

An account of my journey on the Titanic

by Nellie Walcroft

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Sir, I am sending the account of my journey on the *Titanic* thinking that it will interest those at Maidenhead whom I know.

I left Maidenhead on April 9th., stayed in London and caught 'the special train to Southampton at 8.30. on the morning of April 10th. My sister and a friend saw me off. After a splendid quick run we arrived at Southampton Dock Station at 10.15. Looking through the window I saw the largest ship I had ever seen, the sun was shining on it and it was magnificent, everyone was going over the ship and it was greatly admired. The bell rang and all the visitors left the ship. Then we started to the hand waving of thousands of people. We left the docks. We did not know about the near collision we had until we arrived this side.

We arrived at Cherbourg at 5 o'clock and at Queenstown on Thursday morning; we had a perfect trip.

On the Sunday night we went to our stateroom about 10.30. We had not been asleep long when suddenly a crash came and I was nearly thrown out of my berth. I woke my friend, Miss Clear Cameron, who did not hear anything unusual and then I heard the noise of footsteps along the corridor. I waited very anxiously to hear what was the matter because the engines had stopped. Immediately the Steward came down and said "*Go back to your beds. no danger!*" but I heard whispering of Icebergs and then suddenly we heard very loud hammering as if they were closing heavy iron doors. Five minutes after the steward came down and said "*Go back to your beds! no danger!*" Oh what a relief, but a few minutes later he came in and said "*Will you dress and go on deck with your lifebelts on as quickly as possible, it's only a precaution*" My friend and I dressed. There were full instructions how to put the lifebelts on in the stateroom, but we were too nervous to stop to read them. People were going up on deck so we both went, carrying our belts from E deck. A man took the lifebelts from us and put them over our heads and tied them on.

The order was for women and children to go on the lower deck but there was such a lot he told some to go up on the boat deck, so we went. We walked round, thinking there was no hurry when suddenly rockets went up! We then began to realise the danger we were in. Boats were lowered, there was room for two more in boat 14 which I think was the last but three to leave

the ship. Immediately the order was given to lower the boats we began to descend. There were 58 women and children but only about three to row when going down. There was no man in charge and 5th Officer Harold Lowe jumped on our boat and gave the orders. Some men in the Steerage were going to spring in and he threatened them with his revolver to shoot the first, knowing that another one would buckle up the lifeboat. He shot twice, but only at the side, so that the men, who were panic-stricken in the steerage should know it was loaded and that he meant what he said.

When from below the shouting "Stop lowering No. 14" was heard, we were being dropped onto a lifeboat, they could not get away from the side of the ship. At last they did so the men lowered our boat. One side worked better than the other and the ropes on one side did not act so the officer gave the order to cut the ropes and the boat fell some distance and then we got safely away from the ship's side.

It was a lovely starlight night, but not light enough for us to see who were in the boats. The officer told the men to lay on their oars, so as to be handy later on. We did not seem to be long on the water. We could see the ship gradually going down, but all the lights were on, when suddenly two terrible explosions took place. The ship seemed to go forward and then split in the middle and then there were two more explosions that seemed from underneath the water. No more could be seen of that grand ship; all was silent for a moment and then the cries of 1600 men. All were crying for help; it was terrible. I should think the cries must have lasted two hours, or even more and then the day dawned and we could see about six large icebergs. Each looked as large as a house and all the time the cries of the drowning were getting fainter.

Then Officer Lowe wanted to go back to the rescue, but the women begged him not to go. He got about four boats together and distributed his passengers amongst them as many as he possibly could and then went back to the rescue. I believe they rescued six alive from that raft; the others had all died from exposure, as it was intensely cold. The boat I got in was No. 10. There had been six picked up but one man was mad. He shook the boat and we were afraid it would capsize. Two men revived but they were terribly frozen and two were dead and fell into the water at the bottom of the boat.

Several times we thought we saw the lights of a ship. but no. Then we saw the lights of the "*Carpathia*" We tried to shout for joy but it was a poor noise. My friend, Miss Clear Cameron, took an oar and the sea was getting much rougher and several of the passengers were very sick. By this time the cries of the drowning had ceased and the men rowed as quickly as possible. We wondered if ever we should get to it; our boat had about two feet of water in it, although we baled out all the time. Every wave we thought would swamp us and the wreckage was sailing down right in our course. We got safely over that but when the boat was so deep in the water we were pulled back to lie at the end of the boat.

Oh, that last hour's row with hope in sight! When we got to the *Carpathia* we were helped up with ropes. The kindness of the Officers and crew we shall never forget. They took us all along to the saloon and gave us neat brandy. The women were brought in screaming on account of children they had lost. Some of the children got separated from their parents and others looked after them. Those we had said good-night to on the *Titanic* on the Sunday evening we shook

hands with on the Monday at a quarter to seven, that was the time we were picked up by the *Carpathia*, thanking God for our safety.

All the boats were not in, so we went up on deck and watched the others coming up. Quite near the *Carpathia* were quite large icebergs and ice about 12 miles long, broken ice, it was a most imposing sight. I went to the wireless operator, who was very kind and promised if possible, to get a wireless through to tell Mother I was saved, but he was unable to do so, having so much to do.

The men on the *Carpathia* had the message from the *Titanic* to say it was sinking and the Captain had every member of the crew up at one o'clock to prepare for all the survivors of the *Titanic*. No one could have been kinder. We tried to sleep that night on the tables in the saloon but it thundered and lightened all night. How thankful we were that it was not the previous night! We were so glad when the news came that the Captain was going to New York!

We had fog and rain nearly all the way until we got to Sandy Hook, when the Pilot and several more steamers came out to meet us. When we arrived at New York it was about 8 o'clock and the steamers all round were making flash-light photographs of the *Carpathia* and passengers and the reporters kept shouting at us for news.

When we arrived at the pier we did not know that we should be allowed off the ship, but the gangway was put up, and having no customs to go through, having lost everything, we were allowed ashore. There were gentlemen from the Stock Exchange, Sisters-of-Mercy and ladies to meet us. We felt very dazed and strange. They took us and gave us necessary clothes and then I met my brother, and very glad I was. They took us to a cab and we were 'Flash-lighted' going along; 70,000 people were waiting, roped off, to see us. How glad we were to get to my sister and have a wash and go to bed again. Everyone is very kind to us.

There were 36 women saved whose husbands were left on the *Titanic*. It was fearfully sad when they knew their husbands had gone. They had hoped to meet them in New York. When they were told that no more had been picked up they were in a terrible state. How much more fortunate were my friend and I than so many other poor things!

Yours faithfully,

NELLIE WALCROFT

Mamaroneck, New York. April 23rd. 1912.

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