

To Search The Melancholy Wreck of the "Lusitania"

Divers Will Hunt Through the Silent State-Rooms, Will Open the Purser's Safe and Examine the Baggage and Mail

PROSPECTS for the speedy recovery of at least a large part of the wealth which has lain at the bottom of the Irish Sea since that ill-fated afternoon in May, 1915, when torpedoes from a German submarine sank the giant Cunard liner Lusitania, are most encouraging.

For some weeks past expert divers have been prospecting the position of the sunken steamship, and their report is so favorable that it is planned to undertake at once the recovery of the valuable cargo, the passengers' baggage, the bodies of scores of victims who went down with the ship and all the rich treasure that is locked in the purser's strong rooms. Very soon now the news may be expected that men are actually hunting through the silent staterooms, opening the purser's safes and examining the huge heaps of water-soaked baggage and mail.

For the present at least no attempt will be made to raise the vessel itself. As to whether this is possible experts are not as yet agreed. Some maintain that the Lusitania can never be brought to the surface owing to the great depth of water in which she is resting. If, however, the efforts to salvage the steamer's contents are as successful as is now anticipated, it is probable that an attempt to raise the boat itself will be made before the close of the present year.

Although the Lusitania carried only a comparatively small cargo of freight, it carried so many valuables in the shape of personal property of its passengers that its shattered hull undoubtedly contains one of the richest heaps of treasure to be found in the ocean's depths.

As everybody remembers, the Lusitania had an unusually large passenger list on the voyage that ended in its destruction. Included in the list were Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt and more than forty other men and women whose fortunes were rated in the millions of dollars.

Owing to the exigencies of the war, many of these, as well as many of the other passengers, carried with them large quantities of valuables which they would otherwise have entrusted to the mails or express.

Mme. Antoine Depage, for example, wife of the medical director of the Belgian Red Cross, and one of the victims of the disaster, was making the trip to Europe to carry to her native land \$100,000 in gold which she and her husband had helped raise in this country for relief work. This little fortune, with other valuables which filled the purser's strong rooms to overflowing, went to the bottom when the German torpedoes tore gaping holes in the liner's sides.

Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, another victim, is said to have entrusted to the purser's care when the voyage began, money, jewelry and securities worth in the vicinity of \$75,000. Charles Frohman, the theatrical manager; Elbert Hubbard, the famous writer, and Charles Frederick Fowles, the millionaire New York art dealer, are some of the numerous others who had entrusted to the ship's strong rooms quantities of property too valuable to be kept in their staterooms or carried about on their persons.

From all this it can be seen that the purser's strong rooms alone furnish a rich prize for the divers who are soon to brave the gruesome interior of the sunken liner. It has been said that their contents are worth \$1,000,000, and to those who know the distinguished character of the ship's passenger list this seems like a conservative estimate.

But this is not all. There are the trunks and traveling bags of the passengers—

thousands of them—and many of them filled with the most expensive clothing and jewelry. Besides all this, there is the small but rich cargo of express freight which the Lusitania carried—a cargo which was appraised at the time the liner sailed at \$750,000.

Included in this cargo were many things which cannot have been harmed in the least by their years of immersion in the dark depths of the Irish Sea. There were precious stones valued at \$160,000, a great fortune in gold and copper metal, \$50,000 worth of sheet brass, and a variety of other goods that are worth just as much or more to-day than they were when they left New York.

The Lusitania had not been beneath the waves many hours before plans were under way for raising her precious cargo and, if possible, the ship itself. But, of course, no active move could be made while the war was on and the waters off the Irish coast where the liner lies still infested with submarines.

As early as 1916—less than a year after the Lusitania's sinking—one English firm had collected the most complete data as to the position and probable condition of the sunken liner, including the depth of water in which she lies, its temperature, the currents and other conditions prevailing in that vicinity. It is this same firm which since the close of the war has begun active operations. Its divers are now at work in the waters off the Old Head of Kinsale, where the Lusitania went down, and within a few weeks they expect to be bringing portions of the ship's treasure to the surface.

