

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

"HIS OTHER SELF"
(A Humorous Story)

Price 6s. Price 6s.

Daily Telegraph.—"The book is so genuinely funny that we may compare it with some of Mr Anstey's masterpieces. . . . This is a first-class humorous book."

Globe.—"A merry book."

Speaker.—"Cheerful and bustling in the highest degree."

Bookseller.—"An amusing book."

Court Journal.—"The author shows considerable powers for farcical writing."

Sheffield Daily Telegraph.—"A splendidly amusing tale. . . . This entrancing book."

Newcastle Journal.—"A spirited book, cleverly conceived."

Reynolds' Weekly Newspaper.—"A piece of rollicking fun."

Lloyds' Weekly Newspaper.—"The book is entertaining throughout."

Nottingham Guardian.—"Based on a very humorous idea."

Liverpool Daily Courier.—"The idea is clever, and Mr Cole gets a good deal of amusement out of it."

The Lady.—"A dual personality story . . . smartly worked out on comedy lines."

Newcastle Chronicle.—"There are many good laughs in the story."

Birmingham Post.—"Mr R. W. Cole has struck a bright idea."

North Mail.—"Mr Cole has hit upon a good idea in this book."

Record.—"The lesson taught is admirable."

Ladies' Field.—"The idea is ingenious."

Southport Guardian.—"Written with considerable vivacity."

The Death Trap

BY
R. W. COLE
Author of "His Other Self"



LONDON
GREENING & CO., LTD.

1907

All Rights Reserved

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY LIBRARY

AF BX00002788

Contents

	PART I	
PROLOGUE		I
	PART II	
THE BRITISH SEDAN		91
	PART III	
THE AWAKENING		243
	PART IV	
NEMESIS		281
EPILOGUE		305

The Death Trap

Part I

PROLOGUE

CHAPTER I

It was nearly midnight.

The night was dark and stormy, the wind howled, and driving rain beat against the windows of a pair-horse landau, which slowly and laboriously rolled westwards, through mud and darkness, across the Franco-German frontier. On the box were two men, wearing the great-coats and helmets of German soldiers. Inside sat three officers of the German army, evidently high in command, but so muffled up as to be almost unrecognisable. They were stern, silent, and forbidding. One, who sat facing the horses, was a man of commanding appearance. His face was deadly pale, but every feature betokened intense ambition and selfishness, supported by unconquerable energy and resolution. His moustache was brushed away from his mouth, the ends curling upwards. He was evidently the leader of the party, to judge from the deference and respect with which the other men treated him.

Opposite the Chief, and on the right hand side of the carriage, was a stout, heavily-built man, with dark eyes, massive, brooding brow, and a terribly firm and cruel mouth, denoting merciless devotion to purpose. This was Prince Hohenhaus, Chancellor of the German Empire, a man hated and feared throughout Europe and the world for his subtle policy and the deadly strokes of aggression he had dealt in Bismarckian fashion at the countries standing

in his way. Now his brow was sombre and lowering, for he was thinking out, by the wish of his Imperial Master, the final details of what was to be the last crowning act of Germany's career of robbery and aggression.

The third occupant of the carriage sat next the Chancellor. He was tall, thin, and clean-shaven, his eyes steel-blue, and his face seamed with a fine network of lines. His lips were thin and firm, and his mouth appeared to be even more cruel than that of the Chancellor. He was Field-marshal von Prankhe, the great German strategist, of world-wide fame, on account of his vast military genius. These three men were the ruling chiefs of Germany, the skilful engineers who controlled the vast pent-up forces of the mighty German Empire; three Fates, who plotted with relentless determination the ruin of rival states.

The carriage had rumbled for miles through flying mud and blinding rain, whilst none of the three spoke. They were still silent when it crossed the frontier and entered French territory. But a few moments later, the man who faced the horses spoke.

"Yes, my mind is quite made up," he suddenly exclaimed, in a harsh voice. "There must be no turning back now we have put our hand to the plough—no faint-heartedness. I have determined to make this great venture, and I will shrink from no sacrifice to bring it to a successful conclusion. I can do nothing else; there is no other line of policy open to me."

"There is not, Your Majesty," assented the Chancellor. "I have thought everything over very carefully, and I can suggest no other way out of the difficulty."

"Wherever we go, whatever we want to do," continued the pale man in quick, sharp sentences, "England stands in our way. She is our rival in the sea-carrying trade, in manufactures, in commerce, in empire, in everything. We can touch nothing inside or outside Europe without England interfering. If we want a country to colonise, England is there before us. We can do nothing but sit still in Europe and twiddle our thumbs as long as England dictates to the world with her fleet and her power. It is England, England everywhere. Germany cannot have a world-wide policy whilst this British Empire exists."

"Your Majesty is right," assented the Chancellor. "England prevents our legitimate expansion; England crushes us."

"But the end must come," continued the other. "My empire cannot bear the strain much longer. Its commercial prosperity is declining. Its population is too great, and there is no outlet for it in any quarter of the globe. The United States will not let us take part of South America on account of the Monroe doctrine. England has the cream of Africa and all India and Australia. England, and her yellow servant Japan, forbid the partition of China. It is England, England all over the world corking up my people in their narrow bottle, suppressing their legitimate aspirations, thwarting the mission of expansion which God has given them. But relief *must* be found somehow. The Socialists are increasing in numbers and influence. Industrial troubles accumulate daily. Sufficient food cannot be found in this barren Central Europe to support my teeming people. Germany must increase. It is her divine destiny to expand, and eventually become a world-empire; it is my Heaven-sent mission to become Emperor of the West. By the grace of God, and the power of my sword, I shall rule over the greatest and most mighty empire the world has ever seen. But what obstructs the legitimate expansion of Germany? England, always England! She throttles us; she murders us; she must be blotted out."

While he was speaking his eyes flashed and his pale face flushed with excitement. The other two nodded in silence.

"The first thing necessary is a coalition," he continued. "We don't require soldiers, but warships and sailors. France and Russia have plenty. Russia has already promised to join us in crushing England on condition that we give her a free hand in India and Manchuria. We can make France join by threatening war. There is nothing she dreads more than a conflict with my army. The German army crushed her in 1870, and it could crush her as easily now. We shall have to promise her North Africa as her reward."

"I don't like the idea of giving up North Africa," interrupted the Chancellor.

"We can easily repudiate that part of the bargain when England is crushed and prostrate on the ground. I have thought everything over, and success seems certain. The British Empire is merely a colossal fraud, held together by weak bonds, and ready to fall to pieces at any moment. It is even more rotten than the Roman Empire at the time of its fall. I have received secret information of vast importance regarding this terrible British navy, before which all the world trembles. The shooting is very bad, the gun sights are defective, the guns tear their rifling after a few rounds, and the armour-plating is not what it is believed to be. The British public has been deluded and defrauded for years by that delightful Unionist Government it trusts so much. Now I *know* that the ships of my navy are the soundest and best obtainable. The British Government knows nothing whatever about its numbers. I have dozens of submarines, destroyers, and torpedo-boats secretly laid up in the dockyards, and ready to be commissioned at a moment's notice. At the present time, the private shipbuilders have battleships and cruisers ready in every detail, and it has been announced that they were built to the order of certain South American republics. I have arranged that all the finest vessels of the mercantile marine will be handed over to me in the event of war, to act as cruisers or transports. France has several powerful squadrons, and the Russian navy has vastly improved since the Russo-Japanese war. England will be without her Far Eastern and East Indian squadrons, and the great number of cruisers required to escort her food ships. British auxiliary ships cannot be mustered at a moment's notice, for they are scattered over the globe. The French and German vessels, added to the hosts we can muster, will outnumber the British fleet by nearly two to one. We will fall on it suddenly and annihilate it, and then the road will be clear for the invasion of England.

"The fact that England is not a self-supporting country is the principal factor that will determine her fate. Five-sixths of her food is imported, and there is never sufficient in the country to last for more than six weeks. Food will go up to famine prices directly war is declared. That will not touch the rich, but will be an unbearable hardship to the masses. We shall do everything to keep food away

from them. When the proper time arrives, agents of the German Government will buy up all the available supplies of wheat in Russia, Argentine, Canada, and the United States. For weeks beforehand, there will be German agents in Britain to buy up and hold under assumed names all the food they can lay hands on. When war is declared, they will be instructed to hold back all the food under their control. That will be bad enough for the British public. But when the naval crash comes, the price of food will be prohibitive to the masses. The great towns will be filled by raving, starving mobs. Maddened by hunger, they will riot and demand peace at any price. The law-abiding, staid, and stodgy English citizen will become a lunatic when he sees his wife and family starving. What can the British Government do against vast hordes of starving savages?

"Meanwhile, my invincible army will cross the Channel, and land on the south-eastern coast of England. The wise British public has been living in a fool's paradise as regards the possibilities of an invasion. Its Prime Ministers have cajoled it into thinking that the invasion of England is absolutely impossible. The state of the British army was bad enough then, but it has been allowed to grow worse since. It cannot muster many more than three hundred thousand all told, probably not nearly so many. The officers are very badly trained and educated. Promotion goes by petticoat influence and money. There is not even a single general fit to command a division. The physique of the rank and file is very poor. The militia and volunteers are totally inefficient. The artillery is armed with out-of-date weapons. The British magazine-rifle is much inferior to ours. The coast fortresses are not even worthy of the name; they will fall without firing a shot.

"Once the British navy is out of the way, we will prove that the theories of eminent British strategists are wrong, by landing eight hundred thousand men, with full equipment of guns and horses, in a few weeks. The road from the coast to London is quite open, and the country as defenceless as a garden. The British have only their regulars and auxiliaries to depend upon, between three and four hundred thousand altogether. They cannot

obtain more soldiers, because they have no compulsory military service or universal military training. The stolid British cannot fight on empty stomachs. Even supposing the whole nation flies to arms, which is quite unlikely, of what use would it be? The British masses are quite untrained, and know nothing of soldiering. Soldiers are not made in a day, or even in a month, and by that time we shall have thrust our sword into the heart of the British Empire. Even supposing they had the men, who is to organise a huge levy? who drill the men? and where are the trained officers capable of directing a gigantic army of raw levies? Then they have not sufficient arms and ammunition. There are not half a million rifles in the country, and scarcely sufficient field-guns for the regulars. As at the time of the Boer War, their arsenals are nearly depleted of ammunition. We shall find no opposition beyond the three or four hundred thousand men of all arms. My army will surround the British army somewhere on the borders between Surrey and Kent, and annihilate it once and for ever. Then we shall march on to London, and fight our way through the defenceless suburbs. If the British Government does not yield then, we shall bombard London from the suburbs, fight our way through the streets, and capture the Houses of Parliament, Government Offices, and public buildings. We shall have previously captured Chatham, Sheerness, and Woolwich. Then, with the War Office, Admiralty, Foreign Office, Bank of England, Stock Exchange, Post Office, and Houses of Parliament in our hands, the British Government will not have the power of further resistance. The mob of starving people will insist on peace at any price, so that the horrors of invasion may cease, and they can get food.

"We shall then dictate our terms of peace at London. All British colonies to be handed over to Germany, all British warships in any port to be surrendered, the payment of an indemnity of four hundred millions, the Mediterranean and Baltic to be closed to British warships, and the march of my army in triumph through London. Everything *must* succeed as I have arranged it. But very probably we shall not have to bombard London. After the first great battle, when the British army has been

destroyed, the mob may make the Government surrender unconditionally. They must have food, and they will have it at any price. If the Unionist Government is turned out, as it probably will be after the first disaster, the Liberals, Irish, and Little Englanders will let all the empire go without a struggle. My scheme cannot fail to be successful. Starvation, unpreparedness, incapacity, lack of patriotism, deficient physique, and love of ease, everything will conspire to help it forward."

