

THE VICTORY AT SEA

By ADMIRAL WILLIAM SOWDEN SIMS



German U-Boats in American Waters

It was in the summer of 1918 that the Germans made their only attempt at what might be called an offensive against their American enemies. Between the beginning of May and the end of October, 1918, five German submarines crossed the Atlantic and torpedoed a few ships on our coast. That submarines could make this long journey had long been known. Singularly enough, however, the impression still prevails in this country that the German U-boats were the first to accomplish the feat. In the early fall of 1916 the U-53, commanded by that submarine officer, Hans Rose, who has been previously mentioned in these articles, crossed the Atlantic, dropped in for a call at Newport, R.I., and on the way back sank a few merchant vessels off Narragansett. A few months previously the so-called merchant submarine Deutschland had made its trip to Newport News. The German press and even some pro-German sympathizers in this country hailed these achievements as marking a glorious page in the record of the German navy. Doubtless the real purpose was to show the American people how easily these destructive vessels could cross the Atlantic; and to impress upon their minds the fate which awaited them in case they maintained their rights against the Prussian bully. As a matter of fact, it had been proved long before the Deutschland or the U-53 had made their voyages that submarines could cross the Atlantic. In 1915 not one but ten submarines had gone from North America to Europe under their own power. Admiral Sir John Fisher tells about this expedition in his recently published memoirs. In 1914 the British Admiralty had contracted for submarines with Charles M. Schwab, president of the Bethlehem Steel Company. As international law prohibited the construction of war vessels by a neutral in war time for the use of a belligerent with which it was at peace, the parts of ten submarines were sent to Canada where they were put together. These submarines then crossed the Atlantic under their own power, and were sent from British ports to the Dardanelles, where they succeeded in driving Turkish and German shipping out of the Sea of Marmora. Thus a crossing of the Atlantic by American submarines had been accomplished before the Germans made their voyages. It was therefore not necessary for the two German submarines to cross the Atlantic to prove that the thing could be done; but the Germans doubtless believed that this demonstration of their ability to operate on the American coast would serve as a warning to the American people.

What They Would Have Meant
We were never at all deceived as to what would be the purpose of such a visit after our entrance into the war. In the early part of 1917 the Allies believed that the German U-boats might assail our coast, and I so informed the Navy Department at Washington. My cables and letters of 1917 explained fully the reasons why Germany might indulge in such a gesture. Strategically, as these despatches make clear, such attacks would have no great military value. To have sent a sufficient number of submarines to do any considerable damage on the American coast, would have been a great mistake. Germany's one chance of winning the war with the submarine weapon was to destroy shipping to such an extent that the communications of the Al-

lies with the outside world, and especially the United States, would be cut. The only places where the submarine warfare could be conducted with some chance of success were the ocean passage routes which lead to European ports, especially in that area south and southeast of Ireland where these focused the trade routes for ships sailing from all parts of the world and destined for British and French ports. With the number of submarines available the Germans

could keep enough of their U-boats at work in these areas to destroy a large number of merchant ships. Germany thus needed to concentrate all of her available submarines at these points; she had an inadequate number for her purposes; to send any considerable force 3,000 miles across the Atlantic would simply weaken her efforts in the real scene of warfare and would make her submarine campaign a failure. The cruises of submarines on the American coast would have been much longer and would have been a much more serious strain on the submarines than were the shorter cruises in the inshore waters of Europe. As has already been explained the submarine did not differ from other craft in its need for constant repairs and careful upkeep, except that it was perhaps a more delicate instrument of warfare than any other naval craft, and that it would require longer and more frequent periods of overhaul. The Germans had no submarine bases in American waters and could establish none. Pos-

sibly, as the newspaper writer has pointed out, they might seize a deserted island off the coast of Maine or in the Caribbean, and cache there a reservoir of fuel and food; unless, however, they could also create at these places adequate facilities for repairing submarines or supplying them with torpedoes and ammunition, such a place would not serve the purpose of a base at all. Comparatively few of the German submarines could have made the cruise to the American

