

A rather romanticized oil painting of SMS *Seeadler* in full sail. When rebuilt in 1916, the ship was a floating anachronism but that did not stop von Luckner and *Seeadler* from taking the war to the Allies.



ADVENTURES OF

THE SEADEVIL

HOW AN "ANCIENT" SAILING SHIP AND ITS DARING GERMAN COMMANDER CAUSED NEAR PANIC AMONG ALLIED SHIPPING DURING THE GREAT WAR

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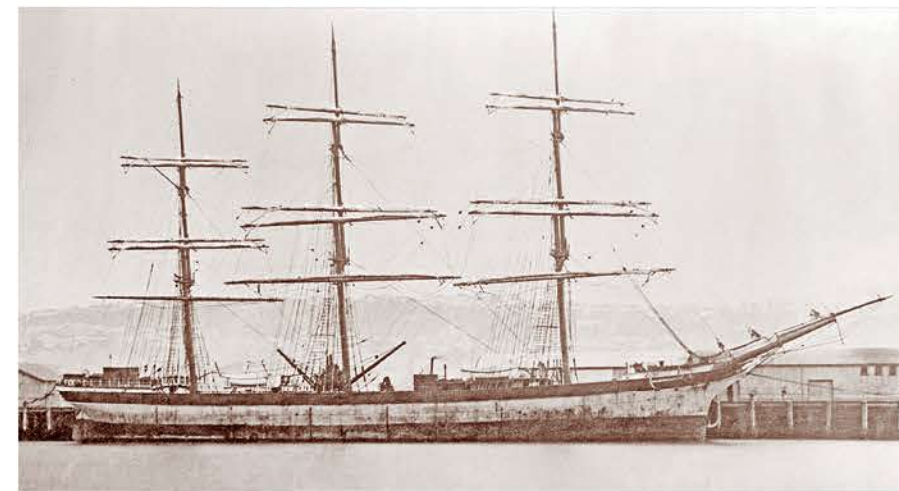
One of the worst hurricanes to hit the North Sea in the beginning of the 20th Century occurred on 23 December 1916. The violent storm sent all ships, including those of the British Fleet blockading the warships of the High Seas Fleet of Imperial Germany, scurrying for cover. All ships except for the *Hero*, a Norwegian sailing ship bound for Australia. She sailed into the North Sea and the hurricane with all the canvas she dare spread pulling at her yardarms.

After having successfully navigated the storm, the *Hero* was sailing along off the coast of Ireland on Christmas morning. Her crew was busy clearing the decks of ice and repairing the damage caused by the storm. Working at their tasks, they were unaware of the British auxiliary cruiser that was fast approaching until the lookout called out.

The cruiser signaled the *Hero* to heave to for an inspection. Although the British had the seas mostly to themselves since the Battle of Jutland, the Germany Navy was still making its presence known through submarines and surface raiders. To curb the attacks by the surface raiders against her shipping, the British Admiralty had ordered their warships to inspect all ships that looked suspicious or flew a neutral flag. Since Norway was neutral, the *Hero* was subject to inspection.

A boat put out from the cruiser with the inspection party. As the boat pulled along side the sailing ship, the British inspectors were met by Capt. Knudsen, the *Hero's* master. While the inspection party made a routine check of the ship, the officer in-charge accompanied Capt. Knudsen to his cabin for a look at the ship's papers.

Entering the cabin, the British officer was surprised to be met by a rather tall woman. Knudsen introduced her as his wife, saying that she had a very bad toothache and could hardly speak. The officer gave her a smile and began examining the *Hero's* papers. After a quick examination, in consideration of the captain's sick wife, and satisfied with the answers Capt. Knudsen had given to his questions, the officer returned topside. Wishing the Norwegian captain a pleasant voyage, the officer climbed into his boat and pulled away.



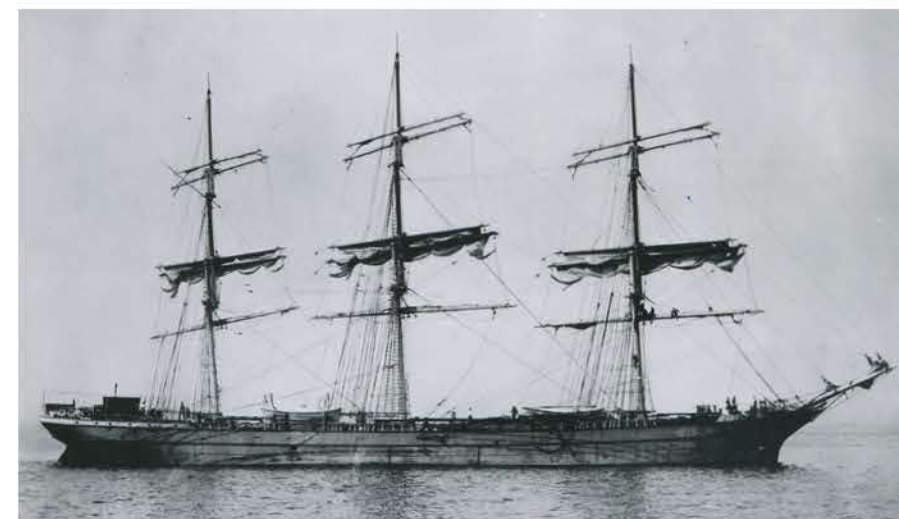
Seeadler started out life as the *Pass of Balmaha*.

Watching the boat move away, Capt. Kundsen's face broke into a big smile. Kundsen and his ship had just passed the most dangerous part of their voyage — they had gotten by the British Fleet. The way was now clear for them to follow out their orders from the German Admiralty: "Sink all the British shipping you can."

The *Hero*, in reality, was the German auxiliary cruiser *Seeadler* (Sea Eagle), and her Capt. Kundsen was 37-year-



Count von Luckner during the Great War when he was in his mid-30s.



Pass of Balmaha after being captured by the German submarine U-36.