

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1919.

MY AND I

JULES VERNE FORESAW DEADLINESS OF "SUB"

Jules Verne, man of vision, and author, described the Nautilus, the famous submarine of his fiction thriller, "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea." He disclaimed credit for the invention of the submarine, and as to their future, as late as 1903, he said the submarine could never be a commercial success. He doubted there would be submarines capable of carrying passengers from Europe to New York, but did prophesy that the submarine as a war vessel would be deadly and would "prove the thin end of the broadest wedge which will cause war to cease between the nations, owing to their very deadliness. Unfortunately, their work will not be done in my time. I am a man of peace and should have loved to see it."

Peace Writer's Belief

However, submarines have been built to carry passengers and cargoes across the Atlantic. They have proven deadly in warfare, and maybe will be proven the "thin edge" to prevent war. He did not live to see the children of the Nautilus do their deadly dastardly work as directed by the Huns of Berlin. Jules Verne's views in 1903 were as follows:

For some inexplicable reason, many people insist upon regarding me as the inventor, or the maker, of the submarine, and that, no doubt, is the reason of the flattering request made to me to give my views upon its future.

I find the task no easy one. To be given with I am not in any way what the inventor of submarine navigation, and reference to the authorities will show that many years—fully 50, I may should say, before I wrote about the Nautilus—the Italians were at work upon submarine war vessels, and other nations were busied with them, too. All that I did was to avail myself of the great privileges of the fiction writer, springs over every scientific difficulty with fancy's seven-league boots and create on paper what others were planning out in steel and other metals.

The future of the submarine as I regard it—and let me here disclaim all gift of prophecy—is to be wholly a war future. The Nautilus, as I have written of it, will never be, I think, an actual fact, and I do not think that undersea ships will be built in future years to carry traffic across the ocean to America and Australia. Even if the air difficulty were successfully overcome (and I have my grave doubts as to the possibility of that) what would be gained by my such with ocean traffic, except freedom from sea sickness? No submarine would ever cross the bed of the Atlantic faster than a ship upon the waves would traverse it, and surely freedom from that bugbear need do me but a not sufficient incentive for the creation of a Cunard line beneath the sea.

No Commercial Future

As well as my deficient oversight will allow me, upon my 1903 volume of boys' stories, and as I look back on the years which have passed since I first wrote the life story of the Nautilus, and of its owner, I see no progress in the submarine which makes me hope for its use as a commercial medium. It has been wonderfully improved, I grant you—miraculously improved at most—but the improvements have all tended to one point—its efficacy as a war weapon; and that will be its one use in the future, I believe. I even think that in the distant future the submarine may be the cause of bringing battle to a stoppage altogether, for fleets will become useless, and as other war material continues to improve war will become impossible.

As time goes on each nation will no longer have a large and very rapid fleet of submarines. Each little vessel, if I am inclined to think that in the future they will be smaller than they are to day, and manned by one or two men only) will be absolutely in control, and will be able with scientific accuracy to place torpedoes underneath the greatest vessels, and to blow those vessels up. I do not think that any apparatus will be found to construct the intense rapidity and certainty of the submarine, and eventually when every nation has its fleet of hundreds of these little vessels, what is to war with them? They may be able even to blow up huge tracts of country and retreat unseen, some day, who knows?

Of course, before these things can be improvements in the submarine will have to be manifold and almost wonderfully ingenious as the exigencies of this greatest wonder of modern science, but these things will, I think, be possible.

I followed very carefully the reports which were made lately during the Spanish maneuvers in the Mediterranean, and during the maneuvers of the English fleet, and I was very much struck by the accuracy with which the submarines of both fleets managed to slip in, within a few miles of the coast, and get away in safety.

Submarine War Vessels

Imagine hundreds of these vessels with their deadly freight. Can you suggest that any means could counteract their deadly power? I do not think so. The refraction of the water, the depths to which the submarines can go, all these things make it the deadliest of war inventions, and in future years, when I myself am under ground, the powers will be enhanced. I do not think that apparatus will be found to render them more harmless. The sea is hard to pierce, and I can think of nothing, even upon paper, which will enable men on board the submarine vessels to trace the tracks of their deadly little foes beneath the waves.

But as a commercial item in the world's civilization I do not think the submarines have any future. An use has been found for them, but even so, it will never be found plentifully enough to make it possible for a large number of passengers to travel for a length of time in comfort. Electricity for the propulsion may one day be gotten from the sea itself, but I have doubts of it, and even if that thing were done the treasure of the sea at a depth would crash a submarine to fragments unless some hitherto unknown metal were discovered which would withstand the pressure. Think of a size a transatlantic submarine would have to be, and think how slowly it must travel, owing to the pressure of the water round it, and tell me if you think a Majesty will ever be made to travel to New York upon the sea bed.

I doubt it—I doubt it very greatly, and, as I have said, I do not see the there is any need for submarine transoceanic vessels. But submarine vessels are in the near future, and they will, I believe, prove the thin end of the broadest wedge which will cause war to cease between the nations, owing to their very deadliness. Unfortunately, their work will not be done in my time. I am a man of peace and should have loved to see it.

Future of the submarine_ the pacific commercial advertiser_ honolulu_ mon Feb 24-1919

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