

Le Queux William

The Invasion



William Le Queux

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PREFACE

"I sometimes despair of the country ever becoming alive to the danger of the unpreparedness of our present position until too late to prevent some fatal catastrophe."

This was the keynote of a solemn warning made in the House of Lords by Earl Roberts. His lordship, whilst drawing attention to our present inadequate forces, strongly urged that action should be taken in accordance with the recommendations of the Elgin Commission that "no military system could be considered satisfactory which did not contain powers of expansion outside the limit of the regular forces of the Crown."

"The lessons of the late war appear to have been forgotten. The one prevailing idea seems to be," said Earl Roberts, "to cut down our military expenditure without reference to our increased responsibilities and our largely augmented revenue. History tells us in the plainest terms that an Empire which cannot defend its own possessions must inevitably perish." And with this view both Lord Milner and the Marquis of Lansdowne concurred. But surely this is not enough. If we are to retain our position as the first nation of the world we must be prepared to defend any raid made upon our shores.

The object of this book is to illustrate our utter unpreparedness for war from a military standpoint; to show how, under certain conditions which may easily occur, England can be successfully invaded by Germany; and to present a picture of the ruin which must inevitably fall upon us on the evening of that not far-distant day.

Ever since Lord Roberts formulated his plans for the establishment of rifle-clubs I have been deeply interested in the movement: and after a conversation with that distinguished soldier the idea occurred to me to write a forecast, based upon all the available military knowledge – which would bring home to the British public vividly and forcibly what really would occur were an enemy suddenly to appear in our midst. At the outset it was declared by the strategists I consulted to be impossible. No such book could ever be written, for, according to them, the mass of technical detail was far too great to digest and present in an intelligible manner to the public.

Lord Roberts, however, gave me encouragement. The skeleton scheme of the manner in which England could be invaded by Germany was submitted to a number of the highest authorities on strategy, whose names, however, I am not permitted to divulge, and after many consultations, much criticism, and considerable difference of opinion, the "general idea," with amendment after amendment, was finally adopted.

That, however, was only a mere preliminary. Upon questions of tactics each tactician consulted held a different view, and each criticised adversely the other's suggestions.

One way alone remained open – namely, to take the facts exactly as they stood, add the additional strength of the opposing nations as they at present are, and then draw logical conclusions. This, aided by experts, was done: and after many days of argument with the various authorities, we succeeded in getting them in accord as to the general practicability of an invasion.

Before putting pen to paper it was necessary to reconnoitre carefully the whole of England from the Thames to the Tyne. This I did by means of a motor-car, travelling 10,000 miles of all kinds of roads, and making a tour extending over four months. Each town, all the points of vantage, military positions, all the available landing places on the coast, all railway connections, and telephone and telegraph communications, were carefully noted for future reference. With the assistance of certain well-known military experts, the battlefields were carefully gone over and

the positions marked upon the Ordnance map. Thus, through four months we pushed on day by day collecting information and material, sometimes in the big cities, sometimes in the quietest and remotest hamlets, all of which was carefully tabulated for use.

Whatever critics may say, and however their opinions may differ, it can only be pointed out, first, that the "general idea" of the scheme is in accordance with the expressed and published opinions of the first strategists of to-day, and that, as far as the forecast of events is concerned, it has been written from a first-hand knowledge of the local colour of each of the scenes described. The enemy's Proclamations reproduced are practically copies of those issued by the Germans during the war of 1870.

That the experts and myself will probably be condemned as alarmists and denounced for revealing information likely to be of assistance to an enemy goes without saying. Indeed, an attempt was made in the House of Commons to suppress its publication altogether. Mr. R. C. Lehmann, who asked a question of the Prime Minister, declared that it was "calculated to prejudice our relations with the other Powers," while the late Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, in a subsequent letter apologising to me for condemning in the House a work he had not read, repeated that it was likely to "produce irritation abroad and might conceivably alarm the more ignorant public at home."

Such a reflection, cast by the late Prime Minister upon the British nation was, to say the least, curious, yet it only confirmed the truth that the Government are strenuously seeking to conceal from our people the appalling military weakness and the consequent danger to which the country is constantly open.

To be weak is to invite war: to be strong is to prevent it.

To arouse our country to a sense of its own lamentable insecurity is the object of this volume, which is somewhat compressed from the form in which it originally appeared, and that other nations besides ourselves are interested in England's grave peril is proved by the fact that it has already been published in the German, French, Spanish, Danish, Russian, Italian, and even Japanese languages.

WILLIAM LE QUEUX.

Speaking in the House of Lords on the 10th July 1905, I said: – "It is to the people of the country I appeal to take up the question of the Army in a sensible practical manner. For the sake of all they hold dear, let them bring home to themselves what would be the condition of Great Britain if it were to lose its wealth, its power, its position." The catastrophe that may happen if we still remain in our present state of unpreparedness is visibly and forcibly illustrated in Mr. Le Queux's new book which I recommend to the perusal of every one who has the welfare of the British Empire at heart.

Roberts, FM

29. Nov. 1905

BOOK I THE ATTACK

CHAPTER I THE SURPRISE

Two of the myriad of London's nightworkers were walking down Fleet Street together soon after dawn on Sunday morning, 2nd September.

The sun had not yet risen. That main artery of London traffic, with its irregular rows of closed shops and newspaper offices, was quiet and pleasant in the calm, mystic light before the falling of the smoke-pall.

Only at early morning does the dear old City look its best; in that one quiet, sweet hour when the night's toil has ended and the day's has not yet begun. Only in that brief interval at the birth of day, when the rose tints of the sky glow slowly into gold, does the giant metropolis repose – at least, as far as its business streets are concerned – for at five o'clock the toiling millions begin to again pour in from all points of the compass, and the stress and storm of London at once recommences.

And in that hour of silent charm the two grey-bearded sub-editors, though engaged in offices of rival newspapers were making their way homeward to Dulwich to spend Sunday in a well-earned rest, and were chatting "shop," as Press men do.

"I suppose you had the same trouble to get that Yarmouth story through?" asked Fergusson, the news-editor of the "Dispatch," as they crossed Whitefriars Street. "We got about half a column, and then the wire shut down."

"Telegraph or telephone?" inquired Baines, who was four or five years younger than his friend.

"We were using both – to make sure."

"So were we. It was a rattling good story – the robbery was mysterious, to say the least – but we didn't get more than half of it. Something's wrong with the line, evidently," Baines said. "If it were not such a perfect autumn morning, I should be inclined to think there'd been a storm somewhere."

"Yes – funny, wasn't it?" remarked the other. "A shame we haven't the whole story, for it was a first-class one, and we wanted something. Did you put it on the contents-bill?"

"No, because we couldn't get the finish. I tried in every way – rang up the Central News, P.A., Exchange Telegraph Company, tried to get through to Yarmouth on the trunk, and spent half an hour or so pottering about, but the reply from all the agencies, from everywhere, in fact, was the same – the line was interrupted."

"Just our case. I telephoned to the Post Office, but the reply came back that the lines were evidently down."

"Well, it certainly looks as though there'd been a storm, but – " and Baines glanced at the bright, clear sky overhead, just flushed by the bursting sun – "there are certainly no traces of it."

"There's often a storm on the coast when it's quite still in London, my dear fellow," remarked his friend wisely.

"That's all very well. But when all communication with a big place like Yarmouth is suddenly cut off, as it has been, I can't help suspecting that something has happened which we ought to know."

"You're perhaps right, after all," Fergusson said. "I wonder if anything has happened. We don't want to be called back to the office, either of us. My assistant, Henderson, whom I've left in charge, rings me up over any mare's nest. The trunk telephones all come into the Post Office

Exchange up in Carter Lane. Why not look in there before we go home? It won't take us a quarter of an hour, and we have several trains home from Ludgate Hill."

Baines looked at his watch. Like his companion, he had no desire to be called back to his office after getting out to Dulwich, and yet he was in no mood to go making reporter's inquiries.

"I don't think I'll go. It's sure to be nothing, my dear fellow," he said. "Besides, I have a beastly headache. I had a heavy night's work. One of my men is away ill."

