

## **CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE ADMIRABLE INQUIRY INTO THE LOSS OF THE TITANIC--1912**

I have been taken to task by a friend of mine on the "other side" for my strictures on Senator Smith's investigation into the loss of the Titanic, in the number of The English Review for May, 1912. I will admit that the motives of the investigation may have been excellent, and probably were; my criticism bore mainly on matters of form and also on the point of efficiency. In that respect I have nothing to retract. The Senators of the Commission had absolutely no knowledge and no practice to guide them in the conduct of such an investigation; and this fact gave an air of unreality to their zealous exertions. I think that even in the United States there is some regret that this zeal of theirs was not tempered by a large dose of wisdom. It is fitting that people who rush with such ardour to the work of putting questions to men yet gasping from a narrow escape should have, I wouldn't say a tincture of technical information, but enough knowledge of the subject to direct the trend of their inquiry. The newspapers of two continents have noted the remarks of the President of the Senatorial Commission with comments which I will not reproduce here, having a scant respect for the "organs of public opinion," as they fondly believe themselves to be. The absolute value of their remarks was about as great as the value of the investigation they either mocked at or extolled. To the United States Senate I did not intend to be disrespectful. I have for that body, of which one hears mostly in connection with tariffs, as much reverence as the best of Americans. To manifest more or less would be an impertinence in a stranger. I have expressed myself with less reserve on our Board of Trade. That was done under the influence of warm feelings. We were all feeling warmly on the matter at that time. But, at any rate, our Board of Trade Inquiry, conducted by an experienced President, discovered a very interesting fact on the very second day of its sitting: the fact that the water-tight doors in the bulkheads of that wonder of naval architecture could be opened down below by any irresponsible person. Thus the famous closing apparatus on the bridge, paraded as a device of greater safety, with its attachments of warning bells, coloured lights, and all these pretty-pretties, was, in the case of this ship, little better than a technical farce.

It is amusing, if anything connected with this stupid catastrophe can be amusing, to see the secretly crestfallen attitude of technicians. They are the high priests of the modern cult of perfected material and of mechanical appliances, and would fain forbid the profane from inquiring into its mysteries. We are the masters of progress, they say, and you should remain respectfully silent. And they take refuge behind their mathematics. I have the greatest regard for mathematics as an exercise of mind. It is the only manner of thinking which approaches the

Divine. But mere calculations, of which these men make so much, when unassisted by imagination and when they have gained mastery over common sense, are the most deceptive exercises of intellect. Two and two are four, and two are six. That is immutable; you may trust your soul to that; but you must be certain first of your quantities. I know how the strength of materials can be calculated away, and also the evidence of one's senses. For it is by some sort of calculation involving weights and levels that the technicians responsible for the Titanic persuaded themselves that a ship not divided by water-tight compartments could be "unsinkable." Because, you know, she was not divided. You and I, and our little boys, when we want to divide, say, a box, take care to procure a piece of wood which will reach from the bottom to the lid. We know that if it does not reach all the way up, the box will not be divided into two compartments. It will be only partly divided. The Titanic was only partly divided. She was just sufficiently divided to drown some poor devils like rats in a trap. It is probable that they would have perished in any case, but it is a particularly horrible fate to die boxed up like this. Yes, she was sufficiently divided for that, but not sufficiently divided to prevent the water flowing over.

Therefore to a plain man who knows something of mathematics but is not bemused by calculations, she was, from the point of view of "unsinkability," not divided at all. What would you say of people who would boast of a fireproof building, an hotel, for instance, saying, "Oh, we have it divided by fireproof bulkheads which would localise any outbreak," and if you were to discover on closer inspection that these bulkheads closed no more than two-thirds of the openings they were meant to close, leaving above an open space through which draught, smoke, and fire could rush from one end of the building to the other? And, furthermore, that those partitions, being too high to climb over, the people confined in each menaced compartment had to stay there and become asphyxiated or roasted, because no exits to the outside, say to the roof, had been provided! What would you think of the intelligence or candour of these advertising people? What would you think of them? And yet, apart from the obvious difference in the action of fire and water, the cases are essentially the same.

