

Arthur Conan Doyle (1914)
Danger! and Other Stories, Strand
Magazine July 1914

DANGER! **AND OTHER STORIES**

BY ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

AUTHOR OF
"THE WHITE COMPANY," "SIR NIGEL"
"RODNEY STONE," ETC.

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It is an amazing thing that the English, who have the reputation of being a practical nation, never saw the danger to which they were exposed. For many years they had been spending nearly a hundred millions a year upon their army and their fleet. Squadrons of Dread-noughts costing two millions each had been launched. They had spent enormous sums upon cruisers, and both their torpedo and their sub- marine squadrons were exceptionally strong. They were also by no means weak in their aerial power, especially in the matter of hydroplanes. Besides all this, their army was very efficient, in spite of its limited numbers, and it was the most expensive in Europe. Yet when the day of trial came, all this imposing force was of no use whatever, and might as well have not existed. Their ruin could not have been more complete or more rapid if they had not possessed an ironclad or a regiment. And all this was accomplished by me, Captain John Sirius, belonging to the navy of one of the smallest Powers in Europe, and having under my command a flotilla of eight vessels, the collective cost of which was eighteen hundred thousand pounds. No one has a better right to tell the story than I. [Chapter 1]

BBC News Magazine <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-28954510>

A century ago Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote a short story about the threat of starvation in Britain - caused by enemy submarines - and the need for a Channel Tunnel. Was his bleak vision justified? He's best remembered for Sherlock Holmes, but 100 years ago Sir Arthur Conan Doyle published a very different kind of story. "Danger! Being the log of Captain John Sirius" appeared in the July 1914 issue of The Strand magazine. It envisaged Britain being starved into submission by eight enemy submarines. The underwater menace came from the fictional country of Norland but was a thinly veiled reference to Germany's naval power.

Description: (Wikipedia)

Danger! And Other Stories (1918) was a collection of short stories published by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

The collection's title story, "Danger!", was written eighteen months before the outbreak of World War I. First published in the Strand Magazine in July 1914,[1] it was based on an imaginary country in Europe fighting - and defeating - Britain and intended to direct public attention to the great danger (submarines) which threatened the country. The story describes how Britain is in need of getting up to date in its naval preparations. A small country in Europe (Norland) has been fighting England, and is now invaded by an English army. However the small country has a naval flotilla of submarines under Captain John Sirius. Sirius uses his submarines to lay a naval blockade around the British Isles, so that no supplies can be landed. The result is that the British start suffering famine. However some of the submarines are sunk. The British are congratulating themselves, when Sirius, waiting outside of Liverpool, purposely torpedoes a large White Star liner. The British end up surrendering.

The story correctly anticipated the U-boat strategy which would be used by Germany in both World Wars - i.e. to target ships bringing the foodstuffs which Britain was not able provide on its own soil. As would be confirmed by the events, the story forecast that for

this strategy to be effective, the attackers would need to also target American ships bringing supplies to Britain – even at the price of violating International Law – and that the British would be forced to introduce rationing among their population.[citation needed]

*At the time there were plenty of popular writings about England facing Germany in an upcoming war. The best remembered are *The Riddle of the Sands* by Erskine Childers, and *When William Came* by “Saki”. Doyle’s story is another example of this genre of invasion literature. Ironically, its conclusion was to mirror the fate of the Cunard liner *Lusitania* two years later.*

Doyle uses a particular stylistic technique to evoke emotion in British readers, making them more receptive to the writer’s warnings: the first person narration by the victorious enemy commander, full of gloating and condescension towards the “stupid” Britons. Norland is depicted as a North European country, with a shore on the North Sea. It seems to be linguistically Germanic – “Norrland” and “Nordland” are respectively the names of a region in Sweden and a country in Norway, and Norland’s main port is Blankenberg, the name of several actual German cities. It is, however, not Germany, which is mentioned as neutral in the war, though Germans are rather sympathetic to Norland’s cause. Norland has a colonial empire, and a border dispute with a British colony, exacerbated by the death of two missionaries, is the direct cause of the war. Norland is a monarchy where the Monarch seems to retain actual executive power; the crucial policy meeting in which it is resolved to defy a British ultimatum and embark on submarine warfare is attended by the King, the Foreign Secretary, an Admiral and Captain Sirius of the submarines – with a Prime Minister being conspicuously absent.

WHAT NAVAL EXPERTS THINK. (From *The Strand Magazine*)

Proofs of this striking piece of fiction submitted to a number of naval experts, who were invited to state their view on the points raised in the story. As a result we are able to give the opinions of several well-known admirals, as well as a number of writers recognised as authorities on naval subjects with notes by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

ADMIRAL LORD CHARLES BERESFORD.

We have done something to meet the dangers to our food supplies by arming some of our merchantmen, but we shall never be really secure until we have installed granaries in the country.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s story will bring this important question well to the front.

Mr. FRANK T. BULLEN, the well-known the writer of sea stories.

You ask me if this could come true. I should say certainly yes—not only could it, but it is eminently probable.

ADMIRAL SIR ALGERNON DE HORSEY. KC.B.

This story contains a very interesting but, as most would say, fantastic account of an imaginary war which, however improbable the result may appear, is deserving of close examination.

I have never wavered in my opinion that a sufficient land force and provision for maintaining a supply of food in war are absolutely necessary, and that, if these requirements are not provided, our existence as a nation remains at stake. Lord Haldane, when Secretary of State for War, stated that “ All the foreigner had got to do was to cut off our food supply.” Our position was rightly compared, by the late Sir John Colomb in Parliament, to that of “ An unvictualled ocean citadel.”

