

THANKS OF CONGRESS TO THE OFFICERS AND CREW OF
THE STEAMER CORWIN.

FEBRUARY 7, 1885.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

Mr. SINGLETON, from the Committee on the Library, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany H. Res. 317.]

The Committee on the Library, to whom was referred the joint resolution (H. Res. 317) extending the thanks of Congress to Capt. M. A. Healy and his associate officers of the revenue marine steamer Corwin, beg leave to submit the following report:

The Territory known as Alaska extends from the 55th to the 71st parallel of latitude, and from the 130th to the 166th degree of longitude, and embraces an area of nearly 600,000 square miles, or more than that of all the States of the Atlantic sea-board from Maine to Florida. This immense tract possesses a coast line of more than 20,000 miles, including the outlying islands, or about twice the extent of all the other coasts of the United States. Its northern shores are far within the limits of the frozen zone, washed by waters choked with polar ice, while its southern boundaries almost touch the wheat-fields of Washington Territory.

This vast country yields to the Government what no other Territory yields, an income of proportions far above the cost of caring for its people. From the seal-fur industry there is yearly turned into the Treasury a sum exceeding \$300,000. It produces also many other valuable furs. The salmon and cod fisheries are a most promising source of wealth. Rich deposits of coal, copper, and the precious metals are also found. The forests of timber are a reserve of incalculable value.

This great area is peopled in its principal extent by wandering tribes of Eskimo, who live by fishing and trapping. They number more than 20,000. The islands of the Aleutian Archipelago contain perhaps a thousand Aleuts, while in Southeastern Alaska are found a few hundred white citizens.

For the protection of these important possessions of our country Congress has for years provided for annual visits of a revenue cutter, appropriating yearly the sum of \$25,000 to pay the expenses of such expeditions. Last year a Territorial government was set up in the south-east corner of Alaska. But the principal area is still left to the protection of the revenue-marine steamer sent out by the Treasury Department.

The revenue cutter Corwin, which for the past three years has cruised to Alaska and the Northwestern Arctic Ocean, is a little steamer of about 220 tons capacity, 140 feet in length, built originally for service upon the coasts of California and Oregon, but diverted to her present

uses for want of a more fit vessel to carry out the purposes of Congress in Alaskan waters. This little vessel leaves San Francisco early in May, and proceeds first to the Seal Islands—Saint Paul and Saint George—then to the Arctic Ocean, where she finds the principal whaling fleet of the country following the animal in his favorite haunts. She visits the native settlements, driving away the illegal traffickers in rum and fire-arms. Amidst snows and fogs and grinding ice-fields she extends succor to the helpless and the shipwrecked. For more than the half of every season her duties are carried on amongst scenes of the utmost desolation, hardship, and peril. Twelve thousand miles within these difficult and dangerous waters is frequently the season's cruise of the *Corwin*.

The revenue marine officers, by their vigilance and activity, have given excellent protection to the nation's interests in this far-away region. Only last season, one of the *Corwin's* officers seized a vessel marauding upon the seal islands and brought her a prize to San Francisco. This seizure was made under circumstances reflecting great credit upon the officer and the service. Two piratical craft had been seized in former seasons. In vast stretches of coast unknown to civilization this vessel has been the only agency to bear the flag and exhibit the authority of the Government. To thousands of half-civilized natives she represents the majesty and power of the nation, and dispenses such justice as humanity and the needs of the people call for.

This Alaskan work is no pleasure-sailing on summer seas. From the beginning to the end of the season it is a series of heroic contests with the most arduous conditions of ocean navigation. Storms of sleet and snow, days of fog and darkness; through treacherous currents and uncharted seas; confronted always by the hidden dangers of the moving ice-pack; yet this staunch little craft has never turned back from the path of duty. The record shows that more than a dozen times in a single season has she been shut in by the ice-wall, and apparently consigned to certain destruction, from which peril she has been extricated only by skillful seamanship. In the face of these difficulties the reports show that her record of gallant and daring deeds of humanity is unexcelled. Within the past three years she has saved from the desolate solitudes of the frozen ocean an aggregate of one hundred persons whom she has borne to safe haven.

