

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Marine DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 554

Press
No.

Dated 31-10-1859

Not to be folded or roughly handled

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Marine Department,
from 22nd to 31st October 1859.*

No. 29. Read the following letter from Captain W. F. MARRIOTT, Acting Secretary to the Government of Bombay; to the Secretary to the Government of Madras, Marine Department, dated Bombay Castle, 21st October 1859, No. 1296.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, No. 458 of 16th September and to state that a copy of your former letter, No. 348 of 30th July and of its accompaniments was referred to the Commander-in-Chief, Indian Navy, for his report but miscarried, so that the Commander-in-Chief, Commodore Wellesley, wrote his report, No. 818 of 19th August in ignorance thereof, and never saw those papers till after the receipt of your letter under reply.

I have now the honor to communicate a copy of Commodore Wellesley's further report, No. 991 of 8th October and of the letters addressed to Colonel Balfour, Mr. Ritchie and the Master Attendant at Tuticorin.

His Lordship in Council trusts that these proceedings will be satisfactory to the Government of Madras.

From Commodore G. G. WELLESLEY, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Navy; to the Right Honorable LORD ELPHINSTONE, G. C. B and G. C. H., Governor and President in Council, dated 8th October, No. 991 of 1859.

MY LORD,

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of Government Memorandum of September 24th, forwarding copy of a letter, No. 458 of 16th September from the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George, to the Secretary to Government Bombay, and also the correspondence alluded to in the 2nd paragraph of Mr. Secretary Pycroft's letter, which latter documents had not previously reached me.

2nd. My letter, No. 818 of 19th August last, was written in consequence of having observed in a Newspaper a letter purporting to have been a copy of one written by the late Captain Robertson to a private friend, and I must fairly acknowledge that the statement made in it relative to the defective condition of the Hull of the "Pownah" appeared to me so incredible, that I was, and am still under the impression that the words he used were rather the carelessly exaggerated expressions a seaman sometimes employs in conversation when joking upon the defects of a Vessel, than an actual bonâ fide statement of facts.

3rd. But the lamentable fate which there was too much reason to fear had overtaken the "Pownah" induced me, the moment I saw that letter, to endeavour to ascertain whether every discovered defect had been repaired, and, further, whether it was possible that what Captain Robertson had mentioned could have escaped the notice of the professional Officers of the Dockyard. The result of my enquiry was embodied in my letter to Government, together with documents shewing the opinion of the Surveying Officers, and the amount of materials used in the repair, and which confirmed me in the opinion that the loss of the "Pownah" must be attributed to the acknowledged severity of the weather at the period she was missed, and to the unskilfulness of the crew she had on board.

4th. I have now perused the correspondence which accompanied Mr. Chief Secretary Pycroft's letter, No. 348 of 30th July last, to the Secretary to Government Bombay, and I have only to express my earnest hope that your Lordship in Council will order the most rigorous enquiry to be made again into the circumstances connected with what the Madras Government are pleased to term the so called repair of the "Pownah."

5th. To the result of that enquiry I beg to leave the decision as to whether blame is to be attributed to the Dock Yard Officers, and in the meantime, I cannot but remark that, for the Madras Government to presume the existence of neglect or fraud on the part of the Dock yard Officials in other instances, as well as in this, is to prefer a charge which is as unjust as it was uncalled for. It is absolutely incredible that such defects as those described by Captain Robertson should have escaped detection if they had existed, and I beg to leave to those who could prefer without proof such accusations to suggest any possible motive for either neglect or fraud in

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repairing this Vessel. It is essential to know what was the nature of the repairs done to the vessel at Tuticorin, and to ascertain from the Bill charged for them what quantity of new planking was put into her. And I would suggest that, if it has not been destroyed, that the old planking removed from her should be submitted for inspection. I do not of course mean to say that some defects may not have been found which had escaped detection in Bombay, or were not considered important enough to require the removal of the planking, but it is most extraordinary that although the "Pownah," a teak built Vessel, had been employed constantly under the Command of Lieutenant Taylor, till within a very short period before she was taken into Dock in Bombay, no intimation of decay in her was reported, and, but for the circumstance that the "Bheemah," a sister Vessel, had been refitted and was ready for Sea, I should not have thought it necessary to substitute her for the "Pownah" on the Survey.

6th. Whether a Pattamar was a description of Vessel suited to the station and the duty on which the "Pownah" was to be employed, was a question never referred to any one in Bombay so far as I am aware. Thousands of Pattamars frequent this Coast, and the "Pownah" herself had been for years engaged on the Survey of the Malabar Coast, and, as I before stated, it might be presumed that before a Vessel of that description was specially applied for, it had been ascertained that she was fit for and would answer the purpose.