"Well, at any rate, I think I'll go," Fergusson said. "Don't blame me if you get called back for a special edition with a terrible storm, great loss of life, and all that sort of thing. So long." And, smiling, he waved his hand and parted from his friend in the booking office of Ludgate Hill Station.

Quickening his pace, he hurried through the office, and, passing out by the back, ascended the steep, narrow street until he reached the Post Office Telephone Exchange in Carter Lane, where, presenting his card, he asked to see the superintendent-in-charge.

Without much delay he was shown upstairs into a small private office, into which came a short, dapper, fair-moustached man with the bustle of a man in a great hurry.

"I've called," the sub-editor explained, "to know whether you can tell me anything regarding the cause of the interruption of the line to Yarmouth a short time ago. We had some important news coming through, but were cut off just in the midst of it, and then we received information that all the telephone and telegraph lines to Yarmouth were interrupted."

"Well, that's just the very point which is puzzling us at this moment," was the night-superintendent's reply. "It is quite unaccountable. Our trunk going to Yarmouth seems to be down, as well as the telegraphs. Yarmouth, Lowestoft, and beyond Beccles seem all to have been suddenly cut off. About eighteen minutes to four the operators noticed something wrong, switched the trunks through to the testers, and the latter reported to me in due course."

"That's strange! Did they all break down together?"

"No. The first that failed was the one that runs through Chelmsford, Colchester, and Ipswich up to Lowestoft and Yarmouth. The operator found that he could get through to Ipswich and Beccles. Ipswich knew nothing, except that something was wrong. They could still ring up Beccles, but not beyond."

As they were speaking, there was a tap at the door, and the assistant night-superintendent entered, saying:

"The Norwich line through Scole and Long Stratton has now failed, sir. About half-past four Norwich reported a fault somewhere north, between there and Cromer. But the operator now says that the line is apparently broken, and so are all the telegraphs from there to Cromer, Sheringham, and Holt."

"Another line has gone, then!" exclaimed the superintendent-in-charge, utterly astounded. "Have you tried to get on to Cromer by the other routes – through Nottingham and King's Lynn, or through Cambridge?"

"The testers have tried every route, but there's no response."

"You could get through to some of the places – Yarmouth, for instance – by telegraphing to the Continent, I suppose?" asked Fergusson.

"We are already trying," responded the assistant superintendent.

"What cables run out from the east coast in that neighbourhood?" inquired the sub-editor quickly.

"There are five between Southwold and Cromer – three run to Germany, and two to Holland," replied the assistant. "There's the cable from Yarmouth to Barkum, in the Frisian Islands; from Habbisburg, near Mundesley, to Barkum; from Yarmouth to Emden; from Lowestoft to Haarlem, and from Kessingland, near Southwold, to Zandypot."

"And you are trying all the routes?" asked his superior.

"I spoke to Paris myself an hour ago and asked them to cable by all five routes to Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Kessingland, and Happisburg," was the assistant's reply. "I also asked Liverpool Street Station and King's Cross to wire down to some of their stations on the coast, but the reply was that they were in the same predicament as ourselves – their lines were down north of Beccles, Wymondham, East Dereham, and also south of Lynn. I'll just run along and see if there's any reply from Paris. They ought to be through by this time, as it's Sunday morning, and no traffic." And he went out hurriedly.

"There's certainly something very peculiar," remarked the superintendent-in-charge to the sub-editor. "If there's been an earthquake or an electrical disturbance, then it is a most extraordinary one. Every single line reaching to the coast seems interrupted."

"Yes. It's uncommonly funny," Fergusson remarked. "I wonder what could have happened. You've never had a complete breakdown like this before?"

"Never. But I think –"

The sentence remained unfinished, for his assistant returned with a slip of paper in his hand, saying:

"This message has just come in from Paris, I'll read it. 'Superintendent Telephones, Paris, to Superintendent Telephones, London. – Have obtained direct telegraphic communication with operators of all five cables to England. Haarlem, Zandypot, Barkum, and Emden all report that cables are interrupted. They can get no reply from England, and tests show that cables are damaged somewhere near English shore.'"

"Is that all?" asked Fergusson.

"That's all. Paris knows no more than we do," was the assistant's response.

"Then the Norfolk and Suffolk coasts are completely isolated – cut off from post office, railways, telephones, and cables!" exclaimed the superintendent. "It's mysterious – most mysterious!" And, taking up the instrument upon his table, he placed a plug in one of the holes down the front of the table itself, and a moment later was in conversation with the official in charge of the traffic at Liverpool Street, repeating the report from Paris, and urging him to send light engines north from Wymondham or Beccles into the zone of the mystery.

The reply came back that he had already done so, but a telegram had reached him from Wymondham to the effect that the road-bridges between Kimberley and Hardingham had apparently fallen in, and the line was blocked by débris. Interruption was also reported beyond Swaffham, at a place called Little Dunham.

"Then even the railways themselves are broken!" cried Fergusson. "Is it possible that there has been a great earthquake?"

"An earthquake couldn't very well destroy all five cables from the Continent," remarked the superintendent gravely.

The latter had scarcely placed the receiver upon the hook when a third man entered – an operator who, addressing him, said:

"Will you please come to the switchboard, sir? There's a man in the Ipswich call office who has just told me a most extraordinary story. He says that he started in his motor-car alone from Lowestoft to London at half-past three this morning, and just as it was getting light he was passing along the edge of Henham Park, between Wangford village and Blythburgh, when he saw three men apparently repairing the telegraph wires. One was up the pole, and the other two were standing below. As he passed he saw a flash, for, to his surprise, one of the men fired point-blank at him with a revolver. Fortunately, the shot went wide, and he at once put on a move and got down into Blythburgh village, even though one of his tyres went down. It had probably been pierced by the bullet fired at him, as the puncture was unlike any he had ever had before. At Blythburgh he informed the police of the outrage, and the constable, in turn, woke up the postmaster, who tried to telegraph back to the police at Wrentham, but found that the line was interrupted. Was it possible

that the men were cutting the wires, instead of repairing them? He says that after repairing the puncture he took the village constable and three other men on his car and went back to the spot, where, although the trio had escaped, they saw that wholesale havoc had been wrought with the telegraphs. The lines had been severed in four or five places, and whole lengths tangled up into great masses. A number of poles had been sawn down, and were lying about the roadside. Seeing that nothing could be done, the gentleman remounted his car, came on to Ipswich, and reported the damage at our call office."

"And is he still there?" exclaimed the superintendent quickly, amazed at the motorist's statement.

"Yes. I asked him to wait for a few moments in order to speak to you, sir."

"Good. I'll go at once. Perhaps you'd like to come also, Mr. Fergusson?"

And all three ran up to the gallery, where the huge switchboards were ranged around, and where the night operators, with the receivers attached to one ear, were still at work.

In a moment the superintendent had taken the operator's seat, adjusted the ear-piece, and was in conversation with Ipswich. A second later he was speaking with the man who had actually witnessed the cutting of the trunk line.

While he was thus engaged an operator at the farther end of the switchboard suddenly gave vent to a cry of surprise and disbelief.

"What do you say, Beccles? Repeat it," he asked excitedly.

Then a moment later he shouted aloud:

"Beccles says that German soldiers – hundreds of them – are pouring into the place! The Germans have landed at Lowestoft, they think."

All who heard those ominous words sprang up dumbfounded, staring at each other.

The assistant-superintendent dashed to the operator's side and seized his apparatus.

"Halloa – halloa, Beccles! Halloa – halloa – halloa!"

The response was some gruff words in German, and the sound of scuffling could distinctly be heard. Then all was silent.

Time after time he rang up the small Suffolk town, but in vain. Then he switched through to the testers, and quickly the truth was plain.

The second trunk line to Norwich, running from Ipswich by Harleston and Beccles, had been cut farther towards London.

But what held everyone breathless in the trunk telephone headquarters was that the Germans had actually effected the surprise landing that had so often in recent years been predicted by military critics; that England on that quiet September Sunday morning had been attacked. England was actually invaded. It was incredible!

Yet London's millions in their Sunday morning lethargy were in utter ignorance of the grim disaster that had suddenly fallen upon the land.