It would strike you and me and our little boys (who are not engineers yet) that to approach--I won't say attain--somewhere near absolute safety, the divisions to keep out water should extend from the bottom right up to the uppermost deck of the hull. I repeat, the hull, because there are above the hull the decks of the superstructures of which we need not take account. And further, as a provision of the commonest humanity, that each of these compartments should have a perfectly independent and free access to that uppermost deck: that is, into the open. Nothing less will do. Division by bulkheads that really divide, and free access to the deck from every water-tight compartment. Then the responsible

man in the moment of danger and in the exercise of his judgment could close all the doors of these water-tight bulkheads by whatever clever contrivance has been invented for the purpose, without a qualm at the awful thought that he may be shutting up some of his fellow creatures in a death-trap; that he may be sacrificing the lives of men who, down there, are sticking to the posts of duty as the engine-room staffs of the Merchant Service have never failed to do. I know very well that the engineers of a ship in a moment of emergency are not quaking for their lives, but, as far as I have known them, attend calmly to their duty. We all must die; but, hang it all, a man ought to be given a chance, if not for his life, then at least to die decently. It's bad enough to have to stick down there when something disastrous is going on and any moment may be your last; but to be drowned shut up under deck is too bad. Some men of the Titanic died like that, it is to be feared. Compartmented, so to speak. Just think what it means! Nothing can approach the horror of that fate except being buried alive in a cave, or in a mine, or in your family vault.

So, once more: continuous bulkheads--a clear way of escape to the deck out of each water-tight compartment. Nothing less. And if specialists, the precious specialists of the sort that builds "unsinkable ships," tell you that it cannot be done, don't you believe them. It can be done, and they are quite clever enough to do it too. The objections they will raise, however disguised in the solemn mystery of technical phrases, will not be technical, but commercial. I assure you that there is not much mystery about a ship of that sort. She is a tank. She is a tank ribbed, joisted, stayed, but she is no greater mystery than a tank. The Titanic was a tank eight hundred feet long, fitted as an hotel, with corridors, bed-rooms, halls, and so on (not a very mysterious arrangement truly), and for the hazards of her existence I should think about as strong as a Huntley and Palmer biscuit-tin. I make this comparison because Huntley and Palmer biscuit-tins, being almost a national institution, are probably known to all my readers. Well, about that strong, and perhaps not quite so strong. Just look at the side of such a tin, and then think of a 50,000 ton ship, and try to imagine what the thickness of her plates should be to approach anywhere the relative solidity of that biscuit-tin. In my varied and adventurous career I have been thrilled by the sight of a Huntley and Palmer biscuit-tin kicked by a mule sky-high, as the saying is. It came back to earth smiling, with only a sort of dimple on one of its cheeks. A proportionately severe blow would have burst the side of the Titanic or any other "triumph of modern naval architecture" like brown paper--I am willing to bet.

I am not saying this by way of disparagement. There is reason in things. You can't make a 50,000 ton ship as strong as a Huntley and Palmer biscuit-tin. But there is also reason in the way one accepts facts, and I refuse to be awed by the size of a tank bigger than any other tank that ever went afloat to its doom. The people responsible for her, though disconcerted in their hearts by the exposure of