"Excellent!" commented the Chancellor.

"If the British fleet is cleared away, and twenty of Your Majesty's army corps landed," said Prankhe, "I will guarantee to annihilate the British army in three or four weeks."

"Good!" exclaimed the German Emperor. "But now listen again, both of you. Crushing England is only the beginning of my great scheme for founding a world-wide German Empire. When I have made terms with England, I shall seize Holland, Belgium, Denmark, and part of Austria without much difficulty. Then I shall join Russia in crushing the naval power and commerce of Japan. Germany and her Kaiser will no more brook a rival in the East than in the West. I shall make Japan keep to her island home. Then I shall attack and annex the republics of South America. If the United States has anything to say to the contrary, she will have to fight my ever-victorious fleet. No country of the earth will be able to stand against my power."

He paused for breath, and looked at his two hearers with flashing eyes. As he finished speaking, the carriage rumbled and jolted over the rough paving-stones of the French frontier town, Rodelles. It was a little insignificant town, boasting one street and one inn. The three arbiters of the destinies of Germany and the world were silent while the carriage rolled down the street of the sleeping town. There was not a living being visible anywhere; there was no sound but the roar of wind and the pattering of rain. All the inhabitants of Rodelles, at least nearly all, were sleeping the sleep of the just.

Little did the humble peasants or petty tradespeople guess that the first scene of a terrible drama would be played in their midst on that very night!

The inn was the only house in Rodelles where there appeared to be any life. There were lights at the windows and at the open doors. Evidently visitors were expected, for a small stout man ran down the steps when the carriage approached. As it pulled up at the door, the clock of a neighbouring church tolled the hour of midnight.

"Punctual to the minute!" exclaimed the Kaiser, as he stepped to the ground. "I hope the French are here."

The party walked into the hall, followed by the bowing landlord.

"Is the room upstairs ready?" inquired Prince Hohenhaus.

"Certainly, the room is prepared. Will the gentlemen walk upstairs?"

"Have the other gentlemen arrived?" continued the Prince. "We are about to meet some French excise officials. We anticipate smuggling trouble."

"The other gentlemen are already upstairs. They have inquired for the German officials."

"Are we quite alone here?"

"Quite alone. There are no other guests in the house. It has been reserved in accordance with instructions."

"Well, to business!" exclaimed Hohenhaus, with a meaning look at his Imperial Master.

The landlord led the way up the creaking staircase. The German Emperor, carefully muffled in an overcoat, followed him, then the other two, and lastly an aide-de-camp, who had ridden on the box with the driver. The landlord opened the door and ushered in the three Germans. Then he withdrew, and the aide-de-camp closed the door and remained on guard outside.

CHAPTER II

Two Frenchmen rose and bowed as the newcomers entered. They were Monsieur Donaine, the President of the French republic, and Monsieur Chauvier, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs. The former was the first to speak.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said. "We are here as you desired. We have considered your proposals carefully, and regret that we cannot accept them."

The Kaiser's brow darkened, and his eyes flashed angrily.

"We will talk about that presently," he exclaimed with an impatient wave of his hand. "Where are the Russians? Have they not arrived?"

"Not yet."

"They should be here by now. They left Berlin an hour before we departed; I saw them before I started, and they accept all our proposals. India and Manchuria are to be their reward."

As the Kaiser spoke, there was a rumbling of wheels outside, and another closed carriage was driven up to the door at a smart pace. There was a noise of shuffling feet on the pavement, and the bang of a carriage door. Then heavy footsteps were heard ascending the creaking stairs, and the aide-de-camp ushered two tall bearded men into the room. These were Prince Zeidsomsky, the Russian Foreign Minister, and the Grand Duke Alexis Alexandrovitch. Bows were exchanged with the newcomers, and the door was closed. There were a few moments of intense silence, broken only by the heavy breathing of the seven men. The air seemed to be pervaded by a fearful nervous tension. At last the Kaiser advanced to the table and spoke.

"Well, gentlemen," he exclaimed abruptly as he glanced at the four statesmen with his flashing eye, "you all know my proposals?"

The Frenchmen and Russians nodded silently. Prince

with pain and shame, crying out for vengeance on their rulers and the Conqueror, the levy of which the Kaiser had spoken so contemptuously. But it was not only patriotism and rage that caused citizens to join this army of the people. Lord Eagleton's offer of ten shillings a day and food made hundreds of thousands, who would otherwise have kept aloof, give in their names. The dearth of employment made the high rate of pay welcome, and the food, which could scarcely be bought, made soldiering necessary, if not agreeable.

Lord Eagleton held back the bulk of the food and distributed it to his soldiers. The citizen defenders and the men who supplied them with the necessaries of war must be fed before anyone else. Men, and only men, were wanted in the present crisis, and it was they alone who could prevent the ship of state from sinking in this terrible tempest. Immeasurable hardships and sufferings pressed heavily on the rest of the nation. Women, children, the aged, the infirm, and cripples were left without food, and abandoned to their fate; the state had now no use for them and could not feed them. There was not enough for all. If the useless were fed, Great Britain must submit to the decrees of Germany, be her vassal state for ever, yield up her empire, pay the indemnity, and sink to rise no more. Lord Eagleton willed that the state must live. He fed his soldiers; he abandoned the women, the children, and the unfit to death. They died of starvation by thousands, in silence and resignation, a vast sacrifice of the weak and uncomplaining on this altar dedicated to vanity and ambition, and erected by years of imbecile Government. This silent suffering and lingering death was the terrible harvest sown by Cabinet Ministers who could not govern, by self-seeking politicians, a selfish society, and a degenerate people.

CHAPTER III

MR REYDLEIGH'S Government had been succeeded by a Liberal Cabinet headed by Sir Arthur Macmore. The Prime Minister asked the Germans for an armistice, so that the opinion of the country could be taken upon the important question of peace. But the enemy would not grant a minute's delay. Public feeling on the subject was divided. People who had property in London wished the conflict to be ended at any price, no matter how great, as long as they did not suffer personal loss. Others, who either had no property near the area of conflict, or had nothing to lose elsewhere, wished the struggle to continue to the bitter end. Political feeling ran high. Mobs paraded the streets with banners shouting patriotic songs. These came into collision with others who clamoured for peace, and energy, which should have been used against the common foe, was wasted in fratricidal strife.

Meanwhile the sands of time were running out. The Government was in a helpless state of vacillation. Almost all the cowardly Cabinet Ministers had left London on hearing that a bombardment was threatened. Those who remained were quite unable to deal with a grave national crisis. At last the Prime Minister resolved to trust still further to luck and reject the German terms. Almost at the moment when the time allowed by the ultimatum expired a telegram arrived from Lord Eagleton—

"Stand firm. Shall come soon."

This was printed and placarded all over London, and raised the drooping spirits of the people. The Government had a vague but fatal idea that the German General Staff was bluffing and would not dare to commit the crime against humanity of bombarding an unfortified city of several million inhabitants. But five minutes after the ultimatum had expired, people who held this view were rudely undeceived. A tremendous roar of thunder came

from the west and south. Detonations and thuds made the ground tremble and shivered windows. Angry shrieks tore the air high overhead and trails of smoke swept across the sky. A moment later there was an inferno in that area of London situated within six miles of the German positions. Huge shells dashed against houses, plunged through roofs, crashed into streets and squares, exploded with terrific detonations and frightful shocks, scattering fragments of steel, bullets, and a suffocating odour everywhere. There was a sharp rending of glass and wood, and a crashing of brickwork and masonry. Shells exploded in roads flinging fragments of earth and macadam far and wide. They smashed their way into the heart of buildings and exploded, demolishing whole houses at one stroke.

London quickly became a ghastly inferno. People who had been strolling in the streets fled up and down in droves like cattle, shrieking, shouting, and swearing, almost bereft of their senses by the terrific din and terrible hail of steel that poured down upon them from the sky. Shells tore through their midst, exploding and hurling fragments of human bodies over the houses. Many persons rushed up and down the streets without the sense to take shelter. Others ran to the nearest houses only to find doors barred. For hours the wretched victims ran distractedly through the streets, whilst the pitiless hail of steel swept down upon them. It was nightfall before the streets were clear of fugitives, and then, amid the thunder of artillery, could be heard the groans and cries of the wounded who lay with the dead still exposed to this murderous shell-fire. Those who had reached shelter in safety descended into cellars, or to the ground floor of buildings, whence they stared in horror at the writhing victims in the street.

It had been a *sauve qui peut*; everyone for himself, and no pity for the weak and fallen. There were a few noble men and women who redeemed the character of humanity, and crept along streets during the terrors of that bombardment, bandaging the wounded, administering restoratives, helping them to shelter, and giving comfort to the dying. The Victoria Cross was won over and over again during those awful hours, but many noble

lives were lost, limbs being torn off or bodies shattered whilst their owners crept about on errands of mercy.

Outside this hell of fire and suffering the gunners in Hyde Park fed their great siege guns and sent projectiles on their errands of destruction with the coolness and discipline of the parade ground. The guns were mounted on platforms, and after every discharge the direction and deviation of the muzzles were altered slightly so that the bombarded area was thoroughly searched out. It was the perfection of modern science applied to bestial destruction. All day and all night the bombardment continued with a never-ending roar, whilst London shuddered and trembled in its burrows of brick and mortar, agonising in this horror of merciless destruction. It was hardly possible to find any escape except by descending to the deepest cellars. Brick walls were of little avail. The steel-nosed projectiles flew crashing through them as if they had been paper, claiming their victims, rending limb from limb, filling the air with suffocating dust, and leaving nameless horrors behind.

When the Germans had thoroughly terrified West and Central London by their hail of shells, the gunners directed their fire on to individual buildings. Engineers dynamited Kensington Palace, the Albert Memorial, the Albert Hall, the museums at Kensington, Paddington Station, Marylebone Station, and the other northern termini. Then they turned their attention to the palaces of Park Lane, and skilfully wrecked them with the expenditure of the least quantity of explosives. The gunners aimed at the great public buildings, church towers and steeples. They had the satisfaction of knowing that if their shells missed the bull's eye, there was a substantial target all around which they could not fail to hit.

As the bombardment continued, the German gunners became more enraged at this lethargic mass of bricks and mortar which they had been told was the pivot of the British Empire. Every man now knew what he was fighting for; the undying glory of the Fatherland, a world-wide empire, and immense wealth. He was told that the only barrier which held him from realisation of his dreams was this huge and inert mass of London, this vast wilderness of bricks. Destroy it, and Germany's

rival all over the world would be annihilated for ever. The more shells the gunners fired, the more they became enraged against this huge and helpless city. The generals, cool and clear-headed, encouraged and directed them from behind, and traction-engines incessantly supplied them with the means of destruction.

The guns placed on the south side of the Thames meanwhile demolished the monumental architecture within their range. The task was much easier since the Londoners were unable to make any reply. The railway stations at Victoria, Charing Cross, and Cannon Street were soon laid in ruins by a few well-directed shells. Somerset House and the great hotels near Charing Cross were likewise demolished. Then the shame of England and her degenerate children was trumpeted forth amid the deafening thunder of artillery, the detonations of shells, and the rending of masonry. Westminster Abbey, the pride of great Britain, peopled with her illustrious dead, was shattered by the explosions of lyddite. The proud towers that had never before looked down upon foreign foe were laid low in the dust. Amid rending and crashing unspeakable the carved roof was torn through, battered down, and hurled far and wide. Inside, the statues of heroes and monuments of great men were pounded to fragments by lyddite and flying steel. Roofs of chapels were smashed in, the tombs of the kings desecrated, the Coronation Stone smashed, the historical monuments of England's past desecrated because England's sons could not defend them. Oh, shame on a conquered race!