Fergusson was for rushing at once back to the "Dispatch" office to get out an extraordinary edition, but the superintendent, who was still in conversation with the motorist, urged judicious forethought.

"For the present, let us wait. Don't let us alarm the public unnecessarily. We want corroboration. Let us have the motorist up here," he suggested.

"Yes," cried the sub-editor. "Let me speak to him."

Over the wire Fergusson begged the stranger to come at once to London and give his story, declaring that the military authorities would require it. Then, just as the man who had been shot at by German advance spies – for such they had undoubtedly been – in order to prevent the truth leaking out, gave his promise to come to town at once, there came over the line from the coastguard at Southwold a vague, incoherent telephone message regarding strange ships having been seen to the northward, and asking for connection with Harwich; while King's Cross and Liverpool Street

Stations both rang up almost simultaneously, reporting the receipt of extraordinary messages from King's Lynn, Diss, Harleston, Halesworth, and other places. All declared that German soldiers were swarming over the north, that Lowestoft and Beccles had been seized, and that Yarmouth and Cromer were isolated.

Various stationmasters reported that the enemy had blown up bridges, taken up rails, and effectually blocked all communication with the coast. Certain important junctions were already held by the enemy's outposts.

Such was the amazing news received in that high-up room in Carter Lane, City, on that sweet, sunny morning when all the great world of London was at peace, either still slumbering or week-ending.

Fergusson remained for a full hour and a half at the Telephone Exchange, anxiously awaiting any further corroboration. Many wild stories came over the wires telling how panic-stricken people were fleeing inland away from the enemy's outposts. Then he took a hansom to the "Dispatch" office, and proceeded to prepare a special edition of his paper – an edition containing surely the most amazing news that had ever startled London.

Fearing to create undue panic, he decided not to go to press until the arrival of the motorist from Ipswich. He wanted the story of the man who had actually seen the cutting of the wires. He paced his room excitedly, wondering what effect the news would have upon the world. In the rival newspaper offices the report was, as yet, unknown. With journalistic forethought he had arranged that at present the bewildering truth should not leak out to his rivals, either from the railway termini or from the telephone exchange. His only fear was that some local correspondent might telegraph from some village or town nearer the metropolis which was still in communication with the central office.

Time passed very slowly. Each moment increased his anxiety. He had sent out the one reporter who remained on duty to the house of Colonel Sir James Taylor, the Permanent Under-Secretary for War. Halting before the open window, he looked up and down the street for the arriving motor-car. But all was quiet.

Eight o'clock had just boomed from Big Ben, and London still remained in her Sunday morning peace. The street, bright in the warm sunshine, was quite empty, save for a couple of motor-omnibuses and a sprinkling of gaily dressed holiday-makers on their way to the day excursion trains.

In that centre of London – the hub of the world – all was comparatively silent, the welcome rest after the busy turmoil that through six days in the week is unceasing, that fevered throbbing of the heart of the world's great capital.

Of a sudden, however, came the whirr-r of an approaching car, as a thin-faced, travel-stained man tore along from the direction of the Strand and pulled up before the office. The fine car, a six-cylinder "Napier," was grey with the mud of country roads, while the motorist himself was smothered until his goggles had been almost entirely covered.

Fergusson rushed out to him, and a few moments later the pair were in the upstairs room, the sub-editor swiftly taking down the motorist's story, which differed very little from what he had already spoken over the telephone.

Then, just as Big Ben chimed the half-hour, the echoes of the half-deserted Strand were suddenly awakened by the loud, strident voices of the newsboys shouting:

"'Dispatch,' spe-shall! Invasion of England this morning! Germans in Suffolk! Terrible panic! Spe-shall! 'Dispatch,' Spe-shall!"

As soon as the paper had gone to press Fergusson urged the motorist – whose name was Horton, and who lived at Richmond – to go with him to the War Office and report. Therefore, both men entered the car, and as they did so a man jumped from a hansom in breathless haste. He was the reporter whom Fergusson had sent out to Sir James Taylor's house in Cleveland Square, Hyde Park.

"They thought Sir James spent the night with his brother up at Hampstead," he exclaimed. "I've been there, but find that he's away for the week-end at Chilham Hall, near Buckden."

"Buckden! That's on the Great North Road!" cried Horton, "We'll go at once and find him. Sixty miles from London. We can be there under two hours!"

And a few minutes later the pair were tearing due north, turning at last into the handsome lodge-gates of Chilham Park, and running up the great elm avenue, drew up before the main door of the ancient hall, a quaint many-gabled old place of grey stone.

A few moments later the breathless journalist faced the Permanent Under-Secretary with the news that England was invaded – that the Germans had actually effected a surprise landing on the east coast.

Sir James and his host stood speechless. Like others, they at first believed the pale-faced, bearded sub-editor to be a lunatic, but a few moments later, when Horton briefly repeated the story, they saw that, whatever might have occurred, the two men were at least in deadly earnest.

"Impossible!" cried Sir James. "We should surely have heard something of it if such were actually the case. The coastguard would have telephoned the news instantly. Besides, where is our fleet?"

"The Germans evidently laid their plans with great cleverness. Their spies, already in England, cut the wires at a pre-arranged hour last night," declared Fergusson. "They sought to prevent this gentleman from giving the alarm by shooting him. All the railways to London are already either cut or held by the enemy. One thing, however, is clear – fleet or no fleet, the east coast is entirely at their mercy."

Host and guest exchanged dark glances.

"Well, if what you say is the actual truth," exclaimed Sir James, "to-day is surely the blackest day that England has ever known."

"Yes, they should have listened to Lord Roberts," snapped his lordship. "I suppose you'll go at once, Taylor, and make inquiries?"

"Of course," responded the Permanent Secretary. And a quarter of an hour later, accepting Horton's offer, he was sitting in the car as it headed back towards London.

Could the journalist's story be true? As he sat there, with his head bent against the wind and the mud splashing into his face, Sir James recollected too well the repeated warnings of the past five years, serious warnings by men who knew our shortcomings, but to which no attention had been paid. Both the Government and the public had remained apathetic, the idea of peril had been laughed to scorn, and the country had, ostrich-like, buried its head in the sand, and allowed Continental nations to supersede us in business, in armaments, in everything.

The danger of invasion had always been ridiculed as a mere alarmist's fiction; those responsible for the defence of the country had smiled, the Navy had been reduced, and the Army had remained in contented inefficiency.

If the blow had really been struck by Germany? If she had risked three or four, out of her twenty-three, army corps, and had aimed at the heart of the British Empire? What then? Ay! what then?

As the car glided down Regent Street into Pall Mall and towards Whitehall, Sir James saw on every side crowds discussing the vague but astounding reports now published in special editions of all the Sunday papers, and shouted wildly everywhere.

Boys bearing sheets fresh from the Fleet Street presses were seized, and bundles torn from them by excited Londoners eager to learn the latest intelligence.

Around both War Office and Admiralty great surging crowds were clamouring loudly for the truth. Was it the truth, or was it only a hoax? Half London disbelieved it. Yet from every quarter, from the north and from across the bridges, thousands were pouring in to ascertain what had really occurred, and the police had the greatest difficulty in keeping order.

In Trafalgar Square, where the fountains were plashing so calmly in the autumn sunlight, a shock-headed man mounted the back of one of the lions and harangued the crowd with much gesticulation, denouncing the Government in the most violent terms; but the orator was ruthlessly pulled down by the police in the midst of his fierce attack.

It was half-past two o'clock in the afternoon. The Germans had already been on English soil ten hours, yet London was in ignorance of where they had actually landed, and utterly helpless.

CHAPTER II

EFFECT IN THE CITY

Monday, 3rd September, 1910, was indeed Black Monday for London.

By midnight on Sunday the appalling news had spread everywhere. Though the full details of the terrible naval disasters were not yet to hand, yet it was vaguely known that our ships had been defeated in the North Sea, and many of them sunk.

Before 7 a.m. on Monday, however, telegrams reaching London by the subterranean lines from the north gave thrilling stories of frightful disasters we had, while all unconscious, suffered at the hands of the German fleet.

