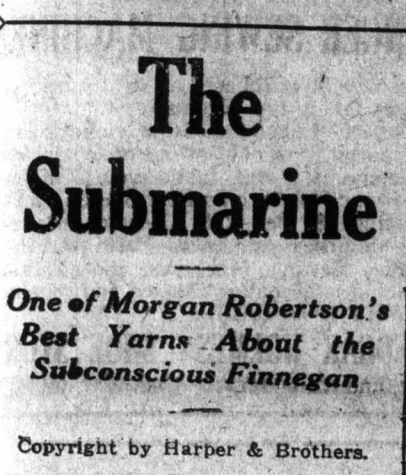


Stirring Stories of the Sea



by Morgan Robertson

The Submarine

One of Morgan Robertson's Best Yarns About the Subconscious Finnegan

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(CONCLUDED)

able to report unofficially, but decisively, on the character of a long, low, destroyer type of craft that crept around the headland downstream, hovered a few minutes and then hurried seaward at thirty knots, followed by about half a ton of steel from the Argyll's six inch secondary guns.

"Russia scout boat," he remarked to the deck, then turned his glasses elsewhere on the smooth waters of the strait, where might appear some traces of his lost boat or his men. Late in the afternoon, when the tide had turned and gained its maximum strength, he called attention to something that glistened in the sun far over toward the other shore, and soon after he pointed out another such object just behind it, then another, farther out in the stream, then a fourth, far to the rear of them all.

"Torpedoes!" he called to the bridge beneath. "They've shot them out to lighten her."

He turned his glass around for a moment, then called again, "Man overboard!" and pointed dead ahead. Bronson came down to the bridge.

The man could be seen with the naked eye—a spartan, bearded fellow, who swam remarkably high out of water. But Bronson, after another inspection, stopped the comment on this by the quiet remark: "He's not swimming at all. He's riding a torpedo. Look out for it, gentlemen, for you'll find the safety gear unsecured from the detonator. That's my engineer."

Whitehead torpedoes, being standardized, are valuable to any craft carrying tubes, and boats were sent to bring them in, one of which brought also the bearded Russian engineer. Mr. Bronson translated his story.

"It was the quartermaster," he said, "who spotted up and moved the starting switch in the conning tower. He easily succeeded by my talking in a language strange to Finnegan that we were contacted."

"But did anybody drown?" asked Mr. Clouston eagerly. "Where's Finnegan? How did that man get out?"

"Some must have drowned," went on Bronson gravely. "The quartermaster got Finnegan out of the way and closed the hatch, and then she was bumping along the bottom, unable to rise even by her own motion against the strong rudder—hard up. They shot the torpedoes, but still she would not rise. Then they drew lots and ejected themselves one by one."

"The quartermaster swam to a torpedo and was rescued by that scout boat, but the rest must have drowned, for the engineer did not see them."

"But who remained behind?" asked Mr. Clouston. "Who drew the fatal number?"

"Finnegan!"

"Fear did Finnegan?" groaned the executive officer. "Done for at last! He has saved thousands of lives when drunk and now must die, sober and instructed, to save a half dozen enemies!"

"The great echoed mentally throughout the ship, and men went to their sleep that night praying for the soul of the gentle and ridiculous old man they had loved."

But at daylight there were other things to think of. Sharp firing was heard, and there staggered around the headland below a large merchant built steamer with huge derricks fitted to each mast, a few small, quick fire guns mounted in high places and barking as she came, the white naval ensign, and a volume of smoke belching upward from amidships.

She was alone, and she was perceptibly down by the head, proving that at least one compartment was filled.

"Your master-at-arms will not confine me, captain."

"Are you still pondering on the ethics of desertion?" asked the captain, again giving his eye to a peephole.

"The probable is unsolvable," said Bronson. "By the laws of honor and of Russia I should be fighting against you; by the laws of nature and blood I should be with you. There are penalties for violation of law."

"What do you mean?" asked the captain, without looking around.

"I notice that your fighting top batteries are silent."

The captain paid no more attention to him, and Bronson climbed the ladder that led up the mast to the lower top.

It is an axiom in the world's navies that no man may live through an action in a fighting top, and Bronson, aloft with the dead, could not but have been impressed by the sight of the fall of the lower Russian ship's foremasts, tops, guns, dead men and living, and the small signal yard to which, even as the mast crashed down, small flags were ascending. But the ship went on, a man now exposed on her forward bridge waving a wigwag back and forth until abreast of the Argyll.

And now, though her heavy shells still came toward the big, invulnerable Englishman, it was noticeable that her whole secondary battery of quick fire and machine guns was directed astern at something which only Bronson, high in air with a pair of service binoculars, could make out.

"A submarine!" he called. "They're running away from it! Now it has lived!"

Guns on the upper ships suddenly ceased, and the Argyll's captain and aids came out of their refuge to see these two, with a furious turmoil of water at their sterns, backing and turning in their lengths. The wigwag had told the news.

"There it is again!" shouted Bronson excitedly. "It's up for a peep around. Now it's under again."

Professional excitement and enthusiasm are excusable, even when aroused over the performances of an enemy. Bronson, who had gone aloft to die, had a new interest in life.

