

SLAVES FOR ETHIOPIA *by* GORDON MACCREAGH

15¢



JULY

Adventure



ATTACK ON AMERICA

by **ARED WHITE**

MEN UNDER THE SEA

by **COMMANDER ELLSBERG**



Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)



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for
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The Lusitania, off the coast of Ireland, carrying 1198 persons to their deaths. . . .

SUNKEN TREASURE!

A "MEN UNDER THE SEA" STORY

By COMMANDER EDWARD ELLSBERG

SUNKEN treasure! There is a lure in those words that is older than history, that has dragged men to the ends of the earth and to the depths of the sea—

a lure that has broken the health of many adventurers, cost the lives of many divers, and stripped the last copper from the purses of thousands who have put up the cash for no one knows

how many salvage expeditions down through the ages. And it still goes on.

Shakespeare made one of his characters, who in a dream thinks he has been knocked into the sea and as he drowns observes the depths, say:

"Methought I saw a thousand fearful wrecks;

Ten thousand men that fishes gnaw'd upon;

Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,

*Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
All scattered in the bottom of the sea.
Some lay in dead men's skulls; and in those holes*

Where eyes did once inhabit, there were crept,

As 'twere in scorn of eyes, reflecting gems,

Which woo'd the slimy bottom of the deep,

And mock'd the dead bones that lay scattered by."

(Richard III, Act I, Scene IV.)

In this opinion, Shakespeare was neither first nor last; nothing has changed in this picture during the centuries save that in the lurid circulars put out by so-called salvagers today, the wedges of gold have so multiplied as to blot from sight the great anchors, and the skulls are no longer visible through the enlarged heaps of gems which now completely engulf them.

Take the case of the *Merida*, for instance.

Early in May, 1911, the S. S. *Merida* sailed from Vera Cruz, Mexico, for New York. She was a prosaic coastal liner, not over large, never the type that for luxury or speed would ever make the news. On May 12, 1911, while well off the Virginia Capes, northward bound in a light fog, she was in collision with an even more prosaic vessel, the freighter *Admiral Farragut*, which crashed into her side, inflicting a mortal gash.

That was about midnight, but as the *Merida* took over five hours to sink, her captain had little difficulty in transferring first his passengers and then all his crew to the *Admiral Farragut*, and before he finally abandoned ship, had time even to set his stewards rummaging

through the passenger's cabins to save what effects seemed worth saving. Not till 5:20 A.M., with his vessel down by the stern and badly listed, did he finally leave, to watch his ship sink some ten minutes later, in about two hundred feet of water.



THAT was less than thirty years ago. Under ordinary circumstances, the *Merida* would simply have joined the long roll of other forgotten wrecks as soon as the underwriters had paid the losses.

But the circumstances surrounding the *Merida's* sailing had not been ordinary. For sometime before, Mexico had been torn by civil war. Porfirio Diaz, aging president, had decided to abdicate while still he had sufficient control of his army and the government to make graceful abdication possible, and departed for Paris, leaving as his almost certain successor the head of the revolutionary party, Francisco Madero.

Foreseeing trouble, Diaz had long before transferred to France a considerable part of his fortune; considerably more he took with him, and ended his days in Paris a wealthy emigré, little concerned over the continual turmoil in Mexico which followed the end of his long dictatorship, as successive patriots fought for the presidency and, not so fortunate as Diaz, usually left office in coffins.

It was during the very month of his abdication, but some weeks before that event, that the *Merida* sailed on her last voyage.

Conditions in war-torn Mexico had been unsettled for many months, with much of its territory ravaged both by the contending armies and by roving bandits. Political refugees were common along the American side of the border and in New York. They had as their outstanding characteristics the twin facts that they were against the Mexican government of the moment and that they were broke.

Under such political uncertainties the *Merida* weighed anchor and left Vera Cruz, carrying among her passengers the usual quota of refugees, some destined on arrival at New York to sponge in

the accustomed manner off their compatriots and any others with a few dollars to give in exchange for somewhat threadbare tales of how their vast *haciendas* had been ravaged or confiscated, and they themselves reduced to beggary. But chance gave to the *Merida's* voyagers a far better story. Beyond any contradiction, their ship had been sunk; they landed as shipwrecked mariners who had lost their all at sea.