With London, the great cities of the north, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, and Birmingham, awoke utterly dazed. It seemed incredible. And yet the enemy had, by his sudden and stealthy blow, secured command of the sea and actually landed.

The public wondered why a formal declaration of war had not previously been made, ignorant of the fact that the declaration preceding the Franco-German War was the first made by any civilised nation prior to the commencement of hostilities for one hundred and seventy years. The peril of the nation was now recognised on every hand.

Eager millions poured into the City by every train from the suburbs and towns in the vicinity of the Metropolis, anxious to ascertain the truth for themselves, pale with terror, wild with excitement, indignant that our land forces were not already mobilised and ready to move eastward to meet the invader.

As soon as the banks were opened there was a run on them, but by noon the Bank of England had suspended all specie payments. The other banks, being thus unable to meet their engagements, simply closed the doors, bringing business to an abrupt standstill. Consols stood at 90 on Saturday, but by noon on Monday were down to 42 – lower even than they were in 1798, when they stood at 47¼. Numbers of foreigners tried to speculate heavily, but were unable to do so, for banking being suspended they could not obtain transfers.

On the Stock Exchange the panic in the afternoon was indescribable. Securities of every sort went entirely to pieces, and there were no buyers. Financiers were surprised that no warning in London had betrayed the position of affairs, London being the money centre of the world. Prior to 1870 Paris shared with London the honour of being the pivot of the money market, but on the suspension of cash payments by the Bank of France during the Franco-German War, Paris lost that position. Had it not been that the milliards comprising the French War indemnity were intact in golden louis in the fortress of Spandau, Germany could never have hoped to wage sudden war with Great Britain before she had made Berlin independent of London in a money sense, or, at any rate, to accumulate sufficient gold to carry on the war for at least twelve months. The only way in which she could have done this was to raise her rate so as to offer better terms than London. Yet directly the Bank of England discovered the rate of exchange going against her, and her stock of gold diminishing, she would have responded by raising the English bank-rate in order to check the flow. Thus competition would have gone on until the rates became so high that all business would be checked, and people would have realised their securities to obtain the necessary money to carry on their affairs. Thus, no doubt, the coming war would have been forecasted had it not been for Germany's already prepared war-chest, which the majority of persons have nowadays overlooked. Its possession had enabled Germany to strike her sudden blow, and now the Bank of England, which is the final reserve of gold in the United Kingdom, found that as notes were cashed so the stock of gold diminished until it was in a few hours compelled to obtain from the Government suspension of the Bank charter. This enabled the Bank to suspend cash payment, and issue notes without a corresponding deposit of the equivalent in gold.

The suspension, contrary to increasing the panic, had, curiously enough the immediate effect of somewhat allaying it. Plenty of people in the City were confident that the blow aimed could not prove an effective one, and that the Germans, however many might have landed, would quickly be sent back again. Thus many level-headed business men regarded the position calmly, believing that when our command of the sea was again re-established, as it must be in a day or two, the enemy would soon be non-existent.

Business outside the money market was, of course, utterly demoralised. The buying of necessities was now uppermost in everyone's mind. Excited crowds in the streets caused most of the shops in the City and West End to close, while around the Admiralty were great crowds of eager men and women of all classes, tearful wives of bluejackets jostling with officers' ladies from Mayfair and Belgravia, demanding news of their loved ones – inquiries which, alas! the casualty office were unable to satisfy. The scene of grief, terror, and suspense was heartrending. Certain ships were known to have been sunk with all on board after making a gallant fight, and those who had husbands, brothers, lovers, or fathers on board wept loudly, calling upon the Government to avenge the ruthless murder of their loved ones.

In Manchester, in Liverpool, indeed, all through the great manufacturing centres of the north, the excitement of London was reflected.

In Manchester there was a panic "on 'Change," and the crowd in Deansgate coming into collision with a force of mounted police, some rioting occurred, and a number of shop windows broken, while several agitators who attempted to speak in front of the infirmary were at once arrested.

Liverpool was the scene of intense anxiety and excitement, when a report was spread that German cruisers were about the estuary of the Mersey. It was known that the coal staithes, cranes, and petroleum tanks at Penarth, Cardiff, Barry, and Llanelly had been destroyed; that Aberdeen had been bombarded; and there were rumours that, notwithstanding the mines and defences of the Mersey, the city of Liverpool, with all its crowd of valuable shipping, was to share the same fate.

The whole place was in a ferment. By eleven o'clock the stations were crowded by women and children sent by the men away into the country – anywhere from the doomed and defenceless city. The Lord Mayor vainly endeavoured to inspire confidence, but telegrams from London, announcing the complete financial collapse, only increased the panic.

In London all through the morning, amid the chaos of business in the City, the excitement had been steadily growing, until shortly after three o'clock the "Daily Mail" issued a special edition containing a copy of a German proclamation which, it was said, was now posted everywhere in East Norfolk, East Suffolk, and in Maldon in Essex, already occupied by the enemy.

The original proclamation had been found pasted by some unknown hand upon a barn door near the town of Billericay, and had been detached and brought to London in a motor-car by a correspondent.

It showed plainly the German intention was to deal a hard and crushing blow, and it struck terror into the heart of London, for it read as will be seen on next page.

Upon the walls of the Mansion House, the Guildhall, outside the Bank of England, the Royal Exchange, upon the various public buildings within the city wards, and westward beyond Temple Bar, proclamations were being posted. Indeed, upon all the hoardings in Greater London appeared various broadsheets side by side. One by the Chief Commissioner of Police, regulating the traffic in the streets, and appealing to the public to assist in the preservation of order; and a Royal Proclamation, brief but noble, urging every Briton to do his duty, to take his part in the defence of King and country, and to unfurl the banner of the British Empire that had hitherto carried peace and civilisation in every quarter of the world. Germany, whose independence had been respected, had attacked us without provocation; therefore hostilities were, alas, inevitable.

When the great poster printed in big capitals and headed by the Royal Arms made its appearance it was greeted with wild cheering.

It was a message of love from King to people – a message to the highest and to the lowest. Posted in Whitechapel at the same hour as in Whitehall, the throngs crowded eagerly about it and sang "God Save our Gracious King," for if they had but little confidence in the War Office and Admiralty, they placed their trust in their Sovereign, the first diplomat in Europe. Therefore the loyalty was spontaneous, as it always is. They read the royal message, and cheered and cheered again.

As evening closed in yet another poster made its appearance in every city, town, and village in the country, a poster issued by military and police officers, and naval officers in charge of dockyards – the order for mobilisation.

PROCLAMATION

WE, GENERAL COMMANDING THE 3rd GERMAN ARMY,

HAVING SEEN the proclamation of His Imperial Majesty the Emperor William, King of Prussia, Chief of the Army, which authorises the generals commanding the different German Army Corps to establish special measures against all municipalities and persons acting in contradiction to the usages of war, and to take what steps they consider necessary for the well-being of the troops.

HEREBY GIVE PUBLIC NOTICE:

(1) THE MILITARY JURISDICTION is hereby established. It applies to all territory of Great Britain occupied by the German Army, and to every action endangering the security of the troops by rendering assistance to the enemy. The Military Jurisdiction will be announced and placed vigorously in force in every parish by the issue of this present proclamation.

(2) ANY PERSON OR PERSONS NOT BEING BRITISH SOLDIERS, or not showing by their dress that they are soldiers:

(a) SERVING THE ENEMY as spies;

(b) MISLEADING THE GERMAN TROOPS when charged to serve as guides;

(c) SHOOTING, INJURING, OR ROBBING any person belonging to the German Army, or forming part of its personnel;

(d) DESTROYING BRIDGES OR CANALS, damaging telegraphs, telephones, electric light wires, gasometers, or railways, interfering with roads, setting fire to munitions of war, provisions, or quarters established by German troops;

(e) TAKING ARMS against the German troops,

WILL BE PUNISHED BY DEATH

IN EACH CASE the officer presiding at the Council of War will be charged with the trial, and pronounce judgment. Councils of War may not pronounce ANY OTHER CONDEMNATION SAVE THAT OF DEATH.