The Lusitania lies 240 feet below the surface at an accurately charted point eight miles off the Irish coast. A few years ago such a depth would have rendered salvage work practically unthinkable, but modern improvement in diving apparatus makes it possible for divers to work at that and even at greater depths for considerable periods of time at a stretch.

This was demonstrated by the raising of the United States submarine F-1, which sank outside Honolulu harbor on March 25, 1915, and was refloated and towed into the harbor five months later. She lay on a slope of the ocean bed, her bow 238 feet below the surface and her stern 306 feet. Yet divers worked in fair comfort and without greater risk than usual at these depths and thereby established a new world's record.

When the work of locating and salvaging the Lusitania was first begun it was thought that the low temperatures of the water in which she lies would be a serious handicap. This, however, proved

not to be the case, as the Gulf Stream which sweeps the Irish coast at this point goes a long way toward relieving the low temperature that would otherwise make the work of the divers difficult.

The task is made still easier by the Lusitania's great size. The 240-foot depth at which she lies is the ocean bottom, and proper allowance is to be made for the fact that she is resting in a nearly upright position. As the ship is nearly eighty feet high this reduces considerably the depth at which it is necessary for the divers to work.

This upright position also lessens the difficulty of retrieving the contents of the strong rooms which are near the purser's office on one of the upper decks. It will be still easier to recover the personal belongings of Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt and other wealthy passengers, as the cabins they occupied are located still higher up on the promenade deck.

The holds in which the passengers' baggage

rest are on a level with the lower deck, which is above the vessel's water line and thirty-one feet above her keel. Just below these are the cargo holds containing hundreds of tons of valuable goods that have undoubtedly not suffered in the slightest from their long stay under water.

In their efforts to recover the Lusitania's treasure and perhaps the ship itself, it is very probable that the English firm which has undertaken the task will have to call to its aid the invention of an American—Simon Lake, inventor of the type of submarine that bears his name. Shortly after the sinking of the Lusitania, Mr. Lake devised an apparatus designed especially for the recovery of the valuable cargo of this and other ships sent to the bottom by German submarines. He calls it a "semi-submersible tube."

This unique device consists of a steel tube five feet in diameter and long enough to reach from a ship on the surface to a wreck several hundred feet below. The

The Plunge of the Lusitania Beneath the Waters of the Atlantic.

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Inside of the tube is fitted with a staircase, up and down which the divers climb, and it also carries telephone lines, electric light wires and air pipes.

At the lower end the tube enlarges into a good sized working chamber, in which the divers make their preliminary investigation of a wreck and to which they return for safety in case of any emergency. This chamber is equipped with motors, powerful searchlights, apparatus for controlling air pressure, and, most important of all, a new and ingenious lens arrangement which Mr. Lake has christened the "aquascope." The latter is really a submarine spy glass which enables the operator to look for considerable distances through the dark ocean depths and locate the wreck or whatever else it is for which he is searching.

"The operator descends into the chamber by means of a stairway built into the tube," says Mr. Lake in describing his invention, "and, after passing through the airlock, goes into the working chamber. He then looks through the aquascope, while the steamer slowly navigates around."