Raids For Moral Effect.
Of course it was clear from the first to the heads of the Allied navies and to all naval authorities who were informed as to the actual conditions, that these attacks by German submarines on the American coast would only be in the nature of raids for moral effect. It was also quite clear from the first, as I pointed out in my despatches to the Navy Department, that the best place to defend our coast was in the critical submarine areas in the Eastern Atlantic, through which the submarines had to pass in setting out for our coast, and in which alone they could have any hope of succeeding in the military object of the submarine campaign. It was not necessary to keep our de-

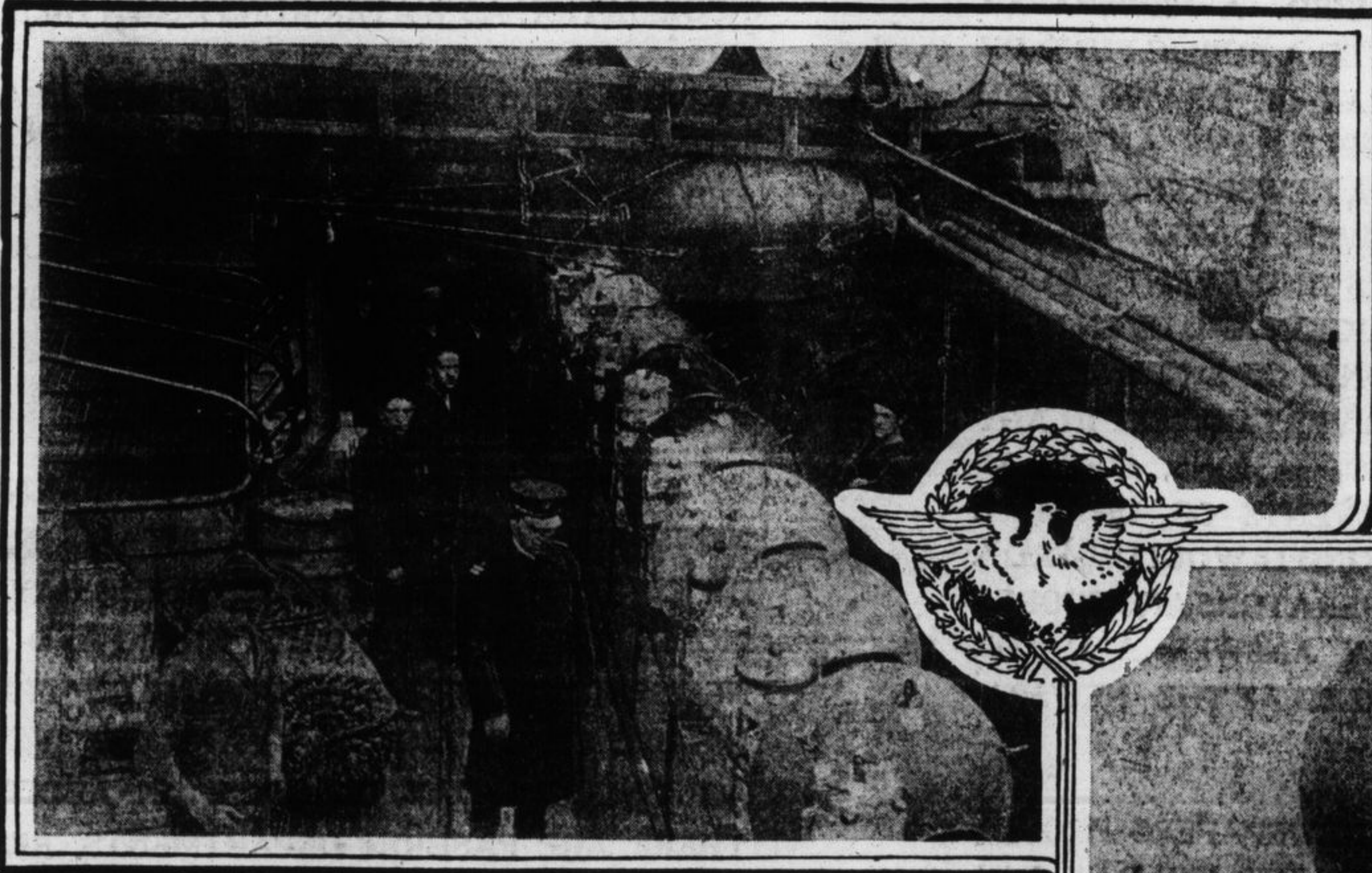
ganda. The press was full of reports that such attacks were about to be made. German agents were continually circulating these reports. easily cross the Atlantic in ten days. It is therefore apparent that a flotilla of destroyers stationed in European waters could protect the American coast from submarines almost as successfully as if it were stationed at Hampton Roads or Newport. Such a flotilla would be of no use at these American stations unless there were submarines attacking shipping off the coast; but as soon as the German started for America—a detail of which, as I shall explain, we always were in fact informed—we could send our destroyers after them. These agile vessels could reach home waters about three weeks before the submarines arrived; they would thus have plenty of time to refit and to welcome the uninvited guests. From any conceivable point of view, therefore, there was no excuse for keeping destroyers in the Eastern Atlantic for "home defense." Moreover, the fact that we could keep this close track of