THE JUDGMENT WILL BE IMMEDIATELY EXECUTED.

(3) TOWNS OR VILLAGES in the territory in which the contravention takes place will be compelled to pay indemnity equal to one year's revenue.

(4) THE INHABITANTS MUST FURNISH necessities for the German troops daily as follows: —

1 lb. 10 oz. bread.	1 oz. tea.	1½ pints beer, or 1 wine-
13 oz. meat.	1½ oz. tobacco or 5 cigars.	glassful of brandy or
3 lb. potatoes.	½ pint wine.	whisky.
The ration for each horse: —		
13 lb. oats.	3 lb. 6 oz. hay.	3 lb. 6 oz. straw.

(ALL PERSONS WHO PREFER to pay an indemnity in money may do so at the rate of 2s. per day per man.)

(5) COMMANDERS OF DETACHED corps have the right to requisition all that they consider necessary for the well-being of their men, and will deliver to the inhabitants official receipts for goods so supplied.

WE HOPE IN CONSEQUENCE that the inhabitants of Great Britain will make no difficulty in furnishing all that may be considered necessary.

(6) AS REGARDS the individual transactions between the troops and the inhabitants, we give notice that one German mark shall be considered the equivalent to one English shilling.

*The General Commanding the Ninth German Army Corps,
VON KRONHELM.*

Beccles, September the Third, 1910.

The public, however, little dreamed of the hopeless confusion in the War Office, in the various regimental depôts throughout the country, at headquarters everywhere, and in every barracks in the kingdom. The armed forces of England were passing from a peace to a war footing; but the mobilisation of the various units – namely, its completion in men, horses, and material – was utterly impossible in the face of the extraordinary regulations which, kept a strict secret by the Council of Defence until this moment, revealed a hopeless state of things.

The disorder was frightful. Not a regiment was found fully equipped and ready to march. There was a dearth of officers, equipment, horses, provisions – of, indeed, everything. Men had guns without ammunition; cavalry and artillery were without horses; engineers only half equipped; volunteers with no transport whatever; balloon sections without balloons, and searchlight units vainly trying to obtain the necessary instruments.

Horses were being requisitioned everywhere. The few horses that, in the age of motor-cars, now remained on the roads in London were quickly taken for draught, and all horses fit to ride were commandeered for the cavalry.

During the turmoil daring German spies were actively at work south of London. The Southampton line of the London and South-Western Railway was destroyed – with explosives placed by unknown hands – by the bridge over the Wey, near Weybridge, being blown up; and again that over the Mole, between Walton and Esher, while the Reading line was cut by the great bridge over the Thames at Staines being destroyed. The line, too, between Guildford and Waterloo, was also rendered impassable by the wreck of the midnight train, which was blown up half-way between

Wansborough and Guildford, while in several other places nearer London bridges were rendered unstable by dynamite, the favourite method apparently being to blow the crown out of an arch.

The well-laid plans of the enemy were thus quickly revealed. Among the thousands of Germans working in London, the hundred or so spies, all trusted soldiers, had passed unnoticed but, working in unison, each little group of two or three had been allotted its task, and had previously thoroughly reconnoitred the position and studied the most rapid or effective means.

The railways to the east and north-east coasts all reported wholesale damage done on Sunday night by the advance agents of the enemy, and now this was continued on the night of Monday in the south, the objective being to hinder troops from moving north from Aldershot. This was, indeed, effectual, for only by a long *détour* could the troops be moved to the northern defences of London, and while many were on Tuesday entrained, others were conveyed to London by the motor omnibuses sent down for that purpose.

Everywhere through London and its vicinity, as well as Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Coventry, Leeds, and Liverpool, motor-cars and motor-omnibuses from dealers and private owners were being requisitioned by the military authorities, for they would, it was believed, replace cavalry to a very large extent.

Wild and extraordinary reports were circulated regarding the disasters in the north. Hull, Newcastle, Gateshead, and Tynemouth had, it was believed, been bombarded and sacked. The shipping in the Tyne was burning, and the Elswick works were held by the enemy. Details were, however, very vague, as the Germans were taking every precaution to prevent information reaching London.

CHAPTER III

NEWS OF THE ENEMY

Terror and excitement reigned everywhere. The wildest rumours were hourly afloat. London was a seething stream of breathless multitudes of every class.

On Monday morning the newspapers throughout the kingdom had devoted greater part of their space to the extraordinary intelligence from Norfolk and Suffolk, and Essex, and other places. Only the slow, old-fashioned "Globe" remained asleep, or pretended to know nothing of what was in progress.

That we were actually invaded was plain, but most of the newspapers happily preserved a calm, dignified tone, and made no attempt at sensationalism. The situation was far too serious.

Like the public, however, the Press had been taken entirely by surprise. The blow had been so sudden and so staggering that half the alarming reports were discredited.

In addition to the details of the enemy's operations, as far as could as yet be ascertained, the "Morning Post" on Monday contained an account of a mysterious occurrence at Chatham, which read as follows:

"Chatham, Sept. 1 (11.30 P.M.).

"An extraordinary accident took place on the Medway about eight o'clock this evening. The steamer 'Pole Star,' 1,200 tons register, with a cargo of cement from Frindsbury, was leaving for Hamburg, and came into collision with the 'Frauenlob,' of Bremen, a somewhat larger boat, which was inward bound, in a narrow part of the channel about half-way between Chatham and Sheerness. Various accounts of the mishap are current, but whichever of the vessels was responsible for the bad steering or neglect of the ordinary rules of the road, it is certain that the 'Frauenlob' was cut into by the stem of the 'Pole Star' on her port bow, and sank almost across the channel. The 'Pole Star' swung alongside her after the collision, and very soon afterwards sank in an almost parallel position. Tugs and steamboats carrying a number of naval officers and the port authorities are about to proceed to the scene of the accident, and if, as seems probable, there is no chance of raising the vessels, steps will be at once taken to blow them up. In the present state of our foreign relations such an obstruction directly across the entrance to one of our principal war-ports is a national danger, and will not be allowed to remain a moment longer than can be helped."

"Sept. 2.

"An extraordinary *dénouement* has followed the collision in the Medway reported in my telegram of last night, which renders it impossible to draw any other conclusion than that the affair is anything but an accident. Everything now goes to prove that the whole business was premeditated and was the result of an organised plot with the object of 'bottling up' the numerous men-of-war that are now being hurriedly equipped for service in Chatham Dockyard. In the words of Scripture, 'An enemy hath done this,' and there can be very little doubt as to the quarter from which the outrage was engineered. It is nothing less than an outrage to perpetrate what is in reality an overt act of hostility in a time of profound peace, however much the political horizon may be darkened by lowering war-clouds. We are living under a Government whose leader lost no time in announcing that no fear of being sneered at as a 'Little Englander' would deter him from seeking peace and ensuring it by a reduction of our naval and military armaments, even at that time known to be inadequate to the demands likely to be made upon them if our Empire is to be maintained. We trust, however, that even this parochially-minded statesman will lose no time in probing the conspiracy to its depths, and in seeking instant satisfaction from those personages, however highly placed and powerful, who have committed this outrage on the laws of civilisation."

"As soon as the news of the collision reached the dockyard the senior officer at Kethole Reach was ordered by wire to take steps to prevent any vessel from going up the river, and he at once despatched several picket-boats to the entrance to warn in-coming ships of the blocking of the channel, while a couple of other boats were sent up to within a short distance of the obstruction to make assurance doubly sure. The harbour signals ordering 'suspension of all movings' were also hoisted at Garrison Point.

"Among other ships which were stopped in consequence of these measures was the 'Van Gysen,' a big steamer hailing from Rotterdam, laden, it was stated, with steel rails for the London, Chatham, and Dover Railway, which were to be landed at Port Victoria. She was accordingly allowed to proceed, and anchored, or appeared to anchor, just off the railway pier at that place. Ten minutes later the officer of the watch on board H.M.S. 'Medici' reported that he thought she was getting under way again. It was then pretty dark. An electric searchlight being switched on, the 'Van Gysen' was discovered steaming up the river at a considerable speed. The 'Medici' flashed the news to the flagship, which at once fired a gun, hoisted the recall and the 'Van Gysen's' number in the international code, and despatched her steam pinnace, with orders to overhaul the Dutchman and stop him at whatever cost. A number of the marines on guard were sent in her with their rifles.

