

(No. 5002.)

"KOW SHING" (S.S.)

FINDING and Order of a Naval Court held at H.B.M. Consulate-General, Shanghai, on the 17th day of August 1894, to investigate the circumstances attending the loss of the British steamship "Kow SHING," on a voyage from Taku to Asan, in Corea.

The "Kow Shing" was a steam vessel of 1,355 tons registered tonnage, official number 87,100, built at Barrow in 1883, and belonging to the Port of London.

It appears from the evidence given before this Court that the "Kow Shing" sailed from Taku on 23 July with a crew of 75 persons all told, 1 European passenger, and about 1,100 Chinese soldiers, and with a cargo of ammunition on board. Nothing eventful occurred till off Shopaiul Island, on 25 July, at about 8.30 a.m., when a vessel of war, flying Japanese colours, surmounted by a white flag, appeared in sight, followed shortly afterwards by three Japanese men-of-war. One of the latter, supposed to be the "Naniwa," signalled to the "Kow Shing" to stop and anchor, which was done, and a signal made to the "Naniwa" to that effect. In reply to a subsequent signal from the "Kow Shing" asking for permission to proceed, the "Naniwa" signalled "Heave to, or take the consequences," and then sent off a boat with two officers and an armed crew to the "Kow Shing." These officers went on board the steamer and examined her papers, the captain calling their special attention to her certificate of British registry and port clearance from British Consulate, and further pointing out that in his opinion, according to international rules, he should be allowed to return to the port whence he had sailed. The Japanese officers asked the captain if he would follow the "Naniwa," to which he said that he should do so under protest, yielding to force, whereupon they returned to their ship. The Chinese generals, on hearing of the Japanese demand that the "Kow Shing" should follow the "Naniwa," opposed its being carried out by threatening the European officers of the "Kow Shing" with swords and bayonets, and depriving them of their freedom of action. Shortly afterwards the "Naniwa" signalled, "Cut slip or weigh immediately: wait for nothing." The captain of the "Kow Shing" replied, "Send a boat: wish to communicate personally." A boat from the "Naniwa" was then sent to communicate. The officer in charge was again told by the captain that the "Kow Shing" was a British ship, and that she was not allowed by the Chinese on board to follow the "Naniwa," and attention was again called to the fact that she was a British ship, and that she had left her port of departure before any declaration of war, and should, therefore, be allowed to return to Taku. The Japanese officers then left. Shortly afterwards the "Naniwa" signalled, "Quit ship immediately," to which answer was made, "We are not allowed: send a boat." The "Naniwa" answered, "Boat cannot come," and soon after hoisted a red flag, and, steaming up abreast of the "Kow Shing," discharged a torpedo at her. On finding this had taken no effect, she fired a broadside, and continued firing till the "Kow Shing" sank.

The Court, having regard to the circumstances above stated, find as follows:—

That the British steamer "Kow Shing" was destroyed and sunk on the 25th July 1894 off Shopaiul Island by a broadside fired into her by a Japanese man-of-war, supposed to be the "Naniwa Khan," and that no blame is attributable to the master, certificated mates, or crew of the "Kow Shing."

The Court desire to place on record their opinion that Captain Galsworthy and the officers of the "Kow Shing" showed great judgment and coolness under trying circumstances, and did all in their power to avert the catastrophe.

The expenses of this Court, fixed at 4*l.* 12*s.* 0*d.*, are approved.

Dated at Shanghai this 17th day of August 1894.

(Signed) JOHN E. BEARCROFT, Commander,
R.N., President.

G. A. BALLARD, Lieutenant R.N.
J. F. JEPSON, Master s.s. "Surat."
W. HOLLAND, Vice-Consul.