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The Senatorial "Titanic" Report

THE report of the committee on the "Titanic" disaster is not delayed, and it is full and fitting. The English criticisms of Senator Smith, chairman of the committee, are not justified, even if the Senator from Michigan is not a salt-water seaman. At least there was no effort by the committee to keep anything back.

The report takes two directions, one the assignment and distribution of blame for the terrible loss of life, and the other the suggestion of needed legislation.

First, and very properly, blame is put on Captain Smith for his recklessness in forcing the vessel to its best speed in the most dangerous of all zones. Warning was sent not less than four times by other vessels that there was ice in sight, but there was no conference of officers, no apparent consideration of the danger, no increased outlook, but on the contrary, more forced speed. We are not told that any one but the captain was responsible for this, but we wish the British investigation might show what instructions had been given by the owners of the line in this matter; orders which, if received, he ought not to have obeyed. The report does, however, give him praise for doing his best when the accident—if we may call it so—came, and that he then proved himself a man fit to have lived. It is well that no special blame is put on Mr. Ismay, for there is no clear evidence that he failed of his duty, except the extraordinary fact that no women were said to have

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been in sight when he took to the last boat, altho Mr. and Mrs. Straus were still on board.

The White Star Company is properly condemned for the fact that there was no suitable provision for saving life, no drill of the sailors, and further, that the bulkheads separating the watertight compartments did not close properly. It is the British investigation which shows that they were actually opened to let in the water, a stupid fatality quite inexplicable.

Much attention is paid in the report to the culpability of the captain of the “Californian,” who was near by and who paid no attention to the wireless reports and the rockets, while if he had done his duty he might have saved every life. This is one of the terrible facts of this disaster that amaze and horrify every one. He will carry a sad burden of remorse all his life. Equally so, if they have any heart, will those who are responsible for the fact that half-filled boats did not go back to save those who were crying in the water for help. The mark of Cain will remain branded in their hearts if not on their foreheads.

The recommendations are well worth consideration. It appears that the inspection laws of various countries, and particularly of Great Britain, are antiquated and need revision. Our own law requires us to accept their inspection of foreign vessels. The law suggested is that foreign inspection be not accepted for vessels carrying passengers from our ports unless they come up to the standard which we require. This covers the provision for lifeboats sufficient for all passengers and crews of vessels licensed to carry passengers; also the assignment

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to each boat of four skilled seamen, with proper drills not less than twice a month, and also the assignment of passengers as well as of crew to each boat before sailing.

Much attention is given to the control of the new wireless equipments. It is asked that every vessel carrying as many as one hundred passengers shall have a wireless operator on duty day and night, having immediate connection with the bridge. There should also be legislation to prevent interference by amateurs and secure secrecy of messages. It is also recommended that it be forbidden that on the high seas rockets be fired except as signals of distress.

Of other recommendations, such as those which refer to the structural safety of passenger vessels, we do not need to speak. They belong to engineers for consideration. Indeed, legislation must be concurrent between the great sea-going countries. We await the conclusion of the British commission's work, for we can be sure that this sad and terrible catastrophe will be made the occasion for the safety of multitudes of passengers for all future time.