

THE "ANTINOE" RESCUES

British Medals Presented to American Seamen.

A MEMORABLE CEREMONY.

From Our Special Correspondent.

SOUTHAMPTON, Saturday.

The United States liner *President Roosevelt* was given a great welcome on her arrival in Ocean Dock this morning. Shortly afterwards, in the saloon of the ship, Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, President of the Board of Trade, representing the King, presented her commander, Captain Fried, three of his officers and several members of the crew with official tokens in recognition of their heroism in rescuing the crew of 25 of the British steamer *Antinoe* in the recent terrible Atlantic gale.

As the American liner, which had sailed from Bremen, approached her berth under the charge of a tug shortly after 11 o'clock, every ship in the harbour, from the *Aquitania*, lying close by, to the smallest craft, joined in the chorus of welcome by sounding their sirens and hooters, while cheers rose from the large throng of spectators on the quay. Flags of all nations, with the Stars and Stripes conspicuous, decked the railway station and the quay, and high up the word "Bravo!" in large letters caught the eye of the commander on the bridge.

PRESENTATION FROM PILOTS.

Afterwards, when the gangways were in position, Captain Fried received Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister on board, and then came the formal introduction on deck abaft the bridge of the boat crew and rescue party, with each of whom Sir Philip shook hands. There the first presentation ceremony took place, Captain Fried receiving a gold-mounted ebony walking-stick from Lord Apsley, President of the United Kingdom Pilots' Association, on behalf of the Southampton pilots.

After luncheon the lifeboat crew filed into the dining-room and took up their position in front of the centre table. There was a halt of some minutes for the signal to be given that the broadcasting arrangements were ready for the speeches to begin, and there were further intervals during the ceremony for the convenience of the photographers and cinematograph operators who were present in strong force. Throughout the greater part of the time occupied by the proceedings the men stood full in the vivid glare of the photographers' arc lamp, but in spite of this and of an almost suffocating heat (for every available inch of the dining-room was occupied), they bore themselves as patiently and good-humouredly as might be expected from men accustomed to worse ordeals.

Mr. PHILIP RUNCIMAN, in introducing the President of the Board of Trade, said that Sir Philip was there by command of the King, to render honour to those to whom honour was due. Captain Fried, his officers and men had deserved well of them. (Applause.)

Sir PHILIP CUNLIFFE-LISTER stated that he was commanded by the King to express to Captain Fried his Majesty's regret that the short stay of the ship at Southampton did not permit of the King seeing him in London and personally thanking him and the crew for their gallant services. "The rescue we are met to commemorate to-day," he continued, "has seized the imagination and earned the gratitude of the whole British race. (Applause.) It has already taken its place in the annals of the sea as one of the epics of the service. Year by year there are reported to the Board of Trade many acts of gallantry in which the crews of British ships figure as rescuers or rescued. In the past six years they have numbered upwards of 220. In such endeavours the standard of gallantry is high, but even in that illustrious record the achievement of the *President Roosevelt* is conspicuous. (Applause.) Many accounts have been written, many more will be written, of this enterprise, but I think, perhaps, I like best Captain Fried's own story. That was characterised by a British officer in these words: 'This is a bald statement of what happened, but reading between the lines I was able to gather that the whole affair was an outstanding epoch of dogged pertinacity and bravery carried out in the traditions—the best traditions—of the sea.' (Applause.)

DARING AND FINE SEAMANSHIP.

"There the story of the rescue is told in the simple language of one to whom grave risk is a plain duty, and high devotion a commonplace of service. It is only when you, Captain Fried, have spoken of the actions of others, of your officers and crew, that you have allowed yourself a freer rein. How much that rescue owed to Captain Fried himself—the immediate answer to the call, the daring and fine seamanship with which in colossal seas he manoeuvred the *President Roosevelt* close to the doomed ship, the determination with which he held on and found her again when she was lost, the untiring ingenuity displayed in devising one attempt after another, and last, but not least—and of this he has never spoken—the force of his own example. (Applause.) Of this Captain Fried is silent. But his silence has made it the plainer to us all. Of the bravery of his crew he is less reticent, and it will live in our memories. Mr. Miller, the chief officer—(applause)—commanded each of the three boats. What a record! We like to think that his forbears probably saw service in British ships—'captains courageous' of an earlier age. Mr. Upton—(applause)—whom only your orders restrained from swimming to certain death; Wirtanen and Heitman—(applause)—risking their lives to save a foreign crew, giving their lives to save their fellow rescuers. What could be finer? (Applause.)

