

A STAR BOOK

RAIDERS
OF THE DEEP

BY
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CHAPTER I

IN QUEST OF AN ULTRA-MODERN SEA TALE

High up on Squaw Mountain near the Tornado Mine in Colorado there was an abandoned tunnel. Prospectors had found an outcropping of gold and for a hundred yards or so had followed the vein into the mountain. Suddenly it had petered out. I stumbled on that old tunnel one day and from then on for years it was my pirate cave. Frequently on Saturday afternoons I came here and sat alone beside a blazing fire of pine cones and old dynamite cases. And here it was that I first read one of the rarest imaginative tales ever written—Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. And here it was that I met for the first time the mysterious Captain Nemo. From then on I was interested in submarines. For that matter, where is the boy or girl or woman or man who is not?

Then the greatest and most terrible of all wars broke upon the placid world, and a race of real Captain Nemos came into being. Here were tales of Jules Verne come true, tales more hair-raising than Verne's wildest imaginings, tales of adventures on voyages of *many hundreds of thousands of leagues under the sea*.

In 1917, with portholes covered, saloon and deck lights out, and all of us forbidden so much as to light a match, we entered the submarine zone. We were on a special mission, assigned to accompany the various Allied armies and bring back a record of events

on all battle fronts from North Sea to Persian Gulf. There was a real thrill in that last night out as we zigzagged across the Bay of Biscay toward the mouth of the Gironde River. Hunted—dodging a foe we couldn't see. If we were thrilled, then what of the sensations and experiences of the raiders of the deep lying in wait for us?

Months later, when we started east to join Allenby's army north of Gaza, to elude these new wolves of the sea we crossed from Taranto to Malta on a slim British ocean greyhound, a 22-knot courier boat. From Malta we planned to push right on across the Mediterranean to Alexandria. But for more than a week no ship, save submarine chasers, dared venture beyond the great steel net at the mouth of the harbour at Valletta. A ring of U-boats was said to have encircled the island.

Were we inconvenienced during those days at Malta? Not in the least! We thoroughly enjoyed the enforced delay. By day we visited picturesque old forts and palaces of the Knights of Malta, with their corridors hung with armour. Or we made excursions inland to the tangerine plantations, or across to the spot where St. Paul was shipwrecked. At night in Admiral Lord Calthorpe's box at the opera we attended gala performances in company with American Consul Wilbur Kiblinger, a charming gentleman from Virginia.

But what of the under-sea pirates in the U-boats off the Malta coast? We often wondered. Surely theirs must be an adventurous and desperate game!

On the way back from Lawrence's headquarters in Arabia I spent a short time chasing U-boats with destroyers and seaplanes near the Mediterranean entrance to the Suez Canal. And as I sat up there in the cockpit looking down on the sunny Mediterranean, with a balmy Egyptian breeze whipping past my

ears, I often wondered about the nightmare existence of the men who fought under the sea.

At the end of the war, Webb Waldron and I crawled through the Allied lines to witness Central Europe in the convulsions of revolution. We met U-boat sailors everywhere. It was then that I first started gathering material for what I knew would one day be looked back upon as the most unreal, the most incredible, and at the same time the most harrowing and thrilling tale of the World War.

Since then, on trips to Europe over a period of ten years, I continued my search for the men who came within an ace of bringing the combined forces of twenty nations to their knees with their new form of warfare—warfare under the sea!

What stories they were! The gathering of them was like passing through a gallery of thrills and fantastic dangers.

After writing of the deeds of Lawrence, the picturesque hero of the Allies, I sought adventure in high Asia. Then came the chronicling of man's first circumnavigation of the world by air. Meanwhile, I was seeking for some romantic figure, some counterpart to Lawrence of Arabia. Later, on a flying tour of Europe, I found him in Count Felix von Luckner, the cheery corsair who raided the seas in a three-master windjammer.

Von Luckner's sailing ship as a raider in the war was certainly a novelty. But there were other raiders the poles away from to'ga's'n'l and marlinspike—the submarines. There you had the two ultimate extremes of war on the oceans. The submarine with its snaking torpedo was less anomalous, to be sure, than the three-master and its full spread of canvas. None the less beguiling, though. Less romance, perhaps, but more thrill and terror. The campaign of the U-boats held the world spellbound. One of the latest marvels

of modern technology, striking a sweeping, fearful blow that threatened to decide the issue of the conflict of the nations—that surely was a thing to clutch the imagination with an iron grasp. And then there were the weird perils of the men who navigated beneath the surface of the sea, who struck their blows from the recesses of the ocean's bosom. The ever-threatening fate of the submerged coffin stands eerie and supremely terrifying. Ah, what stories waited to be told! Not merely stories of mad adventure, but history, important and of intense interest to all men. Surely no chapter of the history of our time needed telling quite so much as this.

And so after a sailor's yarn of scudding the waves with a fair breeze at your back and all sails set, why then a tale of the tight iron shells that ranged the underwater—spectral, fearsome, and deadly.