"The 'Van Gysen' seemed well acquainted with the channel, and continually increased her speed as she went up the river, so that she was within half a mile of the scene of the accident before the steamboat came up with her. The officer in charge called to the skipper through the megaphone to stop his engines and to throw him a rope, as he wanted to come on board. After pretending for some time not to understand him, the skipper slowed his engines and said, 'Ver vel, come 'longside gangway.' As the pinnace hooked on at the gangway, a heavy iron cylinder cover was dropped into her from the height of the 'Van Gysen's' deck. It knocked the bowman overboard and crashed into the fore part of the boat, knocking a big hole in the port side forward. She swung off at an angle and stopped to pick up the man overboard. Her crew succeeded in rescuing him, but she was making water fast, and there was nothing for it but to run her into the bank. The lieutenant in charge ordered a rifle to be fired at the 'Van Gysen' to bring her to, but she paid not the smallest attention, as might have been expected, and went on her way with gathering speed.

"The report, however, served to attract the attention of the two picket-boats which were patrolling up the river. As she turned a bend in the stream they both shot up alongside out of the darkness, and ordered her peremptorily to stop. But the only answer they received was the sudden extinction of all lights in the steamer. They kept alongside, or rather one of them did, but they were quite helpless to stay the progress of the big wall-sided steamer. The faster of the picket-boats shot ahead with the object of warning those who were busy examining the wrecks. But the 'Van Gysen,' going all she knew, was close behind, an indistinguishable black blur in the darkness, and hardly had the officer in the picket-boat delivered his warning before she was heard close at hand. Within a couple of hundred yards of the two wrecks she slowed down, for fear of running right over them. On she came, inevitable as Fate. There was a crash as she came into collision with the central deckhouses of the 'Frauenlob' and as her bows scraped past the funnel of the 'Pole Star.' Then followed no fewer than half a dozen muffled reports. Her engines went astern for a moment, and down she settled athwart the other two steamers, heeling over to port as she did so. All was turmoil and confusion. None of the dockyard and naval craft present were equipped with searchlights. The harbour-master, the captain of the yard, even the admiral superintendent, who had just come down in his steam launch, all bawled out orders.

"Lights were flashed and lanterns swung up and down in the vain endeavour to see more of what had happened. Two simultaneous shouts of 'Man overboard!' came from tugs and boats at opposite sides of the river. When a certain amount of order was restored it was discovered that a big dockyard tug was settling down by the head. It seems she had been grazed by the 'Van Gysen'

as she came over the obstruction, and forced against some portion of one of the foundered vessels, which had pierced a hole in her below the water-line.

"In the general excitement the damage had not been discovered, and now she was sinking fast. Hawsers were made fast to her with the utmost expedition possible in order to tow her clear of the piled-up wreckage, but it was too late. There was only just time to rescue her crew before she too added herself to the underwater barricade. As for the crew of the 'Van Gysen,' it is thought that all must have gone down in her, as no trace of them has as yet been discovered, despite a most diligent search, for it was considered that, in an affair which had been so carefully planned as this certainly must have been, some provision must surely have been made for the escape of the crew. Those who have been down at the scene of the disaster report that it will be impossible to clear the channel in less than a week or ten days, using every resource of the dockyard.

"A little later I thought I would go down to the dockyard on the off-chance of picking up any further information. The Metropolitan policeman at the gate would on no account allow me to pass at that hour, and I was just turning away when, by a great piece of good fortune, I ran up against Commander Shelley.

"I was on board his ship as correspondent during the manœuvres of the year before last. 'And what are you doing down here?' was his very natural inquiry after we had shaken hands. I told him that I had been down in Chatham for a week past as special correspondent, reporting on the half-hearted preparations being made for the possible mobilisation, and took the opportunity of asking him if he could give me any further information about the collision between the three steamers in the Medway. 'Well,' said he, 'the best thing you can do is to come right along with me. I have just been hawked out of bed to superintend the diving operations, which will begin the moment there is a gleam of daylight.' Needless to say, this just suited me, and I hastened to thank him and to accept his kind offer. 'All right,' he said, 'but I shall have to make one small condition.'

"And that is?" I queried.

"Merely to let me "censor" your telegrams before you send them,' he returned. 'You see, the Admiralty might not like to have too much said about this business, and I don't want to find myself in the dirt-tub.'

"The stipulation was a most reasonable one, and however I disliked the notion of having probably my best paragraphs eliminated, I could not but assent to my friend's proposition. So away we marched down the echoing spaces of the almost deserted dockyard till we arrived at the 'Thunderbolt' pontoon. Here lay a pinnace with steam up, and lighted down the sloping side of the old ironclad by the lantern of the policeman on duty, we stepped on board and shot out into the centre of the stream. We blew our whistles and the coxswain waved a lantern, whereupon a small tug that had a couple of dockyard lighters attached gave a hoarse 'toot' in response, and followed us down the river. We sped along in the darkness against a strong tide that was making upstream, past Upnor Castle, that quaint old Tudor fortress with its long line of modern powder magazines, and along under the deeper shadows beneath Hoo Woods till we came abreast of the medley of mud flats and grass-grown islets just beyond them. Here above the thud of the engines and the splash of the water, a thin, long-drawn-out cry wavered through the night. 'Some one hailing the boat, sir,' reported the lookout forward. We had all heard it. 'Ease down,' ordered Shelley, and hardly moving against the rushing tideway we listened for its repetition. Again the voice was raised in quavering supplication. 'What the dickens does he say?' queried the commander. 'It's German,' I answered. 'I know that language well. I think he's asking for help. May I answer him?'

"By all means. Perhaps he belongs to one of those steamers.' The same thought was in my own mind. I hailed in return, asking where he was and what he wanted. The answer came back that he was a shipwrecked seaman, who was cold, wet, and miserable, and implored to be taken off from the islet where he found himself, cut off from everywhere by water and darkness. We ran the boat's nose into the bank, and presently succeeded in hauling aboard a miserable object,

wet through, and plastered from head to foot with black Medway mud. The broken remains of a cork life-belt hung from his shoulders. A dram of whisky somewhat revived him. 'And now,' said Shelley, 'you'd better cross-examine him. We may get something out of the fellow.' The foreigner, crouched down shivering in the stern-sheets half covered with a yellow oilskin that some charitable bluejacket had thrown over him, appeared to me in the light of the lantern that stood on the deck before him to be not only suffering from cold, but from terror. A few moments' conversation with him confirmed my suspicions. I turned to Shelley and exclaimed, 'He says he'll tell us everything if we spare his life,' I explained. 'I'm sure I don't want to shoot the chap,' replied the commander. 'I suppose he's implicated in this "bottling up" affair. If he is, he jolly well deserves it, but I don't suppose anything will be done to him. Anyway, his information may be valuable, and so you may tell him that he is all right as far as I'm concerned, and I will do my best for him with the Admiral. I daresay that will satisfy him. If not, you might threaten him a bit. Tell him anything you like if you think it will make him speak.' To cut a long story short, I found the damp Dutchman amenable to reason, and the following is the substance of what I elicited from him.

"He had been a deck hand on board the 'Van Gysen.' When she left Rotterdam he did not know that the trip was anything out of the way. There was a new skipper whom he had not seen before, and there were also two new mates with a new chief engineer. Another steamer followed them all the way till they arrived at the Nore. On the way over he and several other seamen were sent for by the captain, and asked if they would volunteer for a dangerous job, promising them £50 a-piece if it came off all right. He and five others agreed, as did two or three stokers, and were then ordered to remain aft and not communicate with any others of the crew. Off the Nore all the remainder were transferred to the following steamer, which steamed off to the eastward. After they were gone the selected men were told that the officers all belonged to the Imperial German Navy, and by orders of the Kaiser were about to attempt to block up the Medway.

