

(No. 7177.)

"POW-AN" (S.S.).

REPORT of a Court of Inquiry held at Victoria, Hong Kong, on the 23rd June, 1908, into the circumstances attending the loss of the s.s. "POW-AN," Official Number 68387, of Hong Kong, on the 8th June, 1908, off Lantau.

*Finding.*

We find that the British steamship "Pow-An," Official Number 68387, of Hong Kong, of which Henry Irwin Black, master mariner, certificate of competency, No. 1292, Hong Kong, was master, left the wharf of the Hong Kong, Canton, & Macao Steamboat Company, at Victoria, Hong Kong, at 9 p.m. on the 8th June, 1908, on a voyage to Canton, with a small cargo, 160 bales of paper, and a few other sundry packages and 171 Chinese passengers. The engines were kept at half speed until the Fairway buoys were passed, when a course was set for Capshuimun, N.W. by W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  W., the invariable course adopted, and the engines put to full speed, which should give her about 10.5 knots. Shortly after this the master left the bridge, and, on his return a few minutes later, he found it was raining, and the land obscured from view. During the passage between the Fairway buoys and Capshuimun it was twice necessary to alter course to port to avoid junks, this, however, was compensated for by keeping her headed a quarter of a point to the North of her course for some minutes after each alteration. At about 9.40., at which hour it was to be expected that the ship would be nearing Capshuimun, land was sighted close under the port bow, and, by the master alone, on the starboard bow. The master, not being quite certain of his position, appealed to the pilot—a member of the crew, who had been on the run in the ship for 19 years—as to whether the land on the starboard side was Ma Wan Island in his opinion. The pilot, unfortunately, was not at his station—at a window of the wheelhouse over the master's head—but, in the temporary absence of the helmsman, had taken the wheel, from which position he was unable to see the land on the starboard bow, and thinking the master referred to the land on the port bow, which he could see and which he thought resembled Ma Wan, promptly replied in the affirmative, at the same time putting the helm hard a port, the master immediately afterwards giving orders to that effect. The pilot's evidence here is not very satisfactory, as he was not able to give any reason for his confident recognition of the land. The master was still under the impression that the land he had seen on the starboard bow was Ma Wan Island, and after turning to starboard 2 or 3 points righted his helm, and stood up as he imagined in mid channel, to go through Capshuimun. Almost at the same instant the ship took the ground, and the engines were eased to half speed. The ship appeared to pass over the rocks

and to be afloat, so the engines were put to full speed ahead again with a view to getting her out of the vicinity of danger, while the bells were being sounded. There is some conflict of evidence as to the actual signals given to and received by the engineers, but this is accounted for by the fact that the telegraph was obviously damaged by the shock of impact, and was unreliable. When it was found that the ship was making water in considerable quantities, it was decided to beach her, for which purpose the helm was put hard a starboard, and the ship headed for the nearest beach, she, however, sank before reaching it.

We find that all possible steps were taken after grounding to save the ship and passengers.

We are of opinion that the master was guilty of a grave error of judgment in keeping the engines at full speed when he was in any way uncertain of his position in thick weather. He also appears to have placed too much reliance upon the expression of opinion by this Malay pilot, who was not, as it turned out, in a position to give an opinion of any value. Seeing that so much importance was attached to the opinion of this pilot, it would seem a most improper proceeding to take the helmsman from the wheel, necessitating the absence from his post of the pilot, but this was done by the second mate, without the knowledge of the master.

We therefore direct that the master be severely reprimanded and the second mate be reprimanded.

Given under our hands at Victoria in the Colony of Hong Kong this 27th day of June, 1908.

(Signed) BASIL TAYLOR, Commander R.N.,  
Stipendiary Magistrate  
and President of the Court.

(Signed) HENRY BUTTERWORTH,  
Lieutenant, R.N.,  
H.M.S. "Tamar."

(Signed) T. A. MITCHELL, Master,  
British s.s. "Fook Sang."

(Signed) EDSON S. CROWE, Master,  
British s.s. "Kwong Sai."

(Signed) E. J. PAGE, Master,  
British s.s. "Ying King."

*True Copy.*

B. R. H. TAYLOR,  
Harbour Master &c.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the  
28th day of August, 1908.)