

Since writing the foregoing letter, it has occurred to me that perhaps you have not heard how the "Marquette" went down, and as a postscript I will tell you briefly my experiences that eventful day. I ought to mention that we left Port Said on the 18th October, and embarked at Alexandria on 19th for a destination unknown. We were all huddled together in a third class carriage, and spent from 8pm to dawn in the train - it was about the roughest journey I have ever experienced, but this by the way. We left Alexandria at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and for a couple of days were without escort of any kind, at the end of this time, on the 21st October we picked up a French Destroyer which conveyed us until the evening of the 22nd, when the weather came up a bit rough. On the morning of the 23rd it was simply glorious, the sea was like glass, and although there was no sun it was a very pleasant morning indeed. We had been allotted stations in case of an alarm, and life belts had been distributed around the decks but none of us ever dreamed that there was the slightest danger, and had treated the false alarms which had been given as a great joke, and we were also rather wild at having to "Douse the glem" very early in the evening. I had just finished breakfast when the crash came. It felt like an earthquake, and ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ it was at once apparent that our worst fears had been realised. Stupified for a second, the fellow with whom I was talking and I stood, and then with one impulse rushed to the stern of the ship. A glance confirmed our worst fears. There was a list then to the port side that showed clearly that the "Marquette" was mortally wounded. I went back to the cabin, automatically picked up a hat, and a lifebelt, and ran forward to the fore part of the ship where our alarm stations were. The rush was tremendous and I can well recollect the white faces and the anxiety depicted thereon. The ladders leading down from the deck I was on were crowded, so as it was impossible to get to the proper station I went round to the starboard side where they were launching the boats. One boat had already been lowered and was standing off full of men, and as I reached the side another boat largely filled with Nurses was being lowered. Just as it reached the water, however, something went wrong with the davits and one rope blocked, precipitating about half the occupants into the water, and leaving the remainder hanging to the seats. Just then another boat was lowered, and to the horror of all onlookers it came down on the boat in the water crushing those who had not been thrown out. The sight was sickening. I turned away and again attempted to get down to the proper station, this time managing all right. There were still many men rushing about but the great majority appeared to be over the edge. The bows of the ~~last~~ boat were awash and it was evident that to remain longer was to court suicide. Some minutes prior the command "Every man for himself" had been given. There was still some way on the vessel and the wash against the sides was great. Rafts were being thrown over the edge, and after ~~and after~~ getting one over another chap and myself jumped in. The water was very cold but it had the effect of waking us up properly for up till now we were ~~severely~~ dazed. Our first danger was a boat which was hanging in the water, and our raft had to pass under it, however this was negotiated all right. Then another boat came in ~~in~~ view, and as it was deeper in the water ~~xxxxx~~ I thought that there was very little hope of getting under it. With a crash we came against and after an age of scraping along the bottom, and getting nearly choked in the process, we came up again, only to see the propeller racing like mad on the surface of the water right ahead of us. I gave up all hope, and prayed for a quick end. I mind well that all sorts of memories came before me, and life seemed very dear in that dread moment. The blades seemed to be right on us when we were enveloped in the spray, then we appeared to be drawn under, and then we truly thankfully said "Thank God, we're clear" The vessel at this time presented an ~~impressive~~ impressive spectacle. It was gradually going down at the forward end, the stern rising higher and higher. Men were jumping over in all directions and the cries were terrible to hear. We picked up several swimmers on our raft (it was about 4 feet square) but it became overcrowded and capsized. Just then we saw that the big ship was in her death struggles. She came right down on the port side until her funnels appeared to touch the water, then she resumed her normal position save that the bows were all under water, then she stood ~~up~~ with the propeller facing the heavens & then ~~she gradually~~ gradually ~~fell~~ fell into the depths. The poor fellows who had waited too