again friendly relations. In 1917 they therefore refrained from any acts which might arouse popular hatred against them. We had more than one indication of this attitude. Early in the summer of 1917 we obtained from one of the captured German submarines a set of orders issued to it by the German Admiralty Staff. Among these was one dated May 8, 1917, in which the submarine commanders were informed that Germany had not declared war upon the United States, and that, until further instructions were received, the submarines were to continue to look upon America and American shipping as neutral. The submarine commanders were especially warned against attacking or committing any overt act against such American war-vessels as might be encountered in European waters. The orders explained that no official confirmation had been received by the German Government of the news which had been published in the press that America had declared war, and that, therefore, the Germans officially were ignoring our belligerence. From their own standpoint such a policy of endeavoring not to offend America, even after she became a belligerent, may have seemed politically wise; from a military point of view, their failure to attempt the submarine demonstration off our coast in 1917 was a great mistake; for when they finally started warfare on our coast, the United States was deeply involved in hostilities, and had already begun the transportation of the great army which produced such decisive results on the Western Front. The time had passed, an experience soon showed, when any mere demonstration on our coast would disturb the calm of the American people or affect their will to victory.

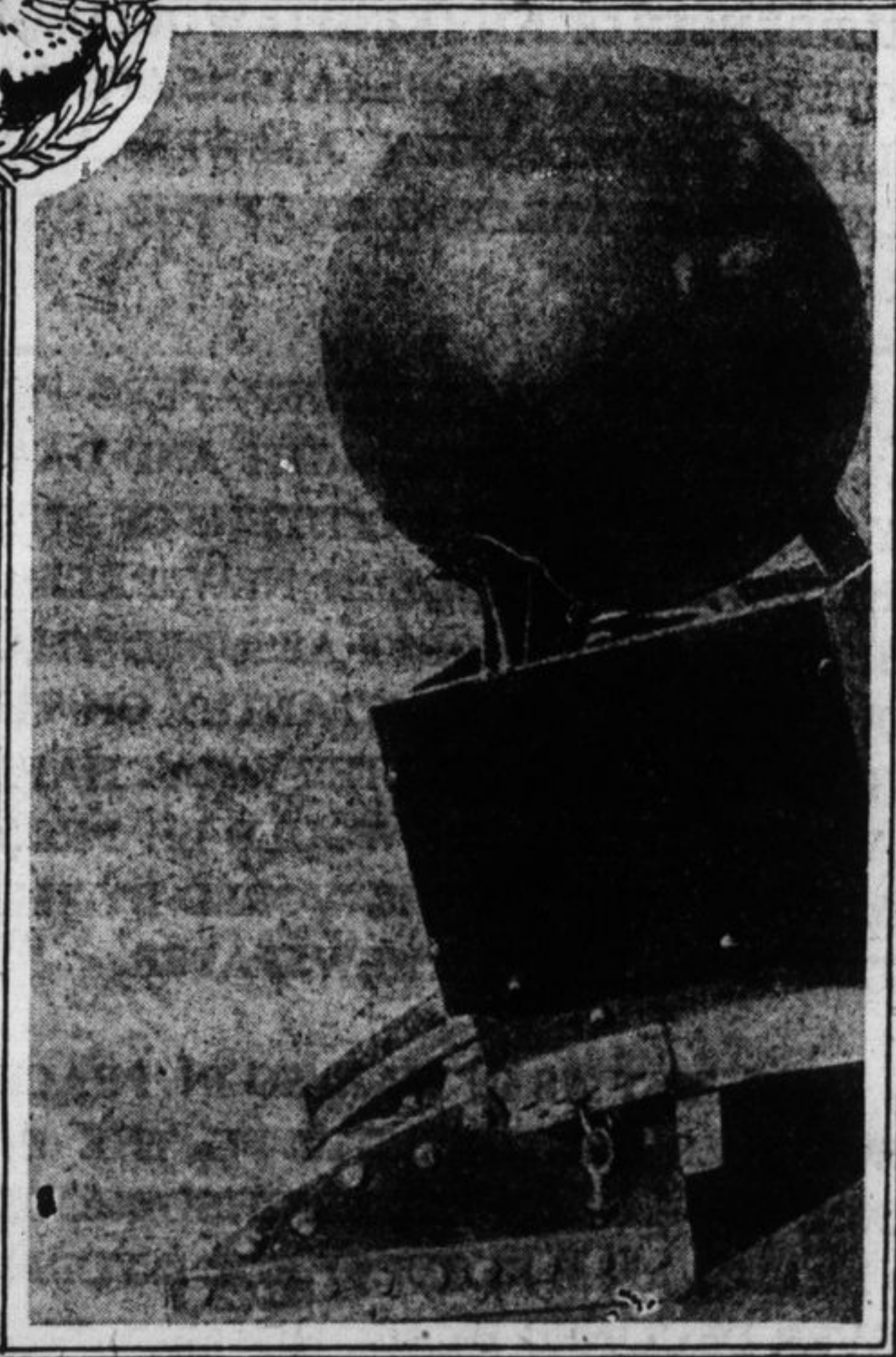
ships were taken on just south of the Five Fathom Bank Light, I suggested that it was not unlikely that the U-151 would attempt to lay mines in that vicinity. Now the fact is that we knew that the U-151 intended to lay mines at this very place. We had obtained this piece of information from the radio we had intercepted; as there was a good chance that our own cable might fall into German hands, we did not care to give the news in the precise form in which