that disaster, are giving themselves airs of superiority--priests of an Oracle which has failed, but still must remain the Oracle. The assumption is that they are ministers of progress. But the mere increase of size is not progress. If it were, elephantiasis, which causes a man's legs to become as large as tree-trunks, would be a sort of progress, whereas it is nothing but a very ugly disease. Yet directly this very disconcerting catastrophe happened, the servants of the silly Oracle began to cry: "It's no use! You can't resist progress. The big ship has come to stay." Well, let her stay on, then, in God's name! But she isn't a servant of progress in any sense. She is the servant of commercialism. For progress, if dealing with the problems of a material world, has some sort of moral aspect--if only, say, that of conquest, which has its distinct value since man is a conquering animal. But bigness is mere exaggeration. The men responsible for these big ships have been moved by considerations of profit to be made by the questionable means of pandering to an absurd and vulgar demand for banal luxury--the seaside hotel luxury. One even asks oneself whether there was such a demand? It is inconceivable to think that there are people who can't spend five days of their life without a suite of apartments, cafes, bands, and such-like refined delights. I suspect that the public is not so very guilty in this matter. These things were pushed on to it in the usual course of trade competition. If to-morrow you were to take all these luxuries away, the public would still travel. I don't despair of mankind. I believe that if, by some catastrophic miracle all ships of every kind were to disappear off the face of the waters, together with the means of replacing them, there would be found, before the end of the week, men (millionaires, perhaps) cheerfully putting out to sea in bath-tubs for a fresh start. We are all like that. This sort of spirit lives in mankind still uncorrupted by the so-called refinements, the ingenuity of tradesmen, who look always for something new to sell, offers to the public.

Let her stay,--I mean the big ship--since she has come to stay. I only object to the attitude of the people, who, having called her into being and having romanced (to speak politely) about her, assume a detached sort of superiority, goodness only knows why, and raise difficulties in the way of every suggestion--difficulties about boats, about bulkheads, about discipline, about davits, all sorts of difficulties. To most of them the only answer would be: "Where there's a will there's a way"--the most wise of proverbs. But some of these objections are really too stupid for anything. I shall try to give an instance of what I mean.

This Inquiry is admirably conducted. I am not alluding to the lawyers representing "various interests," who are trying to earn their fees by casting all sorts of mean aspersions on the characters of all sorts of people not a bit worse than themselves. It is honest to give value for your wages; and the "bravos" of ancient Venice who kept their stilettos in good order and never failed to deliver the stab bargained for with their employers, considered themselves an honest

body of professional men, no doubt. But they don't compel my admiration, whereas the conduct of this Inquiry does. And as it is pretty certain to be attacked, I take this opportunity to deposit here my nickel of appreciation. Well, lately, there came before it witnesses responsible for the designing of the ship. One of them was asked whether it would not be advisable to make each coal-bunker of the ship a water-tight compartment by means of a suitable door.

The answer to such a question should have been, "Certainly," for it is obvious to the simplest intelligence that the more water-tight spaces you provide in a ship (consistently with having her workable) the nearer you approach safety. But instead of admitting the expediency of the suggestion, this witness at once raised an objection as to the possibility of closing tightly the door of a bunker on account of the slope of coal. This with the true expert's attitude of "My dear man, you don't know what you are talking about."

Now would you believe that the objection put forward was absolutely futile? I don't know whether the distinguished President of the Court perceived this. Very likely he did, though I don't suppose he was ever on terms of familiarity with a ship's bunker. But I have. I have been inside; and you may take it that what I say of them is correct. I don't wish to be wearisome to the benevolent reader, but I want to put his finger, so to speak, on the inanity of the objection raised by the expert. A bunker is an enclosed space for holding coals, generally located against the ship's side, and having an opening, a doorway in fact, into the stokehold. Men called trimmers go in there, and by means of implements called slices make the coal run through that opening on to the floor of the stokehold, where it is within reach of the stokers' (firemen's) shovels. This being so, you will easily understand that there is constantly a more or less thick layer of coal generally shaped in a slope lying in that doorway. And the objection of the expert was: that because of this obstruction it would be impossible to close the water-tight door, and therefore that the thing could not be done. And that objection was inane. A water-tight door in a bulkhead may be defined as a metal plate which is made to close a given opening by some mechanical means. And if there were a law of Medes and Persians that a water-tight door should always slide downwards and never otherwise, the objection would be to a great extent valid. But what is there to prevent those doors to be fitted so as to move upwards, or horizontally, or slantwise? In which case they would go through the obstructing layer of coal as easily as a knife goes through butter. Anyone may convince himself of it by experimenting with a light piece of board and a heap of stones anywhere along our roads. Probably the joint of such a door would weep a little--and there is no necessity for its being hermetically tight--but the object of converting bunkers into spaces of safety would be attained. You may take my word for it that this could be done without any great effort of ingenuity. And that is why I have qualified the expert's objection as inane.