And what an all it finally turned out to be! Imagination ran riot. The crown jewels of the Emperor Maximilian (whom Porfirio Diaz half a century before had helped to dethrone and execute) and of his Empress Carlotta; the treasury of Diaz himself, the wealth of Mexico in gold and silver—all these and more were traveling northward in the baggage of the fleeing emigrés on the *Merida*. Undeclared, of course uninsured; secretly packed to avoid seizure.

Odd, certainly, that most of the refugees on previous ships had managed to escape from Mexico only with their lives and with a few personal belongings, while these, their compatriots on the *Merida*, had it not been for an unfortunate accident at sea, would have landed with the wherewithal not only to have outshined Solomon in all his glory, but to have financed a counter-revolution in Mexico which would have restored every refugee to his lost *hacienda*.



WHAT are the facts about the *Merida's* cargo? Not long ago, in the offices of the admiralty lawyers who handled the claims for the underwriters and settled them, I went over the losses and claims in great detail.

There were claims for the ship and for the insured cargo and personal effects; there were claims against the *Admiral Farragut* for having caused the accident, and against her any claimant might have lodged a libel for his losses, regardless of whether his goods were insured or not.

Certainly any passenger with the slightest bit of evidence to establish his loss would at least have filed a claim for it, and with the wreck fresh in the rec-

ords, such evidence might well have been obtained, even in Mexico, did it exist. And had the crown jewels been missing from Mexico and aboard the *Merida*, certainly the Madero government, then the legal owner of them, regardless of how they came aboard the *Merida*, would have lodged a claim for their value.

What happened is illuminating. The passengers filed claims for personal belongings to a total of \$168,000; the crew claimed a loss of \$8,000. There was a claim on cargo for around \$400,000, of which \$24,197 consisted of silver bars or bullion, and \$26,730 consisted of copper. The remainder was general merchandise, hides, etc. And finally there was the claim for the loss of the *Merida* herself, by far the most expensive item. The Mexican government filed no claim at all, apparently unaware that it had lost anything.

Having all the claims before them, the underwriters proceeded to settle, paying the insured losses without discussion, the others by compromise, and promptly wrote the *Merida* off their books. They were out of pocket for the losses, and were now the legal owners of the *Merida* and all her contents, had they any desire to recoup through salvage. But neither then nor since have they ever spent a dollar in any effort at recovery.

There was nothing aboard her worth salvaging that they knew about save a moderate quantity of silver, some \$24,000 worth, and as prudent business men they figured that the cost of salvaging that silver was not warranted by the recoverable value. So far as the millions aboard her in the way of gold and jewels were concerned, they assessed those legends as moonshine, and proceeded to forget the *Merida*.

But others with more romance in their souls did not. A few years went by, just enough to give the stories time for proper mellowing and growth. The rubies in the crown jewels grew to enormous size; the hoard of gold increased proportionately. A syndicate was formed, composed astonishingly enough of half a dozen men whose names bulked large in finance in Philadelphia and New

York. Certainly to them the cost was not important; only the romance of the enterprise could have really mattered.

In the most approved manner, the expedition proceeded. A small vessel was obtained, fitted out for diving. Two divers were procured, on monthly terms which would make the average diver's mouth water. Wreckmaster and crew matched all else. The expedition sailed to salvage the *Merida's* treasure.

For two successive seasons, this expedition worked on the *Merida*. What went on has never been given much publicity. As is usual in such cases, the wreck was located at the very end of the first season's work, thus giving the backers of the expedition something to dream about during the long winter and to keep them in a properly generous frame of mind till spring.

The second season was similarly barren of any results in the way of gems and bullion or anything else of a concrete nature, and ended with all the subscribed funds expended, but with the most glowing tales of what might be expected in the way of gold and jewels to be brought up during the third season.

At this point, however, the wealthy syndicate members, having acquired a sufficient amount of romance to last them for the remainder of their lives (and perhaps having begun to vaguely fear that they, instead of the *Merida*, were the real treasure vessel) refused to put up any more cash. With this decision, the expedition came to an abrupt end.



BUT the *Merida* legend did not die. Soon another group of treasure-seekers were in the field, financed this time by stock subscriptions, with a weird contraption that would make divers, unnecessary, and easily harvest the gold and jewels in the wreck. A submarine tractor, it was. It was fitted out with gadgets enough to do almost anything. It was going to travel along the ocean floor; an operator inside would work the intricate assembly of drills and hooks protruding from it, and do whatever was necessary to the defenseless *Merida*.