Whilst the venerable pile of Westminster Abbey sank to the ground an ignoble heap of ruins, its tombs violated, its monuments rent asunder, degenerate Britons cowered in cellars, hiding their shame from the light of day, unable to defend their own. Other gunners, maddened by hate and the lust of destruction, directed their shells to the Houses of Parliament. Soon the proud towers were overthrown, the House of Commons and House of Lords wrecked, and the splendid legislative pile became a heap of dusty ruin. As each tower tottered to the ground and threw up immense clouds of dust, wild cheers of delight and derision arose from the German

lines. Buckingham Palace, too, that hub of British society, was soon a disgraceful pile of wreckage.

The artillery-fire raged in the area from Charing Cross to the Monument. Shells flew over Trafalgar Square and dropped into Piccadilly. They fell into the great clubs, rending and tearing those sanctuaries of fashionable manhood. The Guards' Memorial was shattered and the Nelson Column quivered. The effigy of that great seaman looked down in contempt upon the people who could not keep the empire his victories had helped to win. It was spared the humiliation of seeing the degradation that followed. A moment later the Column tottered and fell with a fearful crash to the ground, and the statue was dashed to a thousand fragments. Gone the glory of the victory at Trafalgar and the fruits of Nelson's conquests! In vain those victories and sacrifices of long ago! But the merciless and unsentimental shells still hurtled through the air. They exploded in the National Gallery, tearing to fragments the masterpieces of a nation's art. The magnificent buildings of the new War Office were likewise pounded and torn by shells, their magnificence useless since the army they controlled had gone.

Other guns raged with steel and flame towards the east. Cleopatra's Needle was broken and overturned, the Monument hurled down, and the Tower of London rent to pieces. St Paul's, that central point of a nation's religion, offered a huge target. The German gunners vied with one another in their frenzy of destruction. Shells were sent with admirable skill at the base of the dome. Black holes soon gaped, and then that immense mass of masonry fell in with a crash that resounded over London. It came down with enormous force on to the floor below, broke through it as if made of paper, and crashed into the crypt, smashing the tombs of Nelson and Wellington—a fatal omen!

Shells were now rained indiscriminately over Central London. The magnificent new buildings in Kingsway and Aldwych were shattered, also the theatres in the neighbourhood of the Strand, and the newspaper offices in Fleet Street. Shells fell amid the purlieus of finance; they crashed into the Bank of England and Stock

Exchange, shrieking over offices, exploding everywhere, and doing incalculable damage. London agonised beneath this weight of her ruin and disgrace. Her people cowered in vaults and sewers, drinking the wine of their degradation to the very dregs, or fled north and east into the suburbs.

But nothing moved the merciless Germans to pity. England must be made to yield to their demands, and yield quickly. They were enraged at this inert mass of bricks and stone, this mighty capital of the world, this mine of wealth that still seemed as if it would strangle them with its gigantic dead carcass. They must crush it, and Germany's universal enemy and rival would be gone for ever. They now turned their attention to the huge warehouses packed with combustibles that lined the Thames. Containing too much wealth to take away, they must be burnt. Fire-shells were planted with diabolical ingenuity near the base, and when possible, hurled into woodwork. They speedily took effect. Tongues of red smoky flame darted from windows, spurted from roofs and fissured walls. They licked lofty walls and sprang from building to building, throwing up a thick black smoke. There was a dull roaring as the fires of conflagration panted inside buildings, eating their way from story to story, trying to force their way out. Columns of suffocating smoke poured into the air, rising higher and higher till they hung in great wreaths and feathers, shutting out the view of the sky, forming an immense black pall over the doomed city. Myriads of sparks darted in swirls and eddies out of this vast canopy of blackness, flashing like gigantic fireworks. The roaring of the flames increased until it almost drowned the thunder of artillery. Roofs parted, pouring down a rain of molten lead, and the released flames shot heavenward with a roar of thunder, throwing up showers of sparks. Flames leapt from building to building, roaring into the air, and waving over London amid din indescribable.

The north bank of the Thames soon became a raging furnace of fire shouting its delight in the orgy of destruction to the roaring artillery on the opposite bank. Flames leapt skywards, sank down, rose again, and dashed together with the clangour of a hurricane. They spread

down to the wharves in front and the moored vessels, and northwards into the crowded streets behind. No chance for any buildings in those narrow streets. The flames spread with tremendous rapidity and the fire raged fiercer every minute, forming an immense girdle of flames, licking its way northwards over London, over the mighty city of wealth and power that its citizens could not defend. Oil-vats, wine-vaults, tallow stores, warehouses filled with tar, pitch, and other combustibles, and vast stacks of timber added fuel to the flames. Lofty walls tottered and fell into the raging furnace with the deafening noise of thunder.

The immense draught of air carried the smoke to a giddy height, where it spread out like a black pall and hung, a threatening shadow, over the doomed city. The smoke became thicker as stores of naphtha, petroleum, and tallow caught alight. The air was brilliant with myriads of sparks wafted in every direction by the powerful draught of flames. Night came on, but the river and southern bank and suburbs were lighted as bright as day by the columns of flame that towered far overhead, and seemed to lick the sky. The swirling, muddy waters of the Thames flashed back the crimson and white light of flames, making a brilliant but awful scene. The heat was so intense that the German artillery-men had to shade their faces with their hands whilst they rested and watched the result of their handiwork.

There now followed a tremendous conflict of elements. Water and fire strove together for the mastery. Tremendous masses of masonry heated to redness bulged, tottered, and fell outwards into the foaming waters of the Thames with a mighty roar, dragging with them huge girders of white-hot iron. Columns of steam and spray shot up, hiding the flames in a white canopy, whilst the water boiled with the roaring of some mighty cauldron. Rivulets of molten lead and iron ran down the streets and poured into the Thames with a noise of thunder. Flaming tallow streamed out of lofty windows in mighty cascades of smoky, evil-smelling fire. It spurted through fissures in the walls in Niagaras of flame straight into the Thames. It ran down streets and streamed over walls, crackling and roaring in its pleasure of freedom. Fiery petroleum,

too, ran down streets, accompanied by a disgusting stench and heavy black smoke. It collected into hollows whence it shot mighty tongues of fire and columns of smoke to the sky. It poured in sheets of fire into the Thames, and soon the swirling waters of the river were covered with fire, a mingled mass of ignited petroleum, tallow, pitch, and spirits flowing seawards with the tide. Sometimes it moved in long streams, sometimes in islands of fire, eddying, smoking, roaring redly, and covered with clouds of smoke. Streams of flaming combustibles also drifted into backwaters on the Surrey side and set fire to the shipping and wharves.

Meanwhile the Germans skilfully dropped fire-shells amongst the ruins they had created elsewhere. The heap of debris which marked the site of Westminster Abbey was set alight, and soon all that remained of a nation's monuments was burning furiously. The ruins of the Houses of Parliament and St Paul's Cathedral were likewise ignited. Other fire-shells were dropped in Central London, and soon the debris of the General Post Office and the British Museum were wreathed in flames.

The fire raged for days and nights with incredible fury. During the day a black canopy of smoke hung over this devoted city, this modern Babylon, this capital of the world, which its citizens could not defend, blotting out the rays of the sun. During the night the scene of destruction was brilliantly illuminated by the furious blaze that scattered its rays for miles over the suburbs. And while it raged, this tempest of fire roared like a thunder-storm. The hot air was carried by the wind to the north and east and passed over the untouched streets, parching the citizens like the breath of a furnace, almost suffocating them with smell and heat, and shrivelling up every tree and plant. The furnace spread for miles, slowly licking its way northward and eastward and towards the heaps of ruins at the West End. The flames were now dying down along the Thames embankment, where gaunt black walls, twisted girders, and yawning black caverns that still smoked and hissed marked the position of once flourishing warehouses. As the ring of flames crept away from the Thames, it left behind a heartrending sea of blackened ruins still smoking and emitting a disgusting odour and

intense heat. London lay writhing in intolerable agony, ruined and mangled, her skin torn with wounds, blackened and scoriated by fire, hurled to the ground to rise no more.

The fire ate its way to the East End and north, and then gradually died down. But when the flames had disappeared, heaps of brick and iron lay on the ground smoking and almost white-hot, forming a barrier which no living person could approach.

But the Germans had now almost achieved their purpose of crushing England to submission. They had made a complete stagnation of all trade and dislocation of business. They had laid the capital in ruins and demolished the great departments of national affairs. All visible means of offence and defence were gone, and food became scarcer every day. London groaned in insupportable anguish beneath the burden of her hideous affliction. Her citizens were suffocated by the smell, and scorched by the heat of the abominable burning. But the end of her afflictions was drawing nigh. Everyone now wanted peace—the peace that would bring food and comfort, a cessation of the terrible thunder of artillery, and deliverance from the ever-threatening hosts of Germans. What mattered the Empire now, what mattered the payment of hundreds of millions of pounds? Why suffer intolerable anguish to keep distant lands the people never saw, and which could not help them in time of trouble? Life was more important than the visionary grandeurs of an ambitious Imperialism.

Huge mobs of frenzied men and women who had been burnt out of their homes, paraded the streets of north and east London crying for peace at any price. They surged around the Prime Minister's temporary abode at Hampstead, clamouring for peace. All classes and conditions, with the exception of a few fanatics, declared they had had enough of war. Memorials signed by thousands of influential names were presented to Sir Arthur Macmore, praying him to make the best terms he could with the Germans, but to make them at once. The longer the struggle continued, the harder the final terms would be.

A Cabinet meeting was hastily convened. All the

members, without a single exception, voted in favour of peace and on any terms. Sir Arthur Macmore drove past the smoking city, and through the ruined suburbs to the German headquarters. Here he met the Kaiser and Princes Hohenhaus and Prankhe. The terms previously offered were laid before him. He explained that he could not take such an important step as signing away the British Empire without first obtaining the opinion of the country. He therefore begged for an armistice, whilst a general election was held. Prince Hohenhaus peremptorily refused this request, stating that it would be weeks, considering the disorganised state of the country, before a fresh parliament could be elected. He explained to Sir Arthur that such a step was unusual, and that the question of peace or war rested solely with the Government in being. He explained that further resistance on the part of Great Britain was absolutely useless. Her fleet and army were gone, but the military resources of Germany were inexhaustible. The Kaiser would treat all the cities of Great Britain as London had been treated.

At last the Prime Minister bowed to the inevitable, and signed away the British Empire. It was a moment of stupendous importance in the history of the world. Prince Hohenhaus was greatly moved as he appended his signature to the document. The Kaiser was livid, but his eye glittered, and he trembled with suppressed emotion as he saw his ambitious hopes at last realised.

Sir Arthur Macmore returned to London successful in procuring peace at any price, but trembling for the result. He had taken this fatal step, urged on by the clamours of Londoners and the necessities of the situation. Would the rest of the country acquiesce in his action, or would there be civil war? It seemed that the darkest hour of England's history had arrived. Impossible to sink lower in degradation, or to suffer greater humiliation! The terms upon which peace was concluded were soon telegraphed over the country. Londoners gave a sigh of relief, but there were no demonstrations of joy; the defeat had been too crushing and the agony was still excruciating. The relief from the ever-threatening German armies, the prospect of abundant food, and the renewal

of stagnant business made most people blind to the ruinous meaning of the terms of peace.

But in the north there was a fierce cry of rage and despair, a shout for vengeance on the insolent and cruel foe. Should the nation that had driven Great Britain to the depths of shame and ruin enjoy her ill-gotten gains? No peace must be made with the insolent foe while an Englishman who could fire a rifle remained. Lord Eagleton's wrath also knew no bounds when he received news of the shameful treaty. But he struck swiftly at the core. The treaty had scarcely been signed six hours and the Kaiser was dictating grandiloquent proclamations to his army and people when a message from Lord Eagleton crashed upon him like a thunderbolt. It stated briefly that the issues of peace and war no longer rested with the Prime Minister, but with Lord Eagleton, who had been appointed Military Dictator. His lordship altogether repudiated the treaty of peace recently signed. He also declined to negotiate further.

