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The Titanic Puzzle

The Personal Equation.

A GREAT many people have been contrasting the *Titanic* inquiry in Washington with that in London. At Washington the inquiry was conducted by men who knew nothing of shipping or shipping regulations. Consequently, some very foolish questions were asked and the inquiry was directed rather to bringing out the survivors' stories, than to discover the real causes of the accident. In London, on the other hand, the sensational details have been avoided, and the inquiry has been more technical. In the minds of most people this is more dignified and more in keeping with British traditions of the administration of justice and the place which a Government occupies in relation to such happenings.

The difference is, of course, due to the personnel of the chief investigator. Senator Smith, chairman of the Washington inquiry, may be a good senator and a publicist of some standing, but he certainly had no special qualifications for the task which was so suddenly laid upon him. Lord Mersey, who has charge of the British investigation, is probably the best man who could possibly be selected for the purposes of a marine inquiry. As Sir John Charles Bigham, Kt., he was known as a leading commercial and admiralty lawyer. He began life in Liverpool, where shipping questions and shipping cases are of prime importance. As his reputation grew his services were in demand in other parts of the United Kingdom. Later he became president of the Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division of the High Court. He does not seem to have given tremendous satisfaction in divorce matters, but was an undoubted success in so far as admiralty cases were concerned. He has been President of the Bankruptcy Court since 1904.

A Skilful Counsel.

SIR ROBERT FINLAY, who is acting for the White Star in connection with the London investigation, is one of the most prominent of British counsel. Several times he has acted for the larger Canadian corporations in



HON. ALEXANDER CARLISLE

Designer of the *Titanic* and Chairman Harland and Wolff.

appeals which have come before the Privy Council. He has also acted on one or two occasions for the Canadian Government. Sir Robert is the son of an Edinburgh doctor, and was educated in both medicine and law. He was called to the Bar in November, 1867, and became a member of parliament in 1885, representing Inverness. In 1895 he was made Solicitor-General; in 1902 he was chosen Lord Rector of Edinburgh, and from 1900 to 1906 he was Attorney-General. His career is a guarantee that the White Star case will be well looked after before the Court of Inquiry.

Designer and Builder.

ANOTHER interesting figure in connection with the inquiry is Rt. Hon. Alexander Montgomery Carlisle, General Manager and Chairman of the Managing Directors of Harland and Wolff, the famous shipbuilders of Belfast. Harland and Wolff have built most of the White Star vessels, and Mr. Carlisle is said to be chiefly responsible for the design of the *Titanic* and *Olympic*, as well as for that of the two larger boats which are now being built for the same owners. This shipbuilding firm is better known to Canadians through Baron Pirrie, who was formerly Chairman of the Board. Baron Pirrie was born in the city of Quebec, and spent some of his early life in Canada. When only fifteen years of age he entered Harland and Wolff's establishment and eventually became one of its chief officials. He has also been High Sheriff of Antrim and of Down, and also Lord Mayor of Belfast. Like Mr. Carlisle he is a Privy Councillor, showing the high regard which the British Government has for the achievements of this great commercial concern.

Mr. Carlisle was the son of a head master of the Royal Academical Institution of Belfast, and

was educated at that college. Apparently he was intended to follow the career of a shipbuilder and engineer, and the intention has been so far realized that he is now considered one of the greatest of modern shipbuilders.

Something of Results.

THE evidence elicited at Washington and London goes to show that the *Titanic* was travelling in a dangerous zone at too high a rate of speed; that the shell-plating was torn open for approximately two hundred and fifty feet, about twenty-five feet below the water line; that the doors of the watertight compartments were improperly opened after having been closed; that the crew were not named off to take charge of the life-boats; and that the disaster was a most painful and discouraging incident from the point of view of British seamanship. It is quite evident that success had made ship builders and ship owners less fearful of accidents than they should have been. The margin of safety was too narrow. Sir William White, the naval expert, does not seem to take much stock in the notion that the number of life-boats on the big vessels should be increased or that appliances of this kind are as important as "efficient watertight subdivision."

But if British seamanship has been shown deficient in a few particulars there is little doubt that the Captain's command to "Be British" was obeyed almost implicitly, and that in the face of a most sensational catastrophe the British people aboard maintained the best traditions of the race. George Bernard Shaw complains of "an explosion of outrageous romantic lying," but few will agree with him. He is inclined to lay a portion of the blame upon Captain Smith, whom he thinks has been unnecessarily eulogized. It is easy to praise and just as easy to condemn. It is difficult, however, for any human being to say what he would have done if he had been in the position of Captain Smith and the other officers.



SIR ROBERT FINLAY, K.C.

And His Son, Leaving a Session of the *Titanic* Court of Inquiry.



LORD MERSEY

Chairman *Titanic* Inquiry, and His Son, Capt. the Hon. C. Bigham, Who is Secretary.

Photographs by L.N.A.