"The mother boat must have dropped one somewhere," said the captain, "or else it's the one they had hoisted when she blew up. Just in time too," he added calmly as a crash sounded and a quiver went through the ship, while a cloud of smoke and splinters went up from the stern.

A shell from the lower ship had struck.

"Steering gone, sir!" called a quartermaster from within the conning tower.

"Thought so," remarked the captain. "We're hit in our weak spot. We're helpless, but praise God for that submarine! Look at them go!"

The two backing and turning Russians had straightened around. The other, still waving the wigwag from her bridge, had passed them and was leading the parade. Behind was an occasional glimpse of a small, circular conning tower, which appeared for only an instant, and then dived.

The big, helpless ship swung slowly around, steering after a manner, with her twin screws, but helpless to maneuver. Yet her batteries were intact, and she continued her hammering blows on the fleeing ships. The submarine's conning tower now seemed to be approaching the Argyll, which had swung end on to it. Then it dived again.

"She's coming," said the captain. "I wonder if she fired a torpedo."

"Don't think she got near enough," answered one of the lieutenants. "But consider the moral effect of these boats, captain. She frightened away the scout boat and the cruisers. They went away signalling."

"Yes, but each boat is worth a whole fleet until fighting begins. She has frightened them all away. Here she is again."

The small conning tower again arose, a hundred yards ahead, a hundred yards astern.

"Ship ahoy!" yelled a man standing knee deep in the water ahead of the ship. "Why d'ye run away fur? Hey, ye brass bound, murtherin' sons of a coddish a-rishocracy! Lemme out o' this contrapshon! D'ye hear me, blast yer eyes!"

"Finnegan!" yelled a chorus of voices from gunports and apertures, and the beloved name went through the ship. He began dancing about in the water, shaking his fist and reviling his officers profanely and unkindly and rebuking them for their heartlessness in running away. Then the captain spoke.

"He's drunk," he said, an expression of awe and wonder on his smoke stained countenance, "and still an instrument of Providence. But how did he raise that boat alone, and how did he get drunk?"

As the small submarine boat came abreast men on the main deck went over after Finnegan. Yelling and shouting joyously, they pulled the profane and abusive old man off into deep water and held him up, finding him at last an inert and lifeless load on their hands. Then a howline was lowered, and he was pulled aboard.

But in the confusion in the water no one had noticed that one man had climbed up the spluttered deck of the submarine, floundered along to the tower and entered it. It was only when the noise of the hatch snapping down came to their ears and they saw the small conning tower disappear before their eyes that they suspected who had entered the boat.

But as to how Finnegan had raised the boat they did not learn from him. He knew nothing about it, he finished, when the surgeon had revived him. Months later the explanation came in a letter, part of which the captain read to his officers.



Baking Day in Grandmother's Kitchen

GRANDMOTHER did her baking in tin kitchens set before the fire. Sometimes she baked a sponge cake in an iron kettle, browning the top with hot coals heaped on the lid. On baking day the kitchen was filled with delicious fragrance because Grandmother made her cakes and pies with old fashioned brown sugar.

Gone are the cranes and bellows and tin kitchens but we still enjoy Grandmother's favorite dishes. Mince pies, plum puddings, cakes and many sweets and beverages are much better made just as she made them with soft brown sugar. It is easy to get both the recipes and the sugar with which to make them up. Lantic Old-Fashioned

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"I was released from parole, you remember," said the letter, "and took a chance that Finnegan had weathered; that's all. Fifteen torpedoes going out did not lighten her enough, but five men, nearly a thousand pounds more, going out did the business, and she must have floated up with Finnegan."

"He only had to start the motor, but the water wash in her destroyed her trim. That is why she dived so often. He turned on the oxygen too, and I nearly suffocated before I got things straight."

"Oxygen," murmured the surgeon. "That's what made him drunk."

"Will you give me a crust of bread and a cup of water, mum?" "Certainly, I'll fix you up a nice lunch. But why didn't you ask for something more substantial?" "I'm a student of human nature, mum. It's mighty seldom that I strikes anybody what's mean enough to give me just a crust and a cup of water."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

Archbishop Magee, of New York, after staying at a hotel, had an extortionate bill presented to him by his host, who, after receiving payment, solicitously inquired if his lordship had enjoyed the change and rest. "No, I have had neither," replied the Archbishop. "The waiter had the change, and you've had the rest."—The Argonaut.

"Miss Howles studied singing 'abroad.' "How considerate of her."—Baltimore American.

CHRISTIANS, ONWARD GO

OF in danger, oft in woe, Onward, Christians, onward go, Bear the toil, maintain the strife, Strengthened with the Bread of Life!

Let not sorrow dim your eye, Soon shall every tear be dry; Let not fears your course impede, Great your strength if great your need.

Let your drooping hearts be glad; March in heavenly armor clad; Fight, nor think the battle long, Soon shall victory wake your song.

Onward then in battle move; More than conquerors ye shall prove; Though opposed by many a foe, Christian soldiers, onward go!

HENRY KIRKE WHITE. (Born March 21, 1785; died October 19, 1866.)



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