When the ocean liner Titanic sank in April of 1912, one of the few men to survive the tragedy was J. Bruce Ismay, the chairman and managing director of the company that owned the ship.And people who do the "smart" thing are sometimes criticized quite heavily after the fact. In a famous mountain-climbing accident chronicled in the book and documentary Touching the Void, climber Simon Yates was attempting to rope his already-injured friend Joe Simpson down a mountain in bad weather when the belay3 went awry. Simpson ended up hanging off a cliff, unable to climb up, and Yates, unable to lift him up and losing his own grip on the mountain, ended up cutting the rope to Simpson to save himself. Miraculously, Simpson survived the 100 foot fall and eventually made his way down the mountain. But Yates was criticized by some for his survival decision, even though the alternative would have almost certainly led to both of their deaths. In Yates' case, he had time to think hard about the odds, and the possibilities he was facing, and to realize that he couldn't save anyone but himself. But what about people who have to make more instantaneous decisions? If, in fact, survivors are driven by instinct not civilization, how do you explain all those who choose otherwise? Who would dive into icy waters or onto subway tracks or disobey orders to make repeat trips onto a minefield to bring wounded to safety? Are they more civilized than the rest of us? More brave? More noble? It sounds nice, but oddly enough, most of the people who perform such impulsive rescues say that they didn't really think before acting. Which ...means they weren't "choosing" civilization over instinct.But it didn't matter.His reputation was ruined

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