Of course, these doors must not be operated from the bridge because of the risk of trapping the coal-trimmers inside the bunker; but on the signal of all other water-tight doors in the ship being closed (as would be done in case of a collision) they too could be closed on the order of the engineer of the watch, who would see to the safety of the trimmers. If the rent in the ship's side were within the bunker itself, that would become manifest enough without any signal, and the rush of water into the stokehold could be cut off directly the doorplate came into its place. Say a minute at the very outside. Naturally, if the blow of a right-angled collision, for instance, were heavy enough to smash through the inner bulkhead of the bunker, why, there would be then nothing to do but for the stokers and trimmers and everybody in there to clear out of the stoke-room. But that does not mean that the precaution of having water-tight doors to the bunkers is useless, superfluous, or impossible. {7}

And talking of stokeholds, firemen, and trimmers, men whose heavy labour has not a single redeeming feature; which is unhealthy, uninspiring, arduous, without the reward of personal pride in it; sheer, hard, brutalising toil, belonging neither to earth nor sea, I greet with joy the advent for marine purposes of the internal combustion engine. The disappearance of the marine boiler will be a real progress, which anybody in sympathy with his kind must welcome. Instead of the unthrifty, unruly, nondescript crowd the boilers require, a crowd of men in the ship but not of her, we shall have comparatively small crews of disciplined, intelligent workers, able to steer the ship, handle anchors, man boats, and at the same time competent to take their place at a bench as fitters and repairers; the resourceful and skilled seamen--mechanics of the future, the legitimate successors of these seamen--sailors of the past, who had their own kind of skill, hardihood, and tradition, and whose last days it has been my lot to share.

One lives and learns and hears very surprising things--things that one hardly knows how to take, whether seriously or jocularly, how to meet--with indignation or with contempt? Things said by solemn experts, by exalted directors, by glorified ticket-sellers, by officials of all sorts. I suppose that one of the uses of such an inquiry is to give such people enough rope to hang themselves with. And I hope that some of them won't neglect to do so. One of them declared two days ago that there was "nothing to learn from the catastrophe of the Titanic." That he had been "giving his best consideration" to certain rules for ten years, and had come to the conclusion that nothing ever happened at sea, and that rules and regulations, boats and sailors, were unnecessary; that what was really wrong with the Titanic was that she carried too many boats.

No; I am not joking. If you don't believe me, pray look back through the reports and you will find it all there. I don't recollect the official's name, but it ought to

have been Pooh-Bah. Well, Pooh-Bah said all these things, and when asked whether he really meant it, intimated his readiness to give the subject more of "his best consideration"--for another ten years or so apparently--but he believed, oh yes! he was certain, that had there been fewer boats there would have been more people saved. Really, when reading the report of this admirably conducted inquiry one isn't certain at times whether it is an Admirable Inquiry or a felicitous opera-bouffe of the Gilbertian type--with a rather grim subject, to be sure.