Of course, there are the two sides to the story: On the one hand, the adventures of the crews in the Kaiser's U-boats; on the other, the no less beguiling tales from the Allied side of the men who fought them. The U-boats logically come first, the stories of the German submarine commanders—then another tale, *Fighting the Submarines*.

In setting down this account of the submarine war, straight from the lips of the U-boat commanders, I have disregarded all controversial ground, or at any rate have attempted to. The right and wrong of under-sea war is not discussed here. The tales I have to pass on are tales of sheer adventure. Stranger than fiction? Aye! And tales, I believe, such as no other chronicler will have a chance to set down in our time. At any rate, we all hope the world has learned its lesson, and may there be peace among men for generations to come!

What manner of men were these chaps who in war time won the hatred and bitter execration of half the

world? Pirates, they were called, and hanging was the destiny considered just for them. At the same time, it was perfectly clear that they were true stalwarts of the race of adventurers. There was a magic of light and wide airy space in the upper sky where the aviators ranged, but there was a more terrible beguilement in the close embrace of the underwater where men groped with that eerie eye, the periscope.

And then there was the horrible inevitability in the doom of the foundering submarine. The airman shot down in flames was a picture of fright, but the snug iron coffin of the voyager under the sea was a ghostly picture quite as powerful upon the imagination as the flaming coffin of the sky.

What manner of men were they, and what were they doing now? The trade and the course of life that the hero of war follows when peace has returned is always a curious problem. The more so with the submarine commanders of Germany, because Germany is allowed no sea power worth mentioning and the continuance of a naval career is cut off for most of them. After the weird life of war under sea they were thrown abruptly into the placid ways of civilian life in peace time.

I found them in no wise fire-snorting pirates, nor even characters salty with the sea. Quiet, pleasant chaps they turned out to be, most of them rather young—the flower of the German Navy. They had volunteered for U-boat service because it involved the most hazard. As they are to-day, for the most part they would pass anywhere as nicely mannered fellows, matter-of-fact, and rather mild. That, of course, is what one might have expected. The most daring of warriors is likely to be quite a plain citizen in peace time, at least in this day and age. Many of the former submarine commanders are in business connected with shipping. They go to their offices every day, look

over invoices, and dictate letters. Others are in engineering, and still others are successful business executives. The war is past and gone. The perilous life in the U-boats is far behind. They think of it but little. They are busy carving out careers for themselves, and the old days come to mind only when former comrades get together for reminiscences or when at social gatherings stories and experiences are related. Herr U-boat Commandant, whom a few years ago the world looked upon as some kind of sea dragon, is, in this year of 1928, a steady-going citizen such as you could scarcely distinguish from a young and enterprising American business man.

And what ethical slant did they have on their deeds and exploits which the millions of us regarded as the black nadir of immorality and inhuman wrong? I found some interesting things here, particularly in the case of the man who sank the *Lusitania*. These will be told in their proper places. Meanwhile, one point is to be kept in mind, a general principle that stood as the ethical background of the submarine commander, his way of looking at things. It is very simple. As a descendant of Adam he was the same as the rest of us. As a man of war, well, he was a naval officer, and a naval officer's business is to obey orders. That was his training, his tradition, his life. All you have to do is to consider the age-long idea of military discipline as you will find it in the United States Navy, or any other navy, then it all becomes clear. The submarine commander obeyed orders, and that is the highest virtue known to the code of armies and navies. Sometimes he undoubtedly went beyond his orders. A few men in all times and all climes have done that.

But how about all of those atrocities which were so liberally attributed to the U-boats? Here, as with the subject of atrocities in general, it is difficult to find any sound evidence, anything more than rumour. The

two particular crimes attributed to the U-boats were the sinking of hospital ships and the firing on lifeboats. In the first instance the Germans cite the fact that ships often struck mines and were thought to be torpedoed. There are two authenticated instances in which hospital ships appear to have been sunk deliberately. In the second instance I ran across cases where lifeboats were said to have been fired on. The Germans reply to this by pointing out at least one instance when a seemingly innocent lifeboat tried to sink a submarine with a sudden throwing of bombs, and when it was scarcely more than human for the U-boat to open fire. In that way a great tale of machine-gunning lifeboats might begin. In general I found almost nothing conclusive about atrocities, although many instances of humanity on the part of the U-boats came to me from British sources.

If you want a verdict on these things just ask the men who were in action against each other in the war of the sea. On the whole they speak in high admiration of each other. Seafaring men are built that way.

The tale begins with a vivid picture: a cruiser with guns like the spokes of a wheel and funnels belching smoke—and over there hidden below the waves a sliding, black, cigar-shaped hull, a fearsome fish for any ocean.

In the conning tower of the U-boat is an officer destined for a career that will make him one of Germany's greatest war heroes. His periscope—the "asparagus," as the Germans nicknamed the eye of a submarine—has been on the alert. He has spied the cruiser a long way off, heading toward him. He lies in wait. The sea is rough. In the tossing water he can scarcely keep his boat at the proper level. But the mountainous waves are more of an aid than a hindrance. Spray and foam hide the jumping peri-

scope. On a glassy sea that six-foot asparagus would be visible from afar to a lookout in a crow's nest. The cruiser holds its course, swift, warlike, a brave picture of the dominant power of iron and steam. The submerged raider steals to a point close to the path of the oncoming vessel. The tossing sea conceals the periscope. An ideal setting for an ambush—the first of the war.

