

GENERAL ORDER }

No. 85.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,

WASHINGTON, March 22, 1902.

The Department publishes for the information of the service the following correspondence:

The Board of Awards, after a careful examination of the reports submitted to it concerning the fire in the sail room of the U. S. S. *Petrel*, March 31, 1901, recommends that the Navy Department issue a General Order calling the attention of the service at large to the several acts of heroism displayed on that occasion by the late commanding officer and other officers and men of that ship.

It appears from the report of Lieutenant J. S. McKean, U. S. N., that Lieutenant Commander Jesse M. Roper, then in command of the *Petrel*, went down into the fore passage of the ship, filled at the time with dense and acrid smoke, in the endeavor to save the lives of those who, in their efforts to subdue the fire, were in danger of death from suffocation. Partially overcome by the smoke and gases, he was assisted up the hatchway and onto the berth deck.

Learning, on his recovery, that Patrick Toner, seaman, was still below and likely to perish from suffocation, Lieutenant Commander Roper, deaf to the entreaties of those about him, descended a second time and nobly sacrificed his own life in his efforts to save the life of one of his crew.

Such self-sacrificing heroism merits the highest commendation, and is worthy of the best traditions of the service.

Lieutenant J. S. McKean, U. S. N., although on the sick list at the time, went down through the dense smoke, accompanied by L. F. Thies, private, U. S. M. C., and T. Cahey, seaman, all fearlessly exposing themselves to death, and brought out what proved to be the lifeless form of their commanding officer, and rescued Naval Cadet Lewis from certain death.

Naval Cadet J. E. Lewis was also conspicuous for his courage in offering his own life in the effort to save that of Toner and to prevent such risk on the part of his commanding officer.

A. Girandy, seaman, at the imminent risk of his own life, succeeded in saving the lives of E. Kessler, landsman; C. Flaherty, G. M., 3d C., and Patrick Toner, seaman.

These several acts of self-devotion reflect the greatest credit on the officers and men designated as performing them, and entitle each of the latter to a medal of honor and the accompanying gratuity of one hundred dollars, and would entitle each of the officers to the medal did the law permit its being given to a naval officer.

The following named enlisted men deserve conspicuous mention: E. Kessler, landsman, and C. Flaherty, G. M., 3d C., who followed their commanding officer down into the fore passage to rescue Seaman Toner.

These men were themselves overcome by the smoke and gases and had to be hauled up to the upper deck. The following are also deserving of mention for their courageous efforts to save life and to subdue the fire, viz: W. White, coxswain; J. T. Evans, B. M., 2d C.; J. L. Carlsson, bugler; L. T. Sullivan, private, U. S. M. C., and R. E. Burton, 1st sergeant, U. S. M. C.

The following officers also are entitled to commendation: Ensign F. R. Holman for the coolness, good judgment, and professional ability shown in handling the fire after the other officers had all been overcome; and Surgeon B. W. Plummer for coolness and professional ability shown in a most trying situation; and Assistant Paymaster D. M. Addison for the coolness and efficiency shown in his successful efforts in aiding the doctor and resuscitating Naval Cadet Lewis. In fact, the conduct of all on board appears to have been very creditable and the thanks of the naval service are due Major Wise, U. S. V., for heartily and efficiently assisting Dr. Plummer in resuscitating those overcome by the smoke and gases.

In accordance with the above-quoted recommendation of the Board of Awards, which was concurred in by the Commander in Chief of the Asiatic Station, the Department has awarded to Louis Fred Thies, private, U. S. M. C., and to T. Cahey, and A. Girandy, seamen, medals of honor and a gratuity of \$100 each for fearlessly exposing their own lives to danger for the saving of others on the occasion of the fire on board the U. S. S. *Petrel*, March 31, 1901.

JOHN D. LONG,
Secretary.