In this case, the idea was to spread a huge canvas on the ocean floor alongside the ship, blow her up with T. N. T. planted by the tractor, and then catch all the gold and jewels as they rained down through the water on the canvas, after which nothing further was required, save to lift the canvas by the corners to the surface and take aboard the treasure.

This scheme, startling in its simplicity, eliminated all the hazards, the delays, and the uncertainties of working with divers in deep water. The promoters had actually sold stock enough to build their tractor, something very much resembling a baby tank, but far heavier, as it weighed in the neighborhood of ten to fifteen tons.

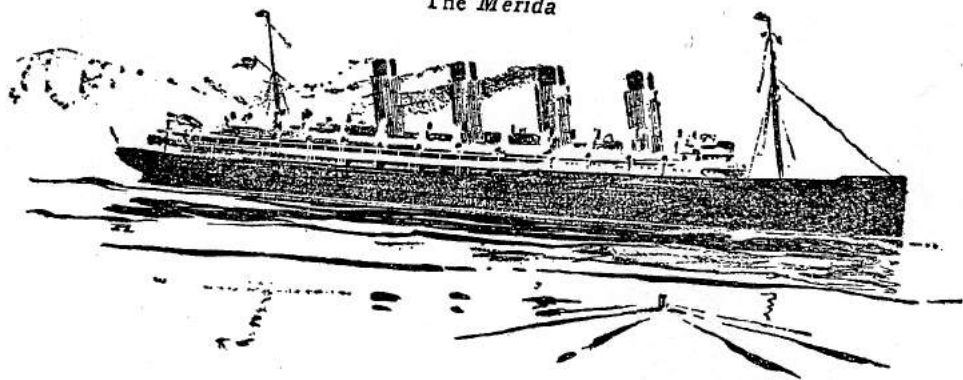
Before going farther in the deep sea, and no doubt to attract more investors, they proceeded to stage a demonstration of the tank's abilities on a small steel vessel which they sank "inadvertently" in Long Island Sound in rather shallow water not far off shore.

So far, all went well; the unsuspecting newspapers even carried a story wherein the sinking was reported as a bona fide accident, with the new-fangled tractor called in to salvage the wreck, all of which publicity made the promoters rub their hands gleefully.

From this point on, however, matters went awry. The submarine tractor, rushed to the scene on a floating derrick, was lowered to the bottom, but instead of rolling over to the side of the wreck and getting to work with its drills and hooks, ingloriously refused to move and had to be heaved up again by the derrick with nothing done.

It appeared that by a curious oversight of nature, the bottom of the sea was not properly macadamized, and the inordinately heavy tractor found itself bogged down and incapable of locomotion. The tractor demonstration was a most spectacular failure.

Then to make matters worse, a heartless government insisted upon the removal of the "wreck" as an obstruction to navigation, and the unlucky promoters found themselves obliged to call in a commercial salvage company and its prosaic divers to get lines attached

The *Merida*

to the little vessel so that it could be carried away. This closed the active career of the tractor, which never actually got anywhere near the sunken *Merida*.



THE next *Merida* phase was more exciting. Another inventor turned up with a trick diving suit, one of the "armored" variety intended to protect the diver from the water pressure and thus save him from "the bends" and all similar diving complications. That incidentally the diver, locked up in that contraption, with nothing but protruding hooks for hands, was rendered practically incapable of doing any useful work or of getting about, was a minor matter. The suit was complicated enough in appearance to give it a definite sales appeal and the usual stock promotion followed. This time the *Merida's* treasure was certainly going to be salvaged.

Unfortunately the sales of stock proved slower than anticipated, and not for several years after the announced date did the salvage expedition sail for the waters off Cape Henry. But then the salvagers proved themselves showmen of the first water and made up for lost time. One morning front page stories announced to a startled nation that not one but two salvage expeditions were simultaneously after the fabulous treasure of the *Merida*, savagely battling each other for the privilege of mooring over the wreck and getting their divers down to fetch up the gold and the crown jewels.

Maximilian, of whom most Americans

had never heard, became a breakfast table topic, and the tragic fate of the *Empress Carlotta* was intertwined in the news with fierce radio accounts of severed anchor cables, slashed mooring lines, and threats of bloody reprisals as the rival salvage vessels desperately maneuvered for diving positions over the coveted treasure. Finally, after a week of turmoil, an armed Coast Guard cutter was sent out with orders to prevent bloodshed on the high seas.

