SEA SLUG STORIES

Thrilling Tales of U Boat Hunting, Told by an American Boy Who Served For Months With the British Patrol and Who Did the Thrilling and Perflous Work That Is Now Being Done by Hundreds of Other American Boys.

No. 3 A Motor Launch Raid on the Belgian Coast

A SEA SLUG,

British Service Name For Crews of Submarine Chasers. Copyright, 1917, by the Bell Syn-

PROLOGUE.

The author of this series of four articles is a young American, who has spent most of his time since the war started with the British patrol fleet, taking an important part in helping to organize that branch of the service known as

He has accumulated a remarkable collection of anecdotes incident to this exciting branch of the service, and many of these were personal adventures in which he took part and which make one of the stirring narratives to come out of the war. He recently returned to the United States to assist the American navy in organizing the same branch of the service and should be of great value because of his experience abroad. So far as known, he is the only American to serve with the British patrol prior to the advent of the United States destroyer flotilla in British waters. Of course some of his experiences. of military value to the enemy, cannot be related. At the request of the service publication of his name is withheld.

TT is better that I do not mention the I name of the Sca Slug who conceived the idea of a motor launch raid on the coast of Belgium-that part | Just before we ran into the mine fields of the coast held by Germany, bordered by a maze of mines, girt by a moving belt of gunboats and patrol and then began the real work of the craft and freckled with a series of expedition. land batteries which make the experts |

say it would be mathematically impossible to smash into the naval bases from the sea side.

The British government prefers to keep his name secret for the present, so it would not be policy for me to divulge it. When he put the idea up to the commander of the base he said

"I don't want to lose more than six boats. If you can get six crews to volunteer for the service go ahead. I won't order anybody on a raid like

Six times six crews volunteered, but only six were allowed to go. We chug-chugged out of Dover just before sundown, every man with a lifebelt strapped under his shoulders, petrol tanks filled to the last drop, ammunition in every available space and every motor thoroughly inspected down to

We were thinking only of what a time we were going to give the Boches. The boys that wigwagged "Goodby" to us believed they had seen us for the last time, but wished they were with us just the same. Straight for a certain selected spot on the Belgian coast we laid our course, and when night fell we couldn't even see our own point of light showing on any of the craft. Every one wore dark uniforms, and every once in awhile when we'd crowd on a little more speed there would suddenly loom up right ahead the dark hull of the boat we were following and we'd almost be aboard her. The men at the wheels had to have

their nerve with them. Over the Mine Fields.

The chap who had proposed the raid -we might as well call him Jones, which is not his name-had figured out the tide conditions to a nicety, and on this particular night we were having the fullest high water of the autumn. we passed a British monitor, about which I will have more to say later.

As every one knows, some mines are

et so that they rise and fall with the ide and remain glways a certain distance below the surface of the water. and if we didn't hit one of these it would be merely a matter of luck. There were thousands of mines all around us, and there was no earthly way of telling where any of them

As for the mines which are anchored always the same distance above the bottom of the sea, we were counting on the extra high tide to take us over these. At least Jones had figured that

There is no moon. We dash along full speed ahead, for we must run in, accomplish our task and run out again before that tide ebbs enough to make it next to impossible for even our



There is No Moon. We Dash Along Full Speed Ahead.

light draft craft to escape lecause of the anchored mines coming to the sur-

The men in each crew have been carefully selected. They are all in the best physical condition, good swimmers, and the Brass Hats (officers) have even made certain that none of them has a cold. A sneeze or a cough might betray us. Despite this, the boats. There wasn't so much as a pin damp, chilly night air makes one of the men in our boat sheeze suddenly. It sounds to us like the crash of a mine. I don't see why it didn't take the top of the Allow's head off. Our finely made motors, of course, were muffled until you could not distinguish their purr ten feet away.

"A thousand yards or so and we'll be vs the Brass Hat in our boat. He has it figured down pretty fine. Now we are skimming over a bar, where a heavier boat could not go.

Discover Enemy Destroyers.

We strain our eyes ahead to catch the white gleam of the wake of our leading craft and stare behind to make out the white bow wave of the one following us. It is the only way we can keep ourselves in line.

Presently I pick up out of the black ness of the night a patch of something that is even blacker. A ripple runs down my spine. The great moment has arrived. This is not like chasing a submarine which is trying to hide and which you can almost run circles around. It is more like six mosquitoes tackling a band of giants. If ever ed to fight. they can hit us a slap we will be crushed to jelly.

night glasses, then hands them to me. "Destroyer!" he says.

The term is well applied, and I realize for the first time what destructive power one of these slick sea fighters day. has. She is running without lights.

We wonder in whispers whether the other craft have sighted her. There is no way for us to signal them. The man standing at the wheel throws her over a little to starboard, following into the source of the light. It seems the white wake of the boat ahead

"They see her," says the Brass Hat next. "They're circling in."

A glance astern shows us that our followers have observed the change in our course. I do not know how far we are from that destroyer. In the dark she looms so big that it seems we must be going to graze her.