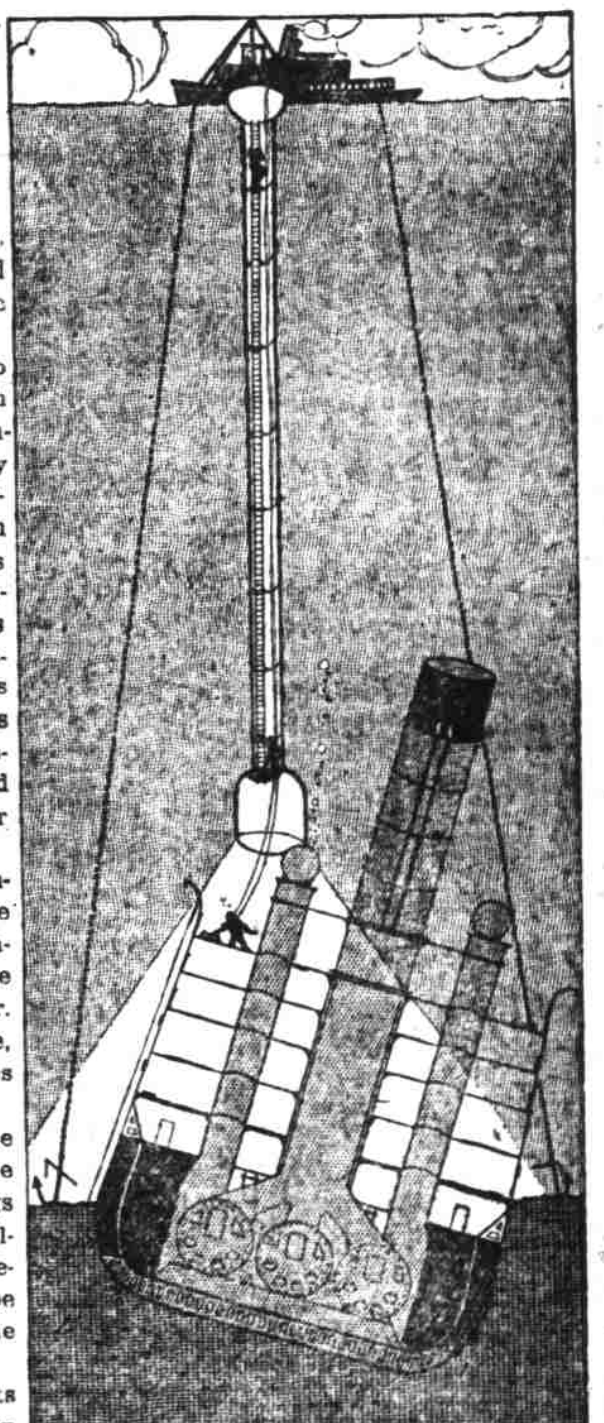
"As soon as the wreck is located the operator telephones to the captain of the wrecking steamer, and the latter brings his vessel to a stop over the wreck, following the maneuvering directions telephoned to him by the operator. The tube is then lowered onto the deck of the wrecked vessel."

"The working chamber has a door on its under side. The air inside is equal in pressure to that of the water outside, and, as the doors open downward, it is impossible for the water to get into the tube."

"When the doors are open the operator, equipped with a diver's outfit, can step on to the deck of the wreck and immediately begin work on recovering the cargo or other things of value. The recovered articles are placed in slings or on hooks and then hoisted to the surface by the derricks on the wrecking steamer."

"The operator carries with him a special type of portable electric light which enables him to see his way clearly about the sunken vessel. Crossed lines or cut lines are a constant danger to ordinary divers, but they have no qualms for our operator, because in case of trouble all he has to do is to walk back to the operating chamber."

"According to reports at the time of her sinking, the Lusitania is resting in forty fathoms of water—240 feet. If this depth is correct it would be an easy matter to recover the bodies imprisoned beneath her decks as well as her cargo."



Mr. Simon Lake's Proposed Scheme for Working at Great Depths.