Had a bomb fallen into the room where the German chiefs were assembled, it could not have caused greater consternation. The Kaiser turned white, Prince Hohenhaus' face became of an ashy-grey tinge, and Prankhe's hand shook visibly. The other generals standing by exchanged nervous glances. The Kaiser was the first to break the tense silence.

"What? Repudiate the treaty!" he exclaimed in a white heat of passion. "Such a proceeding is altogether against military usage. I will never consent to it! The treaty was signed by the Head of the Government."

"It appears that the constitution is suspended," said Prince Hohenhaus. "All the powers of Government have devolved on this Lord Eagleton."

"It is evident that they have tricked us!" shouted the Kaiser furiously. "What is the use for them to prolong the conflict? They cannot drive us out of England."

Von Prankhe silently bit his lip. The other generals glanced nervously at their Chief.

"Your Majesty," said Prince Prankhe, "this Lord Eagleton is no fool. His present action means that there really is a levy *en masse* of the British people."

"Then, why in Heaven's name have you not found out that before?" exclaimed the Kaiser fiercely. "You had all the London papers."

"Eagleton must have had them all censored," remarked Hohenhaus.

"But don't tell me that he can make an army in a day," continued the Kaiser. "They have not a single gun, scarcely a rifle, no ammunition, no officers, only a few million seedy men who have never fired a rifle. How are they going to make an army out of that stuff? My brave soldiers will soon make mincemeat of such a disorderly crew."

"But, your Majesty, they have workshops; they can make all these things," suggested Prankhe.

The Kaiser rose from his chair in a tempest of passion, and smote the table with his fist. He was maddened by the sudden repudiation of the treaty when every point he wished for had been yielded. A torrent of angry words poured out of his mouth.

"And what if they can?" he shouted. "A modern army is not made in a few weeks. He can't move a yard without officers, and where are *they*? Understand, Prince Prankhe, I will have my wishes carried out. This England *must* be crushed for all time. We will destroy city after city until this Eagleton yields."

As he spoke, a message was brought in from the British Sovereign. It simply stated that Lord Eagleton was Military Dictator, and would treat with the German Government whenever further negotiations became necessary.

The Kaiser raged still more when he read this curt message.

"The next time they want peace, they shall pay a thousand millions!" he exclaimed. "I will exterminate this beastly nation if I can't crush it into submission!"

He picked up the treaty which still lay on the table and tore it to fragments. Prince Hohenhaus drew him aside and implored him to be reasonable.

"Would it not be best to abate our terms?" he suggested. "If we gave way on a few points, such as the indemnity and some of the colonies, he might agree rather than continue the war."

"Never! I will not abate one jot of my demands!" exclaimed the angry Kaiser. "Germany has made enormous sacrifices, and she will expect to receive considerable recompense. We shall easily smash these raw British levies."

As he spoke a long rolling noise as of distant thunder came from the south-east. He summoned Prankhe to his side.

"What firing is that?" he asked, for he liked to know what work every unit of his army was doing.

Prankhe replied that no fresh orders had been sent to the army since the command to cease fire was issued.

"It seems to come from the Kent coast," remarked Prince Hohenhaus.

Another long rumble, low and distant, shook the building. "What can it be?" cried the Kaiser impatiently, for his nerves were raw.

No one answered, and the Kaiser went outside to listen, followed by his statesmen and generals. Hohenhaus and Prankhe remained behind and exchanged uneasy glances. A fresh rumble swept down upon them from the south-east.

"That means only one thing!" commented Prankhe, glancing meaningly at the other. "The Eastern Squadron!"

"Oh, we can easily crush that." This in a confident tone.

"We can—if it comes alone."

"What *do* you mean?" asked Hohenhaus, turning white to the lips.

"There are the Japanese."

"Oh, they are all right. Conducting manoeuvres near Formosa a few days ago."

"Those Japanese are very clever."

"We could beat the combined fleets if they did join the British," said Hohenhaus.

They both joined the Kaiser and his suite outside, and stood listening to the distant thunder.

But while the chiefs of the German Empire stood listening to the awe-inspiring rumble of artillery, and while the victorious German army lay silent around London, and enveloped in the stench of its burning, another scene

of the great drama of battle was acted in the English Channel. Two mighty fleets were steaming to the conflict. The vessels of one flew the German and Russian ensigns, those of the other the British ensign and flag of Japan. A third fleet flying the flag of the French republic hovered near. Several ships were missing from the Russian and German squadrons, for the Japanese torpedo-boats had delivered attacks of unsurpassed audacity and skill during the previous night. But now a strange thing happened as these colossi of steel approached one another. The French ships saluted the Japanese and British fleets and hoisted the Japanese and British flags. A thrill of rage passed through the German ships, but the British cheered with wild enthusiasm. Then the French fleet steamed out of the way and the battle began.

A little naval man, who had previously broken the naval might of Russia, directed the battle, and thousands of other little sailors fired the guns. The numbers were nearly equal. The Germans and Russians fought like heroes, but the strategy of the Japanese admiral, who stood with folded arms directing the battle from his conning tower, was superior to theirs. Hours passed. The little yellow man still calmly gave his orders and watched the battle. Ships were battered by shells, rammed, sunk, and torpedoed. But the yellow men were triumphant everywhere, and soon their enemies' ships floated as useless hulks upon the waves, or lay at the bottom of the English Channel. A few that tried to escape were caught by the French.

Whilst the naval battle raged, the Kaiser listened to the rumbling of artillery, and gazed to the south-east as if fascinated. A few hours after the thunder had died down a message was flashed along the German lines of communication and delivered to the Kaiser. He glanced at it and turned a ghastly grey colour as he handed it to Prince Hohenhaus.

"The French!" he stammered.

"The Japanese!" said the Prince.

While the Kaiser staggered under the blow inflicted by the Japanese, thousands of Japanese army officers, who had accompanied the fleet, were landing at Liverpool.

They arrived in regimental sets commanded by colonels, also generals of division, and generals commanding army corps with their staffs. All were ready to take over their commands at once, and at the head of all were field-m Marshals who had fought in Manchuria. Almost every member of this vast array of officers had seen service in the Russo-Japanese War.

The next morning placards were posted all over London and the other great towns—

Great Naval Victory.

The French desert Germany.

Arrival of Japanese Fleet.

All German and Russian vessels sunk or captured.

Thousands of Japanese officers landed at Liverpool.

But the Kaiser at his headquarters was still conferring with his generals, and making plans for the future.

"We can easily defeat their raw levies," he remarked in a confident voice. "Then we shall make our own terms."

Part IV

NEMESIS

CHAPTER I

ONCE more the curtain rises and discloses armies marching. One, the lately victorious and splendidly organised German army, hastily retreating southwards through Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. The other, a part of Lord Eagleton's levy *en masse*, marching in pursuit.

Great events had rapidly followed one another since Lord Eagleton's repudiation of Sir Arthur Macmore's disgraceful treaty with Germany. The naval fight was desperate, and victory had hung in the balance for hours. Finally Great Britain and Japan obtained the victory, but with only a small margin of safety. Every ship had fought with magnificent courage and devotion, for the sailors had recognised the tremendous issues that hung on their prowess. Had the Germans won, they would still have command of the sea. Their lines of communication would have been intact, and they could have poured fresh myriads of their splendidly-drilled troops into England to tackle Lord Eagleton's raw levies.

But the naval victory, which would have been quite impossible without the timely aid of Japan, raised the fortunes of Great Britain from the dust. Supplies of food poured into Liverpool and the northern ports. The north was jubilant, and re-echoed with the din of martial preparations, but around London and in the south-eastern counties, where the people were entangled in the horrors of war, there was little alleviation of the despair of the past weeks. The once proud and magnificent London lay a blackened ruin, bruised and smoking from her fearful conflict with the Germans.

The news of the naval defeat fell like a thunderbolt upon the German headquarters. It was the first reverse the Kaiser had suffered during the war, and it fell upon German strategists and German statesmen like the blow of a hammer, for it rendered the position of their army highly critical. It cut away at one stroke the fruits of the series of triumphant victories. It paralysed the activities of every department of this wonderful machine that had been contrived to effect the downfall of England. For once the strategy, the naval policy, and the splendid Intelligence Department of Germany had been caught badly napping.

The victorious army lay enmeshed and strangled for days in the ruined wilderness of London, whilst its chiefs prepared fresh plans. The majority urged moderation, and suggested the suitability of the moment for securing satisfactory terms of peace from Great Britain. They pointed to the fact that Germany had no more ships of war, and that her army was in a very dangerous position, hung up as it was in the enemy's country with its lines of communication completely severed.

But the Kaiser soon recovered from the shock of the naval disaster. He was now determined to have all or nothing, and to prosecute the war with the utmost vigour. His army was in excellent condition, his artillery intact, and there were still large supplies of food and ammunition at the depots he had established in the southern counties. If food or ammunition did run short, the former must be obtained by pillage, the latter by capturing the enemy's arsenals. London must be abandoned, for it was no longer an important factor in the struggle, the new British army being altogether controlled from the north. The Bank of England and principal London banks were pillaged, and then the German troops were withdrawn from the dangerous and stinking wilderness of ruins, and reorganised for the march northwards.

The Kaiser despised the raw hordes of half-trained men who were collected under Lord Egleton's command. The idea was to attack and crush these levies piecemeal, for they would never be able to withstand the seasoned and highly-trained soldiers of Germany. The German leaders deceived themselves with the idea that this would

be an easy task. As the thought of a levy *en masse* never entered into their calculations, plans had not been made to meet it. Germany's greatness in painstaking preparations and foresight was now of no avail. Many mistakes were made and the difficulties encountered increased. It was impossible to obtain accurate information regarding the numbers or position of the new British army. All northern telegraph offices were in the hands of British soldiers, and every message was carefully censored. The penalty of instant death inflicted on all spies caught in the act, prevented the Germans obtaining much information that way. The presence of innumerable Japanese officers of all ranks in the British amateur army had greatly improved its value. Its movements were screened by a vast number of small bodies of mounted infantry, which explored every yard of ground some miles in advance and snapped up most of the German scouts.

As the days passed by and no British army appeared, the German generals grew anxious and made fatal mistakes. The Kaiser, inflamed by consuming energy and a desire to see the conquest of England consummated, urged a march into the Midlands. Others thought it best to sit around London and await the coming of the enemy. But immediate action of some sort was imperative since the German army was completely cut off from its base, and the supplies in hand would not last for ever. Accordingly, a disastrous march into the Midlands was begun. The German army, nearly six hundred thousand strong, marched northwards, and at once its difficulties commenced. The right wing had to pass through the narrow and tangled lanes of Buckinghamshire. Parties of British infantry and cavalry under Japanese officers were always dropping down from apparently nowhere, and cutting off stragglers, intercepting ammunition and commissariat wagons, sometimes even firing on the artillery trains. The same thing happened on the centre and left wing. Every unit of the German army was terribly harassed by these intrepid bands. But the German commanders obstinately stuck to their plan and rushed blindly on.

Meanwhile the British levies to the number of nearly two million men of all arms slowly advanced southwards.

The army was inefficient owing to the rapidity of its formation and the rawness of its soldiers, but the Japanese generals acting in concert with Lord Egleton recognised this fact and moved it with greater care than an army of well-trained soldiers would have required. An immense force of several army corps, under one of the best Japanese field-m Marshals was despatched by rail to different parts of the Great Western Railway between Bath and Didcot. As the German armies plunged into the Midlands, this army was slowly moved up the Great Western Railway and deposited along the banks of the Thames. Another vast army was sent down through the eastern counties and stationed in the south-western corner of Essex. As the German army moved further northward, this army was slowly advanced by the north of London until it joined hands with the western army. There the two armies waited, whilst their Japanese leaders made extensive arrangements for a concentration at any required point. A third army was slowly moving southwards, following the route of the Great Northern, Midland, London and North Western, and Great Central railways, which kept it supplied. But the undergrown and underfed, town-bred men who composed these armies could not withstand the fatigue of marching, or the hardships and exposure of a soldier's life. They were taken ill by thousands and died like flies. Thus the ranks were thinned before they sighted the Germans, but Lord Egleton had foreseen this and provided an ample margin for safety.