For these extra services and this frequent hazard of the lives of her commander and his associates the law permits no increase of pay, no mark of distinction. Congress provides medals of gold as a token of the nation's pride in him who hazards his own life to save a fellow-being, but there is no mark of recognition for this whole command, engaged season after season in extra-hazardous navigation in Polar seas. The appended letter of the Secretary of the Treasury gives in detail the shining record of Captain Healy and his command for the past three seasons' work. This statement tells a story of heroic service rendered without expectation of reward that cannot fail to elicit the warm commendation of every friend of humanity.

The resolution conveying the thanks of Congress is a simple means of indicating to this gallant officer and his brave associates that their good work is observed, and their heroic deeds are held in grateful remembrance by the country's law-makers. It confers no added rank or increase of pay; it only adds the stamp of our approval to the well-earned luster with which the people must crown such good deeds.

Your committee can see no good reason why this just act of recognition should be withheld, but many why it should be accorded, and therefore strongly recommend the passage of the resolution.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
February 2, 1885.

SIR: Respectfully replying to the telegram to this Department from the clerk of your committee, in which he states that the committee desires the facts in support of the resolution of thanks to Capt. M. A. Healy and others, introduced by Mr. Collins, of Massachusetts, I have the honor to transmit the following statement of facts copied from the records:

"The Corwin in 1852, while proceeding to the relief of the destitute and starving people of the United States Arctic relief steamer Rodgers, entered heavy fields of drift-ice in the Bering Sea on the 11th of May, by which she was beset for a period of three days to the imminent peril of all on board; finally, after a three days' contest with the ice-fields, reaching Saint Lawrence Bay, Siberia, where the Rodgers people were, at midnight of the 14th. Receiving these people on board at the jaws of Saint Lawrence Bay, she cruised for the next three days in returning to the southward through the same fields of heavy ice, making her way with still greater difficulty than upon her passage to the northward, and encountering even greater dangers. She brought away at this time thirty-two officers and men.

"On the same occasion, while working through the ice, she rescued fourteen of the American whaling bark Sappho, which had been wrecked in the ice.

"On the 17th of the same month, still cruising amidst ice-fields, she picked up a boat containing nine natives of Saint Lawrence Island, which had been blown off shore in a gale. These were conveyed to Indian Point, Siberia.

"The Corwin transported the Rodgers people a distance of 3,800 miles, via Sitka, to San Francisco, and, after repairing some damages sustained in the first cruise, proceeded again to the Arctic Seas, where, in August, she cruised to Point Barrow, the most northerly land of our country, and thence 200 miles in an easterly direction in aid of the whaling fleet. Here, after steaming through field-ice, she encountered the impenetrable ice-barrier of the Northwestern Arctic Ocean.

"During the season of 1853 the Corwin cruised as usual in the Arctic Ocean, but found the waters exceptionally free from ice and very few persons imperiled by the conditions of navigation.

"August 10 of that year she took on board at Golovin Bay seven miners without means of transportation to San Francisco, and conveyed them on her return voyage to their destination.

"In 1854, leaving San Francisco early in May, she encountered heavy drift-ice in Norton Sound, Bering Sea, that was barring the entrance to the harbor at Saint Michael's.

"On June 12 of the same year, in the Arctic Ocean, she was completely embayed in the ice-pack, and for twenty-four hours fought her way amongst the grinding masses, composed of sharp, new ice, averaging from 30 to more than 50 feet in thickness; and the vessel was repeatedly in imminent peril of destruction during the whole twenty-four hours.

