



"He staggered forward, as if in fear, and 'Mya!' he cried."

The Price of Victory—By Robert Aitken

THE *Magnifique* had made good time as far as the Flemish Cap, but there the first of the fog drew a dense curtain across her path and spoiled all prospect of a record run.

A little later came a wireless warning from the *Majestic*, feeling her way toward the Fast-net through the thick sea-ske, of busy times on the Banks and a big berg calving below the Virgins, whence its unwieldy progeny wallowing westward on the Great Circle course.

After this there was snow—dense, incessant, through which could scarcely be seen the dim shadows of disaster and death that went by the big liner, while the sensitive ears of her saloon passengers, peering disconsolately through the steamy portholes, were smitten by the sound of deep-sea curses from the sailors. All the shipping of that hemisphere seemed to be bearing down upon her, but she had so far escaped collision. It was just possible, while daylight lasted, to struggle onward at half

speed; when dusk came down the engine-room telegraph rang for dead slow. Every other precaution possible had already been taken, and, with that, she went blindly forward to her fate.

It was the surge of the sea rather than her own impetus which sent the steamer crashing across the submerged floe with such force that, as she sprang upward, the keen, knife-like edges of the ice cut right through her soft steel skin. She slid back, ready to sink.

There followed that pandemonium which breaks loose when a multitude in fear is fighting for individual life, when dark deeds are done in the darkness, when the devil exacts his dues of many who would not otherwise be accounted cowards. It is one thing, remember, to face death freely in the open and by day—another altogether to go down into the depths alive, to drown like rats in a trap, with wide, unseeing eyes.

The *Magnifique* was crowded from stem to stern. A thousand emigrants had swarmed on board before she started; and in the saloon and second cabin she carried nine hundred passengers; her own hands could be counted by companies.

Many were crushed into shapeless clay in the mad rush for the upper air; many more cast overside in the struggle to be first at the lifeboats; there were even knives at work among the worst of them, stabbing, cutting, carving a way for their wielders toward suppositious safety.

A blue light began to sputter on the flying-bridge, and, as it blazed up, its flare fell, through fog and snow, on the white fretwork of frantic faces turned toward it. Beyond these, on all sides, showed the black, hungry sea, swelling, sinking again with an oily regularity, an apparent relentlessness of purpose which heightened the horror of the scene.

The captain, leaning far over the rail above, shouted short, sharp orders through a megaphone that muffled the words as they left his lips so that no landsman could learn their import. His officers, striving to reach their posts beside the boats, sought to reassure the rabble by the way; but that was seemingly impossible, and it was not long before the dull report of a revolver-shot proclaimed the species of the discipline they were prepared to exercise in case of need. At this the emigrants, misunderstanding the measures being

taken for their welfare, began to storm the boat-deck.

As soon as Yorston Goodyear realized that the ship had struck the lifted a life-belt from the rack above his berth, and, snatching a candle-lamp from its socket, started out to find Amberley.

It happened, as he had foreseen, that the electric lights died out before he reached the passage, already packed with maddened men and women, and he had to fight hard to save his insufficient light. Prisoned there among them, he kept calling to his friend, "Miles, Miles!" until through all the uproar there came back to him the answer he had prayed for, and Amberley appeared at a distance, his forehead bleeding, his eyes aflame.

A fresh effort brought them together at the foot of the staircase, up which they clambered painfully in a slow, creeping current of humanity, leaving behind them in the cruel darkness an unforgettable inferno.

Once on the landing immediately above they turned aside, boring their way along another blocked corridor, blind and deaf to the agonies about them, until they came to the cabin they were seeking. The door was

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locked, and perate demand answer from

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