

1 'With a quiet, slanting dive she disappeared'

2 source : <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/inquirer/with-a-quiet-slanting-dive-she-disappeared/story-e6frg6z6-1226326100951>

3 *This account was given to The Times three days after the sinking by Beesley, a science master at London's Dulwich College.*

4 **THE voyage from Queenstown was quiet and successful. We had met with very fine weather. The sea was calm and the wind was westerly to southwesterly the whole way. The temperature was very cold, particularly on the last day. In fact, after dinner on Sunday evening it was almost too cold to be on the deck at all.**

5 I had been in my berth about 10 minutes when at about a quarter past 10 I felt a slight jar. Then soon afterwards there was a second shock, but not sufficiently large to cause any anxiety to any one, however nervous they may have been. The engines, however, stopped immediately afterwards. At first I thought that the ship had lost a propeller.

6 I went up on deck in my dressing gown and I found only a few people there who had come up in the same way to inquire why we had stopped, but there was no sort of anxiety in the mind of anyone.

7 We saw through the smoking-room window that a game of cards was going on, and I went in to ask if they know anything.

8 They had noticed the jar a little more and looking through the window had seen a huge iceberg go by close to the side of the boat. They thought that we had just grazed it with a glancing blow and they had been to see if any damage had been done. None of us, of course, had any conception that she had been pierced below by part of a submerged iceberg.

9 The game of cards resumed, and without any thought of disaster I retired to my cabin to read until we started again. I never saw any of the players or the onlookers again.

10 A little later, hearing people going upstairs, I went out again and found that everybody wanted to know why the engines had stopped. No doubt many of them had been awakened from their sleep by the sudden stopping of the vibration to which they had become accustomed during the four days we had been on board. Going up on the deck again, I saw there was an unmistakeable list downwards from the stern to the bows, but knowing nothing of what had happened I concluded that some of the front compartments had filled and had weighed her down.

11 Again I went down to my cabin, where I put on some warmer clothing. As I dressed, I heard the order shouted, "All the passengers on deck with lifebelts on." We all walked up slowly with the lifebelts tied on over our clothing, but even then we presumed that this was merely a wise precaution the captain was taking, and that we should return in a short time to go to bed.

12 There was a total absence of any panic or expression of alarm. I suppose this must be accounted for by the exceeding calmness of the night and the absence of any signs of an accident. The ship was absolutely still, and except for the gentle tilt downwards, which I do not think one person in 10 would have noticed at the time, there were no visible signs of the approaching disaster. She lay just as if waiting for the order to go on again when some trifling matter had been adjusted.

13 But in a few moments we saw the covers being lifted from the boats and the crews allotted to them standing by and uncoiling the ropes which were to lower them. We then began to realise that it was a more serious matter than we had at first supposed.

14 My first thought was to go down to get more clothing and some money, but, seeing people pouring up the stairs, I decided it was better to cause no confusion to people coming up by attempting to get to my cabin.

15 Presently we heard the order, "All men stand back away from the boats. All ladies retire to the next deck below", which was the smoking room or B deck. The men all stood away and waited in absolute silence, some leaning against the end railings of the deck, others pacing slowly up and down.

16 The boats were then swung out and lowered from A deck. When they were level with B deck, where all the women were collected, the women got in quietly, with the exception of some who refused to leave their

husbands. In some cases they were torn from their husbands and pushed into the boats, but in many instances they were allowed to remain, since there was no one to insist.

17 Looking over the side, one saw the boats from aft already in the water slipping quietly away into the darkness. Presently the boats near me were lowered with much creaking, as the new ropes slipped through the pulleys and blocks down the 90 feet (27m) that separated them from the water. An officer in uniform came up as one boat went down and shouted, "When you're afloat, row round to the companion ladder and stand by with other boats for orders."

18 "Aye, aye, Sir," came up the reply, but I do not think any boat was able to obey the order, for when they were afloat and had their oars at work the condition of the rapidly settling liner was much more apparent. In common prudence the sailors saw that they could do nothing but row from the sinking ship, and so save, at any rate, some lives. They no doubt anticipated that the suction from such an enormous vessel would be more than usually dangerous to the crowded boat, which was mostly filled with women.

19 All this time there was no trace of any disorder. There was no panic or rush to the boats, and there were no scenes of women sobbing hysterically, such as one generally pictures happening at such times. Everyone seemed to realise so slowly there was imminent danger that when it was realised we might all be presently in the sea, with nothing but our lifebelts to support us until we were picked up by passing steamers, it was extraordinary how calm every one was, how completely self-controlled we were, as one by one the boats filled with women and children were lowered and rowed away into the night.