At last the armies met, and the Germans went into action confident of victory. But they were roughly undeceived, for although the rank and file were weak and ineffective, the Japanese officers were far superior in dash and science to the Kaiser's. After all, the strength of an army lies in its brains, and the British and their Japanese allies had both brains and numbers. The Germans found themselves entangled by an immeasurably superior force, but their mad folly was unabated. The active and alert enemy snapped up stray regiments and convoys, turned both the German wings, and finally hurled the army back in confusion, inflicting immense losses. The German plans fell into greater confusion. A retreat to the south

coast was ordered, and a rear-guard action was fought in the teeth of a victorious and vindictive enemy.

The battle almost resulted in a *débâcle*, but it was not the intention of the Japanese generals to smash the Germans just then. They wanted to give them sufficient rope to hang themselves completely. They pursued the retreating and disorganised hosts with vigour for some miles. Regiments became entangled in cross roads, commanders lost their way, and thousands of stragglers were cut off. A great number of guns was also captured by the pursuing cavalry. The pursuit was given up when the beaten army was nearly in a line between Banbury and Bedford. The Germans breathed freely again, and paused to reorganise their shattered battalions. All was not lost, and with luck they might again become victors. The British army was evidently exhausted by its unparalleled efforts and would soon be crushed by the heroic soldiers of Germany.

But Marshal Tamara, the great Japanese general, who had humbled Russia in the dust, was only giving the Kaiser sufficient length of rope. Vast movements of troops took place behind the hills that bounded the horizon. The army of the west was rapidly concentrating upon the line of the Great Western Railway between London and Reading, and innumerable trains waited day and night to effect still further concentration. The eastern army was moved from Essex into Hertfordshire, the two together forming an immense semicircle.

A message was now flashed to Lord Egleton, and the British central army continued its march southwards. It soon caught up the Germans, and a number of small engagements were fought at Wolferton, Wallingford, Leighton Buzzard, and Penny Stratford. But the Germans always found themselves opposed by vastly superior numbers and had to retreat to avoid complete disaster. The retreat at last became almost a rout. As they advanced southwards into Buckinghamshire, their difficulties increased. All the principal roads converged upon London, which city would have proved a veritable death-trap at that time. Accordingly, they were forced to leave the high roads and become entangled in a maze of byways.

It had been raining ceaselessly for some days, and the soft gravel roads, churned into stiff mud by the passage

of innumerable horses, were almost impassable. Discipline became slacker as difficulties and dangers increased. Troops grew weary of the incessant hardships of the campaign. No tangible results had been obtained from this splendid series of victories, and now everything was tending to a great and final *débâcle*. No reward for the immense exertions and sacrifices of the past. Nothing in store but disgrace, defeat, and death! Provisions and ammunition were running very short. The splendid mechanism of the German army was gradually falling to pieces. Insubordination increased from hour to hour, and many regiments mutinied. Drivers cut the traces of guns and wagons, and galloped away, eager to disentangle themselves from the mob of flying infantry.

Luton, Wendover, Tring, and Aylesbury were passed with increasing confusion in a driving rain. The general staff completely lost its head in the face of gathering difficulties. Prince Prankhe was in despair and the Kaiser in a towering rage at the overthrow of all his plans, and the increasing danger to his army. The latter now began to realise that his ambitious plans for world-wide conquest and dominion were vanishing like smoke. An army, badly organised, it was true, but overwhelming in numbers, harassed his weary troops at every step. The brilliant series of victories already won was quite barren of results. The most he could hope to obtain now was an honourable peace on the condition of withdrawing his troops from England. But Lord Eagleton and the Japanese had other views concerning peace and the terms on which it was to be granted, as the sequel will show.

The Kaiser made plans and altered them every hour. It was impossible to attempt to remove his army from England since he had lost command of the sea. At last he determined to continue the retreat to Surrey, and then make a stand in an entrenched position. It was a reckless plan, but there was nothing else to save the army from complete ruin. The difficulty was to introduce order into the ranks, and extricate the army from this maze of cross-country lanes. Prince's Risborough, Cholesbury, Berkhamstead, Hemel Hempstead, and St Albans were passed, and the greater part of the army plunged into the devious lanes of the Chiltern Hundreds. Progress

became slower, and finally almost a crawl as the Germans crowded into the narrow byways.

The scene quickly became one of inextricable confusion. Guns and wagons sank to their axle-trees in the clayey mud. Regiments floundered through the stiff clay of ploughed land, and were entangled in the numerous beech plantations. The hilly country resounded with the tread of many feet, the rustling of accoutrements, and the shouts of officers and drivers. Rain dripped from beech trees, ran in rivulets down roads, and filled the ruts and footmarks. The air was saturated with moisture, and reeked with the steam arising from thousands of damp horses and men.

The Kaiser drove from Berkhamstead over the Chiltern Hundreds to Chesham, his face livid and worn with anxiety, thinking deeply, racking his mind to devise fresh plans and save the honour of his army, doing his best to ward off the despair that was rapidly engulfing him. The cavalry patrols continually brought news, but their reports became more disquieting every hour. A strong British force had been sighted near St Albans, and a heavy artillery fire poured into the Germans near that town. There had been another severe engagement with the British near Prince's Risborough, and again the Germans had to give way before superior numbers. The Kaiser ground his teeth with rage at these continual defeats and difficulties. His will was still inflexibly set on reorganising his army, and saving its honour and his own. One more decisive battle must be fought and multitudes must be mangled by shot and shell to preserve the honour of Germany and her Kaiser. The latter still had hopes of beating these raw British levies, and saving something of the fruits of previous victories.

The Kaiser's carriage splashed on through the mud and wet. The squadron of cavalry, which guarded the precious person of its Imperial Master, trotted before and behind the imperial equipage. This was followed by a long train of carriages bearing the imperial suite, the members of the general staff, the statesmen, the foreign attachés and the German princes. Behind these were light wagons bearing the servants, valets, cooks, cooking apparatus, food, and other necessaries of the imperial *ménage*—a long,

bedraggled train of steaming horses, muddy carriages, grinding, rumbling, and squelching through the mud and water. Anxious faces stared out of the windows at the mob of toiling, marching soldiers who muttered curses when they saw the originators of their hardships roll idly and luxuriously past in carriages.

The road was choked by muddy, bedraggled, drenched, and weary regiments. The Imperial Guards cleared a passage with difficulty. Infantrymen, guns, and wagons were thrust on one side, whilst the Kaiser and his suite passed by. When he was on the high ground about midway between Berkhamstead and Chesham, the sullen noise of distant artillery-fire broke upon his ear. It was a dull rumbling, almost muffled by the beechwoods and rolling hills, but it struck despair to the hearts of the imperial *entourage*. The Kaiser started, leaned forward from the luxurious cushions of his carriage, and his face became more haggard from this fresh anxiety.

"I would we were well clear of this Buckinghamshire," he muttered. "That firing seems to come from Prince's Risborough. They must have caught up our right; or——"

He unfolded a map and pored over it. The distant booming continued—low, monotonous, and melancholy, and accompanied by the ceaseless drip of rain. The Kaiser looked at Prince Hohenhaus who sat opposite.

"That other force we heard of has marched up from the right," remarked the Chancellor.

The Kaiser turned paler.

"Heaven grant that we get out of this soon!" he stammered. "If we were surrounded in these Buckinghamshire valleys, the consequences would be——"

"Your Majesty need not fear," said Hohenhaus. "It would take more than a million men to do that, and they have nothing like so many."

"Oh no, I am not afraid of being caught in a trap," interrupted the Kaiser, hastily. "And yet——"

He did not complete the sentence, but stared as if fascinated at the map he had spread out on the Chancellor's knees. He noticed that all the main roads converged upon London, like the spokes of some gigantic wheel on its hub. To proceed southwards, his army would have to traverse a maze of crooked and erratic

byways crossed by several mainroads all leading to London. Good military roads all of these, but the narrow byways his army would be obliged to cross were clayey, flinty abominations which would soon be made impassable. Most of them were deeply sunk and walled in by high hedges and beechwoods, abounding in a thousand places suitable for ambushes. He traced the road his carriage was following, and saw Chesham lying in a valley not many miles ahead. Eight roads converged on Chesham like spokes upon the hub of a smaller wheel, and three miles further to the south lay Amersham, also in a deep valley. The Kaiser made a rapid calculation with his eyes fixed on the map.

"Another fifteen miles, and we shall be out of this," he muttered.

The long cavalcade rumbled on. Without, in the pouring rain, the weary tramping soldiers heard the distant rumbling, and knew that it meant further sufferings and torments for them. But they marched doggedly on, most of them starving and ready to drop from fatigue. Some still thought loyally of the Imperial Idol who had been their religion and their God. And so they marched on, the artillery rolling amidst the Buckinghamshire hills, and making a deadly funeral music to accompany their dismal and disastrous march.

The Kaiser's cavalcade rolled on towards Chesham. The gloomy October afternoon gradually merged into evening, and it was growing dark when the carriages descended the hill leading from the high ground into the town. As they proceeded, the press of soldiers became greater, until the road was almost blocked. Regiments left the road and marched across the sodden fields to make better progress. The guards before the Kaiser's carriage shouted for room for His Majesty, but there was little response save muttered curses from the press of troops in front. The cavalcade came to a standstill, the steam from the heated horses gleaming brightly in the light of lanterns. There was a confused noise from the front, the pattering of innumerable feet, and the rustling of dripping garments, while from the distant hills above the ominous thunder of artillery still rumbled. A confused murmuring, a muttering of terrible reports, and

surmises passed from mouth to mouth down the ranks of the waiting crowds of troops.

"A British army right across our path. The van rolled back. Regiments falling back on Amersham and Chesham. Caught in a trap!"

The Kaiser alighted to learn the reason of the delay, but heard none of these ominous rumours. A passage was soon cleared and the imperial cavalcade resumed its progress. It was nearly dark when it rolled into Chesham with a clatter of horses and rumbling of wheels, a bedraggled train, symbolic of disaster! The town was almost choked with the press of men, wagons, and horses, but all the private houses were in total darkness, and the shops shuttered, for the inhabitants were afraid of this undisciplined rabble of foreign soldiers. The Kaiser's carriages rumbled down the High street and entered the market square, also choked with soldiers. But way was quickly made, the carriages were drawn up in lines in the square, and the imperial carriage halted at the door of the Royal Hotel, which had already been engaged for the accommodation of the Kaiser and his suite. As the carriages came to a standstill, the lights of the hotel revealed a crowd of generals standing at the entrance.

All were livid and haggard with despair. When the Kaiser alighted, the group opened out, and a tall general who was covered in mud from head to foot stepped out from the porch. For a moment the overhanging lamp lighted up his worn features, and the stony despair of his eyes; it flashed from the raindrops and patches of mud that covered his dirty uniform. He advanced to meet the Kaiser, whilst the other generals stood nervous and perfectly still as if carved out of marble.

"Well Prankhe, what news?" asked the Kaiser briskly, as he advanced to meet the chief of his staff.

There was silence for a moment broken only by the heavy breathing of horses and grinding of wheels as the carriages of the imperial train disposed of their burdens. The Kaiser breathed heavily as he awaited the reply.

"Your Majesty," said Prince Prankhe, "the worst has happened. The British have surrounded us!"

