

Walter Wood (1905) *Submarined* – Pearson's Magazine, February 1905



"Samson the was followed by a porpoise of her. Harden passed the bottom Samson."

A short story of a disabled British battleship taking refuge and defending itself against a submarine attack by a diver blowing up the submarine with a mine. In Walter Wood's story, "*Submarined*," the lieutenant of a damaged battleship turns the tables on an enemy submarine. The battleship *Samson* limps into an out-of-the-way cove to make repairs, but is spotted by an enemy torpedo boat, which quickly withdraws. The crew of the *Samson* realizes the enemy will send a submarine at night to finish off the battleship; they discuss their options. Lieutenant Harden convinces the captain to allow him to don an underwater suit and take the ship's only remaining mine, and wait along the path the submarine must take. When the underwater boat is close enough, Harden explains, he will detonate the mine, thereby "submarining" the submarine. The scheme works, but Harden sacrifices his life in the process, as the crew knew he must. The attitude of the ship's captain is that submarine warfare is not "honest fighting," as there is "no way of guarding against them." So, Harden's sacrifice is particularly poignant insofar as it is a maneuver against which the submarine itself has no defense. [Antulio Joseph Echevarria (2007) *Imagining Future War*, p.71]

Submarined

By WALTER WOOD



HE *Samson*, first-class battleship, lonely, and for the time disabled as a fighter, blundered through a thick fog and a heavy sea. She was down by the head, in spite of all the pumps could do, and the leaks were gaining slowly. The ship drove through the stormy darkness into a cheerless dawn; but the fog passed with the night, and the daybreak showed that she had been steering straight for a sullen, rocky coast. "That lift in the fog saved us," remarked the Captain to the Commander, who was standing by his side. "Ten minutes more and few of us would have had breath enough left to pray."

Already the *Samson* was going full speed astern with her engines. "In a roundabout way it's luck," said the Captain, "for since the water is coming in faster than we can pump it out, I'm going to run in here until we're patched up. We're in the enemy's territory, it's true, but better that than foundering."

An hour later the *Samson* was snug in a natural harbor, and on her divers were at work. Some officers and men were ashore, sweeping the bleak land with glasses, to see whether their coming was known, and a boat—the only serviceable one that was left to the *Samson*—had been sent out to watch for the enemy.

"Look here, and see how safely we could ride if it weren't for the submarines," said the Captain to the Commander. "I know every yard of the region, and it's all like this." He drew with a pencil on a slip of paper a rough but clear plan of the anchorage and entrance. "Here's the ship, snug and safe in deep water. Here's the entrance, deep and narrow, a mere neck, with shoal water on each side. To get in at all a ship must exactly hit the middle, otherwise she's done for. We don't need to stay here more than twenty-four hours, we can patch her up well enough in that time to steam home; and our friends are so busy elsewhere that they'll scarcely have time to give a thought to an out-of-the-

way spot like this. Ah! they're signaling from the shore that they can see nothing. That's good—excellent!"

"Yes, but——" the Commander finished his sentence with a look seaward and a sweep of the arm.

"Um," murmured the Captain with a troubled look.

The boat came alongside, and the officer in command reported that one of the enemy's torpedo boats had dashed into view, stopped for an instant, and had gone back the way she came.

"So they've spotted us," said the Captain. He called his officers into his cabin, and held a hurried council of war. Every man was invited to speak freely, and each did so, except Harden, the torpedo lieutenant. For the most part the officers favored the idea of the Commander, which was that the *Samson* should put to sea at once, and trust to Providence and her engines to escape from her predicament.

"Unfortunately," replied the Captain, "it can't be done. We can't get out of the channel—it's ebb tide. Depend upon it, though, we'll get out on the next flood. What we must consider is what to do until then. *You* haven't spoken," he said with a smile, turning to Harden. "Come, you've had some original ideas at manœuvres. What do you say, Mr. Harden?"

Harden stepped forward quietly. "Well, sir," he said, "of course, as most submarines are now provided with a 'natiscope' attachment to the periscope, they can see to manœuver at night. I feel sure we shall be attacked at night. But I have an idea. Perhaps it isn't much; I'll just explain it my own way." When he finished the officers clustered earnestly about him. Harden was an authority on submarines and how to circumvent and destroy them.

For a full minute there was silence. The Captain, with folded arms, looked steadily at the young man. "Your scheme is just possible, I believe," he said very gravely. "But there is one point on which there can be little or no doubt. You might destroy any sub-

Other posts of possible interest:

Conan Doyle, A. (1914) [Danger! and Other Stories](#)

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

Eastwick, J. (1895) [The New Centurion](#)

Wood, W. (1905) Submarined

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

Anonymous (1885) The Great War and Disastrous Peace of 1885