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THE "CONSPICUOUS SERVICE CROSS."

The King has approved the institution of a decoration to be known as the Conspicuous Service Cross, as a means of recognising distinguished service before the enemy on the part of the Warrant Officers or subordinate officers of His Majesty's fleet, who, by reason of not holding a commission in the Royal Navy, are not eligible for appointment to any existing order or decoration. This decoration is to consist of a silver cross, with the reverse side plain, but having on the obverse side the Imperial and Royal cypher "E. R. I." surmounted by the Imperial crown.—*London Gazette.*

THIS month we have to gratefully record one of the concessions which were recently promised by Mr. Arnold-Forster from his seat in the House of Commons, in regard to the *anomalies* that existed and the disabilities under which the Chiefs and Warrant Officers of the Navy had so long laboured. It is the first fruits of an investigation that has been, and we believe still is, going on in connection with the re-adjustment of the conditions of our service, which it is our duty to advocate in these columns. Not, we hope, the chief and most important one; but still an important and satisfactory one if it is followed, as we have every reason to believe it will be, by concessions more substantial and far-reaching in regard to our pay and promotions. But speaking of this concession alone, and on behalf of our class, we wish to respectfully convey the sincere and heartfelt

thanks of the Chiefs and Warrant Officers to the sea and civil Lords of the Admiralty for establishing the order of the "Conspicuous Service Cross," by means of which Warrant and subordinate Officers can receive some mark of distinction for meritorious or distinguished service before the enemy. We are more than glad that subordinate officers have been included with Warrant Officers, as it will give the decoration an even greater value than if it had been created for Warrant Officers only. Officers of midshipmen and other junior ranks may thus earn this decoration and place C.S.C. after their names when they wear the uniform of Admirals, or officers of equivalent rank. This association will certainly enhance its value to Warrant Officers, and make them in the future co-members of a distinguished order with officers who are their co-workers in all the fighting and hardships of our great service. It is for this reason we are specially grateful to the authorities for including subordinate with Warrant Officers as being eligible for this new decoration. For it is a concession to modern naval thought, which daily becomes less exclusive and less tolerant of that policy which tends to keep the abyss between the men and their officers in the Navy as broad and deep as has been the custom during the last century, in spite of the fact that among all other classes of civil and military servants, and in commercial and business circles generally, these barriers have been largely broken down or entirely removed. Even those that argue that social distinctions must be maintained—and we have always allowed that to a certain extent this must be so in a country whose society is constituted as ours is—cannot fairly argue that there is not room and need for professional services to the country to be rewarded with a nearer regard to equality than has hitherto been the custom in the Navy, where although the commissioned naval officer could aspire to various orders and decorations created by his Sovereign, yet Chiefs and Warrant Officers who shared their every danger and hardship whether ashore or afloat, and who were the only officer representatives from the rank and file of the Navy, had not a single order open to them no matter how distinguished or meritorious their services.

However, that state of things has now passed away. We want to write with modesty and restraint about the sweeping away of this inequality; but it is only fair to the class we represent to point out that the creation of some such distinction as has now been

established by His Gracious Majesty the King was advocated in the columns of this, their official organ, many months ago. In our back numbers more than one reference will be found in regard to the subject, and it will be also be found that we have strongly advocated what has now occurred. Whether this has had any influence on the final result or not is hardly for us to say. What we can say, however, with a fair amount of confidence and assurance, is that no other single reference to, or support of, the creation of such distinction for Warrant Officers, either in the press, in Parliament, or in public speech, has been brought to our notice before Mr. Arnold-Forster told us in answer to a question in the Commons a few months ago that the matter was being investigated by a committee. But these are details; the great thing is that this anomaly has been brushed aside and destroyed for ever, no matter by whose suggestion or instigation, and for that result we are truly and sincerely grateful.

The first batch of names will indicate what are to be counted as meritorious or distinguished services before the enemy. Each one of us will no doubt set up our own standard for such a distinction. As for ourselves we are content to leave the matter in the hands of the Admiralty, believing they will be as fair and as just to their Warrant and subordinate as to other Officers of higher rank. We have no reason to think that the C.S.C. will be given to men of our rank whose services should claim the higher reward of promotion and financial recognition. We prefer rather to believe that the authorities will be as fair to us as they are to all other classes of officers, when men of our rank have their claims placed before the Board of Admiralty for consideration. There is no reason why this should not be so. There is every reason why they should be equally as fairly treated as are all other classes. And if this is so, then the C.S.C. is a distinct and decided gain for such as those among us whose services have hitherto been rewarded by a letter of thanks and noted at the Admiralty, and which now and in future, we may well hope, will receive the more tangible reward of having the C.S.C. bestowed upon them, when recommended by their Captains and Admirals for meritorious or distinguished services. We say tangible advisedly, and because the holding of such a distinction will probably act in our rank as it acts in other ranks, viz., it will mark the officer who holds it down for early promotion if he goes on deserving, and if the conditions for promotion to a higher grade remains as it is at present for Warrant Officers, *i.e.*, *seniority tempered by selection*. It is for that among other reasons that we welcome the creation of this new decoration by His Majesty, and that we express our gratitude to him and the Lords of the Admiralty, and to all who have been concerned in bringing about so gratifying and desirable an end as the establishment of a "Conspicuous Service Cross" whereby Warrant and subordinate Officers can be rewarded for meritorious and distinguished services before the enemy. We heartily thank all concerned, not forgetting the committee whose recommendations appear to have been adopted, and all our own senior officers who may

have had a hand in, or approved of, this new departure. Such attention to our affairs will make us more than ever their zealous servants and co-workers, and the devoted and faithful fighting instruments of our country.