

The Annual Register
A Review of Public Events at Home and Abroad
for the Year 1912

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Another subject also stood over till the autumn for debate. The Report of the Special Commission on the loss of the *Titanic* (p. 85), issued July 30, was unanimous. The Commission had held thirty-seven sittings and examined ninety-seven witnesses. It found that the loss was due to collision with an iceberg, brought about by the excessive speed at which the ship was being navigated. Certain messages as to ice from other ships had not received proper attention, but ice was clearly expected, yet the course was not altered nor was speed reduced. No blame was imputed to Captain Smith, in view of the invariable practice; but he had made a very grievous mistake. The Report discussed questions of construction, but advised their reference to the Bulkhead Committee of the Board of Trade. The ship's officers did their work well, but the organisation should have been better. In fact only 711 lives were saved. Boats left the ship comparatively empty because passengers were unwilling to go in them, but it was regretted that some of the boats did not return when the vessel sank. Otherwise the Report had "nothing but praise for both passengers and crew." Sir Cosmo Duff-Gordon and Mr. Bruce Ismay were exonerated from the charges made against them, and there was no ground for the suggestion that the third-class passengers had been unfairly treated. Captain Rostron of the *Carpathia* had "done the very best that could be done." The Court was convinced, despite inconsistencies in the evidence, that the ship seen from the Leyland liner *Californian* was the *Titanic*, and that the former could have pushed through the loose ice surrounding her to the *Titanic* and saved many, if not all, of the lives lost. [Captain Lord protested later against this finding.] The Board of Trade's omission to revise the rules of 1894 as to boat accommodation was blameworthy, but a revision would probably have made no difference in this case. Until vessels could be rendered unsinkable, boat accommodation should be provided for all on board. The charges that the Board had failed effectively to supervise the *Titanic's* plans and construction broke down, but (among other recommendations) there should be more searching inspection of boats, more boat drills, wireless telegraphy with continuous service, sight tests for look-out men, and captains should be reminded that it was a misdemeanour not to go to the relief of a ship in distress.

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