

## GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.—No. 724.

The following Finding of the Marine Court of Enquiry into the loss of the British Steamship *Hupeh*, Official No. 99024 of London, is published.

By Command,

J. H. STEWART LOCKHART,  
*Colonial Secretary.*

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hongkong, 22nd December, 1899.

## FINDING.

We find that the British Steamship *Hupeh*, Official No. 99024 of London, of which GEORGE HENRY PENNEFATHER was Master, the number of whose Certificate as Master was 015281 issued at London, left Pasarang (Java) on the 6th November with a full cargo of about 4,000 tons of raw sugar bound for Hongkong.

The *Hupeh* was a steel steamer of 1846 Register tons built in 1891, having a cellular double bottom, 2 decks, four holds, and 6 water-tight bulkheads.

On the 14th November Cabra Island was passed, 4 miles off, the ship then experiencing strong Northerly winds and high sea.

After passing Cabra Island a course was set for Hongkong, the weather continuing stormy with a high sea.

On the 16th at about 2 a.m. the Master noticed an unaccountable list to port which gradually increased until at about 8 a.m. it had reached 8°. The ship was then turned round and a course set for Manila, it being supposed that the cargo from some cause had shifted, but the list increasing the hatches were taken off the No. 1 hold, that being the only one which in the opinion of the Master it was safe to uncover, and cargo was then jettisoned until the ship became nearly upright. The holds were then sounded and in No. 2 only was there found about 4 feet of syrup or thick sugared water. The pumps were put on to this but very shortly ceased to throw, and in a very short space of time the ship had fallen over to starboard, and in half an hour had a list of 27°, all the boats being swept away on that side as had previously happened to all but 2 boats on the Port side; No. 1 hold was again opened and cargo jettisoned, but the ship continued to go over and eventually capsized and foundered at about 7.30 a.m. on the 20th November.

The officers and crew had left on the 8 rafts the day before the ship foundered, but the Master and the only passenger remained by her, 2 rafts returned the next morning, and their occupants went on board the ship, and when the ship went down all were floated off in the one remaining boat.

The survivors being the Master, 3 Officers, 3 Engineers, 1 European passenger, Chinese—1 Boat-swain, 3 Quartermasters, 1 Lamptrimmer and 2 Sailors (15 all told) 8 Europeans and 7 Chinese, leaving 46 Chinese missing.

All the ship's papers were lost.

After carefully considering the evidence, the Court finds no little difficulty in forming any opinion as to the cause of the casualty, but it appears fairly conclusive that the ship sprung a leak in No. 2 hold, and the probability seems that, in an unusual roll, the water settled on the port side of the flat tank top on which the cargo was stowed, that when the ship became upright through the jettisoning of cargo, she only remained in that state till another unusual roll settled the water over to starboard and that by this time the stowage had been so disturbed by the dissolving of the sugar that the whole cargo gradually fell over to the starboard side till it capsized the ship.

The Court does not find that any blame attaches to the Master for the loss of the ship and they are impressed with his conduct in electing to remain by her to the last, and by the conduct of his passenger who remained with him; such conduct in the Court's opinion stands out in relief against that of the officers and crew, who appeared only too ready to get away notwithstanding the fact that their Captain remained, but seeing that it was not against the wishes of the Captain that they pursued this course, the Court refrains from making more than a passing reference to their conduct.

The Master's Certificate is returned to him.

Given under our hands at Victoria, Hongkong, this 19th day of December, 1899.

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

PHILIP NELSON-WARD, Lieutenant, R.N.

HARRY SMITH, Master British S.S. *Doric.*

S. DE B. LOCKYER, Master British S.S. *Rohilla.*

J. WILLIAMSON, Master British S.S. *Chow Fa.*