



HAVE you tried to "re-create" for yourself—as the Parisian police do in criminal cases—the scene on the *Republic* when the shock of the collision jarred its passengers awake? The evening before there had been a concert to celebrate the first night at sea. Then we may assume that some of the passengers went out on deck to get a mouthful of air before turning in. There is a weird and savage loneliness about the night deck of a great steamship as it forges ahead into the dark and unstable sea. In the harbour, you marvel how these immense iron monsters can ever be moved by anything so soft as mere water. You can imagine that waves will break on them as on a cliff; but that waves will lift them and toss them about seems incredible. So when from your place at the rail you feel this mysterious sea, whose seething foam flashing by is well-nigh all you can see of it, lift your iron monster and let it down again with the rhythmic ease of untold strength, you get a vague fear of the unmeasured ocean rolling out there in the dark on whose bosom this leviathan of yours is a toy.

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FROM away out in front and up in the dark comes the striking of a bell. Then a hoarse voice cries—"Eleven o'clock! And all's well!" You turn with relief to the lighted cabins and make your way down the winding stair and along the endless narrow corridors into the bowels of the ship. It seems to shelter you from the nameless power of the unlit sea; but it may occur to you that it is a long way from air and life if an accident should come. In the case of the *Republic*, it came. The passengers were still asleep. An unexpected jar where no jar should be possible. What is it? Let us turn on the electric light. Snap! The light is off. We are still in the bowels of the ship, in our locked state-rooms, and no light. Yet a moment's delay may mean death. However, a rush into the corridors brings reassurance. Those much abused fellows—the stewards—over whose "tips" we should have been grumbling in a few days had all gone well, are there telling us that there is no danger for the moment, and improvising lights with candles melted fast to saucers.

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HOW a touch of the commonplace kills panic. The stewards were not consciously heroes; but if they had not been there with their professional politeness to quiet the passengers and do them the deft services at which they are adepts, panic would have driven the people on the *Republic* mad in that moment of uncertainty. But the real test was yet to come. Soon it is known that there is danger and that we are to be transferred to the *Florida*—a badly injured ship already full of people. Nothing could make more plain the doom of the *Republic*. Some of the passengers have been caught by the interviewers mourning over their baggage; and we may have been inclined to criticise. But it required self-denial of a fair order for those passengers to leave the ship in a calm sea, and take practically nothing with them.

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THE supreme test of courage did not come until later, however, when the slow and toilsome transfer had to be made to the *Baltic*. It took twelve hours. The passengers had to help man the oars. All had to climb a swaying rope ladder. Did you ever try to get up a rope ladder? If it hangs from the side of a ship, it offers one of the most exciting experiences possible, though the ship be lying at anchor in a river and there are friendly seamen about to make drowning impossible. Your feet drive one rung in and your hands pull the other rung out until you feel as if you were suspended horizontally over the river. You are not climbing up, but climbing out; and if your feet should slip—of course that is not what is happening—it is only what it feels like. Every step is an athletic venture with a cold bath waiting to punish a failure to achieve success. Now if this be the feeling beside an anchored ship in a river, what must have been

the experience of those chilled and frightened passengers who were desperately clinging to such a swaying ladder hanging from the side of a rolling ship in a rough sea? After the long period of suspense and the wearing down of their courage and their nerve, this was, doubtless, the most trying experience of the accident.

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ONE cannot help feeling sympathy, too, for those Italians on the *Florida* who had to be kept back by force from rushing the boats. They were refugees from Messina. They had already been through one nerve-shaking experience. Death had trodden on their fleeing heels; and, they could still feel his cold breath. Then came the long voyage across the endless ocean amidst strange surroundings. Then collision which was as frightful to them as to the passengers on the lofty *Republic*. Possibly they did not like the transfer of the *Republic's* passengers to their crippled ship. Is it certain that American passengers would have welcomed an army of Italians under similar circumstances? It probably made them feel even less secure. Then came the word that these favoured passengers were to be transferred again. Why? For what reason could it be except that the *Florida* was believed to be unsafe? No wonder that they, too, demanded to be transferred and not left on a sinking ship to drown like rats in a box. And they demanded it in their excitable Southern way, aggravated by their suspicion that these superior and autocratic officers did not care very much what became of them. As for the officers, one almost forgets to mention their sublime courage when writing of the event, so accustomed have we become to that in trained seamen. It seems as much a part of a sailor's equipment as the hitch he gives his trousers or his immunity from seasickness. We rely on their steadiness in the face of any danger that may come as automatically as we trust to the skill of the engineer who runs a railway train; and this is especially true of ships that fly the British flag.

Wid Importe

A PROVINCE BUILDING IN LONDON CITY



In the centre of London, there is a district which is being entirely rebuilt under the supervision of the London County Council. This is one of the new buildings. It has been erected by the government of Victoria, Australia. This is a bit of enterprise which each of the nine Canadian provinces will find it hard to beat. Later on, the Commonwealth of Australia will build a larger building alongside this fine structure.

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