"A collision between two other ships had been arranged for, one of which was loaded with a mass of old steel rails into which liquid cement had been run, so that her hold contained a solid impenetrable block. The 'Van Gysen' carried a similar cargo, and was provided with an arrangement for blowing holes in her bottom. The crew were provided with life-belts, and the half of the money promised, and all except the captain, the engineer, and the two mates dropped overboard just before arriving at the sunken vessels. They were advised to make their way to Gravesend, and then to shift for themselves as best they could. He had found himself on a small island, and could not muster up courage to plunge into the cold water again in the darkness.

"By Jove! This means war with Germany, man! – War!" was Shelley's comment. At two o'clock this afternoon we knew that it did, for the news of the enemy's landing in Norfolk was signalled down from the dockyard. We also knew from the divers that the cargo of the sunken steamers was what the rescued seamen had stated it to be. Our bottle has been fairly well corked."

This amazing revelation showed how cleverly contrived was the German plan of hostilities. All our splendid ships at Chatham had, in that brief half-hour, been bottled up and rendered utterly useless. Yet the authorities were not blameless in the matter, for in November, 1905, a foreign warship actually came up the Medway in broad daylight, and was not noticed until she began to bang away her salutes, much to the utter consternation of every one.

This incident, however, was but one of the many illustrations of German's craft and cunning. The whole scheme had been years in careful preparation.

She intended to invade us, and regarded every stratagem as allowable in her sudden dash upon England, an expedition which promised to result in the most desperate war of modern times.

At that moment the "Globe," at last aroused from its long and peaceful sleep, reproduced those plain, prophetic words of Lord Overstone, written some years before to the Royal Defence Commission: "Negligence alone can bring about the calamity under discussion. Unless we suffer ourselves to be surprised we cannot be invaded with success. It is useless to discuss what will occur

or what can be done after London has fallen into the hands of an invading foe. The apathy which may render the occurrence of such a catastrophe possible will not afterwards enable the country, enfeebled, dispirited, and disorganised by the loss of its capital, to redeem the fatal error."

Was that prophecy to be fulfilled?

Some highly interesting information was given by the Ipswich correspondent of the Central News.

Repeated briefly, it was as follows: —

"Shortly before three o'clock on Sunday morning the coastguard at Lowestoft, Corton, and Beach End discovered that their telephonic communication was interrupted, and half an hour later, to the surprise of every one a miscellaneous collection of mysterious craft were seen approaching the harbour: and within an hour many of them were high and dry on the beach, while others were lashed alongside the old dock, the new fish-docks of the Great Eastern Railway, and the wharves, disembarking a huge force of German infantry, cavalry, motor-infantry, and artillery. The town, awakened from its slumbers, was utterly paralysed, the more so when it was discovered that the railway to London was already interrupted, and the telegraph lines all cut. On landing, the enemy commandeered all provisions, including all motor-cars they could discover, horses and forage, while the banks were seized, and the infantry, falling in marched up Old Nelson Street into High Street, and out upon the Beccles Road. The first care of the invaders was to prevent the people of Lowestoft damaging the Swing Bridge, a strong guard being instantly mounted upon it, and so quietly and orderly was the landing effected that it was plain the German plans of invasion were absolutely perfect in every detail.

"Few hitches seemed to occur. The mayor was summoned at six o'clock by General von Kronhelm, the generalissimo of the German Army, and briefly informed that the town of Lowestoft was occupied, and that all armed resistance would be punished by death. Then, ten minutes later, when the German war-flag was flying from several flagstuffs in various parts of the town, the people realised their utter helplessness.

"The Germans, of course, knew that, irrespective of the weather, a landing could be effected at Lowestoft, where the fish-docks and wharves, with their many cranes, were capable of dealing with a large amount of stores. The Denes, that flat, sandy plain between the upper town and the sea, they turned into a camping-ground, and large numbers were billeted in various quarters of the town itself.

"The people were terror-stricken. To appeal to London for help was impossible, as the place had been cut entirely off, and around it a strong chain of outposts had already been thrown, preventing any one from escaping. The town had, in a moment, as it seemed, fallen at the mercy of the foreigners. Even the important-looking police constables of Lowestoft, with their little canes, were crestfallen, sullen, and inactive.

"While the landing was continuing during all Sunday the advance guard moved rapidly over Mutford Bridge, along the Beccles Road, occupying a strong position on the west side of the high ground east of Lowestoft. Beccles, where von Kronhelm established his headquarters, resting as it does on the River Waveney, is strongly held. The enemy's main position appears to run from Windle Hill, one mile north-east of Gillingham, thence north-west through Bull's Green, Herringfleet Hill, over to Grove Farm and Hill House to Raveningham, whence it turns easterly to Haddiscoe, which is at present its northern limit. The total front from Beccles Bridge north is about five miles, and commands the whole of the flat plain west towards Norwich. It has its south flank resting on the River Waveney, and to the north on Thorpe Marshes. The chief artillery position is at Toft Monks — the highest point. Upon the high tower of Beccles Church is established a signal station, communication being made constantly with Lowestoft by helio by day, and acetylene lamps by night.

"The enemy's position has been most carefully chosen, for it is naturally strong, and, being well held to protect Lowestoft from any attack from the west, the landing can continue uninterrupted, for Lowestoft beach and docks are now entirely out of the line of any British fire.

PROCLAMATION

CITIZENS OF LONDON

THE NEWS OF THE BOMBARDMENT of the City of Newcastle and the landing of the German Army at Hull, Weybourne, Yarmouth, and other places along the East Coast is unfortunately confirmed.

THE ENEMY'S INTENTION is to march upon the City of London, which must be resolutely defended.

THE BRITISH NATION and the Citizens of London, in face of these great events, must be energetic in order to vanquish the invader.

The ADVANCE must be CHALLENGED FOOT BY FOOT. The people must fight for King and Country.

Great Britain is not yet dead, for indeed, the more serious her danger, the stronger will be her unanimous patriotism.

GOD SAVE THE KING

HARRISON, Lord Mayor.

Mansion House,
London, *September 3rd, 1910.*

"March outposts are at Blythburgh, Wenhaston, Holton, Halesworth, Wissett, Rumburgh, Homersfield, and Bungay, and then north to Haddiscoe, while cavalry patrols watch by day, the line roughly being from Leiston through Saxmundham, Framlingham, and Tannington, to Hoxne.

"The estimate, gleaned from various sources in Lowestoft and Beccles, is that up to Monday at midday nearly a whole Army Corps, with stores, guns, ammunition, etc., had already landed, while there are also reports of a further landing at Yarmouth, and at a spot still farther north, but at present there are no details.

"The enemy," he concluded, "are at present in a position of absolute security."

CHAPTER IV

A PROPHECY FULFILLED

This authentic news of the position of the enemy, combined with the vague rumours of other landings at Yarmouth, along the coast at some unknown point north of Cromer, at King's Lynn, and other places, produced an enormous sensation in London, while the Central News account, circulated to all the papers in the Midlands and Lancashire, increased the panic in the manufacturing districts.

The special edition of the "Evening Star," issued about six o'clock on Tuesday evening, contained another remarkable story which threw some further light upon the German movements. It was, of course, known that practically the whole of the Norfolk and Suffolk coast was already held by the enemy, but with the exception of the fact that the enemy's cavalry vedettes and reconnoitring patrols were out everywhere at a distance about twenty miles from the shore, England was entirely in the dark as to what had occurred anywhere else but at Lowestoft. Attempts had been made to penetrate the cavalry screen at various points, but in vain. What was in progress was carefully kept a secret by the enemy. The veil was, however, now lifted. The story which the "Evening Star" had obtained exclusively, and which was eagerly read everywhere, had been related by a man named Scotney, a lobster-fisherman, of Sheringham, in Norfolk, who had made the following statement to the chief officer of coastguard at Wainfleet, in Lincolnshire:

"Just before dawn on Sunday morning I was in the boat with my son Ted off the Robin Friend, taking up the lobster pots, when we suddenly saw about three miles off shore a mixed lot of curious-looking craft strung out right across the horizon, and heading apparently for Cromer. There were steamers big and little, many of them towing queer flat-bottomed kind of boats, lighters, and barges, which, on approaching nearer, we could distinctly see were filled to their utmost capacity with men and horses.