"From the date of her release, on June 13, to that of her arrival at Point Hope, on July 17, 1854, she waged a succession of battles with drifting fields of heavy ice, attended most of the time with dense fog—the sailor's worst foe—making navigation exceedingly perilous.

"On August 24, she went to the assistance of two of the whaling fleet, which were anchored in a perilous position near the ice-pack. These vessels, however, refused assistance. One of them was subsequently surrounded by ice and abandoned by her crew. On the same day, steaming near the pack in the vicinity of Point Barrow, observing and communicating with the whaling fleet, the vessel was suddenly beset by very heavy ice, threatening her immediate destruction, from which, after many hours' severe peril and arduous work, she was fortunately extricated.

"During this season she supplied with provisions destitute miners in Golovin Bay; June 17, rendered assistance to the steamer Bowhead; July 23, took on board two shipwrecked sailors from the wrecked schooner Caleb Eaton; August 12, found in a destitute condition, and took on board, four sailors who had deserted from the whaling bark Dawn (found at Port Clarence, Bering Sea).

"Proceeded, August 20 and 21, to the assistance of the wrecked steamer Bowhead in the Arctic Ocean, 30 miles north of Icy Cape. After battling for two days with fog and ice, succeeded in picking up twenty-seven of the crew of that vessel.

"September 4, succored five Golovin Bay miners at Saint Michael's, who were without subsistence or the means of reaching civilization."

RECAPITULATION.

Number of officers and men from the Rodgers	32
Number of the wrecked crew of the American bark Sappho	14
Number of Innuits picked up in boat blown off shore in a gale	9
Number of miners from Golovin Bay	7
Number of sailors from the Caleb Eaton	2

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Number of sailors, deserters, from the whaling bark Dawn.....	4
Number of sailors from steamer Bowhead	27
Number of Golowin Bay miners without subsistence or the means of reaching civilization	5
Total.....	100

Besides the assistance enumerated, Captain Healy with his command rendered other acts of humanity and advantage to the interests of commerce in Alaskan waters.

It is proper to add that all the cruising of the Corwin in the Arctic waters is attended with constant occasions of imminent danger, not only to the vessel but to the lives of those on board.

As bearing on the subject of the committee's inquiry, I transmit the inclosed copies of letters of thanks to the Department for assistance rendered by this vessel, as follows:

(A) Letter dated September 1, 1884, from Z. H. Crocker, master of American ship Siren.

(B) Letter dated November 10, 1884, from A. Borland, president, and Crittenden Robinson, secretary, Omilak Gold and Silver Mining Company.

(C) Letter dated November 15, 1884, from J. N. Knowles, manager Pacific Steam Whaling Company.

During the period covered by the foregoing data the Corwin has been under the command of Capt. Michael A. Healy, U. S. R. M.

Very respectfully,

H. McCULLOCH,
Secretary.

Hon. O. R. SINGLETON,
Chairman Committee on the Library, House of Representatives.

A.

SAN FRANCISCO, September 1, 1884.

SIR: I feel it to be an act of duty, no less than a pleasure, to bring to your notice a few of the very many invaluable services and acts of kindness performed by the captain and officers of the U. S. R. S. Corwin in the northern seas.

I have charge of the ship Siren, of New Bedford, and have just returned from a voyage to Port Clarence, Alaska, where I landed a cargo of coal for use of the United States Revenue Marine and the steamers of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company. Before leaving San Francisco I received much invaluable information from Captain Healy regarding my proposed voyage. During my stay at Port Clarence, and in proceeding to sea from thence, by the aid and assistance I received from Captain Healy and his officers much valuable time was saved, and I was enabled to complete my voyage far sooner than I otherwise could have done. I will not encroach upon your valuable time by attempting to particularize what was done for me except in one instance. During the afternoon of July 31 a strong wind arose very suddenly; all my crew were ashore with a lighter of coal, which lay on the beach full of water, the surf breaking completely over her. The Siren dragged her moorings and the crew's services were greatly needed on board at once, but I had no means of getting a boat to them.