20 Presently, word went round among us that men were to be put in boats on the starboard side. I was on the port side. Most of the men walked across the deck to see if this was true. I remained where I was and shortly afterwards I heard the call, "Any more ladies?"

21 Looking over the side of the ship I saw boat No 13 swinging level with B deck. It was half full of women. Again the call was repeated. "Any more ladies?" I saw none coming. Then one of the crew looked up and said, "Any ladies on your deck, Sir?"

22 "No," I replied.

23 "Then you'd better jump." I dropped and fell into the bottom of the boat as they cried, "Lower away." As the boat began to descend, two ladies were pushed hurriedly through the crowd on B deck, and a baby 10 months old was passed down after them. Then down we went, the crew shouting out directions to those lowering us, "Level". "Aft". "Stern". "Both together". Until we were some 10ft from the water.

24 Here occurred the only anxious moment we had during the whole of our experience from the time of our leaving the deck to reaching the Carpathia (the Cunard steamship that rescued 705 of Titanic's passengers).

25 Immediately below our boat was the exhaust of the condensers, and a huge stream of water was pouring all the time from the ship's side just above the water-line. It was plain that we ought to be smart away from it if we were to escape swamping when we touched the water.

26 We had no officers on board, and no petty officer or 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 well as we could on the floor and along the sides, but found nothing. It was difficult to move among so many people. We had 60 or 70 on board. Down we went, and presently we floated with our ropes still holding us, and the stream of water from the exhaust washing us away from the side of the vessel, while the swell of the sea urged us back against the side again.

27 The resultant of all these forces was that we were carried parallel to the ship's side and directly under boat No 14, which had filled rapidly with men and was coming down on us in a way that threatened to submerge our boat. "Stop lowering 14," our crew shouted, and the crew of No 14, now only 20ft above, cried out the same.

28 The distance to the top, however, was some 70ft and the creaking of the pulleys must have deadened all sound to those above, for down she came . . . 15ft . . . 10ft . . . 5ft, and a stoker and I reached up and touched the bottom of the swinging boat above our heads. The next drop would have brought her on our heads. Just before she dropped, another stoker sprang to the ropes with his knife open in his hand. "One," I heard him say, and then "Two," as the knife cut through the pulley rope.

29 The next moment the exhaust stream carried us clear, while boat No 14 dropped into the water, taking the space we had occupied a moment before. Our gunwales were almost touching.

30 We drifted away easily, and when our oars were got out we headed directly away from the ship. The crew

seemed to me to be mostly cooks. They sat in their white jackets, two to an oar, with a stoker at the tiller.

31 There was a certain amount of shouting from one end of the boat to the other, and the discussion as to which way we should go was finally decided by our electing as captain the stoker who was steering, and by all agreeing to obey his orders.

32 He set to work at once to get in touch with the other boats, calling upon them and getting as close to them as seemed wise, so that when search boats came in the morning to look for us there would be more chance that all would be rescued.

33 It was now 1 o'clock in the morning. The starlit night was beautiful, but as there was no moon it was not very light. The sea was as calm as a pond. There was just a gentle heave as the boat clipped up and down in the swell. It was an ideal night, except for the bitter cold. In the distance, the Titanic looked enormous.

34 Her length and her great bulk were outlined in black against the starry sky. Every porthole and saloon was blazing with light. It was impossible to think that anything could be wrong with such a leviathan were it not for that ominous tilt downward in the bows, where the water was by now up to the lowest row of portholes.

35 At about 2 o'clock we observed her settling very rapidly, with the bows and the bridge completely under water. She slowly tilted straight on end with the stern vertically upwards; as she did so the lights in the cabins and the saloons, which had not flickered for a moment since we left, died out, flashed once more, and then went out altogether.

36 At the same time the machinery roared down through the vessel with a groaning rattle that could have been heard for miles. It was the weirdest sound surely that could have been heard in the middle of the ocean.

37 It was not yet quite the end. To our amazement she remained in that upright position for a time, which I estimate as five minutes. It was certainly for some minutes that we watched at least 150ft of the Titanic towering up above the level of the sea, looming black against the sky.

38 Then with a quiet, slanting dive she disappeared beneath the waters. Our eyes had looked for the last time on the gigantic vessel in which we set out from Southampton.

39 Then there fell on our ears the most appalling noise that a human being ever heard -- the cries of hundreds of our fellow beings struggling in the icy water, crying for help with a cry that we knew could not be answered. We longed to return to pick up some of those who were swimming, but this would have meant the swamping of our boat and the loss of all of us.