In the face of this show of force, the two competitors decided to compose their differences and cooperate, leaving cynical salvage men to conclude that it was all a plant, that both vessels were under one control, and that the battle had been staged solely for publicity purposes, in which aim the promoters apparently succeeded beyond their wildest expectations.

What happened after that, so far as the treasure seekers were concerned, was shrouded in deep silence. Nothing was accomplished, nothing was recovered, in spite of their impressive metal armored diving rig which was to make the recovery of the *Merida's* treasure simple beyond words—so simple in fact, that that same summer, they assured their investors, they would also salvage the *Lusitania*, the *Egypt*, and then move on to spend the winter salvaging more treasure from Navarino Bay in the Mediterranean. Now once more did any of these treasure seekers burst into print over the *Merida*. Not long after, one of their diving ships came into Norfolk with its chief diver dying of "the bends," and the expedition folded up.

That left the *Merida* to rest in peace for a few years more—until 1938. At that time a hitherto unknown group of Italians decided to try their hand on her. Their departure from Spezia, Italy, in the *Falco*, a small steamer, was announced in late May against the usual rosy background of stories about the jewels and the gold, amounting now to some \$4,000,000.

Twelve days later they arrived at Norfolk, where once more the crown jewels and the Emperor Maximilian were paraded in the news. The *Falco* and her crew then sailed for the scene of the wreck, leaving the unfortunate impression that they were the Italian group which had successfully conducted the salvage of the *Egypt*—which most decidedly they had not. Since then a pall of silence has once more fallen on the *Merida*. It is known only that the salvagers returned to Italy with nothing at all of value recovered from her.



A competently directed salvage expedition would have a fair chance of blasting and cutting its way into the *Merida's* hull and recovering the silver there. More difficult salvage jobs than this have been successful. But in two hundred feet of water, on a heeled over wreck, the task is both difficult and dangerous.

Real divers and real salvage masters could do it, but a properly organized and fitted out expedition is expensive, and deep diving operations on a difficult wreck are always long drawn out and costly affairs.

For the known treasure, \$240,000 in silver, no competent American authority would recommend diving, as the cost of an expedition over two seasons might well exceed the value of the silver when recovered, and there is no guarantee of success even in two seasons' work.

So the *Merida* rests at the bottom of the sea. But in spite of reason, in spite of the well authenticated facts about her cargo, she is still surrounded by a halo of romance and loaded to the gunwales with non-existent gold and enormous rubies, the perfect symbol of the sunken treasure legend.

To put the final touch to the comic opera atmosphere surrounding the *Merida's* treasure, the crown jewels of Maximilian and Carlotta at last burst legitimately into the news in late 1938. A Mexican desirous of acquiring them, instead of wasting time and effort and the risk of "the bends" by diving for the *Merida*, took the much simpler and more sensible course of going where they were—to the National Museum at Mexico City, where for years they have been publicly exhibited.

What happened, as reported by the *New York Times*, follows:

Laredo, Texas, Oct. 4, 1938 (A.P.)
Theft of the crown jewels which once adorned the Empress Carlotta when Emperor Maximilian ruled Mexico was solved today by Federal officers.

Enrique Mazando Cordova, 23 years old, who was arrested today on a charge of smuggling, calmly admitted the theft of the crown jewels, and deliberately related how he engineered the daring plan. The jewels were stolen on Sept. 4 from the Mexican National Museum.

Cordova pleaded guilty to the smuggling charge before United States Commissioner Frank V. Hill and was held for the Federal grand jury in \$3,000 bond.

The prisoner said he entered the Mexican National Museum on Sept. 4 and concealed himself. He waited until the closing hour, and when the building was deserted, he said, he walked to the large show case where the jewels were kept, took them, and left by jumping from a balcony.

For thus directing attention to the facts in this matter, a vote of thanks is due Enrique Mazando Cordova from all future "investors" in salvage schemes on the *Merida*. As soon as the smuggled jewels have been restored to the Museum for exhibition, they might think it wise in part to follow his example, buy a ticket to Mexico City, examine at their leisure the crown jewels, and decide after that inspection whether they are valuable enough to warrant risking any money in diving operations to recover them from the wreck of the *Merida*.



