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CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD.

*St. James's Palace, S.W.1.
23rd November, 1943.*

The KING has been graciously pleased to award the GEORGE CROSS to:—

George Preston Stronach, Esq., Chief Officer.

When the ship was lying in harbour, a severe aircraft attack developed and she was hit and at once caught fire. The vessel had a large consignment of petrol and ammunition on board, which was exploding heavily all the time and in spite of strenuous efforts which were made to fight the fire she had to be abandoned. The Master was killed by the explosion and the responsibility for further operations devolved on the Chief Officer.

He had been rendered temporarily unconscious but recovered almost immediately and went forward to look for survivors. He found a number of the crew sheltering in the alley way and, braving the exploding ammunition, led them to a boat alongside which took them to safety. In order to provide for the transport of any other survivors who might be found, he then lowered another boat and brought it alongside the ship. Although the vessel was now burning furiously Mr. Stronach made his way to the officers' accommodation amidships. Finding a hose with a trickle of water coming through, he held this over his head and so kept himself sufficiently wet to protect him from the worst of the heat and flames. With great difficulty he climbed into the collapsed accommodation and found one of the deck officers, unconscious and badly burned. Mr. Stronach pulled him clear and dragged him along the deck to the lowered boat. Returning to the accommodation, he began to remove the debris from another officer who was trapped. By almost superhuman efforts he dragged the man through the porthole and

along the deck. He then tied a rope around his waist and lowered him over the side to the boat. As the situation was becoming desperate Mr. Stronach ordered a man to take the boat to safety and once again he returned amidships where he discovered an officer who had been severely injured. Dragging him along the deck to the side of the ship, he tied a rope around him and lowered him over the side on to a raft which had returned to the ship in response to his calls. Again Mr. Stronach continued his search for survivors and, taking a final look round aft, he saw a greaser lying unconscious in the scuppers. He dragged this man to the side of the ship, but finding there was no raft or boat alongside, put a lifebelt around him and threw him overboard. When he was satisfied that there were no further survivors the Chief Officer jumped overboard and swam to a raft which, under his direction, returned to pick up the injured greaser. In the full knowledge that she was likely to blow up at any moment Chief Officer Stronach stayed on this burning vessel searching for survivors for an hour and twenty minutes. His inspiring leadership induced a number of the crew to get away and so saved their lives and by his gallant efforts, undertaken with utter disregard of his personal safety, he saved the lives of three officers and a greaser, all of whom were badly hurt. His action equals any in the annals of the Merchant Navy for great and unselfish heroism and determination in the face of overwhelming odds.

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD.

*St. James's Palace, S.W.1.
23rd November, 1943.*

The KING has been graciously pleased to give orders for the undermentioned appointments to the Most Excellent Order of the