

GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.—No. 286.

The following Finding of a Marine Court, appointed to inquire into the loss of the British Steam-ship *Benledi*, is published for general information.

By Command,

FREDERICK STEWART,
Acting Colonial Secretary.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hongkong, 9th July, 1887.

FINDING.

- 1.—That the British Steam-ship *Benledi*, 1,000 tons burden, Official Number 65,767, of Leith, of which JAMES LAWSON RIDDOCH, Number of Certificate of Competency 06200, was Master, left Swatow at 4.40 P.M. on the 18th June, with about 3,000 bags of Sugar, bound to Chefoo, and was wrecked on the Boat Rocks to the S.W. of the Lammocks Island Light-house at about 8.8 P.M. of the same day.
- 2.—In the absence of any Logs or Charts used by the Master in the navigation of the ship, the evidence as to courses steered and distance run is entirely from memory.
- 3.—The Master, according to his recollection, steered a course to take him, allowing three and a half miles for current, about three miles to the South of the Boat Rocks, and on the red light of the Lammocks being seen, he thought himself to the Southward and clear of those rocks.
- 4.—Four Members of the Court agree that no blame is to be attached to the Master for the loss of the ship.
- 5.—All the Members of the Court are unanimously of opinion that the Master left the ship too hurriedly, the weather was fine and there appears to have been ample time for the Master, Officers and Crew to have saved their own effects, the passengers' effects, ship's papers, logs, &c.; and we consider the Master is to blame for not remaining by the ship longer than he did, but the Court is not disposed to deal with his Certificate for this unnecessary haste.

Given under our hands at Hongkong, this 30th day of June, 1887.

J. BUCKNER,
Staff-Commander, R.N., H.M.S. "Victor Emanuel."

W. ELLIS,
Commanding British S.S. "Airlie," Official No. 89,595.

W. D. MUDIE,
Commanding British S.S. "Thibet," Official No. 70,628.

SAMUEL ASHTON,
Commanding British S.S. "Haiphong," Official No. 88,838.

Report, Sub-section 5, Section 13, Ordinance 8 of 1879.

I am unable to concur in the conclusion the majority of the Court have come to as regards no blame being attached to the Master of the *Benledi*, for the loss of that ship. It appears to me a very suspicious circumstance, that, although there was ample time to save the ship's papers, log book, charts, &c., no document was produced to show how this vessel was navigated, the evidence given is therefore from memory only.

The *Benledi* left Swatow, and at 6.10 P.M. of the 18th June, a departure was taken from a point about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles North of the Cape of Good Hope, with a bright light on it, showing a distance of 15 miles. The ship is said to have been steered a course that, without a current, would have taken her $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles South of the "Boat Rocks." No bearing of the Cape of Good Hope light was taken, in fact it is stated that it was not seen, although the ship ran for upwards of an hour within its range of light. As the ship was steering about East South East, occasional bearings of this light would have shewn if the ship was experiencing any unusual North-Easterly current.

The "Lammocks Rocks" are marked by a white light, showing at a distance of 22 miles. There is also a red light on the Lammocks, visible from the Sea between N. $34\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ E. and N. $50\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ E., covering the "White," and "Boat Rocks," and placed there expressly to keep ships off them. The night was fine as the Master was able to take a bearing of the Pole Star to check his deviation, yet the Cape of Good Hope light was not seen at all, and the Lammocks white light (a 22-mile light) was only seen at 7.20 P.M., when the ship was only about 16 miles from it. The Cape of Good Hope and Lammocks white lights overlap each other for a distance of over 8 miles, and cross bearings of the two, assisted by an observation of the Pole Star for Latitude, would have shewn the ship's position very nearly.

As regards the red light, the chart, by which the Master says he navigated the ship, has the lines of light defined, and the words "arc of visibility of the red light" marked on it, this arc is placed about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to the South-Westward of the "Boat Rocks." The Master of the *Benledi* heard the red light reported when talking to the Chief Engineer. He went on the bridge, took a bearing of the light, told the Second Mate (Officer of the watch) not to come Eastward of his course, went to the Chart-room door (aft), speaking to the Chief Mate on the way, did not go into the Chart-room, but was about to return to the bridge, with, as he states, the intention of changing his course, when the ship, going 11 knots an hour, struck the "Boat Rocks" and became a wreck.

The red light is purposely and properly described on the Admiralty Charts, confining it to a narrow compass, to caution Navigators seeing it that they are in immediate danger, and any one accidentally bringing it in sight, and imagining himself farther from it than so described, in my opinion, assumes an unreasonable and dangerous responsibility.

The Master of the *Benledi*, when the red light was reported, instead of at once altering his ship's course to lose sight of that light, lost very valuable time, and with it his ship.

Fortunately in this case, the weather was fine, and there was no difficulty in rescuing the Passengers and Crew.

H. G. THOMSETT, R.N.,
*Stipendiary Magistrate and President
of the Court.*

30th June, 1887.

GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.—No. 287.

The following Notice is published for general information.

By Command,

FREDERICK STEWART,
Acting Colonial Secretary.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hongkong, 9th July, 1887.

PARCEL POST.

The limit of weight for Parcels despatched by German Packet has been extended to 11 lb., and the rates to most countries of Europe by this route have been slightly lowered.

Parcel Post has been extended to Ceylon, British Honduras, Italy and Luxemburg. The rate charged on Parcels for Canada has been lowered.

All the above alterations, with other information, are embodied in the following Table, copies of which may be obtained at the Post Office.

Senders are requested to make their Declarations of Contents complete and accurate. Everything in the Parcel should be entered. Two Parcels have lately been confiscated in London; one for containing cigars falsely described as curios; the other for containing books copyright in the United Kingdom.

A. LISTER,
Postmaster General.

GENERAL POST OFFICE,
HONGKONG, July 1st, 1887.