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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Marine DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 258 Press Mis.

Dated 28. 7 1860.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Marine Department,
20th July 1860.

No. 48. Read the following letter from Captain W. F. MARRIOTT, Acting Secretary to Government, Bombay, to the Secretary to Government at Fort Saint George, dated 2nd June 1860, No. 547.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, No. 197, dated 23rd May last, and in reply am directed to forward to you the accompanying explanation by the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Navy, dated 18th instant, of the neglect presumed by the Madras Government, because a survey was not held after the completion of the repair of the "Pownah." His Excellency in Council, considers the explanation satisfactory.

His Excellency in Council also instructs me to express his concurrence in the rest of Commodore Wellesley's letter.

From Commodore G. G. WELLESLEY, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Navy, to His Excellency the Honorable Sir GEORGE RUSSELL CLERK, K.C.B., Governor and President in Council, dated Bombay, 18th June 1860, No. 595.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of Government Resolution, No. 473, of the 7th instant, forwarding copy of a letter from the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George, to the Secretary to the Government of Bombay, No. 197 of the 23rd ultimo, and calling for an explanation regarding the supposed absence in the case of the "Pownah" of any survey after repairs.

2. In reply, I have the honor to report that it is not the practice in this Dockyard, nor is it so to the best of my belief in any other, to hold a survey on a vessel after the repairs are completed. A survey is held beforehand, in order to ascertain and report on the defects, and upon that report, when approved by myself, an estimate of the cost of making them good is framed by the Master Builder, or the Chief Engineer as the case may be. If, in the course of the repairs, any further defects are discovered, a supplemental survey is held, and an additional estimate called for, upon the sanction of Government being obtained to the expenditure of the sum mentioned in the estimate the work is proceeded with.

3. The Certificate alluded to and which is called a Completion Certificate is signed by the Commanding Officer, and is sent with the Builder's accounts to the Audit Department. It certifies that the defects mentioned in a specified report of survey have been completed, and after that has been signed no further outlay is permitted. It will be understood, therefore, that the Certificate is not intended to relieve the Builder's or Chief Engineer's Departments of any responsibility for the efficient performance of the work recommended, but to close the account for those repairs.

4. I think, moreover, that it is evident that in most cases a survey after repair would be of no possible utility. I would take this case of the "Pownah" as an instance, and I would ask, how could any survey, after repairs, have decided whether defective planks in the bottom (the all-important part) of the vessel had been removed before she was re-coppered? I am sure also that it will be allowed that the condition of the planking above water must have been much more capable of being carefully examined when it was scraped bright than after it had been covered with one or two coats of paint. A survey, therefore, I am of opinion, would in all cases of important repairs give no security at all, but on the contrary it would probably promote carelessness in those who had the management of the work, as it would relieve them of all responsibility.

5. Neglect or fraud were the alternatives which were laid by the Madras Government at the door of the officials of the Bombay Dockyard. These are grave charges. A Committee has investigated into the circumstances and could find "no intelligible motive for overlooking "any apparent defects or only patching them up"—"could discover no interest that would be "viewed in sending the vessel to sea in a defective state," and that, "as far as they have "observed, there is no ground for imputing neglect or fraud to the Dockyard Officers to whom "the work was entrusted."

6. Every circumstance which has come to light has on the contrary shown more and more the extraordinary exaggeration of the expressions made use of by the late Captain Robertson. Teakwood does not perish in a few months, and yet Lieutenant Williams who had been surveying and cruizing in the "Pownah" till within a short time previous to her repair, and who must have been in and out of her several times a day during a period of upwards of two years while she was on survey, was unaware of any such defects. I pass over, as I have before mentioned it, the impossibility of their having escaped detection in Dock, but fortunately the actual repairs which were effected at Tutacorin have been ascertained, and I am content to leave it to any unprejudiced, impartial person to compare what was done to the "Pownah" then, with the account of her condition which Captain Robertson had written, and then to state whether it is credible that if the account was a true one he would have only had done to her what the bill for repairs now proves to have been actually executed. I would not wish to write one word which would give pain to those interested in the sufferers from this melancholy catastrophe, but it has, I submit, been satisfactorily proved, so far as it is possible, that the description of the "Pownah" given by Captain Robertson was not justified by the facts which have been elicited in the course of this enquiry, and the conclusion must in fairness be drawn that his remarks were rather made with the conventional freedom of a sailor, than as intended to place on record the actual condition of the vessel.

7. I would, in conclusion, beg leave to offer one remark on the first sentence of the last paragraph of Mr. Chief Secretary Pycroft's letter, in which it is stated that the Madras Government never intended to suggest fraud on the part of any but the subordinate employés of the Bombay Dockyard. I submit that after the recorded opinion of the Committee (of whose impartiality, I presume, no doubt is entertained) the subordinate employés of the Dockyard have a just right to be relieved of so grave an imputation, whatever may have been the pre-conceived opinion of that Government.

(True Copy.)
(Signed) W. F. MARRIOTT, Captain,
Acting Secretary to Government.

No. 49. To the Secretary to the Government of Bombay, dated Fort Saint George, 20th July 1860, No. 258.

I am directed by the Honorable the Governor in Council to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, under date 2nd instant and of its enclosure, a copy of a letter from His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Navy.

2. In my letter of the 23rd May last, paragraphs 11 and 13, some stress was laid on the fact that the Pattamar "Pownah" was not surveyed after her repairs had been completed, the omission having been alluded to by the Committee in their report paragraph 11 in such a manner as to leave this Government under the impression that such survey was the regular and usual course which had been departed from in the case of the repairs of the "Pownah."

3. It would seem from His Excellency Commodore Wellesley's letter that such is not the fact. It is not, he states, the practice in the Bombay Dockyard, nor to the best of his belief in any other, to hold a survey on a vessel after the repairs are completed, and he adds his opinion, that, for causes which he assigns, a survey after repair would in most cases be of no possible utility.

4. Under such circumstances the omission to survey the "Pownah" after the completion of her repairs is of course satisfactorily accounted for.

5. With reference to the concluding passage in His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief's letter, the Madras Government, I am desired to state, do not impute blame in the matter of the repairs of the "Pownah" to any of the officials of the Bombay Dockyard, whether of superior or inferior grade.

(Signed) T. PYCROFT,
Chief Secretary.

Exd. S. T. Augustin.

Marine Department.

No. 258—

To The Secretary to the Government of Bombay.—

Sir,

I am directed by the Honorable the Governor in Council to acknowledge the receipt of your letter under date 2nd instant and of its enclosure, a copy of a letter from His Excellency the Commander in Chief of the Indian Navy.

2.— In my letter of the 23rd May last paras. 11 & 13, some stress was laid on the fact that the Pattamar "Pownah" was not surveyed after her repairs had been completed— the omission having been alluded to by the Committee in their report para: 11 in such a manner as to leave this

this Government under the impression that such survey was the regular and usual course which had been departed from in the case of the repairs of the "Powrah."—

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4. Under such circumstances the omission to survey the "Powrah" after the completion of her repairs is of course satisfactorily

satisfactorily accounted for.—

5.— With reference to the concluding passage in His Excellency the Commander in Chief's letter, the Madras Government, I am desired to state, do not impute blame in the matter of the repairs of the "Powrah" to any of the officials of the Bombay Dock-Yard, whether of superior or inferior grade.—

I have &c.

Fort St George
20 July 1860

J. Lane

Pro. of Govt.

Marine 1860 Depart.

No. 258.

To The Secy to the Govt.
of Bombay dated
20th July 1860.

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