{enclos.} } Depd. 21st
" Bcl. of Revenue.

1844
July 20th - 1850

Dear,
The Assistant Adjutant General -
The Civil Secretary to Government
Fort Smith George.

With reference to that part of the Proceedings of
the Indian Government marginally noted, where it is
directed that the Master Attendant at Quebec shall
be called upon through the office to explain, why
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