A deadly, short-range shot. So rough is the sea that even the path of the torpedo is obscured. The cruiser hasn't a chance to side-step. A dull roar. At the water line, just under the forward funnel, it strikes. The entire fore part of the ship is blown to bits. Fire breaks out and flames shoot skyward. The cruiser heaves. Its stern rises until it stands straight in the air. For a moment it hesitates. Then, bow first, it dives.

Three minutes have elapsed since the torpedo sped to its mark. The noise of the explosion has carried for miles. Torpedo boats rush to the scene. Both cruiser and U-boat have vanished.

This was the first ship ever sunk by the attack of a submarine. It was the 3,200-ton British cruiser H. M. S. *Pathfinder*. The identity of the ship the U-boat had sunk was not known in Germany until days later, when word drifted in through Holland. Out of a crew of 360 less than half were saved. Only one lifeboat got away before the *Pathfinder* went down. The other dazed survivors were found clinging to the wreckage. The commander to make this first underwater kill was Lieutenant Commander Otto Hersing. His raider was the *U-21*.

But it was an under-sea boat of far older vintage that was destined to launch the torpedoes that were to give the world its really spectacular introduction to this new phenomenon of warfare.

Again and again as I talked with those Captain

Nemos I heard it: "When Weddigen in the *U-9* won the first big victory"; or "When Weddigen in the *U-9* sank the *Aboukir*, the *Hogue*, and the *Cressy*."

At the very beginning of the World War the news came that a German submarine had torpedoed and sunk three great British armoured cruisers. That newest of new inventions, the submarine, a mysterious and doubtful quantity in the calculus of warfare, had come to the front with a telling stroke. The place to begin, indeed.

Weddigen lies at the bottom of the North Sea, and the *U-9* has long since been consigned to the junk heap. But very much in the land of the living is a youngish, rather dreamy-looking chap, Lieutenant Johann Spiess, Weddigen's watch officer and second in command, who tells in his own words the tale of the raids of the historic *U-9*:

CHAPTER II

PERISCOPE AND TORPEDO

The twenty-second of September, 1914. How well I remember it! For me it is one of those days a man looks back upon with endless reminiscence, a dividing point for a lifetime. And it has more than a mere personal significance. It stands a marker in the stream of history, a milestone on the long road of terrestrial events. On that day a new piece of action flared big and bold on the earthly scene. The sliding cataclysmic submarine intruded with crashing torpedo shots into the game of nations. We, the raiders of the deep, struck our first telling blow. Already a British warship had been sunk by our comrades of the *U-21*, but now we scored a success that made history. The world thrilled and marvelled, and it was not long before all mankind trembled with the thought of the hand of death that reached out under the sea. On that twenty-second of September, 1914, we sank the great cruisers, the *Hogue*, the *Aboukir*, and the *Cressy*.

Two years before, in October, 1912, I was assigned to the submarine service—to my disgust. At the time I was serving as second torpedo officer aboard *S. M. S. Pommern*. But my one ambition was to get assigned to a torpedo boat, the goal of every young torpedo expert.

The small, swift craft, with their darting attacks, seemed to offer us the best opportunity for hurling our huge, ship-smashing missiles. The submarines? Bah! True, they, too, were for launching torpedoes. But

in those days we looked at under-sea craft, along with aircraft and other technical innovations, with a skeptical eye. Would they ever amount to anything in real warfare? Probably not. Nor was life aboard the U-boats anything to look forward to. Even now the submarine is no pleasure barge. In 1912, between close quarters, foul air, and crazy rolling and pitching, a rowboat was palatial compared to the inside of one of those diving dories. There were frequent accidents, too, especially in foreign navies. And death in a plunging submarine was as evil a fate as the imagination could conjure. Death by slow suffocation. Nevertheless, although I did not like it, a submarine officer I became.

The boat to which I was transferred was the *U-9*, of the old kerosene-burning type. (The Diesel engine had not yet been developed.) At that time the *U-9* was quite an up-to-date craft. But technical progress was such that this boat speedily became obsolete.

Nowadays we can look back with an indulgent smile upon that prehistoric era. Any kind of extended U-boat voyage was undreamed of. Only in rare cases did men sleep on board, which was not only uncomfortable but considered dangerously unhealthful. Going ashore at nightfall was the invariable routine. Diving was done as little as possible, and we seldom ventured to go down more than a few yards, and then we looked anxiously about to see if the seams were tight and no water was leaking in. There was grave doubt whether subsurface craft could weather a lively storm. They had never been tried out in a real gale. An attack under water in any kind of rough weather was considered impossible. The prescribed plan under such conditions was to approach and torpedo an enemy craft with the conning tower above water. The supposition was that, with the waves breaking over the conning tower, it could not be seen. Our kerosene motors