R.M.S. *Lusitania* is another star of the first magnitude in salvage promotion literature. Unlike the *Merida*, the *Lusitania* has always been news in America,

from the days of her first voyage, when due to disgruntled stokers she failed to capture the blue ribbon of the Atlantic, through her second voyage, when she achieved the title of speed queen of the Atlantic, down to the fatal hour on May 7, 1915, when a torpedo from the U-20 sent her to the bottom. Naturally enough, with the *Lusitania* a household word both here and abroad, she qualifies perfectly as a treasure ship for gulling the public.

Before engaging divers to struggle in the 240 feet of water in which that Cunarder lies, let us analyze the prospects. Did the *Lusitania* have any recoverable treasure aboard?

Transatlantic liners do carry gold. Never in the history of the world have such huge gold shipments across the seas taken place as occurred early in the World War, and in the last few years, since Britain went off the gold standard. Financial unsettlement abroad and recent fears of war in Europe have sent cargoes of gold scurrying across the Atlantic in undreamed of quantities. During the month of September, 1938, from England alone the shipments amounted to \$370,000,000, and in the two months of September and October, 1938, a billion dollars in gold flowed into the United States from abroad, in cargoes that dwarfed into insignificance even the days when the loot of Peru and Mexico was flowing toward Spain. Simple shipments reached as high as \$50,000,000; cargoes from \$5,000,000 to \$25,000,000 were common; and even third class passenger ships, too slow ordinarily to obtain any of this profitable cargo, became modern argosies, laden with gold bullion running into millions.

It is well to note that during this vast movement, even with war brewing, there has been no attempt at concealment of commercial shipments. The amounts shipped each day and the vessels carrying the bullion were daily reported (as they have always been) in the press both in London and New York; the arrivals received similar attention.

And of course each shipment was insured. Not for over a hundred years in war or peace has any considerable com-

mercial shipment of bullion moved across the Atlantic without that protection.

Does anyone think that, should one of these treasure-laden ships be sunk, the slightest doubt would exist in the minds of the owners or of the underwriters as to what the ship was really carrying in the way of unusually valuable cargo? This knowledge, the first essential in any bona fide salvage attempt, is available for all modern wrecks. Yet in the case of practically every vessel which forms the object of the average salvage promoter of the present day, nothing authentic can be shown proving that the ship carried anything resembling treasure.

The reason, obviously enough, is that where a real loss has occurred, making salvage worth while, the underwriters always contract for salvage themselves, and are usually successful. It is only the worthless wreck that is left lying unclaimed, to be used as a bait for the unwary. The *Lusitania* is a case in point.

The *Lusitania*, sailing from New York for Liverpool near the end of the first year of the World War, had all eyes riveted on her by the cryptic warning to passengers published by the German Embassy before she left.

Before departure, as a result of this, she was carefully examined by the port and customs authorities in New York. She had not the slightest chance of concealing anything in her cargo, even had the owners or shippers so desired. She sailed carrying a distinguished passenger list of Americans, who, knowing they were sailing on an unarmed merchant ship, felt safe from enemy attack. But on May 7, 1915, she was the target of a German submarine and went down off the southeast coast of Ireland, carrying to their deaths 1198 persons, including 124 Americans.

While there had been nothing secret about the *Lusitania*, her cargo, or her movements up to the moment she disappeared beneath the waves, immediately thereafter she became enmeshed in a cloud of legends, with the easily obtainable facts deliberately obscured by a flood of propaganda intended to justify

her destruction. Nothing was too wild to be believed about the *Lusitania*—she was an armed ship, she was loaded with explosives, and naturally she was stuffed with gold.

The rumors that had to do with her character as an unarmed merchant vessel, prohibited from carrying explosives if she carried passengers, were matters of grave concern to the United States Government, intent on maintaining its neutrality and safeguarding its citizens. The rumors were proved to be wholly false; the *Lusitania* carried no explosives, she carried no guns. The instigator of at least one of the stories was convicted of perjury and sentenced to prison. But neither our government nor that of Great Britain has ever bothered to go to similar lengths in squelching the equally imaginative stories of the treasure on the *Lusitania*.



IN spite of the absurdity of such yarns, treasure hunting expeditions have been formed to salvage treasure from the *Lusitania's* hulk; these expeditions have tried to raise money from the public, both here and in England.