A boat was immediately dispatched from the Corwin, although it was a very difficult thing to do, on account of the strong wind and heavy surf, my crew brought safely on board, and I was enabled to secure my moorings, and soon after my lighter.

As Captain Healy preemptorily refused offers of a pecuniary reward for what was done, you will please accept my sincere thanks and those of my owners (who will be fully informed of what was done for the Siren by the Corwin) for this and all other services rendered. I also wish to add that a number of the steamers of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company coaled from my ship at Port Clarence, and all those captains, as well as all the other whaling captains whom I saw, write in their praises of the Corwin, her commander and officers, and say that her presence among them in the Arctic is of the very greatest value. That this feeling must be very strong among the whaling captains will, I think, be conclusively shown when I add that in at least one instance the captain loudest in his praises of her is the owner of several ships and had been put to considerable trouble and inconvenience by the Corwin through being suspected of having on board contraband articles.

With my heartiest good wishes for the prosperity and success of the United States Revenue Marine, and in particular for the commander and officers of the Corwin,

I am, sir, yours, very truly,

Z. H. CROCKER,
Master American Ship Siren.

The Hon. SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,
Washington.

B.

SAN FRANCISCO, November 10, 1884.

DEAR SIR: On behalf of the Omilak Gold and Silver Mining Company, at present, and for some years past, engaged in mining operations near Golowin Bay, northern coast of Alaska Territory, we desire to express our appreciation and sense of deep gratitude for the valuable services rendered our company and our people at a time of distress and great necessity by the United States revenue cutter Corwin, Capt. M. A. Healy commanding.

By reason of the wrecking of the company's vessel, and the loss of all on board, our people at the mine were left with scant supplies on hand and great suffering and distress staring them in the face. The timely arrival of the Corwin, and the intelligent spirit of humanity evinced by her commander in their behalf, prompts us to give expression to the obligations we are under to Captain Healy, and through him to your Department.

Another service rendered by the appearance of the Corwin was its effect upon the Indians, who previously had been domineering almost to the point of open and armed assault upon our people. In this behalf we very respectfully beg leave to suggest that an annual visit to Golowin Bay by a United States vessel will be of much effect in preventing armed hostility on the part of the Indians, with the attendant result of massacre and bloodshed.

Again expressing our most sincere thanks and feelings of lasting gratitude to your Department and to the commander of the Corwin, we beg to remain, with great respect, your obedient servants,

A. BORLAND, *President*,
CRITTENDEN ROBINSON, *Secretary*,
Omilak Gold and Silver Mining Company.

Hon. HUGH McCULLOCH,
Secretary United States Treasury,
Washington D. C.

C.

SAN FRANCISCO, November 15, 1884.

DEAR SIR:

* * * * *
The Bowhead was owned by the Pacific Steam Whaling Company, on behalf of which company, as its manager, it becomes my duty, as well as my pleasure, to return to you, and through you to the Department which you represent, and to Captain Healy, commander of the Thomas Corwin, my grateful thanks and the thanks of the company which I represent, for his timely and humane exertions in rescuing, caring for, and safely landing in port the officers and crew of this ill-fated steamer.

While the plaudis of the public may not be audible in commendation of the quiet and unobtrusive but noble acts of the officers of the Corwin, yet those whose lives were saved and their families, as well as those indirectly interested, will ever hold their rescuers in grateful remembrance, and I am sure that I speak the sentiments of the mercantile community of San Francisco, in complimenting and thanking you and the Department and Captain Healy for the efficient service that has been performed by the officers of the Corwin in rescuing valuable lives, many of whom, without the aid thus extended, would doubtless have been left at the mercies of the inhospitable Arctic climate to perish by cold and hunger.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. N. KNOWLES,
Manager.
EDWIN L. GRIFFITH,
Secretary.

Hon. SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,
Washington, D. C.

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