Yes, rather grim--but the comic treatment never fails. My readers will remember that in the number of *The English Review* for May, 1912, I quoted the old case of the *Arizona*, and went on from that to prophesy the coming of a new seamanship (in a spirit of irony far removed from fun) at the call of the sublime builders of unsinkable ships. I thought that, as a small boy of my acquaintance says, I was "doing a sarcasm," and regarded it as a rather wild sort of sarcasm at that. Well, I am blessed (excuse the vulgarism) if a witness has not turned up who seems to have been inspired by the same thought, and evidently longs in his heart for the advent of the new seamanship. He is an expert, of course, and I rather believe he's the same gentleman who did not see his way to fit water-tight doors to bunkers. With ludicrous earnestness he assured the Commission of his intense belief that had only the *Titanic* struck end-on she would have come into port all right. And in the whole tone of his insistent statement there was suggested the regret that the officer in charge (who is dead now, and mercifully outside the comic scope of this inquiry) was so ill-advised as to try to pass clear of the ice. Thus my sarcastic prophecy, that such a suggestion was sure to turn up, receives an unexpected fulfilment. You will see yet that in deference to the demands of "progress" the theory of the new seamanship will become established: "Whatever you see in front of you--ram it fair. . ." The new seamanship! Looks simple, doesn't it? But it will be a very exact art indeed. The proper handling of an unsinkable ship, you see, will demand that she should be made to hit the iceberg very accurately with her nose, because should you perchance scrape the bluff of the bow instead, she may, without ceasing to be as unsinkable as before, find her way to the bottom. I congratulate the future Transatlantic passengers on the new and vigorous sensations in store for them. They shall go bounding across from iceberg to iceberg at twenty-five knots with precision and safety, and a "cheerful bumpy sound"--as the immortal poem has it. It will be a teeth-loosening, exhilarating experience. The decorations will be Louis-Quinze, of course, and the cafe shall remain open all night. But what about the priceless Sevres porcelain and the Venetian glass provided for the service of Transatlantic passengers? Well, I am afraid all that will have to be replaced by silver goblets and plates. Nasty, common, cheap silver. But those who will go to sea must be prepared to put up with a certain amount of hardship.

And there shall be no boats. Why should there be no boats? Because Pooh- Bah

has said that the fewer the boats, the more people can be saved; and therefore with no boats at all, no one need be lost. But even if there was a flaw in this argument, pray look at the other advantages the absence of boats gives you. There can't be the annoyance of having to go into them in the middle of the night, and the unpleasantness, after saving your life by the skin of your teeth, of being hauled over the coals by irreproachable members of the Bar with hints that you are no better than a cowardly scoundrel and your wife a heartless monster. Less Boats. No boats! Great should be the gratitude of passage-selling Combines to Pooh-Bah; and they ought to cherish his memory when he dies. But no fear of that. His kind never dies. All you have to do, O Combine, is to knock at the door of the Marine Department, look in, and beckon to the first man you see. That will be he, very much at your service--prepared to affirm after "ten years of my best consideration" and a bundle of statistics in hand, that: "There's no lesson to be learned, and that there is nothing to be done!"

On an earlier day there was another witness before the Court of Inquiry. A mighty official of the White Star Line. The impression of his testimony which the Report gave is of an almost scornful impatience with all this fuss and pother. Boats! Of course we have crowded our decks with them in answer to this ignorant clamour. Mere lumber! How can we handle so many boats with our davits? Your people don't know the conditions of the problem. We have given these matters our best consideration, and we have done what we thought reasonable. We have done more than our duty. We are wise, and good, and impeccable. And whoever says otherwise is either ignorant or wicked.

This is the gist of these scornful answers which disclose the psychology of commercial undertakings. It is the same psychology which fifty or so years ago, before Samuel Plimsoll uplifted his voice, sent overloaded ships to sea. "Why shouldn't we cram in as much cargo as our ships will hold? Look how few, how very few of them get lost, after all."

Men don't change. Not very much. And the only answer to be given to this manager who came out, impatient and indignant, from behind the plate-glass windows of his shop to be discovered by this inquiry, and to tell us that he, they, the whole three million (or thirty million, for all I know) capital Organisation for selling passages has considered the problem of boats--the only answer to give him is: that this is not a problem of boats at all. It is the problem of decent behaviour. If you can't carry or handle so many boats, then don't cram quite so many people on board. It is as simple as that--this problem of right feeling and right conduct, the real nature of which seems beyond the comprehension of ticket-providers. Don't sell so many tickets, my virtuous dignitary. After all, men and women (unless considered from a purely commercial point of view) are not exactly the cattle of the Western-ocean trade, that used some twenty years ago to be thrown



overboard on an emergency and left to swim round and round before they sank. If you can't get more boats, then sell less tickets. Don't drown so many people on the finest, calmest night that was ever known in the North Atlantic--even if you have provided them with a little music to get drowned by. Sell less tickets! That's the solution of the problem, your Mercantile Highness.

