

LIFEBOATS WOULD HAVE SAVED MORE

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Titanic's Steward, in Giving Story, Says Great Loss of Life Was Due to Their Absence

SHIP'S ENGINEER, CAUGHT IN DOOR, BEGS TO BE SHOT TO END AGONY

New York, April 18---The following statement made to-day by Alfred Tessinger, a first-class steward on ill-fated Titanic, tells graphically of scenes and incidents hitherto unpublished.

Tessinger was one of the survivors who clung to a life raft. For twenty-one years he has followed the sea. He sails to-morrow on the Lapland with scores of other members of the crew, and it will be his last trip on the ocean.

"I joined the Titanic a fortnight before she left Queenstown," he said. "I was detailed to 'C' deck, and when we started on this trip over I had charge of staterooms occupied by some of the most noted people on board. These included Mr. and Mrs. Isidor Straus, Mr. Benjamin Guggenheim, Howard B. Case, Dr. Emil Taussig, Mrs. Taussig, and Miss Ruth Taussig, their daughter. I can never forget the horror of last Sunday night. These people, and the hundreds of others, all sitting helpless on the giant vessel. So few of them were saved, too.

"I must say right here that it was not the fault of the vessel that brought about her destruction. She was superb in every detail. But no vessel could withstand the grinding of the ice on her bottom, and with the ripping of the plates enormous holes were made and the inrush of water was too great to check. More lifeboats would have saved us all.

NO ICEBERG BULLETINS

"The run to Cherbourg and thence toward the Banks was pleasant. The sea was calm. If any icebergs were near I heard nothing of it. No bulletins regarding them were posted at the board.

"Sunday afternoon at 5 o'clock it became much colder.

"At 7 o'clock dinner was served, and I notified my people. I remember distinctly notifying Mr. Guggenheim. He speaks German, and we conversed together. He told me he had been to Paris, and that this ship, the Titanic, was the best he had ever sailed on.

"Until 8:30 o'clock I was busy fixing the rooms, when at this hour one of the passengers requested me to go to the croquet court, with a pair of shoes. I did this, and then went to the

working passage, where the stewards' quarters are.

"At 11:30 I was summoned to No. 63, in which there was a Mr. Gee, an Englishman, en route to Mexico. He requested me to go to the working passage and have some firemen, who had just been relieved, cease their racket. I was talking with George Brewster, another steward, at 11:32 o'clock. As we were talking, suddenly, there came a noise, as is made by a rowboat running over a gravel beach.

"There was a slight shock, but absolutely no severe jolt that would have caused us worry. I was suddenly aware that the engines had stopped, and then Brewster said, 'what do you think that is?'

There Is Water Forward

"I looked out into the passageway. A fireman was running past carrying a bag of clothing on his shoulders. As he rushed by he shouted:

"'There is water forward.'

"Then some one shouted:

"'All watertight doors shut.'

"I ran to my section, and as I passed 'E' deck, where the mailing section is, I saw water pouring into a room filled with mail bags. The second steward, Mr. Dott, was standing by the companionway, and shouted:

"'All stewards call your people. Warn them to go on deck.'

"I rushed to the first stateroom, which was Mr. Guggenheim's. I pounded on the door.

"'What is the matter?' he called out.

"I said: 'The vessel is in danger. Get up.'

"'Is it very serious?' he asked.

"'Yes,' I said.

"Water is coming into the mail room.

"I then awakened Mr. and Mrs. Taussig, in 67 and 68.

"'You had better put on your life belts,' I called out, 'and rush to the deck.'

"'Is it as serious as all that?' said Mr. Taussig.

"I said: 'Yes. Hurry.'

"I heard Mrs. Taussig begin to cry.

"Don't cry,' Mr. Taussig urged her. 'Be brave. All will surely be all right.'

"As I approached the stateroom of Miss Taussig, she opened the door. I urged her to put on a coat; not to stop to dress. She had just been awakened by the uproar. She wanted to dress, but I said: 'To hell with clothes. Slip into this great coat. If you stop to dress you'll drown.'