As he spoke, a loud rumbling of artillery thundered from the hills above as if to say "Amen" to his statement.

CHAPTER II

THROUGHOUT the night small, alert men, wearing the uniform of Japanese generals were busy making preparations for the complete destruction of the German army. They were dotted about on the Chiltern Hundreds and at Watford, Rickmansworth, Beaconsfield, and High Wycombe, hurrying up more divisions to make an impenetrable barrier of fire and steel around the demoralised Germans hosts. Since they were not over-confident in the fighting and marching capabilities of Lord Eagleton's raw levies, they employed double or treble the number of soldiers actually necessary, had they been operating with a regular army. An immense ring was almost closed round the disorganised Germans. The great semicircle had moved upwards until it passed through High Wycombe, Beaconsfield, Chalfont St Giles, Rickmansworth, and skirted Watford. The pursuing hosts were hastened on by forced marches during the night, and by the morning formed another huge semicircle passing through Abbot's Langley, Boxmoor, Berkhamstead, and Wiggington. Two army corps had been advanced through Prince's Risborough in the afternoon of the preceding day, and had opened a terrible fire on the German right wing, driving it eastwards into the Chiltern Hundreds, and finally forging another link on to the huge chain. At about the same time the leading German columns came into contact with strong British forces posted near Chorley Wood, Chalfont St Giles, Coleshill, Penn, and on the high ground above Wycombe. Swept by a terrific artillery-fire, the Germans wavered and finally retired with great confusion. The increasing darkness, the crowded condition of the roads, and the dispirited state of the soldiers created a panic. The utmost confusion soon reigned in the German vanguard. Whole regiments broke and fled regardless of their officers. Some went to the right in

the hope of getting round by High Wycombe; others fled eastwards towards London. But the narrow crooked lanes soon absorbed all stragglers, and the majority fell back upon the main body.

This disaster to the advance guard checked the retreat of the whole German army, and caused a thrill of terror to pass through Amersham and Chesham to the rear-guard, which was north of Berkhamstead and Tring. The badness of the byways, and the absence of any high-roads leading southwards increased the difficulties of the discomfited invaders. All roads and lanes were blocked by a struggling mass of soldiery, guns, wagons, and horses, trying in vain to march away from this fearful maze of byroads and beech thickets. The German generals were helpless in this fearful *impasse*. They had little knowledge of the country or roads, and they knew nothing of the numbers or position of the British. The state of things became more critical from hour to hour. Baggage and ammunition trains had gone astray, food ran short, and many of the soldiers were ill from privations and exposure.

The rain ceased with the approach of night, and the drenched army bivouacked in cold and discomfort spread out over the stony and hilly tract of South Buckinghamshire. A council of war was held at Chesham. The most sober-minded generals advised a surrender on condition that the German army should be allowed to march to the coast with the honours of war and disembark for the Fatherland. But the Kaiser was maddened by the failure of his plans, and adhered obstinately to his idea of continuing the retreat into Surrey and taking up an entrenched position in that county. The folly of pursuing such a course was pointed out to him, but in vain. His mad folly must be pursued to the end, and Prince Prankhe gave the necessary orders. The army was to break through the British lines at all hazards. More rivers of blood must flow because the Imperial Will ordered it.

But movements, of which the German general staff knew nothing, were being pushed forward behind the screen of hills. The German rear was attacked by the British with great vigour at daybreak, and, after some

hours' fighting, driven into the Chiltern Hundreds with hordes of mounted infantry at its heels. The German vanguard was reduced to some state of order and led against the British lines about three miles to the south of Amersham. But it was like dashing against the face of a cliff. Every hedge in this thickly-wooded country bristled with bayonets, and the sunken roads were lined with soldiers. Every attack was repulsed, often with great loss, and the disorganised Germans, wearied by weeks of slaughter, recoiled before this deluge of soldiers. Guns, admirably screened by beechwoods and thickets, poured shells on to the invaders whenever they ventured into open ground. The strip of country extending from Chalfont St Giles and Penn to the south of Missenden became a battlefield. The struggle only lasted for a few hours, and the Germans withdrew after appalling losses. It seemed impossible for them to make any progress southwards in the face of overwhelming numbers. A retreat to the south-west was suggested, but news came to the effect that the British were in great force in the neighbourhood of Wycombe. But the latter did not seem to be eager to press their advantage and did not advance any further northwards than Penn. Their dilatory movements did not, however, deceive the acute German strategists who experienced a horrible thrill as they felt the merciless net tightening round their soldiers.

A vigorous rear-guard action was fought by the Germans in the Chiltern Hundreds. Their retreating columns were harassed by a furious artillery-fire which searched every wood or coppice that might afford the slightest shelter to the stricken soldiers of the Kaiser. Little by little they were pressed southwards, and soon the roads converging on Chesham were choked by a hurrying crowd of fugitives.

The Kaiser had been awake since daybreak. He was not now watching the progress of his soldiers from an eminence as at Chatham. He walked to and fro in the principal room of the Royal Hotel at Chesham listening to the never-ceasing thunder of artillery that was sweeping away his plans of world-wide dominion, and fast humbling himself and Germany in the dust. His face was drawn

and haggard from the incessant anxiety and crushing fatigue. His hands were folded behind his back, his shoulders stooping, and his eyes bloodshot and protruding as he walked to and fro. Sometimes he remained still, wrapped in thought, trying in vain to devise an escape from this crushing disaster he knew to be almost inevitable. He often started violently when the terrible detonations swept down from the battlefield and smote upon his ear. Sometimes he consulted the maps that were spread out on the table and almost immediately threw them down with a gesture of impatience. He was irritable with his attendants whenever they approached. Messages came down from the battle area every few minutes. They were all in the same strain; his soldiers obliged to give way at all points before vastly superior numbers, ammunition growing alarmingly short, and great losses in guns and horses. Reports grew hourly more alarming, and the concussions from the artillery above Chesham more deafening. The Kaiser groaned aloud as he felt this terrible net tightening around him.

"These wretched English must have more than a million soldiers!" he exclaimed, in a frenzy of rage and alarm.

At midday more alarming reports arrived. The whole of the German rear-guard was flying in a panic upon Chesham. The Kaiser was urged by his staff to move on to Amersham where he would be safe for a time. The imperial carriages were accordingly made ready shortly after twelve o'clock. Again the long procession of vehicles rumbled over the streets and all the imperial train rolled out of Chesham followed by wagons bearing the imperial plate, the food, the wines, and the cooks, all the luxuries that never leave a Crowned Head.

The streets of Chesham already swarmed with undisciplined fugitives, many of them slightly wounded, who cursed loudly at the Kaiser as he rolled past in his luxury and state. The cavalcade, headed by a detachment of Royal Guards, laboriously ascended the muddy road leading to Amersham. A tempest of sound smote on the ears of the members of the imperial *entourage*, when they were clear of the buildings. An incessant roar of artillery mingled with the sharp crackling of rifles came from north, east, and west.

The drivers quickened the pace, anxious to escape from this terrible tumult of sound. They reached the high ground separating the two valleys. The Kaiser glanced for a moment at the Chesham valley studded with red-roofed houses and numerous timber yards, and obscured in places by a bluish mist curling up from the damp ground. All around lay the hills showing innumerable patches of crimson, russet, and gold, where beech trees glowed with autumn hues. As the carriages rolled over the level ground at the summit, he saw the trampled fields and golden-foliaged trees stretching out on either side, and a network of narrow lanes set between high hedges and leading nowhere.

The Kaiser crossed the railway and commenced the descent into Amersham. He saw another long valley, more beechwoods on either side, the rough, flinty soil, and far in front more hills rising up speckled with blue mist and the hues of autumn. He could see almost to Coleshill and Penn in front, to Chalfont St Giles on the left, and to Little Missenden on the right. Wherever he looked, he saw his own soldiers dotted about on this gigantic chessboard which the Japanese controlled; singly, in groups, in thousands, their bayonets flashing in the autumn sunlight. And from the distant beechwoods, radiant with the hues of autumn, and the vast circle of horizon spread out before him, came the incessant and ominous thunder of the artillery that was sweeping his soldiers into this mighty net of blood and fire.

The Kaiser alighted at the principal Amersham inn, and his train of carriages was parked in the centre of the wide road which passes through the town. Prankhe soon arrived and brought more disquieting reports. He advised a meeting with the British generalissimo, so that the nature of the British demands might be ascertained, and terms of peace arranged. The Kaiser walked restlessly to and fro in a state of indecision. The artillery-fire still rumbled from the north of Chesham, but as the afternoon wore away, it gradually died down. The detonations, which came from the south, also diminished, and by evening the sound of firearms had ceased altogether.

The Kaiser began to recover his spirits. Evidently his brave soldiers had at last been able to make a stand

against the British. But such was in reality far from being the case, especially near Chesham. A disorganised rabble of German soldiers, many of them without arms or accoutrements, poured down the numerous byways and lanes that converged upon Chesham. Officers gave orders in vain; no notice was taken of them in this undisciplined *sauve qui peut*. They choked Chesham and soon crowded the Amersham road, possessed by the idea of getting south as quickly as possible. But they knew nothing of the roads, and were soon lost in the tangle of lanes and byways. The soldiers who fled down the London road or towards Aylesbury came into contact with strong detachments of British, and were either turned back or captured.

The Kaiser was mistaken if he thought he had balked Lord Eagleton. The battle was recommenced at day-break by a general advance of the southern part of the British army. It moved slowly, but relentlessly, and with infinite care. Every wood was raked by a terrible shell-fire. Wherever the Germans collected in open spaces, shells were quickly dropped amongst them. Since they could not reply effectively on account of lack of ammunition, they were gradually swept backwards towards the Amersham valley. Penn, Omar Hill, Hazlemere, Kingshill, and Prestwood were slowly cleared of Germans. But the British went to work very leisurely, and were not tempted to rashness by their success.

By five o'clock in the afternoon they were in possession of Coleshill and the edge of the ridge which overlooks Amersham. The Germans poured down into the valley under a terrible hail of shot and shell. At the same time British forces pressed up from the east through Chenies, Latimer, and Florenden, and from the west through Little Missenden. A terrible artillery-fire also swept the plateau separating Amersham from Chesham. The German soldiers who had been driven there from Chesham crowded every lane, a disorganised mob without ammunition, and even without arms, tottering from fatigue and starvation. They ran wildly hither and thither in their terror, and wherever they went, the terrible shells and bullets mowed them down. They surrendered by thousands, and guns were captured by dozens. By eight

o'clock the plateau was occupied by a strong force of British artillery and infantry, and the last links of the steel ring were securely welded together. The German army lay huddled and disorganised, cut in two pieces, in the valleys of Chesham and Amersham, and an immense ring of more than a million and a half British and thousands of guns was posted as an impenetrable barrier on the surrounding hills. All night the British and Japanese generals strengthened their positions and gunners brought up more guns to annihilate the German army if it continued the battle.

The Kaiser had spent all that agonising day riding up and down the Missenden road, while the incessant roar of artillery thundered in his ears, and shells shrieked over his head or exploded on the slopes with deafening detonations. Wherever he turned, the debris of this cruel and merciless war met his eyes; guns and wagons overturned, riderless horses galloping furiously, and the shattered remnants of batteries painfully fleeing from the field of battle.

At every turn, too, the Kaiser was met by suffering humanity, wounded troopers galloping past and falling from the saddle through faintness, pierced by bayonets, hands hacked off by sabres, legs and arms tortured by bullets, and heads gashed by bayonets and swords. Thousands of infantrymen staggered along with grey, blood-stained faces, some reeled from faintness into ditches, others fell down with a last cry of agony and weakness at the very feet of their Kaiser. Hundreds of wounded horses galloped down the slopes with fearful cries, and a constant stream of fugitives poured down from the beechwoods. The road was soon blocked by a panting, swearing crowd of soldiery, some trying to go eastwards, others endeavouring to escape westwards from this Hell of anguish and defeat. But the doors were already closed by British troops led by skilful Japanese.