But there would be a cry, "Oh! This requires consideration!" (Ten years of it--eh?) Well, no! This does not require consideration. This is the very first thing to do. At once. Limit the number of people by the boats you can handle. That's honesty. And then you may go on fumbling for years about these precious davits which are such a stumbling-block to your humanity. These fascinating patent davits. These davits that refuse to do three times as much work as they were meant to do. Oh! The wickedness of these davits!

One of the great discoveries of this admirable Inquiry is the fascination of the davits. All these people positively can't get away from them. They shuffle about and groan around their davits. Whereas the obvious thing to do is to eliminate the man-handled davits altogether. Don't you think that with all the mechanical contrivances, with all the generated power on board these ships, it is about time to get rid of the hundred- years-old, man-power appliances? Cranes are what is wanted; low, compact cranes with adjustable heads, one to each set of six or nine boats. And if people tell you of insuperable difficulties, if they tell you of the swing and spin of spanned boats, don't you believe them. The heads of the cranes need not be any higher than the heads of the davits. The lift required would be only a couple of inches. As to the spin, there is a way to prevent that if you have in each boat two men who know what they are about. I have taken up on board a heavy ship's boat, in the open sea (the ship rolling heavily), with a common cargo derrick. And a cargo derrick is very much like a crane; but a crane devised ad hoc would be infinitely easier to work. We must remember that the loss of this ship has altered the moral atmosphere. As long as the Titanic is remembered, an ugly rush for the boats may be feared in case of some accident. You can't hope to drill into perfect discipline a casual mob of six hundred firemen and waiters, but in a ship like the Titanic you can keep on a permanent trustworthy crew of one hundred intelligent seamen and mechanics who would know their stations for abandoning ship and would do the work efficiently. The boats could be lowered with sufficient dispatch. One does not want to let rip one's boats by the run all at the same time. With six boat-cranes, six boats would be simultaneously swung, filled, and got away from the side; and if any sort of order is kept, the ship could be cleared of the passengers in a quite short time. For there must be boats enough for the passengers and crew, whether you increase the number of boats or limit the number of passengers, irrespective of the size of the ship. That is the only honest course. Any other would be rather worse than putting sand in the sugar, for which a tradesman gets fined or

imprisoned. Do not let us take a romantic view of the so-called progress. A company selling passages is a tradesman; though from the way these people talk and behave you would think they are benefactors of mankind in some mysterious way, engaged in some lofty and amazing enterprise.

All these boats should have a motor-engine in them. And, of course, the glorified tradesman, the mummified official, the technicians, and all these secretly disconcerted hangers-on to the enormous ticket-selling enterprise, will raise objections to it with every air of superiority. But don't believe them. Doesn't it strike you as absurd that in this age of mechanical propulsion, of generated power, the boats of such ultra-modern ships are fitted with oars and sails, implements more than three thousand years old? Older! Older! . . . And I know what I am talking about. Only six weeks ago I was on the river in an ancient, rough, ship's boat, fitted with a two-cylinder motor-engine of 7.5 h.p. Just a common ship's boat, which the man who owns her uses for taking the workmen and stevedores to and from the ships loading at the buoys off Greenhithe. She would have carried some thirty people. No doubt has carried as many daily for many months. And she can tow a twenty-five ton water barge-- which is also part of that man's business.

It was a boisterous day, half a gale of wind against the flood tide. Two fellows managed her. A youngster of seventeen was cox (and a first-rate cox he was too); a fellow in a torn blue jersey, not much older, of the usual riverside type, looked after the engine. I spent an hour and a half in her, running up and down and across that reach. She handled perfectly. With eight or twelve oars out she could not have done anything like as well. These two youngsters at my request kept her stationary for ten minutes, with a touch of engine and helm now and then, within three feet of a big, ugly mooring buoy over which the water broke and the spray flew in sheets, and which would have holed her if she had bumped against it. But she kept her position, it seemed to me, to an inch, without apparently any trouble to these boys. You could not have done it with oars. And her engine did not take up the space of three men, even on the assumption that you would pack people as tight as sardines in a box.