In writing to the Press have ever claimed the absolute importance of food supply, and I have repeatedly suggested one of the three following courses

- (1.) The establishment of granaries to maintain always a three months’ supply of grain.
- (2.) The encouragement of farmers always to keep their harvest in rick for one year.
- (3.) To induce at least double the present area of wheat cultivation by a tax on foreign supplies.

Failing provision of food for our people, we continue to run a deadly risk of ceasing to exist as an Empire and the loss of all our Colonies.

ADMIRAL SIR COMPTON DOMVILE. KC.B.

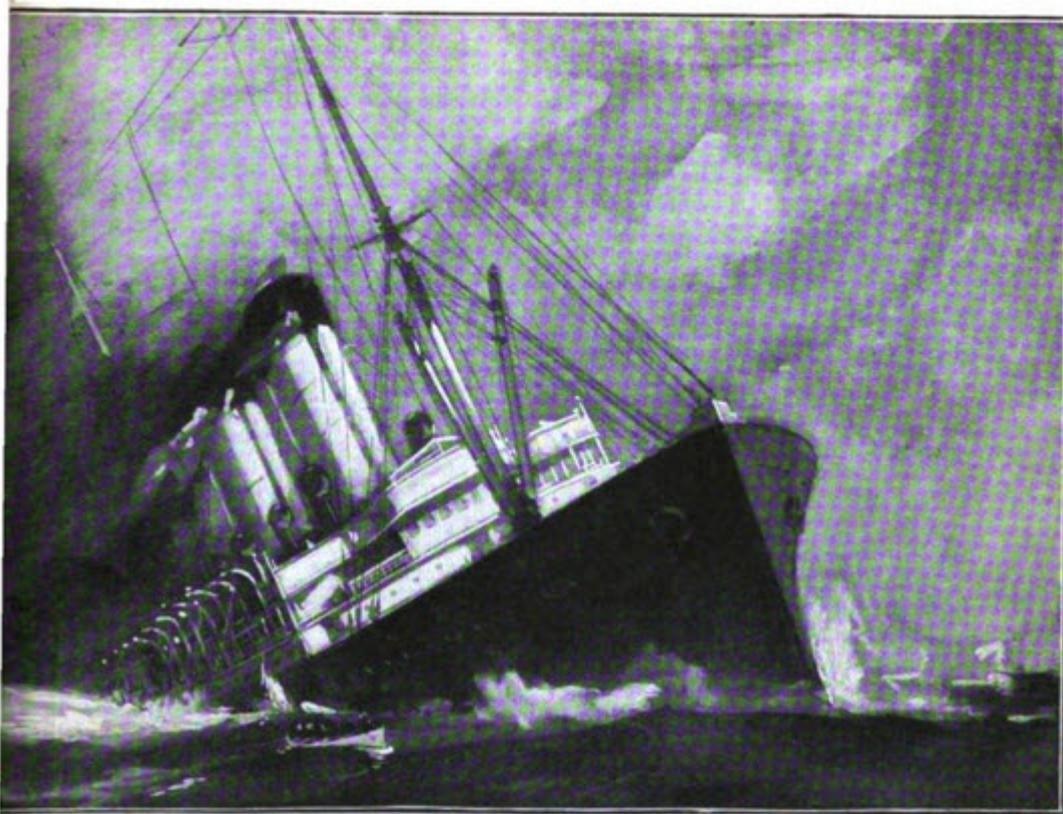
Having read with much interest Sir A. Conan Doyle’s story, I am compelled to say that I think it most improbable, and more like one of Jules Verne’s stories than any other author I know—that a submarine could keep the sea alone for that length of time without replenishing the oil fuel and other necessaries which are usually carried in a depot ship, whose presence would make these depredations impossible. Another point is that if we were engaged in a war with one of the Eastern Powers, the Thames would not be used for receiving supplies.

Ships from the west would probably use Milford Haven, a fortified port with narrow entrance, strong tides, and dangerous rocks at the entrance which would make submarine work more difficult ; and ships from the south would probably use

Plymouth. As to keeping the railroad open through France and a tunnel, in order to feed the country, this would probably involve France in war. I have no doubt a tunnel could be more easily destroyed than the number of food-ships described in this story.

Submarines have no doubt been much improved in recent years, and their radius of action much greater than formerly, as was proved in the recent manoeuvres, but I am afraid they are not yet capable of the wonderful performances described in this article.*

* [The story deals with the submarine of the immediate future.—A. C. D.]



DANGER!
Being the Log of
Captain John Sirius
By **A. CONAN DOYLE**
Illustrated by E. S. Hodgson



"THE SHIP LAY WITHIN TWO HUNDRED YARDS OF US, AND IT WAS EASY TO SEE THAT SHE HAD HER DEATH-BLOW."





“IT'S AN AMERICAN SHIP, YOU BLIND BEETLE!
HE CRIED. 'CAN'T YOU SEE THE FLAG? IT'S
THE "VERMONDIA," OF BOSTON.'”



"SHE DROVE BOWS FOREMOST, AND THERE WAS A TERRIFIC EXPLOSION, WHICH SENT ONE OF THE FUNNELS INTO THE AIR."

Other posts of possible interest:

Wood, W. (1905) Submarined

Jane, F.T. (1895), Blake of the "Rattlesake"

Burton, F. G. (1896), The Naval Engineer And The Command Of The Sea

Eastwick, J. (1895) The New Centurion

Arnold-Forster, H.O. (1888) In a Conning Tower