"I then adjusted the life belt on her and left.

"Mr. and Mrs. Isidor Straus occupied stateroom No. 50.

"As I knocked on the door, Mr. Straus said: 'What is it, steward?'

"I answered: 'Water is coming in fast. The ship is sinking.'

"I will get up, but I don't think it is as serious as all that,' he answered.

"I then summoned others and went to 'D' deck, where I again met Brewster. Passengers were rushing to and fro, and as we passed the purser's office there were scores of men and women demanding and receiving their valuables. I want to say that the water-tight doors were shut at once upon notice of the crash. These extended upward thirty feet above the water line. In the engine room one unfortunate, an engineer, had his leg caught as a door swung to. It was crushed and he was held as in a vise. Before leaving the Titanic I was told how he had begged to be shot to end his agony. His wish was complied with, but this is the only shot I know of.

"Arriving at the sun deck, which is the topmost deck, I saw hundreds of people running to and fro. I was just aft of the bridge, on which I saw Capt. Smith. He had assumed control immediately upon hearing of the accident. The first officer had been in charge until that time, the captain to my personal knowledge being in a portion of the ship near the main salon. He passed me just after I had seen the fireman rushing from the incoming waters.

ABoats 1, 2, and 3 were already in the water, which by now was only thirty feet below the topmost deck. It was 12:30 by this time, and we saw the vessel was doomed.

"In the fire drill, which had never been demonstrated on this ship, I was assigned to lifeboat No. 11. I knew this only by reading the rules. On the deck at this time, an officer ordered all of us to stand in a crowd and not to move.

"Women and children first,' he said. And then the men.'

"As fast as the women and children nearest any particular boat found places, and there was still room, a few men were told off. Finally I saw there was no hope there, and ran back toward

the second cabin section of the deck. Here was boat No. 15. I aided in getting her davits swung over the side of the ship, but an officer said:

“There is no chance for you. I am sorry.’

Thought It All Over

“The boat was lowered and rowed away.

“I stood there talking to Storekeeper Reick. About half a mile away was a massive iceberg. It looked like the Rock of Gibraltar. It was fully three miles long and extending out to the huge cliff was a section seemingly three to six feet above the water. It was into this that we had run, and it was this that tore the plates from the bottom. There were two main pillars of the ice, the highest about 300 feet.

“As we stood looking at this, the cause of the disaster, a violent explosion suddenly shook the entire boat. I lost sight of Reick, but saved myself from being thrown---God only knows where---by grabbing hold of the rail. The vessel seemed to break in two. The part on which I stood went way up into the air and remained in that position. This was the stern. The lights had gradually gone out, excepting one light near where I stood. Several hundred men were gathered about me. I saw that all was over.

“Stewrad Selbert was the nearest person to me. All of us had life belts on. I said to Selbert; ‘Come, we had better get away and take our chances before she sinks.’

“I leaped into the water and he followed me. I swam as hard as I could go and finally near to me I saw a raft on which a few men were clinging. A willing hand was extended me and we picked up seventeen others. A woman was among these and I must give her praise. I wish I could remember her name. During those two dreary hours she laughed and sang, cheering us.

“The water was up to our knees.

Nearer, My God, to Thee

“As we stood there the Titanic suddenly sank. I say suddenly, but it seemed to be a gradual sinking. I remember the band. Those brave men were playing the immortal hymn, ‘Nearer, My God, to Thee.’

“The an awful cry arose out of the depths of the sea. The vessel had disappeared. The unfortunates who found no means of escape dotted the ocean. All was silent.

“Before daylight a lifeboat came near to us on the raft. We were rescued and taken aboard. Selbert was dead.

“Then the shout: ‘A steamer!’

“And finally we were rescued by the Carpathia. The Carpathia had provided for our comfort and each of us was given coffee and sandwiches.

“I am through with the sea; but for the heroes that stuck to their posts I have only words of praise.

“For the captain I feel sorrowful. He was well named, ‘The grand old man of the sea.’”

Courtesy of Mark Baber

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