7th. A Syrang and Native Crew (the same as allowed to her sister Vessel the "Bheemah") were engaged to take her to Cochin, and deliver her over there to the Master Attendant, it being understood that she was to be made over to the Madras Government, and removed from the List of the Indian Navy.

8th. The question therefore, so far as the Bombay Dock yard is concerned, is narrowed into determining whether at the time of leaving Bombay in November 1858, the "Pownah" had received those repairs which were considered requisite to make her seaworthy and efficient.

From Captain W. F. MARRIOTT, Acting Secretary to Government of Bombay; to Colonel BALFOUR, dated Bombay Castle, 14th October 1859, No. 1273.

I am desired to transmit to you the accompanying correspondence regarding the condition of the Pattamar "Pownah" when she left Bombay for service under the Madras Government.

The Madras Government considers that the loss of Mr. Robertson and of the Crew who accompanied him is attributable beyond question to the unseaworthy condition of the "Pownah."

The Madras Government also remarks that the case of the "Pownah" is scarcely likely to have been a solitary instance of neglect or fraud on the part of the Dock yard Officials.

Both the Madras Government and Commodore Wellesley express their desire for the most rigorous enquiry into the circumstances of the repair of the "Pownah."

His Lordship in Council being equally anxious for such complete and satisfactory enquiry as may be satisfactory to the Madras Government, has resolved to ask yourself and Mr. Ritchie the Superintendent of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, to conduct it.

His Lordship in Council leaves the particular points and general scope of the enquiry to your judgements.

I append copies of letters addressed this day to Mr. Ritchie and to the Master Attendant at Tuticorin.

From Captain W. F. MARRIOTT, Acting Secretary to the Government of Bombay; to J. RITCHIE Esq., dated Bombay Castle 14th October 1859, No. 1274.

I have the honor to transmit to you a copy of a letter, I have this day addressed to Colonel Balfour.

The nature of the enquiry makes it of high importance that it should be conducted by persons both fully competent to judge and without any motive for partiality.

From Colonel Balfour an Officer of the Madras Government, experienced in the business of Public Departments and yourself familiar with Dock yard arrangements, His Lordship in Council feels that he will receive an unexceptionable judgement on the case, and he therefore desires me to say that he would esteem it a great favor if you would kindly consent to conduct the enquiry in conjunction with Colonel Balfour.

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From Captain W. F. MARRIOTT, Acting Secretary to the Government of Bombay; to the Master Attendant at Tuticorin, dated Bombay Castle, 14th October 1859, No. 1272.

In consequence of your predecessor the late Mr. Robertson's statements of the condition of the Pattamar "Pownah" with which you are well acquainted, the Government of Madras, and the Government of Bombay are very anxious for the most thorough investigation of the matter which the circumstances permit.

Therefore as Mr. Robertson states in his letter of 5th March last from Tuticorin, that the "Pownah" is now having her rotten planks taken out and replaced by new, His Lordship in Council desires me to enquire whether the planks removed from the Vessel on that occasion can be found. If so, His Lordship in Council would be glad that their condition should be accurately described, and that they should be sent to Bombay also for inspection.

No. 30. To THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY, dated Fort Saint George, 31st October 1859, No. 554.

SIR,

I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter under date the 21st instant No. 1296, forwarding copy of correspondence on the subject of the Pattamar "Pownah," and of the letters addressed to Colonel Balfour and Mr. Ritchie Superintendent of the P. and O. Company, requesting them to institute a searching inquiry into the circumstances of the repair of the "Pownah" in the Bombay Dock yard.

In reply, I am instructed to state that the proceedings there reported are entirely satisfactory to this Government.

(Signed) T. PYCROFT,
Chief Secretary.

Exd. W. Komareck.

Sept 21st 1855
No 551
Op No 27-28
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Secretary to the Govt of Bombay.

I am - to acknowledge
the receipt of your letter under
date the 21 inst and No ~~44~~¹⁴⁶ for-
warding copy of correspon-
dence on the subject of the
Pattana Pownah, and of
the letters addressed to Col
Halpou and Mr Ritchie
Supt of the PLO Comp^y request-
ing them to institute a searching
inquiry into the circumstances
of the repair of the Pownah in
the Bombay Dockyard -
In reply I am instructed

to state that the proceedings
there reported are entirely
satisfactory to this Sub-

Fort St. George,
31 October, 1859. } J.P.