

CURRENT LITERATURE

July, 1912

THE HEROISM OF THE DOOMED

The Death of Captain Smith.

THAT a terrible measure of responsibility rested upon Captain Smith for neither altering his course nor slowing up the engines after the repeated warnings of ice ahead, seems to be one of the conclusions from which no one dissents, tho some try to palliate his guilt by the (assumed) fact that Ismay's presence was in some way responsible for the speed of the vessel. But of course the Captain would have been responsible for the navigation of the ship and the protection of the lives on board even if all the White Star line officials had been aboard trying to give him orders. But if the responsibility for the calamity rested primarily upon him, his conduct afterwards, especially his heroic death, has dulled the edge of censure and extorted words of admiration. One of the collapsible boats on the ship could not for some reason be launched; but when the ship went down this boat floated, bottom-side up. On this boat thirty men, including the second officer, the two wireless operators and Colonel Gracie, found refuge by swimming. Captain Smith stayed on the ship till it sank. He also managed then to reach this collapsible boat, when it was already becoming overweighted. The account of what followed is thus given in the *New York Times*:

"Those who had already made the boat saw Capt. Smith swimming toward them with a child held high out of water. With a life-belt to support him the Captain was swimming easily and strongly. He reached the boat, from which hands were stretched out to receive him, and passed the child on board. Several hands gripped his arms, but he broke away from those who would have raised him out on the boat.

"Where is Murdock?" he demanded.

"Some one told him that the first officer had gone down. Captain Smith shoved himself away from the boat. His fingers worked desperately at the fastenings of his lifebelt, and finally he cast it from him.

"I will go down with the ship," he cried.

"He sank immediately, and altho those on the collapsible boat watched for him to come up that they might drag him aboard, he never appeared."