The Kaiser, maddened by despair and the sense of crushing disaster, rode back to his quarters, followed by his suite. But the messengers of this fast gathering disaster still clustered about him like eagles around a carcase. He raved and stormed as each fresh message arrived from the area of battle. Prankhe insisted that

everything was hopelessly lost, and that a capitulation must be made, or a frightful massacre would follow. The doubtful mercy of a surrender was due to his brave soldiers. But the Kaiser was still obstinate and proposed wild schemes. He would put himself at the head of his faithful Guards, and cut a way out for the army. He would die fighting for his army and for Germany, and his name would go down to posterity enshrined in glorious renown. He would issue a proclamation to his soldiers and ask them to make one more heroic effort for their Emperor and Fatherland.

Prankhe smiled coldly and shrugged his shoulders as he pointed to the golden beechwoods that fringed the hills.

"Sir, there are hundreds of thousands of troops up there. Not a single man could get through."

The Kaiser turned away with a gesture of impatience, and glanced up at the hillside covered with his wretched beaten soldiers fleeing from the storm of lead. A word from him and all this abominable anguish would cease. But he refused to yield while there were still men to fight for him and his ambition. He continued his restless pacing to and fro.

The hours of cruel agony dragged on. Amersham was filled with a despairing crowd of soldiers hurrying to hide themselves in the buildings and gardens with the fatal instinct of the conquered. The Kaiser's train of carriages still stood drawn up in the centre of the street, the wagons of wine, of silver, glass, and cooking apparatus, all muddy, grim, and funereal, and seemed unreal as they stood partly enshrouded in the autumnal mists. The stream of soldiers swirled round these emblems of imperial magnificence and decadence. It was growing dark, but still more tortured fugitives arrived, pouring down from the high ground to the north of Amersham, and swarming in from Missenden and Chalfont St Peter. Other streams poured into Chesham from the Chiltern Hundreds. And inside these two gigantic cauldrons of misery which the Japanese strategists had made swirled and eddied the wreckage of the German army, hundreds of thousands of soldiers whirling in a maelstrom of wretchedness, two boiling Hells of misery. Few of the miserable

soldiers as yet knew that an unbreakable ring had been forged around them, and madly continued their struggling march, hoping to find an exit somewhere. At last night descended on the seething mass of human beings, and out of the darkness came the incessant murmur of men, the trampling of feet, the groaning of wounded, all the intolerable anguish of war and defeat.

The Kaiser passed a sleepless night, and when day broke, had made up his mind to throw himself on the mercy of the British, and treat for the surrender of himself and his army.

The sun was just rising over the beechwoods, when General Ergstein, accompanied by a lieutenant bearing a white flag, rode out of Amersham and ascended the road leading to Chesham. Behind him came the imperial carriage still covered with mud, bearing the Kaiser and Prince Hohenhaus. The procession was met at Chesham Bois by a British patrol and conducted to Lord Eagleton's temporary quarters three miles away. After half an hour's winding down muddy lanes, past artillery in position and battalions of British infantry, it halted at a gate leading into a field. A British general advanced to open the door of the carriage, and the Kaiser and Prince Hohenhaus alighted.

"The Commander-in-chief!" said the Kaiser tersely.

The general saluted and led him to a tent situated on a slight eminence a few hundred yards away. A tall, well-knit soldier with grey hair stood by the tent sweeping the southern horizon with his glasses. Around him were grouped other men in British uniforms and several small men wearing Japanese uniforms. They were talking together and consulting maps. As the Kaiser approached, Lord Eagleton closed his glasses with a snap and turned to a Japanese field-marshal who stood by his side.

"Our arrangements are now completed," he said. "All our artillery is in position."

The Japanese officer nodded silently, and then all turned to regard the new arrivals.

"His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Germany, my lord!" announced the officer who conducted the Kaiser.

Lord Eagleton bowed coldly.

"Well sir?" he inquired, in a harsh voice.

"I have come to treat for the capitulation of my army," said the conquered Emperor.

Lord Eagleton remained cool and impassive. He made a sign to a secretary, who produced a folded document.

"Read our terms to His Imperial Majesty," he commanded.

A deep silence fell on the little group, while the secretary read the conditions upon which the British Government would accept the capitulation of the German army. Lord Eagleton's steely eyes glittered with merciless triumph as he fastened them on his defeated adversary. The Japanese folded their arms and looked as impassive as statues. The Kaiser staggered with rage and shame when he learnt the severity of the British terms. No marching out with the honours of war. No speedy re-shipment of the defeated army!

But much more severe conditions. An enormous bill to be paid, a heavy punishment to be administered, and then Great Britain would consent to make peace with Germany. No juggling with diplomats, no whittling away the hard-earned fruits of victory, no room for future shuffling and evasion, no conferences, and no opportunities for cheating. The Lion had got the Eagle between his paws and would not let him go until he had paid the uttermost farthing. The one strong man of England was determined that England's enemy should be crushed for ever, and this tiger of Europe should have all her teeth drawn. His methods were unprecedented, undiplomatic, and savage, but to the point.

The Kaiser staggered, gasped, turned whiter and whiter as sentence after sentence of that terrible document smote his ears like the knell of Doom. The Kaiser, the princes of the empire, the imperial statesmen, the members of the imperial *entourage* were all without exception to be surrendered as prisoners of war. The whole army, all officers and men, to be prisoners. All guns, weapons, and munitions of war to be surrendered. All German vessels of war to be handed over. All German oversea possessions to be ceded to Great Britain. Alsace and Lorraine to be given to France. A war indemnity of five hundred million pounds to be paid. The Kaiser, the

royal princes, and the statesmen to remain in England as prisoners of war until a substantial part of the terms had been carried out.

The Kaiser stormed and raved with fury when he heard these crushing conditions of peace.

"Impossible!" he cried, savagely. "I will not consent to a single article! It is sheer robbery!"

Lord Eagleton's steely eyes glittered. He looked around the horizon and thought of the immensity of death and suffering spread over those thousands of acres, and caused by the fallen Emperor who stood before him. The land seemed to him to groan with the cruel torment of war. He thought of the anguish of the massacre at Chatham, the savage terms imposed on the British army, the bombardment and fire of London, all the abominable agony of those weeks of torture and shame, and his heart was steeled against the author of this diabolical bloodshed.

"You are completely defeated," he said harshly. "The British troops surround your army and outnumber it by nearly four to one. You cannot offer any further resistance."

The Kaiser stamped his foot on the ground.

"I refuse, I absolutely refuse your terms!" he cried passionately. "My brave troops will cut their way out. They would rather die to a man than submit to such disgraceful terms. I will march at their head and lead them to victory myself."

Lord Eagleton smiled unpleasantly and the Japanese shrugged their shoulders.

"Impossible!" he said, sharply. "You had better accept our terms, or you will never return to Germany."

"What do you mean?" asked the Kaiser fiercely.

"If the capitulation on the terms I have proposed is not signed by twelve o'clock, the British artillery will bombard those two valleys."

He indicated with a wave of his hand the Amersham valley on one side and the Chesham valley on the other. The Kaiser shuddered, but he was mad with anger and shame at his humiliating and irretrievable disaster.

"Then do your worst!" he cried, shaking a fist at his terrible Conqueror. "I will not accept your terms!"

Lord Eagleton's eyes shot sparks of fire, but he remained quite unmoved.

"Then there is no occasion to prolong this interview," he said quietly. "Your Majesty will return to Amersham. General Barkford, conduct His Imperial Majesty to his carriage!"

Lord Eagleton turned on his heel and spoke in an undertone to a Japanese general. A British officer came forward and escorted the Kaiser back to his carriage. The miserable cavalcade trotted along the winding lanes and down into Amersham. The Kaiser's carriage passed groups of soldiers, the wreckage of regiments and squadrons, wounded men wandering about, and others lying on the ground in a fainting condition, or dead from exposure and privations. There was the wreckage of battle everywhere, in the fields, the lanes, the ditches; dispirited soldiers in thousands. But the Kaiser saw none of these; his brain was maddened by defeat and humiliation. As he re-entered Amersham, the clang of a bell awoke him from his thoughts. Nine strokes, one after the other. It was the church clock striking the hour of nine. Three more hours before the terrible massacre would begin!

A council of war was held immediately on the Kaiser's arrival, and the British terms were discussed. All the generals agreed that it was impossible to cut a way out and urged the acceptance of the British terms. It was not of the slightest use provoking a bombardment; such a course would result in a frightful massacre for which the Kaiser would be held responsible. The sacrifice of the flower of the German nobility and nearly half a million brave men would do no good to Germany. Such a disaster would produce a greater depression in Germany than the acceptance of the British terms. Prince Prankhe himself recognised that he had been badly beaten in this second game of military chess, though by no fault of his own, and counselled submission.

At last the Kaiser gave way. At eleven o'clock the imperial cavalcade set out again, bearing the nobles, the princes, the statesmen and the generals, the Kaiser's carriage leading the way. The melancholy procession of conquered great men of Germany wended its way up the long hill to the high ground where the Conqueror awaited

it. It trotted down the winding lanes past beech trees golden and radiant in the brilliant sunlight; past rows of terrible cannon already trained and loaded to bombard the conquered army; past grim Japanese calmly directing these preparations for an abominable massacre.

What ensued seemed to the beaten German chiefs like the scenes of some frightful dream, a hideous and awful nightmare that would never end.

The Kaiser, white as death, trembling in every limb, crushed almost to the ground by the shame and agony of defeat, was again received by a British general attended by a Japanese staff. No one saluted. A Japanese field-marshal advanced, was introduced, and received his sword. Other officers took the swords of his princes and generals. Scarcely a word was spoken; scarcely a sound disturbed the air but the pattering of feet on muddy ground, whilst the solemn but merciless etiquette of war was duly observed. The Kaiser was conducted to a rough table on which something white was spread out. A Japanese general dipped a pen in the ink. Then all waited as if expecting someone. Another general steadied the table by thrusting its legs into the damp earth. Some yellow leaves fluttered down on to the white object from an overhanging beech tree; someone shook them off. Then the group round the table parted, and a tall officer approached. He took the pen and wrote something on the paper—

Eagleton.

Someone handed the pen to the Kaiser. A finger pointed to the place for his signature. His hand shook as he signed away his valiant army, the remains of his navy, his colonies, and the huge indemnity. Then Lord Eagleton took the pen again and handed it with a bow to one of the small yellow men. The British officers crowded round the table as the illustrious Japanese soldier wrote his name in Japanese characters beside that of Lord Eagleton. Prince Hohenhaus signed next, and a secretary took the document away. Another copy was signed and handed to the Kaiser. Then all the British and Japanese officers dispersed except one British general. He approached this swordless, beaten Napoleon, and saluted.

"Will Your Majesty please follow me?"

He conducted the Kaiser back to his carriage and the door was closed. A guard of Japanese soldiers surrounded it and drew their swords. The members of the imperial suite, the German generals and statesmen, the royal princes and attachés who had come to exult over Britain's downfall were conducted to their carriages and shut in, swordless, and heads bowed in shame. Mounted guards with drawn swords surrounded every carriage. Then sharp words of command rang out, and the cavalcade set forth to convey the German prisoners of war to their place of captivity.

EPILOGUE

THUS the great struggle for supremacy between Great Britain and Germany ended in the triumph of the former over her aggressive rival. But her victory only came when she had been brought to the brink of annihilation by the futile and treacherous policy of her so-called statesmen, and the selfishness and shirking of duty on the part of her citizens. Her final triumph was brought about, not by the genius of her politicians and statesmen, but by the timely and skilful aid of Japan.

