

The "Titanic" Tragedy: The Sea's Toll

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THE voyage from Queenstown had been quite uneventful; very fine weather was experienced, and the sea was quite calm. The wind had been westerly to south-westerly the whole way, but very cold, particularly the last day; in fact, after dinner on Sunday evening, it was almost too cold to be out on deck at all. I had been in my stateroom for about ten minutes when, at about 11.15 p.m., I felt a slight jar, and then soon after a second one, but not sufficiently large to cause any anxiety to anyone, however nervous he may have been. The engines stopped immediately afterward, and my first thought was, "She has lost a propeller."

NO SENSE OF DANGER.

I went up on the top deck in a dressing gown, and found only a few people there, who had come up as usual to inquire why we had stopped, but there was no sort of anxiety in the minds of anyone.

We saw through the smoking-room window a game of cards going on, and went in to inquire if the players knew anything; it seems they felt more of the jar, and, looking through the window, had seen a huge iceberg go by close to the side of the boat. They thought we had just grazed it with a glancing blow, and the engines had been stopped to see if any damage had been done. No one, of course, had any conception that she had been pierced below by part of the submerged iceberg.

The game went on without any thought of disaster, and I retired to my cabin to read until we went on again. I never saw any of the players or the on-lookers again. A little later, hearing people going upstairs, I went out again and found everyone waiting to know why the engines had stopped.

No doubt many were awakened from sleep by the sudden stopping of a vibration to which they had become accustomed during the four days we had been on board. Naturally, with such powerful engines as the "Titanic" carried, the vibration was very noticeable all the time, and the sudden stopping had something the same effect as the stopping of a loud-ticking grandfather's clock in a room.

THE FIRST ALARM.

On going on deck again I saw that there was an undoubted list downward from stern to bows, but knowing nothing of what had happened, concluded some of the front compartments had filled and weighed her down. I went down again to put on warmer clothing, and as I dressed heard an order shouted:

"All passengers on deck with life belts on."

We walked slowly up with them tied on over our clothing, but even then presumed this was a wise precaution the captain was taking, and that we should return in a short time and retire to bed.

There was a total absence of any panic or any expressions of alarm, and I suppose this can be accounted for by the exceedingly calm night and the absence of any signs of the accident.

The ship was absolutely still, and except for a gentle tilt downward, which I don't think any person in ten would have noticed at that time, no signs of the approaching disaster were visible. She lay just as if she were waiting the order to go on again when some trifling matter had been adjusted. But in a few moments we saw the covers lifted from the boats and the crews allotted to them standing by and curling up the ropes which were to lower them by the pulley blocks into the water.

GATHERING SENSE OF PERIL.

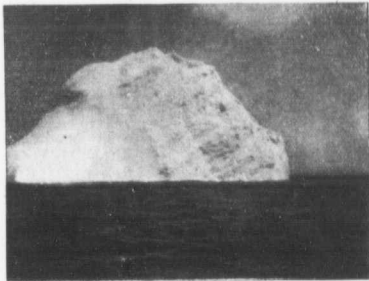
We then began to realize it was more serious than had been supposed, and my first thought was to go down and get more clothing and some money, but seeing people pouring up the stairs decided it was better to cause no confusion to people coming up by doing so.

Presently we heard the order:

"All men stand back away from the boats and all ladies retire to next deck below"—the smoking room deck or B deck. The men all stood away and remained in absolute silence, leaning against the end railings of the deck or pacing slowly up and down.

The boats were swung out and lowered from A deck. When they were to the level of B deck, where all the ladies were collected, the ladies got in quietly, with the exception of some who refused to leave their husbands. In some cases they were torn from them and pushed into the boats, but in many instances they were allowed to remain because there was no one to insist they should go.

Looking over the side one saw boats from aft already in the water, slipping quietly away into the darkness, and presently the boats near to me were lowered



ONE OF THE TERRORS OF THE DEEP.

and with much creaking as the new ropes slipped through the pulley blocks down the ninety feet which separated them from the water. An officer in uniform came up as one boat went down and shouted: "When you are afloat, row round to the companion ladder and stand by with the other boats for orders."

"Aye, aye, sir," came up the reply, but I don't think any boat was able to obey the order. When they were afloat and had the oars at work the condition of the rapidly settling boat was so much more a sight for alarm for those in the boats than those on board that in common prudence the sailors saw they could no nothing but row from the sinking ship to save at any rate some lives. They no doubt anticipated that suction from such an enormous vessel would be more than usually dangerous to a crowded boat mostly filled with women.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SEA.

All this time there was no trace of any disorder, panic, or rush to the boats, and no scenes of women sobbing hysterically, such as one generally pictures as happening at such times; everyone seemed to realize so slowly that there was imminent danger.

When it was realized that we might all be presently in the sea, with nothing but our life belts to support us until we were picked up by passing steamers, it

was extraordinary how calm everyone was and how completely self-controlled. One by one the boats were filled with women and children, lowered and rowed away into the night. Presently the word went round among the men, "The men are to be put in boats on the starboard side." I was on the port side, and most of the men walked across the deck to see if this was the case.

I remained where I was and presently heard the call:

"Any more ladies?" Looking over the side of the ship, I saw the boat, number thirteen, swinging level with B deck, half full of ladies.

Again the call was repeated:

"Any more ladies?"

I saw none come on and then one of the crew looked up and said: "Any ladies on your deck, sir?"

"No," I replied.

"Then you had better jump."

I dropped in and fell in the bottom, as they cried, "Lower away." As the boat began to descend two ladies were pushed hurriedly through the crowd on B deck and heaved over into the boat, and a half of ten minutes passed down after 11:30. Down we went, the crew calling to us as lowering which end to keep her level, "Aft," "Stern," "Both together," until we were some ten feet from the water, and here occurred the only anxious moment we had during the whole of our experience from leaving the deck to reaching the "Carpathia."

Immediately below our boat was the exhaust of the condensers, a huge stream of water pouring all the time from the ship's side just above the water line. It was plain we ought to be smart away from this not to be swamped by it when we touched water.

We had no officer aboard, nor petty officer, nor member of the crew to take charge. So one of the stokers shouted: "Someone find the pin which releases the boat from the ropes and pull it up."

No one knew where it was. We felt as if we could on the floor and sides, but found nothing and it was hard to move among so many people—we had sixty or seventy on board.

A PERILOUS MOMENT.

Down we went and presently floated with our ropes still holding us, the exhaust washing us away from the side of the vessel and the swell of the sea urging us back against the side again.

The resultant of all these forces was an impetus which carried us parallel to the ship's side and directly under boat fourteen, which had filled rapidly with men and was coming down on us in a way that threatened to submerge our boat.

"Stop lowering fourteen," our crew shouted and the crew of number fourteen now only twenty feet above, shouted the same. But the distance to the top was some seventy feet and the creaking pulleys may have denuded all sound to those above, for down it came—fifteen feet, ten feet, five feet, and a stoker and I reached up and touched her swinging above our heads. The next drop would have brought it on our heads, but just before it dropped another stoker sprang to the ropes with his knife.

"One," I heard him say, "two," as his knife cut through the pulley ropes, and the next moment the exhaust stream had carried us clear while boat fourteen