Medal Award: Keeper Isaac H. Grant, 1881

The instance first in order was that of Mr. Isaac H. Grant, the keeper of Whitehead light-house, on the coast of Maine, who, on the 7th of August, 1881, was the hero of a remarkably prompt and gallant rescue. At about 8 o'clock in the morning of that day two men, named Thomas Wilson and John Lynch, mate and seaman on board the schooner Vicksburgh, of Bangor, Maine went out in a yawl from their vessel, which was at anchor in Seal Harbor.

There was a dense fog, a strong breeze, with frequent squalls and a heavy sea, and at 9 o'clock, when the boat had been absent from the vessel an hour, and was about a mile to the eastward of Whitehead light-house, she suddenly capsized. The men contrived to get astride the bottom, and clung to the keel, but were repeatedly torn off by the violent seas, although they often managed to regain their position. Their cries for help were drowned out by the roar of the waves, and the dense fog prevented alike their being seen from or seeing the shore.

In this pitiable condition of suffering and struggle they continued for three hours, a strong current caused by the ebb-tide meanwhile bearing them out to sea, and the prospect of being lost rapidly becoming imminent, when the fog fortunately lifted and disclosed them to the keeper of the light-house as they tossed, clinging to the yawl's bottom, far out on the rough waters.

Keeper Grant acted at once with admirable forethought and energy. He dispatched his daughter with the alarm to the keeper of the life-saving station, about a mile away, and while the girl sped on her errand launched his own boat, with the aid of his son Frank, and put out to the rescue.

So stormy was the sea after getting past the lee of the light-house that he was forced to throw over sail and ballast to keep the boat from swamping. He soon found that the nearest way to the perishing men was across a dangerous shoal, and time being precious, he risked this peril, and after a hazardous pull came up with the sufferers, who by this time were so helpless that they had to be lifted into the boat. They were in a frightful condition, exhausted, benumbed with cold, their trouser-legs chafed off at the knees by the abrasions of their struggles in keeping their hold of the boat's bottom, and the skin and flesh excoriated for spaces each as large as a man's hand, forming ghastly wounds.

The keeper of the life-saving station soon came up in a boat better than that by which the rescue had been effected, and to this they were transferred and taken to the light-house, where their hurts were bandaged and every attention was bestowed upon them.

The silver medal of the Life-Saving Service was bestowed upon Mr. Grant in recognition of his humane and gallant service upon this occasion.

[i]Annual Report of the Operations of the U.S. Life-Saving Service for the Fiscal Year ending June 30,1882[/i