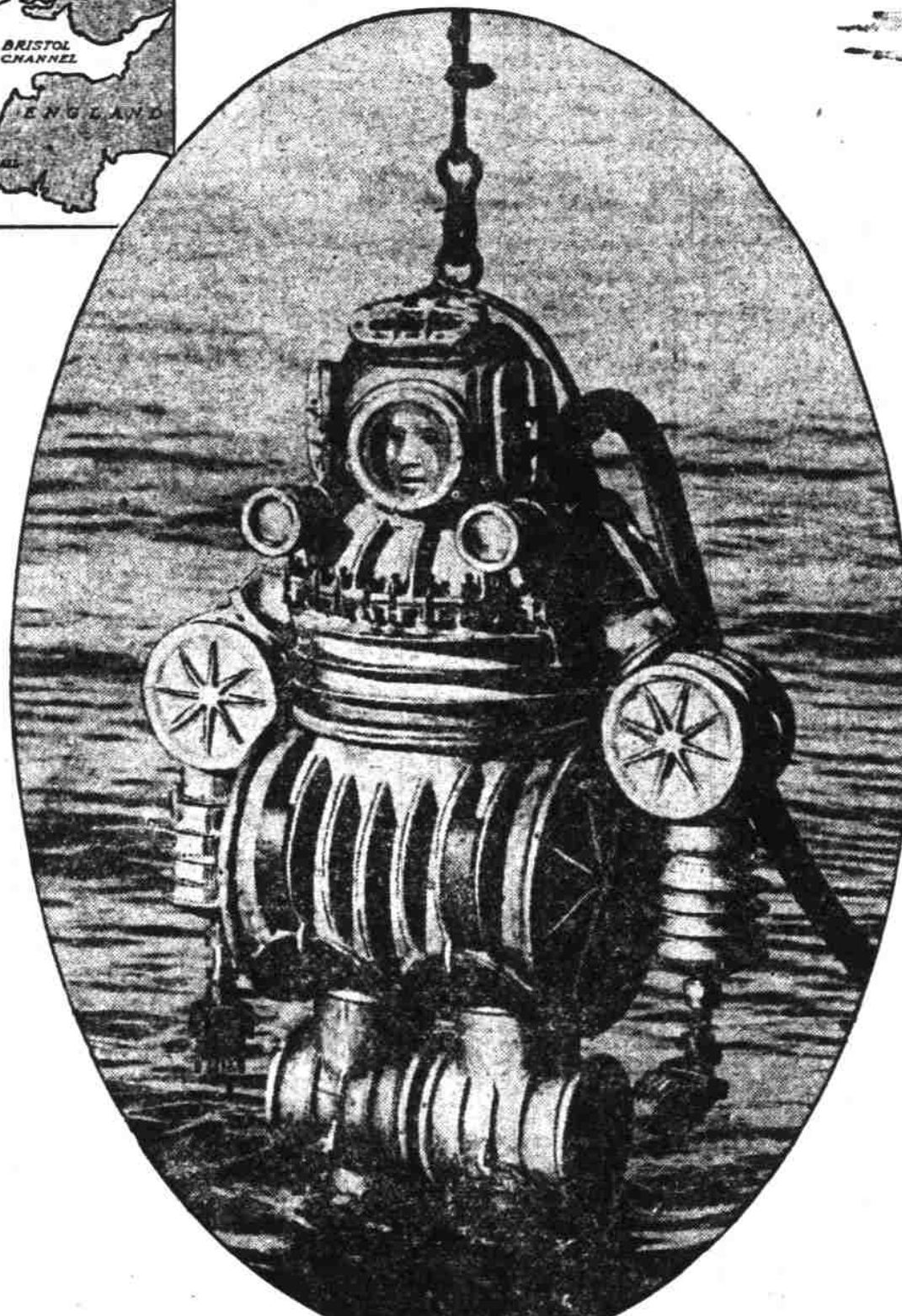
From a vessel securely anchored directly above the wreck a five-foot steel tube is lowered. From an airlock at the bottom of the tube the divers go forth to their work and return for rest and supplies.

This diagram roughly shows how Mr. Lake's invention might be applied to the wreck of the Lusitania.

mg steamer devised by Mr. Lake for use with his tube is so arranged that the tube can be used in a heavy sea.

If the divers now at work off the Irish coast succeed in salvaging any considerable portion of the Lusitania's contents, they will undoubtedly make a determined effort to raise the ship itself. That would indeed be a prize worth winning.

When the Lusitania sailed out of New York harbor on her way to doom she was valued at between \$7,000,000 and \$8,000,000. With the present high prices of metals the wreck as junk alone is worth a fortune. And there is always the possibility that the damage done by the torpedoes can be easily repaired and the ship fitted to sail the seas again.



A Diving Suit Specially Devised to Withstand Pressure of the Water at Great Depths.