"After the crew of the first boat was thrown into the water, Wirtanen had his hold firm on one of the ladders. He saw the peril of his comrades; he leapt from safety to their rescue. Some of those who are here to-day probably owe the lives they had risked to his sacrifice, and the last that was seen of this gallant seaman was a solitary figure trying to float his drifting lifeboat to the distressed ship.

"These are deeds that live. All members of the crew will wish that I should mention this, but all are on the roll of honour, the living and the dead—(applause)—and as one reads the names—Miller, Sloan, Upton, Wirtanen, Heitman, Wall, Beers, Jacobowitz, Bauer, Fugetsang, Frauehlich, Fisher, Riedel, Wikie, Diaz, Arnedo, Alberts, Hahn, Roberts, and Caldwell—drawn themselves or by descent from different lands, there comes to us with a new understanding all that is meant by the brotherhood of the sea. (Applause.) No one who knows what life at sea is can fail to appreciate what must have been the work and service rendered by the engineering staff of that vessel.

"It is the wish of his Majesty the King that I should present to the officers and men who manned the boats the Foreign Service Gold Medal for Saving Life at Sea, and that I should give into your keeping, Captain Fried, for presentation to the relatives the medals which would have been awarded to these two gallant men—Wirtanen and Heitman—who gave their lives, and on behalf of his Majesty's Government, I have to ask you, whom duty kept on the bridge, to accept a special token of their recognition of the fine seamanship, the humanity, and the courageous resource which throughout those nights and days characterised your every action. (Applause.) The Government also desire to make a presentation to your officers, Mr. Miller, Mr. Sloan and Mr. Upton, in recognition of their gallantry. The service which Captain Fried and his crew have rendered has done more than perhaps any of us can realise to cement the long friendship and the lasting ties between our two nations." (Loud applause.)

A handsome silver-gilt cigar box was then handed to Captain Fried. It bore the following inscription: "Presented by the British Government to George Fried, captain of the s.s. *President Roosevelt*, in recognition of his fine seamanship, humanity, and courageous resource in the rescue of the crew of the British steamer *Antinoe*, in the North Atlantic, Jan. 25-28, 1926."

Chief Officer Robert B. Miller was handed a gold watch ("in recognition of his gallantry and fine seamanship") and a medal; Third Officer Thomas Sloan a silver salver and gold medal, and Fourth Officer Frank M. Upton also a silver salver and gold medal, while the members of the crew received medals inscribed: "From the British Government," and each bearing the name of the recipient on the edge.

CAPTAIN FRIED'S REPLY.

Captain Fried, who was loudly cheered, said: "It is, indeed, a pleasure and an honour to have your distinguished presence on board to offer solemn tribute to our lost comrades, and to rejoice in the rescue of the distressed. This momentous occasion will live in our memory for ever, and on behalf of my officers and crew, I thank you for this very generous gift. I have been asked to say a few words on behalf of the officers and crew. After receiving distress signals early on Sunday morning, we put the radio-compass on her bearing and sighted the ship at noon. Arriving alongside of her weather-beam, we found her turning over her engines slowly, but lying in the trough of the sea. They were trying to make repairs to the steering engine, and to secure hatches, and only requested us to stand by. It was blowing hard, and a rough sea was running. At 9 p.m. on Sunday we lost sight of her in the violent snow and hail squalls and darkness. We tried getting her on the wireless and radio compass, but could get no answer.

"We searched all night and next day, Monday, until 4 p.m., when we finally sighted her. The anxiety and suspense during this search were terrible. There was nothing to guide us. It looked hopeless. When we picked her up again her signals indicated that she wished to abandon ship, but had not the means—all boats gone, fire-room and engine-room flooded, radio out of commission and no lights. It was still daylight, and the weather moderate, but a heavy swell was running. I was confronted with the prospect of losing sight of her again as soon as darkness came on, or taking the chance of launching a manned lifeboat. The latter decision cost the lives of two of my crew, because of the violent squalls that hit us, kicking up a sea that an open boat could not live in. The weather increased in violence, and it seemed at times as though the *Antinoe* would go down before our eyes, as their signals indicated that she was rapidly sinking. We tried every means to get a boat to them by towing close around her stern, and firing gun lines, but every effort met with failure. Finally, on Wednesday evening the weather moderated considerably, though still a very high swell was running. We launched the second lifeboat, and took off 12 men, and at midnight, the weather still improving, and aided by the bright moonlight, we took off the remaining 13. Think of 13!

THE "ROARING FORTIES."