we had received it, as we did not intend that he should know that we had means of keeping so accurately informed. As has been predicted, the U-151 proceeded directly to the vicinity of this Five Fathom Bank off Delaware Bay, laid her mines and then, cruising north up the coast, began her demonstration on the 25th of May by sinking two small wooden schooners.

On July 29th I informed Washington that another U-boat was then coming down the west coast of Ireland, bound for the United States, and that it would arrive some time after July 16th. Complete reports of this vessel were sent from day to day as it made its slow progress across the ocean. On July 6th I cabled that still another U-boat had started for our coast; and the progress of this adventurer, with all details as to its character and probable area of operations, were also forwarded regularly. From the end of May until October, there was nearly always one submarine operating off our coast. The largest number active at any one time was in August, when for a week or ten days there were more or less active in attacking coastwise vessels. These three performed all the way from Cape Hatteras to Newfoundland, attempting by these tactics to create the impressions that dozens of hostile U-boats were preying upon our commerce and threatening our shores. These submarines, however, attacked almost exclusively sailing vessels and small coastwise steamers, rarely, if ever, using torpedoes. A number of mines were laid at different points off our ports, on what the Germans believed to be the traffic routes; but the information which we had concerning them made it possible to counter successfully their efforts and, from a military point of view, the whole of the submarine operations off our coast can be dismissed as one of the minor incidents of the war, as the Secretary of the Navy described it in his Annual Report. The five submarines sunk in all approximately 110,000 tons of shipping, but the vessels were, for the most part, small and of no great military importance. The only real victory was the destruction of the cruiser San Diego, which was sunk by a mine which had been laid by the U-156 off Fire Island.