Here is a vessel which has been sunk hardly twenty years; a vessel which the owners, the underwriters, and the British Government all deny carried any appreciable amount of gold; a vessel whose position as she lies on the bottom is known within reasonable limits, and on which in two hundred and forty feet of water, salvage work could be done if it were warranted.

Yet not a stroke of salvage work has ever been attempted by the owners, the underwriters, or the British Government, thus proving that, in the opinion of those who are in the best position to know, there is nothing aboard worth salvaging. Still the *Lusitania* is usable bait for promoters with novel salvage gadgets and a well-founded faith in the ability of the public to swallow anything.

The *Lusitania*, when she sailed from New York, carried a cargo totaling \$735,000 in value, listed in considerable detail in her manifest, which was open to inspection. It is a curious list for in-

vestors in treasure-seeking schemes to ponder:

5470 boxes of unloaded brass	
cartridge cases (no powder)	\$200,000
Sheet brass	49,565
Copper (mostly wire)	53,000
Cheese	33,000
Furs	119,000
Silverware	7,000
Precious stones	13,350
Miscellaneous cargo	260,085
TOTAL	\$735,000

The salvage value of the furs and of the cheese needs no discussion. The ammunition cases, the sheet brass, and the copper wire, for twenty years submerged in salt water, would now, as junk, command only a trifling part of their original manufactured value; the miscellaneous cargo would not be worth hauling up. So the treasure of the *Lusitania* comes down to some \$20,350 in silverware and precious stones, plus what little impersonal effects might be obtained from the purser's safe. And the reasons why those financially involved, and who initially had to stand the losses, have never bothered with salvage on the *Lusitania* become immediately obvious.



EVEN if one wants to believe that the *Lusitania's* manifest was falsely sworn to, that then and now, the British Government for war reasons is trying to conceal the facts surrounding the sinking and has therefore discouraged salvage work—still, slight consideration of the circumstances will show the impossibility of any large amount of gold aboard.

For the flow of gold between England and America is governed by inexorable economic conditions which dictate the direction of its flow. When financial conditions cause gold movements in quantity, the shipments during that period are always in one direction.

During the early days of the World War, the flow of gold was eastward, as Britain and her citizens called home their credits in America, seriously dislocating international exchange and forcing gold shipments to London to balance the account. But as 1915 dawned, it became increasingly evident that the

British Empire was faced with a long war. American raw materials and such munitions as could be obtained were badly needed in England, and that nation started to purchase here on an increasingly vast scale.

Contrary to present popular belief, most of this material was actually paid for up to the time we entered the war ourselves, much of it by mobilizing American securities abroad and returning them to us in payment, some of it by payment in sterling bills of exchange. To keep the British pound sterling at a point where its purchasing value here was high became almost as important a matter to England as holding the Germans on the Western Front. And when necessary to bolster the value of sterling exchange, they shipped gold westward to New York.

The flow of gold to London had long since stopped before the summer of 1915, and the tide was setting strongly westward. Unfortunately for the treasure legends of the *Lusitania*, she was headed eastward when torpedoed. There was no gold in her.

But might not the *Lusitania* be herself salvaged, lifted to the surface for her value as a ship? After all, when she went down, she was the pride of the Atlantic. Why not have divers do that, as some amateur salvagers suggest?

Why not? In the first place, the *Lusitania* was a vessel of about 35,000 tons. She went down in the exposed sea some ten miles offshore, in a terribly damaged condition from torpedo explosion, and was unquestionably further damaged by impact with the sea floor. What does raising the ship herself now mean?

To raise her as a dead weight may be instantly dismissed. No surface lifting gear capable of dragging up 35,000 tons exists, nor if it did, could it safely work in the open sea. Could she be lifted by attaching to her a multitude of submersible pontoons? To one who has struggled with the diving job of lifting a 1200-ton submarine, the idea is thoroughly foolish. As for making the *Lusitania* lift herself by sealing up all openings in her hull and expelling the water with compressed air, as submarines are

sometimes lifted, this could only be done in the highly improbable case that she lies upside down on the ocean floor, so that she has made of herself a huge diving bell. Right side up or on her side, which is more probable, the countless hatches and smoke-stack openings to be sealed make it totally impracticable to hold compressed air in her hull.

Upside down, in sheltered waters around one hundred feet deep, some large ships have been raised that way, notably the German battleships which were scuttled by their crews at Scapa Flow and capsized in sinking because of their enormous top weights in turrets and guns. These ships, still upside down, were raised by British divers, a most notable salvage feat.