The desolating war-storm had been slowly gathering for years, and every thinking man must have foreseen the deadly conflict between these two colossi. The German Empire grew more powerful, restless, and aggressive from year to year, and was ruled over by an ambitious and arrogant Kaiser. That Sovereign had at his disposal the largest and finest army in the world. The Germans were industrious, patriotic, and submitted to universal military service. They multiplied excessively, but were bound to their Fatherland by the strongest ties of patriotism, and shirked no irksome duties, no expenditure to further its interests. The brilliant victories of 1870 had taught them that solid rewards result from careful preparation, stern devotion to duty, and unflinching patriotism. The ambitions of its rulers infected the whole of this highly-educated, painstaking nation. All dreamed of an expansion which would make the German Empire the ruling Power of the world. But it was impossible to expand in Europe, for Germany was surrounded by doubtful friends, and any attempt to seize the territory of neighbours would have led to a hostile coalition, which would have crushed even her superb army.

Circumstances brought Germany into fierce rivalry with Great Britain all over the world. The latter possessed an empire consisting of vast countries with undeveloped resources scattered over the globe, and loosely

bound to the Mother-country. All these vast tracts of land were defended by a puny army of a few hundred thousand men, and a fleet quite inadequate for its task. The British army was badly organised and vilely led; the British navy was far too small to watch over these far-distant countries, to defend the Mother-country, and to protect scattered British shipping. Treacherous Governments, acting under the orders of a selfish and unpatriotic electorate, had reduced the strength of the navy again and again, and had starved both services by neglect and niggardly expenditure. The army was ridiculously small, considering the vast empire it had to defend; even too small to ward off danger from Great Britain.

The military and naval weakness of this unwieldy giant was a strong temptation to German statesmen. They were perfectly aware of the inherent rottenness of the British Empire. Here lay a solution for all Germany's troubles, and ample means of satisfying her ambition. All this empire and a large sum of money might be wrung from Great Britain if Germany made necessary preparations and submitted to needful sacrifices. The strength of Germany's fleet was increased by leaps and bounds. The hostile purpose of this increase might have been manifest even to asses, for there was no Power, except Great Britain, with which Germany was ever likely to have a naval conflict. But the German Government made repeated assurances, and British statesmen and public were quite blind to its hostile purpose. Other Powers, which might have made objections to this plan of aggression, were bribed by promises, or threatened into becoming allies or neutrals. If the navy of Great Britain had been twice as powerful, it could have overcome the Kaiser's coalition; and had she possessed a million soldiers, France would never have joined the coalition. If the Indian army had been twice as large, Russia would not have been tempted by the attractive reward held out by the Kaiser. But Great Britain would never learn the lessons taught by the Crimean War, the Boer War, and numerous minor campaigns. She had always muddled through successfully in the past; why should she not continue to do so in the future?

It required an immense disaster to rouse British citizens to an adequate idea of their duties and responsibilities. Many causes, besides inadequate military and naval preparations, led up to a series of disasters which culminated in the burning of London. Problems of vital national importance were never properly tackled. The question of food supply in time of war had never received proper consideration. There was not at any time sufficient food in the country to last longer than a few weeks. Owing to the criminal neglect of agriculture, five-sixths of the food consumed in Great Britain was imported from countries thousands of miles away. This fact alone made the position of the country very precarious in the event of war with a great Power. Directly war was declared, the supply of food was at the mercy of speculators, traitors, and German agents. The enormous rise of prices and the speculation in food which were sure to follow a declaration of war brought the country to such a critical state that no statesman should have dared to allow England to be dragged into a war. This defect alone rendered it impossible for England to declare war against a first-class Power with any great prospect of success.

The problem of the unemployed was also never properly tackled, and became more acute when it cropped up every recurring winter. Aliens were allowed to immigrate into the country without hindrance, and fill positions that ought to have been reserved for British subjects. The public would not even entertain the idea of universal military service, or even of universal military training. The exportation of Welsh steam-coal, that life-blood of navies, was also permitted, and German syndicates were even allowed to own Welsh coal-fields. Business men were quite willing to sell their country's best interests. An insane fiscal system enabled the foreigner to rob British workmen of their wages. It seemed as if successive Governments did their utmost to give away British gold to the foreigner and weaken the Empire. Even the colonies were rebuffed when they wished to be united more closely to Great Britain by an improved fiscal policy.

The national physique had been slowly decaying for years. This was due to the exodus from the country to towns, to unhealthy occupations, adulterated food, and

hygienic neglect. Physical unfitness was evident everywhere, one half of the nation being underfed and overworked, whilst the other half sapped its strength and morals with over-abundance and idleness. In spite of the increasing devotion of all classes to athletics, the national physique continued to decay. The conditions of life were eminently unhealthy. Love of ease and pleasure dominated everything, duty was derided, patriotism a mere name, morals a farce, and religion an amusement for idle hours. National solidity was swamped by the excessive frivolity that was evident in every walk of life. All classes were permeated by a lack of discipline that ate like a cancer into the vitals of society. The rising generation became more lax, undisciplined, luxurious, inefficient, and physically unfit. Children were excessively pampered, and grew up to be selfish, indolent, and unprofitable citizens.

More attention was bestowed on sport and athletics every year, and increasing sums of money were squandered on pleasure. British citizens were too lazy, apathetic, and selfish to defend either their country or empire. Immense sums of money, which should have been spent on national defences, were squandered on sport. A vast deception was practised on the nation by the politicians of successive Governments. All Governments were under the finger and thumb of the democracy, and those politicians who imposed least burdens on the country were sure of the popular vote. The services were starved to provide the Government with ample funds for rewarding supporters. The British army became worse every year. No effective improvements had been made since the disastrous experiences of South Africa. The army remained the rich man's toy and recreation. It grew smaller in numbers, worse in training, and more deficient in capable leaders. Its armament was always hopelessly out of date. British military science had become, like British religion, a collection of obsolete and spiritless formulæ. The volunteers were allowed to decay. There had been no universal military training; schoolboys had not been taught the elements of soldiering. Consequently, there was no trained reserve to swell the numbers of the regular army, or to take its place when it had been wiped out.

No Government had had the courage to bring forward any proposals for even the mildest form of universal military training. The prevailing indiscipline of the country was such a menace to any proposals of this kind that the self-seeking statesmen who had caught the popular vote did not dare to suggest them. The working classes did not see why they should spend the hours of their well-earned rest in preparing themselves for national defence. Overworked and underpaid clerks reasoned similarly.

That was the position of one side of the community. On the other side was a number of manufacturers, business men, capitalists, professional men, and men of independent means, who took every benefit they could extract from the country and would not contribute a jot of their time or money to its defence. Many of these helped their country's future enemies by their selfish and thoughtless habit of selling steam-coal and warships to them.

There was a lack of fitness in every department of life. The system of employment was stupid and wasteful, and nerves were wrecked by a merciless system of competition. There was a vast increase of rates due to municipal jobbery and extravagance. The fiscal system was disastrous to the nation. The education of the masses was lacking in thoroughness, whilst that of the upper classes was stupid, smattering, out-of-date, and useless. Schools were given up to the pursuit of athletics and the study of dead languages, when they should have taught modern subjects and inculcated habits of industry and discipline. The majority of citizens took but little interest in national affairs. There was a vast and bitter controversy concerning the control of national schools, but little notice was taken of affairs of the greatest national importance. Self-interest, love of ease, and frivolity, were the gods worshipped in Great Britain.

The system of Government by party grew more corrupt and inefficient from year to year. Such a system could not meet a serious national crisis, or maintain the highest state of national efficiency. The nominal rulers were aristocratic, but the spirit was thoroughly democratic. No parliamentary leader had the courage to go to the country and tell it what was urgently necessary and what

it must do. There had been no leader worthy of the name for years. Women were made to pay taxes, but were not allowed to vote at parliamentary elections. The system of party Government seriously hampered foreign relations. It caused vital national concerns to be subordinated to petty party interests. Party was the god of politicians and the country; it was worshipped with a blind devotion that no disaster could shatter. Parliamentary machinery could be manipulated so that a small party, if out of temper, was able to block public business and imperil the state. This general inefficiency was augmented by the hereditary politicians who led the two principal parties, and by the mere boys who were pushed into Parliament by influential relations to occupy their idle hours in playing with national concerns and the most vital imperial interests.

It seemed as if nothing, not even the severest lessons of the past, the examples of history, or the warnings of a few honest statesmen would ever bring about a thorough reform. The country was being slowly ruined by a decaying national physique, an effete aristocracy, an ineffective Church, a vast warring of creeds, an antiquated and foolish system of education, and a gilded society jewelled with tinsel to conceal its inherent rottenness.

Although Great Britain emerged from the struggle victorious, the cost of her past sins was immense. The whole Empire was in a critical condition at the close of the conflict, and it seemed as if it would never recover any measure of its former prosperity. The colonies seethed with discontent when they heard they had been handed over to Germany by the first treaty signed by Sir Arthur Macmore. Their loyalty and that of India were much shaken at the discovery of how precarious the position of England had been. The British fleet that had formerly ruled the world was almost annihilated, for only a few unseaworthy battleships and cruisers and a score of destroyers remained after the final naval engagement.

Great Britain was a chaos of disorder and suffering. Every department of industrial life was dislocated. All trade and commerce were at a standstill, and employment very scarce. The country suffered from famine for a long time after the cessation of hostilities, for it took weeks to import sufficient food to supply all the popula-

tion. Disease caused by privations raged throughout the land. And to this were added the horrors of a pestilence engendered by the stench arising from the thousands of dead horses and men that were strewn over every battlefield.

A continual wail of anguish for the multitude of men killed during the war rose from every corner of the stricken land. London lay black, grim, and silent, a vast and unsightly ruin of noble buildings and monuments, and scarcely any business doing, for all financial operations had been strangled by the internecine struggle. Her railway communications with the rest of England were almost entirely cut off on account of the blowing up of stations and bridges. Kent, Surrey, Hertford, Middlesex, Bedford, and Buckingham were trodden almost to a wilderness by the passage of myriads of armed men. Whole towns and villages had been reduced to ruins during the progress of battles. The crops had been destroyed, and all cattle either killed or driven away. Even the final victory gave little satisfaction, for it was universally known that it was due to the highly-skilled aid of Japan, and not to the martial prowess of the British.

But if Britain writhed from her wounds, the state of Germany was far more critical. The fruits of her magnificent series of victories were torn from her grasp in the hour of her triumph. Her fleet was confiscated, the cream of her army destroyed, the result of years of preparation gone in a breath. Shorn of her oversea possessions, her Kaiser and Chiefs prisoners of war, her trade ruined, her financial position critical, an immense bill to be paid to her Conqueror, Russia sneering, France triumphant at the restoration of lost provinces, the rest of Europe jeering at the misfortunes of its tyrant, her punishment was indeed great. Then there were internal disorders; the socialists aggressive, German states wanting disunion, the people crying out against the mad imperialist idea, all trade at a standstill, the terrible wail of anguish for slaughtered soldiers, and the shame and humiliation of defeat. And all wrought by the despised yellow monkeys from the Far East.

The rivalry between the two colossi of Western Europe had been growing more acute for years, and they had

been urged on to their mutual ruin by an irresponsible Press and unprincipled politicians. The inevitable collision took place, and the main result was that the undisputed supremacy of the sea and the lion's share of the world's trade passed to the United States. Business, and not sentiment, is the ruling idea of American statesmen and people. They loved the Almighty Dollar better than the Mother of their race. America rioted in prosperity at the close of this titanic struggle. True to her business principles, she kept entirely aloof while the conflict raged, and her cousin England would have been shorn of her world-wide Empire and her millions, would have sunk to the level of a third-class power with no chance of rising again had not gallant and faithful Japan arrived with her timely aid.

THE END