

## The Titanic : Our Story

by M. E. S. and E. M. E.  
1912

SUNDAY morning, April 14, 1912, was a beautiful clear day, high wind and cold. Elizabeth and I wrote letters before service, remarking at the service that they did not sing the hymn "For Those in Peril On the Sea." Then read the chart and noticed we had made a run of five hundred and forty-seven miles. After lunch we spoke to Penrose, our room steward, about the run and he said it was nothing to what we would do on Monday, when they expected to do five hundred and eighty.

McElroy

I was sound asleep when at quarter before twelve I was awakened by a terrible jar with ripping and cutting noise which lasted a few moments. We both were much frightened, sitting up in our beds and turning on the electricity. Our door was on the hook and we soon heard voices in the hall so that Elizabeth put on her wrapper, slippers and cap and ran out. I was bitterly cold, and, shivering from fright and cold, sat undecided as to what to do. Our steward came down to close the port and I asked him if the order had been given to close all the ports, but he said "No, it 's only cold, go to bed; it 's nothing at all." Before Elizabeth returned I decided to get dressed as I had seen a gentleman in one of the rooms opposite pull his shoes in from the passageway. When she came in she told of many people outside half-dressed, one woman having a thin white pigtail down her back and a feather hat; also that some man was fastened in his inside room unable to open his door. He was much worried, calling for help, and young Williams put his shoulder to the panels and broke it in. The steward was most indignant and threatened to have him arrested for defacing the beautiful ship.

Just as I was wholly dressed and she hooking her waist Mr. Thayer appeared at our door, which we had opened, and said he was very glad that we had dressed. He thought there was no danger, but we had struck ice and there was much on deck and he urged us to come up and see it, saying we would find him and Mrs. Thayer on the deck. I put on my fur coat over everything and Elizabeth said she thought she would wear her watch, which reminded me that mine was hanging by the bureau and I quickly put it on. I took my glasses and small change purse, also a clean handkerchief and was dressed as if for breakfast. We then left our room, leaving the electric lights on, also the electric heater so it would be warm on our return. We closed the door and started down the long passageway and up the stairs.

My mind is a blank as to a trip we took to the boat deck, when I distinctly remember being beside the gymnasium on starboard side and seeing Mr. Ismay come out, noting the fact that he had dressed hurriedly, as his pajamas were below his trousers. After getting our rugs we were in the companionway of A deck when order came for women and children to boat deck and men to starboard side.

Elizabeth and I took each other's hands, not to be separated in the crowd, and all went on deck, we following close to Mrs. Thayer and her maid and going up narrow iron stairs to the forward boat deck which, on the *Titanic*, was the captain's bridge.

At the top of the stairs we found Captain Smith looking much worried, and anxiously waiting to get down after we got up. The ship listed heavily to port just then. As we leaned against the walls of the officers' quarters rockets were being fired over our heads, which was most alarming, as we fully realized if the Mrs. Thayer remarked, "Tell us where to go and we will follow. You ordered us up here and now you are taking us back," and he said "Follow me."

On reaching the A deck we could see, for the decks were lighted by electricity, that a boat was lowered parallel to the windows; those were opened, and a steamer chair put under the rail for us to step on. The ship had listed badly by that time and the boat hung far out from the side so that some of the men said, "No woman could step across that space." A call was made for a ladder on one of the lower decks, but before it ever got there we were all in the boat. Whether they had drawn the boat over with boathooks nearer the side I do not know, but the space we easily jumped with the help of two men in the boat. The only gentleman I remember seeing at all was Colonel Astor, who was stepping through the window just in front of me when the crew said, "Step back, sir; no men in this boat." He remarked that he wanted to take care of his wife, but on being told again that no men could go, he called "Good bye" and said he would follow in another boat, asking the number of our boat, which they said was "No. 4." In going through the window I was obliged to throw back the steamer rug, for, with my fur coat and huge cork life preserver, I was very clumsy. Later we found the stewards or crew had thrown the steamer rugs into the boat, and they did good service, Elizabeth's around a baby thinly clad, and mine for a poor member of the crew pulled in from the sea.

*Carpathia*, when they were taken aboard and Monday afternoon given a decent burial with three others.