But the *Lusitania* is not in sheltered waters, she is beyond reasonable depth for long continued work by divers, and she is known to be so badly torn open by the explosion which sank her that, regardless of her position on the bottom, she cannot reasonably be sealed up.

Finally, while the lifting of the *Lusitania* is technically not wholly impossible, the cost would certainly exceed that of building a new and modern *Lusitania*, and to what end? The *Lusitania* has been only junk from the moment she sank. Even at the high junk price of \$10 per ton at the melting furnaces, the gross return for raising her as a ship would be only \$350,000, a sum which will not even start to cover the cost. To add the final touch needed to make any thought of lifting the *Lusitania* ridiculous, the *Mauvetania*, her sister ship, still in perfect running order and undamaged, was so poorly regarded by the Cunard Line as a ship that they sold her for junk several years ago and sent her on her last voyage to the shipbroker's yard.



BRIEFLY then, the *Lusitania* as a sunken treasure ship does not exist. There is no treasure in her, and there never was. As a ship, no diver who belongs outside a lunatic asylum would ever wet a suit endeavoring to lift her.

What are the stories in the press, over

the radio, about salvaging the *Lusitania* all about, then? Three years ago a world syndicated series of news articles detailed the lurid adventures of a British salvage ship seeking the *Lusitania*—stories which through a long summer kept English investors on edge for the harvest which was soon to be garnered from the deep—ridiculous stories, helping to set the stage for a similar financial raid on Americans.

What happened? In spite of all the yarns concerning the fabulous efficiency of the gadgets employed, nothing at all. But by a gratifying coincidence, on the last diving day of that season, the *Lusitania* was "found." But she might just as well have stayed lost, for the British public apparently had enough and has

so far refused to put up sufficient funds again to permit the salvagers to go back and retrieve the treasure. Perhaps America will do better in coming to their aid.

Is there any treasure on the *Lusitania*? There certainly is. But it seems to lie in the pockets of the public, and in selling to the press and to the radio lurid stories of the search. To paraphrase the old prospector's words,

"Thar's gold in them thar syndicated articles!"

But there is none in the *Lusitania*. And meanwhile real divers and salvage masters open their eyes in wonder, for the whole performance smacks of the late P. T. Barnum's circus stunts rather than of salvage.

MAN AGAINST PYTHON

C. E. L'Ami

IN the summer of 1895, Harry Niel was hunting in Barotseland, fifty miles north of Lialui. Coming in from a shoot one morning, the party killed a python, which the boys dragged into camp to skin. While they were doing this, a dispute broke out among them. One boy, a coal black M'Bunda nearly seven feet tall and with six fingers on each of his huge hands, said he could kill these snakes with his bare hands. The others called him a liar and a braggart, and demanded a test, to which he agreed.

After lunch the big boy, whose name was M'Bassi, dragged the carcass of the skinned python out from camp to an open place where there were no trees, bushes, or rocks within fifty yards. When he had thrown it down, he searched carefully in the short grass. Then he came back to camp and brought out a gourd of some oily stuff, with which he greased himself all over, singing a low chant as he worked.

An hour later the whole camp, greatly excited, assembled at the place of combat. The male python had come to look for the dead one, and was lying in the grass beside it. M'Bassi circled till he got the sun behind him, then leaped like a panther and gripped the snake with

both hands just behind the head. His right hand then shifted to a point four feet down the trunk, and he swung upright, holding the snake high above his head.

For nearly half an hour he held the hundred and twenty pound reptile thus, while the big coils, with scales on them like hackles, lashed about him and made red weals on his sides. Once he swayed, and the watchers thought he was done, but he held on, and at last the snake's movements began to slow, the pressure on its neck numbing it. Then, with a lightning move, he brought his right hand up to the left and swung the head down beside his knee, where, after a moment's desperate struggle, he broke the snake's neck.

Later in camp, when Niel asked him how he held a snake that could crush oxen in its coils, M'Bassi replied that the python could only coil around a victim when going headfirst, and unless its tail could anchor about a tree or rock or the leg of the victim, it could not contract its coils. He had seen that there were no trees or rocks nearby, and had held the snake high over his head so that it could not catch his ankles. The oil on his body made the coils slide off, and made the whiplash blows less severe.