

PRESENTATION OF THE ROYAL HUMANE SOCIETY'S MEDAL.

Yesterday morning a number of gentlemen assembled by invitation at H.M.'s Custom House, to take part in the presentation of the Royal Humane Society's Bronze Medal and Certificate to Captain E. J. Collings of the s.s. *Commerce*, for saving from drowning the life of a man at Sutton Pool, Plymouth, under most courageous circumstances in September last.

COURTESY OF THE ROYAL HUMANE SOCIETY.

Mr. Emra Holmes, Collector of Customs presided on the occasion, and introduced Mr. H. Turner who had represented the case to the Royal Humane Society, and had obtained the customary reward.

Mr. Turner said,—Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I have great pleasure in handing in the medal and certificate which I have received from the Royal Humane Society to be presented to Captain Collings, for saving life in September last at Plymouth. This is the second award I have received to be presented to those who have done such brave acts as Captain Collings. It might seem strange to many persons why I should interest myself in obtaining these rewards, but it is because, when I was a lad I was saved from a watery grave, and it is those, and those only, who have been saved from the perils of the deep, that can appreciate the bravery of those who will risk their own life to save the life of a fellow-creature. The medal now before you, Sir, is one of the first-class bronze medals, and to obtain this is no easy matter, on account of the Committee of the Royal Humane Society being very careful not to award these gifts unless in cases where great gallantry has been done. It has been stated by some of Captain Collings's friends, that they anticipated the Society would have presented him with a Silver Medal, on account of the many lives he had saved on previous occasions, but the Society, in sending their official papers to be filled up, are very explicit in requesting the latest facts of the last act of bravery to be only stated, because they do not take into consideration any other facts but the last. When we call to mind the case of Private Lorain, 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards, for plunging into the water and rescuing a man the same month as Captain Collings, and that the Committee, when investigating the case of Lorain, were fully aware of the fact that Her Majesty had requested her thanks to be conveyed to Private Lorain for his gallantry. Although Royalty had interested itself in this case, yet Lorain only received the same class medal as Captain Collings. I am glad we are able to witness this presentation in Guernsey, because applications were made from Plymouth and Jersey for these honours.

Had they been sent to the places named, I doubt if one now amongst the company would have been a spectator of this grand event, and the one I allude to is no other than the son of Captain Collings. Although young now, yet the memory of this morning's proceedings may be long retained by him, and should duty in after life call him to follow the footsteps of his brave father, he may be also the cause of saving life. In conclusion Sir, I beg to state that my instructions from the Society are to have the presentation made public, and seeing so many of Captain Collings's friends and the public now present, and taking into consideration that the presentation is being made within these walls, where such a large amount of shipping business is transacted, and that the award coming from the hands of the head of Her Majesty's customs in Guernsey has much more importance—classing all these points together, I think I have carried out my orders, and lastly, what is more gratifying to state is that Captain Collings does not stand before you this morning a smuggler for condemnation, but stands before you as one of England's brave seamen receiving his due reward.

Mr. Emra Holmes said, he was pleased to make this presentation in her Majesty's Custom House, where he met sailors as friends, and was always glad to do what he could for them. Acts of bravery by seamen such as performed by Captain Collings, ought certainly to be rewarded. In this case by jumping into the water in Sutton Pool the Captain had run a great risk, as a large amount of sewage was poured into it, and he might have been suffocated. Many cases of gallantry in saving life had come under his notice, and he referred particularly to several of these, showing how deserving they were of public acknowledgment, and explained how under certain circumstances people if stunned might be easily saved. He then called upon Mr. Ramsey to read the particulars of Captain Collings's case, from which it appeared that he was disturbed from his sleep, by cries of drowning, and rushing on deck had to scramble across three vessels and then dive into the pool in the dark to save the man, which he succeeded in doing just in time to save life, for he was so exhausted that he had to be taken to the Hospital, and was some time before he recovered. Mr. Holmes said thanks were due to the members of the Press for having given publicity to the matter, without which the reward would not probably have been obtained. The medal was then presented to Captain Collings, and the certificate handsomely framed, having been read, was also handed over, hearty congratulations being offered him on this well-deserved honour.

Mr. G. F. Carrington, President of the Chamber of Commerce, said he had much pleasure in being present on such an occasion ; he had known Captain Collings since he was a boy, and had had him in his employment, and was proud of him ; he was glad to bear testimony not only to his humanity, but to his energy and skill in making his voyages ; and in the kindness and courtesy he showed to his passengers of all classes. He had voyaged with him many times in the *Commerce*, and had been always highly gratified with his admirable seamanship and attention to his duties, and hoped he would long be spared to carry on his good work. He was never the man to shirk a breeze, but was always at his post whatever might be the weather, and made his voyages often, when larger vessels would not put out.

Mr. W. Jones, Chairman of the Mutual Fire Insurance, said he was in Plymouth when Capt. Collings's gallant act took place, and it certainly deserved the highest praise, for a more dangerous case could scarcely be conceived. He had many times crossed with Capt. Collings, and could safely say no one could be more attentive to his duties no one more kind and attentive to his passengers, and no one more brave in case of need. He had therefore great pleasure in bearing his testimony to Capt. Collings's skill and bravery.

Mr. W. W. Bird on behalf of the owners of the *Commerce* gladly endorsed all that had been said respecting Capt. Collings's energy and ability in their services, and was proud to see his bravery so highly honoured.

Captain Collings thanked Mr. Holmes for making the presentation and the gentlemen who had so kindly spoken of his services. He always remembered Nelson's noble words "England expects every man to do his duty" and in all things he felt he had only done his duty which he was ever ready to do. He should cherish the gifts he had received that morning as long as he lived, and he hoped his family would equally value them after him. He again thanked all present for the kind interest they had taken in him.

Mr. Carrington proposed and Mr. Holmes seconded a vote of thanks to Mr. Turner for the active interest he had taken in the matter, which was acknowledged by Mr. Turner.

On the proposition of Mr. Carrington a vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. Holmes for having made the presentation, and given the use of the office for the purpose.

Mr. Holmes said his official services were always at the command of the public, and it afforded him pleasure at all times to aid in any good cause.

The proceedings then terminated.

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