"When we left the *Antinoe* her well decks fore and aft were under water to the hatches, and she listed at least 40 degrees. She could not have lasted another 12 hours. I firmly believe that Master-at-Arms Wirtanen tried to steer the boat near enough to the *Antinoe* so that they might get her, by his powerful body swaying astern, as he hung on by the painter trawling over her stern. When we came alongside the boat some 15 minutes later he was gone, but to lose one's life for such a cause—God must surely reward. The locality where this disaster occurred is frequently referred to as 'The Roaring Forties,' and is certainly well named. While the honour falls to a certain few to man the lifeboats, men who are seamen in every sense of the word, let us not forget those who were doing all the mule-handing, also the helpless men, waiting patiently, unable to help themselves." (Applause.) Captain Fried concluded by thanking the company for the warmth of their reception, and said that the gratitude expressed in hundreds of telegrams and letters received made them feel the more keenly the proud name which their steamer bore.

Chief Officer MILLER desired to pay a tribute from the boat's crew to the captain and officers of the *President Roosevelt* for showing such a fine spirit and courage in

L.L. Feb 8th 1926

2/5110-015
W64-015

the face of terrible odds. They proved themselves men who would perform the same services should the occasion arise. He knew that he was voicing the feelings of every member of the crew when he spoke of the great courage and ability displayed by Captain Fried, who through all the anxious hours never raised his voice above a conventional tone when issuing orders. He added that when the list of the rescued men had been posted it was discovered that Laurence Borge, of the *Antinoe*, was a relative of Miss Rita Hughes, who was a member of their own ship's company.

Mr. BORLSTON BEAL, representing the American Ambassador, observed that no one had followed the stories of heroism and danger with greater interest than had the American Ambassador, who unfortunately was unable to be present owing to his absence in Paris. What the men of the ship did last week meant more than it was easy to express. Everyone realised that what America said and did was not always understood by the people of England, and that what England said and did was not always understood by those in America. But there were certain deeds which could be understood by the people of both lands and were of inestimable value in drawing together those two great countries and keeping their mutual understanding clear—an understanding on which many felt the well-being of the world depended. (Applause.) Deeds of valour, particularly valour at sea, had always been understood and appreciated at their full value by these two great maritime countries. It could be said without exaggeration that the work of the officers and men of the *President Roosevelt* last week had done more for the good relations of those two countries than could easily be estimated.

Mr. RUNCIMAN announced that as the result of Captain Tose's broadcast speech last week, the British Broadcasting Company had received over £300 for the relatives of the two men who were lost from the *President Roosevelt*, and he had asked Captain Tose if he would give the money to Captain Fried to hand to the proper authorities in New York.

Captain Tose, of the *Antinoe*, who had an enthusiastic reception, stated that the amount received in subscriptions in response to the broadcast appeal on behalf of the relatives of the lost rescuers was £327, and this he handed to Captain Fried. He also handed to the latter a silver cigarette case and a similar gift each to Chief-Officer Miller, Third Officer Sloan, and Fourth Officer Upton.

The ceremony closed with the singing of the British and American National Anthems, and a little later, the guests having come ashore, the *President Roosevelt* sailed away for Cherbourg en route for New York.

Among the company besides those already mentioned were:—

Lady Cunliffe-Lister, Mr. E. B. Pulbrook (Chairman of Lloyd's) and Mrs. Pulbrook, Sir Ernest Glover (Chairman of the Baltic Mercantile and Shipping Exchange), Captain Purdy (Director for Europe of the United States Shipping Board), Mr. Tarleton Winchester (Director United States Lines, London Office), Colonel E. K. Perkins, M.P., Sir James Charles (Commander of the *Aquitania*), Mr. Philip Currie, Major Gilbert Szimper (Southern Railway) and Mrs. Szimper, Admiral McNamee (Naval Attaché, American Embassy), Mr. Charles Turner (Board of Trade), Mr. H. Leak (Marine Department, Board of Trade), Mr. W. B. Brown (Secretary to the President of the Board of Trade), Captain King (Principal Officer, South and South-West of England District, Board of Trade), Captain Raymer (Board of Trade, Southampton), Captain H. P. Patterson (Chief Emigration Officer, Southampton), Mr. Campbell Lee (representing the American Society in London), Mr. F. E. Powell (representing the American Club and the American Chamber of Commerce), Mr. J. Savage, Mr. Anderson, Legal Department U.S. Shipping Board, Mr. G. B. Moore (European Traffic Manager, United States Shipping Board), Mrs. De Castro (representing the English-Speaking Union), Mr. C. B. Cotterell, Mr. G. F. Harre (representing the owners of the *Antinoe*), Mr. Braithwaite, Alderman Moulton, Mr. Harry Parsons, and Captain Paul Grenning (a former commander of the *President Harding*).

© 2020

Lloyd's Register
Foundation

W654-015 2/2