

CHAPTER I

FIRST NEWS OF THE GREATEST MARINE DISASTER IN HISTORY

"THE TITANIC IN COLLISION, BUT EVERYBODY SAFE"--
ANOTHER TRIUMPH SET DOWN TO WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY--
THE WORLD GOES TO SLEEP PEACEFULLY--THE SAD
AWAKENING.

LIKE a bolt out of a clear sky came the wireless message on Monday, April 15, 1912, that on Sunday night the great Titanic, on her maiden voyage across the Atlantic, had struck a gigantic iceberg, but that all the passengers were saved. The ship had signaled her distress and another victory was set down to wireless. Twenty-one hundred lives saved!

Additional news was soon received that the ship had collided with a mountain of ice in the North Atlantic, off Cape Race, Newfoundland, at 10.25 Sunday evening, April 14th. At 4.15 Monday morning the Canadian Government Marine Agency received a wireless message that the Titanic was sinking and that the steamers towing her were trying to get her into shoal water near Cape Race, for the purpose of beaching her.

Wireless despatches up to noon Monday showed that the passengers of the Titanic were being transferred aboard the steamer Carpathia, a Cunarder, which left New York, April 13th, for Naples. Twenty boat-loads of the Titanic's passengers were said to have been transferred to the Carpathia then, and allowing forty to sixty persons as the capacity of each life-boat, some 800 or 1200 persons had already been transferred from the damaged liner to the Carpathia. They were reported as being taken to Halifax, whence they would be sent by train to New York.

Another liner, the Parisian, of the Allan Company, which sailed from Glasgow for Halifax on April 6th, was said to be close at hand and assisting in the work of rescue. The Baltic, Virginian and Olympic were also near the scene, according to the information received by wireless.

While badly damaged, the giant vessel was reported as still afloat, but whether she could reach port or shoal water was uncertain. The White Star officials declared that the Titanic was in no immediate danger of sinking, because of her numerous water-tight compartments.

"While we are still lacking definite information," Mr. Franklin, vice-president of the White Star Line, said later in the afternoon, "we believe the Titanic's passengers will reach Halifax, Wednesday evening. We have received no further word from Captain Haddock, of the Olympic, or from any of the ships in the vicinity, but are confident that there will be no loss of life."

With the understanding that the survivors would be taken to Halifax the line arranged to have thirty Pullman cars, two diners and many passenger coaches leave Boston Monday night for Halifax to get the passengers after they were landed. Mr. Franklin made a guess that the Titanic's passengers would get into Halifax on Wednesday. The Department of Commerce and Labor notified the White Star Line that customs and immigration inspectors would be sent from Montreal to Halifax in order that there would be as little delay as possible in getting the passengers on trains.

Monday night the world slept in peace and assurance. A wireless message had finally been received, reading:

"All Titanic's passengers safe."

It was not until nearly a week later that the fact was discovered that this message had been wrongly received in the confusion of messages flashing through the air, and that in reality the message should have read:

"Are all Titanic's passengers safe?"

With the dawning of Tuesday morning came the awful news of the true fate of the Titanic.