

## GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.—No. 211.

The following Finding of the Marine Court of Enquiry into the stranding of the British Steam-ship *Sishan*, Official No. 89,083, is published.

By Command,

T. SERCOMBE SMITH,  
*Acting Colonial Secretary.*

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hongkong, 6th May, 1898.

## FINDING.

We find that the British Steam-ship *Sishan*, Official No. 89,083 of London, of which JOHN JENKINS was Master, whose Certificate as Master is No. 378 of Hongkong, left Hongkong on 22nd April, 1898, bound for Swatow with general cargo.

The ship was light, her draught being 14'.3" and 9'.6".

That she encountered a strong N.E. monsoon which caused her to anchor after leaving Hongkong, but that at 0.30 p.m. the voyage was resumed.

That after passing through the Strait between Tuniang Island and the mainland, a course was set which the Captain intended should take her  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile south of the Middle Rocks.

That the Rocks, according to the evidence and the Log, were sighted at 5.20 p.m. The Second Mate, it then appears, altered the course to starboard without any orders from the Captain, and sent to call the Captain.

The Captain came on the upper bridge almost immediately and altered the course  $\frac{1}{2}$  point more to starboard, and, almost at once, the ship struck and passed over a rock which so damaged her that, she returned to Hongkong with 10 feet of water in No. 2 hold and 4 feet in No. 1 hold.

According to the evidence and also to the Log, Middle Rock was sighted 3 points on the Port Bow and 2 to 3 miles off, but no bearing was taken, and the time of sighting was guessed. Also, according to the evidence and the Log, the ship, going at a speed estimated at 5 to 6 knots, struck from 5 to 8 minutes later, on what in the clear opinion of the Court was the reef which the China Sea Directory states lies 3 cables S.W. of the Rock.

It is evident therefore that, either the time was very inaccurately guessed, or that the estimated distance of the Rock when first sighted has been very much over-stated, this latter is made the more probably correct by the fact that, immediately on sighting the Rock, the course was altered by the Second Mate on his own responsibility, and that the Captain almost immediately after altered it still more in the same direction, the inference being that, this hurried and extended alteration of course was made because the ship was found to be dangerously close to the Middle Rock, and that she did not go off enough under her Port helm to clear the reef.

The Court is of opinion that the ship was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care, and that the Captain neglected to verify the position of the ship from time to time.

We therefore find that the damage to the ship was caused by the wrongful act or default of the Master, and we therefore suspend his Certificate for one month from this date.

We recommend that, if he so desires, a First Mate's Certificate be issued to him during the suspension of his Master's Certificate.

Given under our hands at Victoria, Hongkong, this 4th day of May, 1898.

R. MURRAY RUMSEY, Retd. Comdr., R.N.,  
*President.*

RICHD. J. ROGERS, Staff Comdr., R.N.,  
*H.M.S. "Tamar."*

INMAN SEALBY,  
*Master, British Steam-ship "Coptic."*

WILLIAM ARTHUR RENDLE,  
*Master, British Steam-ship "Sungkiang."*

JAMES WILLIAMSON,  
*Master, British Steam-ship "Chowfa."*