Not the room of three people, I tell you! But no one would want to pack a boat like a sardine-box. There must be room enough to handle the oars. But in that old ship's boat, even if she had been desperately overcrowded, there was power (manageable by two riverside youngsters) to get away quickly from a ship's side (very important for your safety and to make room for other boats), the power to keep her easily head to sea, the power to move at five to seven knots towards a rescuing ship, the power to come safely alongside. And all that in an engine which did not take up the room of three people.

A poor boatman who had to scrape together painfully the few sovereigns of the price had the idea of putting that engine into his boat. But all these designers, directors, managers, constructors, and others whom we may include in the generic name of Yamsi, never thought of it for the boats of the biggest tank on earth, or rather on sea. And therefore they assume an air of impatient superiority and make objections--however sick at heart they may be. And I hope they are; at least, as much as a grocer who has sold a tin of imperfect salmon which destroyed only half a dozen people. And you know, the tinning of salmon was "progress" as much at least as the building of the Titanic. More, in fact. I am not attacking shipowners. I care neither more nor less for Lines, Companies, Combines, and generally for Trade arrayed in purple and fine linen than the Trade cares for me. But I am attacking foolish arrogance, which is fair game; the offensive posture of superiority by which they hide the sense of their guilt, while the echoes of the miserably hypocritical cries along the alley-ways of that ship: "Any more women? Any more women?" linger yet in our ears.

I have been expecting from one or the other of them all bearing the generic name of Yamsi, something, a sign of some sort, some sincere utterance, in the course of this Admirable Inquiry, of manly, of genuine compunction. In vain. All trade talk. Not a whisper--except for the conventional expression of regret at the beginning of the yearly report--which otherwise is a cheerful document. Dividends, you know. The shop is doing well.

And the Admirable Inquiry goes on, punctuated by idiotic laughter, by paid-for cries of indignation from under legal wigs, bringing to light the psychology of various commercial characters too stupid to know that they are giving themselves away--an admirably laborious inquiry into facts that speak, nay shout, for themselves.

I am not a soft-headed, humanitarian faddist. I have been ordered in my time to do dangerous work; I have ordered, others to do dangerous work; I have never ordered a man to do any work I was not prepared to do myself. I attach no exaggerated value to human life. But I know it has a value for which the most generous contributions to the Mansion House and "Heroes" funds cannot pay. And they cannot pay for it, because people, even of the third class (excuse my plain speaking), are not cattle. Death has its sting. If Yamsi's manager's head were forcibly held under the water of his bath for some little time, he would soon discover that it has. Some people can only learn from that sort of experience which comes home to their own dear selves.

I am not a sentimentalist; therefore it is not a great consolation to me to see all these people breveted as "Heroes" by the penny and halfpenny Press. It is no consolation at all. In extremity, in the worst extremity, the majority of people,

even of common people, will behave decently. It's a fact of which only the journalists don't seem aware. Hence their enthusiasm, I suppose. But I, who am not a sentimentalist, think it would have been finer if the band of the Titanic had been quietly saved, instead of being drowned while playing--whatever tune they were playing, the poor devils. I would rather they had been saved to support their families than to see their families supported by the magnificent generosity of the subscribers. I am not consoled by the false, written-up, Drury Lane aspects of that event, which is neither drama, nor melodrama, nor tragedy, but the exposure of arrogant folly. There is nothing more heroic in being drowned very much against your will, off a holed, helpless, big tank in which you bought your passage, than in dying of colic caused by the imperfect salmon in the tin you bought from your grocer.

And that's the truth. The unsentimental truth stripped of the romantic garment the Press has wrapped around this most unnecessary disaster.