The sea was smooth and the night brilliant with more stars than I had ever seen. We could see the outline of several bergs and scanned the horizon hoping to see the light of some vessel. Occasionally a green light showed, which proved to be on the emergency boat, and our men all recognized it as such. We all prayed for dawn, and there was no conversation, everyone being so awed by the disaster and bitterly cold. We found ourselves in the boat with Mrs. Arthur Ryerson, her boy, two daughters, governess and maid; Mrs. John Thayer and maid, Mrs. Widener and maid, Mrs. Astor, her trained nurse and maid, , her two children and maid, Mrs. Cumings, and Mrs. Walter Clark of Los Angeles, with many from second and third cabin besides the eight men whom we had pulled in from the sea. By a strange coincidence Mrs. Cumings discovered that the man whom she pulled in was her own bedroom steward. By this time our women, Mrs. Thayer and Mrs. Cumings, were helping two of the half-drowned sailors pull on the oars, as the boat was tremendously heavy.

With the dawn came the wind and before long quite a sea was running. Just before daylight on the horizon we saw what we felt sure must be the lights of a ship. The quartermaster was a long time in admitting that we were right, urging that it was the moon, but we insisted and they then said it might be the as they had been told before leaving the that she was coming to us. For a long time after daylight we were in great wreckage from the *Titanic*, principally steamer chairs and a few white pilasters. Before leaving the *Titanic* they had been breaking off planks and throwing seats from the upper deck which we realized were thrown over for people to float on. We felt we could never reach the when we found she had stopped, and afterwards when we asked why she didn't come closer we were told that some of the early boats which put off from the starboard side reached her a little after four, while it was after six when we drew under the side of the open hatch.

It had been a long trying row In the heavy sea and impossible to keep bow on to reach the ship. We stood in great danger of being swamped many times and Captain Rostron *Carpathia* with Mr. Ismay, they

having gone off together in a life-boat. Watching the other boats come in we found Jack Thayer who, it seems, was on the overturned boat, but got into the other boat and not ours. He had lost his father after the women left and could not find him. He picked up young Long

The was small and so crowded. We fortunately found friends on the ship who took us to their stateroom, letting us do our hair and wash our faces and hands. At about nine o'clock or later we had a regular breakfast. From the deck of the *Carpathia* we scanned the sea and such fields of ice only Shackleton's book the night before had shown me. The entire horizon for the complete circle had bergs stationed like sentinels.

The [sic] came up to us at about eight o'clock and stood so close that the wireless could not be used, but for nearly an hour they wig-wagged and used the semaphore and finally the *Carpathia's* captain steamed away with the feeling that all boats were accounted for and the had promised to stand by with the hope of rescuing any people then living. But we felt sure that Captain Rostron believed that he had everybody.

*Carpathia*. Stewards and stewardesses worked without sleep and were indefatigable trying to give help and comfort to the rescued. Passengers gave up staterooms and everybody took someone in where they had a vacant berth or sofa. The barber shop was soon sold out. Elizabeth secured a small comb, tooth paste, nail file, sponges and wash cloths, also a buttonhook. The purser was able to give us a small inside room with four berths that had only been used as a dressing room for many years. However, we slept there very comfortably and took Mrs. Cumings and Mrs. Astor's maid for the other two berths. We lived on deck as there was no place on the ship to sit.

Two days the sun shone, then came fearful weather with fog and thunder storm so that at times it seemed as if the Lord had intended us all to go. Captain Rostron was more than thoughtful, knowing how our nerves had already been under great strain. The fog horn was blown only when absolutely necessary and as soon as it lightened the least bit it was promptly stopped.

Our meals were remarkable. Of course, the saloon was set up always twice and sometimes three times for people to go, and while we had no appetites still the menu was the same as on all ocean steamers. Broth and tea were served on deck every day. The few of the rescued stewards from the *Titanic*, made him stick close to the decks.

Our stop at quarantine was very short. Dinner was served, but no one had any appetite. When we got up the North River small boats were as thick as bees. At the foot of the Cunard pier we stopped and a large lighter came alongside from the White Star Company to take off the fourteen lifeboats which Captain Rostron had taken aboard in case of accident to the *Carpathia*. While standing, a small newspaper tug which was under us caused us some amusement. A sudden rush of water frightened us, but on inquiry we discovered Captain Rostron had turned the hose on her and she was scurrying off at full speed and I trust the men were well soaked. We were soon off at the pier and among the earliest to leave the ship, as we had been on the deck all the way up and the gangplank was put on right beside us so we only had a few steps to walk.

The family were all close to us and we quickly got away, all going first to the Pennsylvania station, where I left with George, Helen, Ned, Jim Boyd and Dr. Christie. Elizabeth went with Tracy, Martha, Arthur, Mary and Angie to the Belmont, where they spent the night, going to Boston the next day. A special train was run to Philadelphia and we left at North Philadelphia, where Joseph met us with the motor and we got to Haverford a little after three in the morning.

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