At 10:30 that night we received a message from the *Titanic* to say that she had struck an iceberg. She would then be about two hundred and forty miles away. We established communication with the German steamer *Breslau*, about forty miles from the *Titanic*, and the *Carpathia*, then about sixty miles away. At about midnight the *Titanic* reported that she was sinking, and asked ships near by to hasten to her. At 2 a.m. she reported that she was sinking rapidly, and that was the last we heard from her. It was not until much later that we were informed of the seriousness of the disaster, thinking that the *Carpathia* would be there in time. Captain Barr was not particularly perturbed. It therefore came as a great shock to hear that so many people had lost their lives. A friend of mine who actually went down in the ship, but was eventually saved, told me that Captain Smith behaved with wonderful heroism. Amongst the male passengers very few escaped. They watched the boats being lowered, very often not full, with only women and children in them; but obeyed orders with the greatest courage and calmness. The engine staff stuck to their posts till the ship went down, keeping the pumps and the electric lights going to the very last moment. The purser's staff, also the doctor's, were drowned to a man and the majority of stewards were also lost. The purser, Mr. McElroy, who was a friend of mine, was standing on the B deck rail just before she sank. He made a remark that will live for ever at sea. Looking at the men around him, he said: "It will be sand in the morning for breakfast."


*Charles Spedding was the purser aboard the Caronia at the time of the Titanic sinking. He later survived the sinking of the Laconia. He ended his career with Cunard as the purser of the Aquitania. He went on to write a book about his career at sea.*

Courtesy of Michael Poirier


http://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/the-view-from-caronia.html