There is a lurid stab of red in the darkness shead-a designing roar-the smell of battle is in our nostrils. The leader's three incher has barked. Ours barks at almost the same time. Ours has bitten, for we can see the flash of the explosion as the shell falls on board the destroyer. That is better luck than we had looked for.

The Searchlights Scour the Sea.

The finshes have shown us other craft-destroyers, patrol boats and now. We walt just long enough be- night before, and the Brass Hat, in tween shots to make it hard for the

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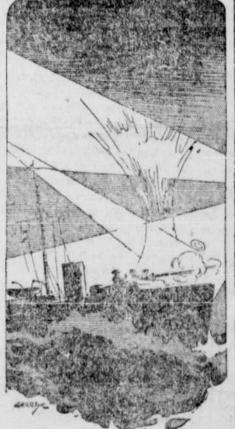
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the guns. Our engines, with the muf- count. flers open to give us all possible speed, are rearing almost as loudly as the in evidence during the first years of

haven't fired on us yet. Searchlights made in America, and most of the are darting everywhere across the water and in the sky. Their one object is to find and destroy us, but they cannot figure out what to look for. They of course think we have come in from whence we fired our first shots. They don't expect craft of our size to attempt such a daring raid.

How much damage we have done we do not know, but we cease firing



The Gunner Fires Into the Source of the Light.

and double back, waiting until we are out of the zone from which we start-

I do not suppose any of the Huns ever thought of the little motor launch-I point out the black patch to the es. They seem jumpy in their nerves, Brass Hat. He strains through his judging by the way they handle the searchlights. Probably they think some new engine of warfare is attacking them, like the tanks which so surprised them in the trenches one fine

Umph! Suddenly I am blinded, I think for a hundredth of a second that I am shot, and my head is splitting. It is a searchlight, the rays full and square in my eyes. The gunner fires to be coming from a gunboat. If he hits her he will be lucky, for it is impossible for us to see anything.

We can hear the "woomph-woomph" of shells dropping into the water around us. We have made up our minds that it is all over, but two of the other boats, not being blinded by the searchlights, turn their fire on our tormentor. If the Germans hold on us we are gone, but they seem to be in a frenzy, and while they sweep round, trying to pick up the other craft, we change our course, and they do not seem able to find us again. They fire on every stick of driftage and spar that darkens the surface of the Illuminated water.

Out Over the Dangers of the Mines.

When the rising sun began to streak the sky we were safe. Way on to port lay the monitor we had passed the command of the expedition, signaled

Germans to locate us from the flash of us to run over to her and take ac-

The monitor was one of a type much the war, mounting heavy guns forward The Boches must be confused. They in an armored turret. The guns were monitors were named after American generals.

They were used on work that took them constantly into the mine fields. and for that reason they must bave through the channel, and their power- special protection against mines and ful rays sweep the entrance to the torpedoes. Just how this is accomharbor and the waters just inside, plished I do not feel at liberty to tell, while others play over the surface but because of it an amusing incident occurred. The first motor launch was running at rather low speed in toward the monitor, so as to come alongside. All of a sudden we saw her sort of climb out of the water, bow first, heel over and lie there as though she had

> A couple of "matlees" (sailors) on the deck of the monitor began swearing at the crew, and every man in the M. L. was thrown off his feet by the shock which stopped the boat. The swearing was not confined to the monltor's men. The M. L. had run high and dry on to the shelf which forms a part of the more or less intricate protection against torpedoes and mines that modern monitors carry. They had to use a crane to get her off.

> Well, we had roll call and found only one man slightly hurt. A bit of shell had struck him in the shoulder. A plece the size of a man's palm was imbedded in the side of one of the M. L.'s. We had got off mighty lucky.

> I might say here that later six other boats made the experiment again, and only one got back to England, so it isn't such a soft assignment. In that single craft were all the men from the five launches who had survived the hell they ran into. And there was plenty of room, for those who had been lost were many.

> Under orders the survivors of that raid refrained from telling what actually happened, but in general it is true that the Germans must have realized what occurred on the first expedition, and they were ready. The element of surprise, which saved us all from going to kingdom come, was ab-

> The officer in command of the one which was not destroyed cruised around in the glare of the searchlights until he had gathered in every living thing that still struggled in the watera man's job in that searching glare of light and hail of shells.

The Hero.

"The sky was red over his head," said one of the men he picked up, "because of the vast number of illuminating bombs and rockets the Huns were using, besides the searchlights and the shells that were bursting. There was light enough to take a moving picture of the scene.

"Any human being would have run, but that chap's a devil or a god. He shouted orders to his men as though he were at maneuvers and fished us out of the water with a boat hook as coolly as if he were merely picking up a buoy and couldn't understand what all the racket was about.

"After he got me on board I saw him fall with the blood spurting from his leg. He grabbed a bit of rope, made a tourniquet bimself, using the barrel of his revolver to twist it tight, and directed the work until he had all of us on hoard.

"How we ever penetrated that barrier of fire and lead and steel I don't. know, but we came through and limped into port under our own power.'

As I say, I was not on this expedition, and what few details other than these I heard I am not at liberty to

Continued on last page.

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