(To be continued.)
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ON THE LAUNCHING DECK.
The mines moved on little railroad tracks toward the stern, whence they dropped at about ten second intervals into the water. Each mine lay in ship carried about 500 on an average.



MINE GOING OVERBOARD.
The ten vessels made thirteen so-called excursions into the North Sea laying about 5,000 mines each trip. The mines were all made in the United States, shipped to Norfolk, Va., thence sent to Fort William and Loch Aish, Scotland, and from these latter points sent to bases at Inverness and Javergordon by the Highland Railway and the Caledonian Canal.

submarines in itself formed a great protection against them. I have already explained how we routed convoys entering British waters in such ways that they could sail around the U-boats and thus escape contact. I think that this simple procedure saved more shipping than any other method. In the same way we could keep these vessels sailing from American ports outside of the area in which the submarines were known to be operating in our own waters.

Why?
Yet the enemy sent no submarines to our coast in 1917; why they did not do so may seem difficult to understand for that was just the period when a campaign of this kind might have served their purpose. During this time, however, we had repeated indications that the Germans did not take the American entrance into the war very seriously; moreover, looking forward to conditions, after the peace, they perhaps hoped that they might soon be able to establish once



Could Not Sleep

Mr. Earnest Clark, Police Officer, 338 King St., Kingston, Ont., writes:

"For three years I suffered from nervousness and sleeplessness. I believe my condition was brought about by overwork. I had frequent headaches, neuralgic pains and twitching of nerves and muscles. I had indigestion, was short of breath and easily tired. I commenced a treatment of Dr. Chase's Nerve Food, and seven boxes of this medicine cured me of all my symptoms. I am now feeling one hundred per cent better than I was, and have to thank Dr. Chase's Nerve Food for the good health I am now enjoying."

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coast and operate successfully there so far away from their bases for any considerable time. Anything resembling an attacking force on American harbors was therefore improbable. Yet it seemed from the first that the Germans would send an occasional submarine into our waters, as a measure of propaganda rather than for the direct military result that would be achieved. American destroyers and other vessels were essential to the success of the whole anti-submarine campaign of the Allies. The sooner they could all be sent into the critical European waters the sooner the German scheme of terrorizing our coast would end. If these destroyers or any considerable part of them could be kept indefinitely in American waters, the Germans might win the war. Any maneuver which would have as its result the keeping of these American vessels, so indispensable to the Allies, out of the field of active warfare would thus be more than justified, and indeed, would indicate the highest wisdom on the part of the German navy. The Napoleonic principle of dividing your enemies forces is just as valuable in naval as in land warfare. For many years Admiral Mahan had been instructing American naval officers that the first rule in warfare is not to divide your fighting forces, but always to keep them together, so as to bring the whole weight at a given moment against your adversary. Two of the fundamental principles of the science of warfare, on land and sea alike, are contained in the maxims: Keep your own forces concentrated and always endeavor to divide those of the enemy. Undoubtedly the best method which Germany could use to keep our destroyers in our own waters was to make the American people believe that their lives and property were in danger; they might accomplish this by sending a submarine to attack our shipping off New York and Boston and other Atlantic seaports, and possibly even to bombard our harbors. The Germans doubtless believed that they might create such alarm and arouse such public clamor in the United States that our destroyers and other anti-submarine craft would be kept over here by the Navy Department, in response to the popular agitation to protect our own coast. This is the reason why American headquarters in London, and the Allied admiralties, expected such a visitation. The Germans obviously endeavored to create the impression that such an attack was likely to occur at any time. This was part of their war propa-