"Both Ted and I stood staring at the unusual sight, wondering whatever it meant. They came on very quickly, however – so quickly, indeed, that we thought it best to move on. The biggest ships went along to Weybourne Gap, where they moored in the twenty-five feet of water that runs in close to the shore, while some smaller steamers and the flats were run high and dry on the hard shingle. Before this I noticed that there were quite a number of foreign warships in the offing, with several destroyers far away in the distance both to east and west.

"From the larger steamships all sorts of boats were lowered, including apparently many collapsible whaleboats, and into these, in a most orderly manner, from every gangway and accommodation-ladder, troops – Germans we afterwards discovered them to be, to our utter astonishment – began to descend.

"These boats were at once taken charge of by steam pinnaces and cutters and towed to the beach. When we saw this we were utterly dumbfounded. Indeed, at first I believed it to be a dream, for ever since I was a lad I had heard the ancient rhyme my old father was so fond of repeating:

"He who would Old England win,
Must at Weybourne Hoop begin."

"As everybody knows, nature has provided at that lonely spot every advantage for the landing of hostile forces, and when the Spanish Armada was expected, and again when Napoleon threatened an invasion, the place was constantly watched. Yet nowadays, except for the coastguard, it has been utterly unprotected and neglected.

"The very first soldiers who landed formed up quickly, and under the charge of an officer ran up the low hill to the coastguard station, I suppose in order to prevent them signalling a warning.

The funny thing was, however, that the coastguards had already been held up by several well-dressed men – spies of the Germans, I suppose. I could distinctly see one man holding one of the guards with his back to the wall, and threatening him with a revolver.

"Ted and I had somehow been surrounded by the crowd of odd craft which dodged about everywhere, and the foreigners now and then shouted to me words that unfortunately I could not understand.

"Meanwhile, from all the boats strung out along the beach, from Sheringham right across to the Rocket House at Salthouse, swarms of drab-coated soldiers were disembarking, the boats immediately returning to the steamers for more. They must have been packed as tightly as herrings in a barrel; but they all seemed to know where to go to, because all along at various places little flags were held by men, and each regiment appeared to march across and assemble at its own flag.

"Ted and I sat there as if we were watching a play. Suddenly we saw from some of the ships and bigger barges horses being lowered into the water and allowed to swim ashore. Hundreds seemed to gain the beach even as we were looking at them. Then, after the first lot of horses had gone, boats full of saddles followed them. It seemed as though the foreigners were too busy to notice us, and we – not wanting to share the fate of Mr. Gunter, the coastguard, and his mates – just sat tight and watched.

"From the steamers there continued to pour hundreds upon hundreds of soldiers, who were towed to land, and then formed up in solid squares, which got bigger and bigger. Horses innumerable – quite a thousand, I should reckon – were slung overboard from some of the smaller steamers which had been run high and dry on the beach, and as the tide had now begun to run down, they landed only knee-deep in water. Those steamers, it seemed to me, had big bilge keels, for as the tide ebbed they did not heel over. They had, no doubt, been specially fitted for the purpose. Out of some they began to hoist all sorts of things, wagons, guns, motor-cars, large bales of fodder, clothing, ambulances with big red crosses on them, flat-looking boats – pontoons I think they call them – and great piles of cooking pots and pans, square boxes of stores, or perhaps ammunition, and as soon as anything was landed it was hauled up above high-water mark.

"In the meantime lots of men had mounted on horseback and ridden off up the lane which leads into Weybourne village. At first half a dozen started at a time; then, as far as I could judge, about fifty more started. Then larger bodies went forward, but more and more horses kept going ashore, as though their number was never-ending. They must have been stowed mighty close, and many of the ships must have been specially fitted up for them.

"Very soon I saw cavalry swarming up over Muckleburgh, Warborough, and Telegraph Hills, while a good many trotted away in the direction of Runton and Sheringham. Then, soon after they had gone – that is, in about an hour and a half from their first arrival – the infantry began to move off, and as far as I could see, they marched inland by every road, some in the direction of Kelling Street and Holt, others over Weybourne Heath towards Bodham, and still others skirting the woods over to Upper Sheringham. Large masses of infantry marched along the Sheringham Road, and seemed to have a lot of officers on horseback with them, while up on Muckleburgh Hill I saw frantic signalling in progress.

"By this time they had a quantity of carts and wagons landed, and a large number of motor-cars. The latter were soon started, and, manned by infantry, moved swiftly in procession after the troops. The great idea of the Germans was apparently to get the beach clear of everything as soon as landed, for all stores, equipment, and other tackle were pushed inland as soon as disembarked.

"The enemy kept on landing. Thousands of soldiers got ashore without any check, and all proceeding orderly and without the slightest confusion, as though the plans were absolutely perfect. Everybody seemed to know exactly what to do. From where we were we could see the coastguards held prisoners in their station, with German sentries mounted around; and as the tide was now setting strong to the westward, Ted and I just let our anchor off the ground and allowed ourselves

to drift. It occurred to me that perhaps I might be able give the alarm at some other coastguard station if I could only drift away unnoticed in the busy scene now in progress.

"That the Germans had actually landed in England now apparent; yet we wondered what our own fleet could be doing, and pictured to ourselves the jolly good drubbing that our cruisers would give the audacious foreigner when they did haul in sight. It was for us, at all costs, to give the alarm, so gradually we drifted off to the nor'-westward, in fear every moment lest we should be noticed and fired at. At last we got around Blakeney Point successfully, and breathed more freely; then hoisting our sail, we headed for Hunstanton, but seeing numbers of ships entering the Wash, and believing them to be also Germans, we put our helm down and ran across into Wainfleet Swatchway to Gibraltar Point, where I saw the chief officer of coastguards and told him all the extraordinary events of that memorable morning."

The report added that the officer of coastguard in question had, three hours before, noticed strange vessels coming up the Wash, and had already tried to report by telegraph to his divisional inspecting officer at Harwich, but could obtain no communication. An hour later, however, it had become apparent that a still further landing was being effected on the south side of the Wash, in all probability at King's Lynn.

The fisherman Scotney's statement had been sent by special messenger from Wainfleet on Sunday evening, but owing to the dislocation of the railway traffic north of London, the messenger was unable to reach the offices of the coastguard in Victoria Street, Westminster, until Monday. The report received by the Admiralty had been treated as confidential until corroborated, lest undue public alarm should be caused.

It had then been given to the Press as revealing the truth of what had actually happened.

The enemy had entered by the back door of England, and the sensation it caused everywhere was little short of panic.

Some further very valuable information was also received by the Intelligence Department of the War Office, revealing the military position of the invaders who had landed at Weybourne Hoop.

The whole of the IVth German Army Corps, about 38,000 men, had been landed at Weybourne, Sheringham, and Cromer. It consisted of the 7th and 8th Divisions complete, commanded respectively by Major-General Dickmann and Lieutenant-General von Mirbach. The 7th Division comprised the 13th and 14th Infantry Brigades, consisting of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau's 1st Magdeburg Regiment, the 3rd Magdeburg Infantry Regiment, Prince Louis Ferdinand von Preussen's 2nd Magdeburg Regiment, and the 5th Hanover Infantry Regiment. Attached to this division were the Magdeburg Hussars No. 10, and the Uhlan Regiment of Altmärk No. 16.

In the 8th Division were the 15th and 16th Brigades, comprising a Magdeburg Fusilier Regiment, an Anhalt Infantry Regiment, the 4th and 8th Thuringen Infantry, with the Magdeburg Cuirassiers, and a regiment of Thuringen Hussars. The cavalry were commanded by Colonel Frölich, while General von Kleppen was in supreme command of the whole corps.

Careful reconnaissance of the occupied area showed that immediately on landing, the German position extended from the little town of Holt, on the west, eastward, along the main Cromer road, as far as Gibbet Lane, slightly south of Cromer, a distance of about five miles. This constituted a naturally strong position; indeed, nature seemed to have provided it specially to suit the necessities of a foreign invader. The ground for miles to the south sloped gently away down to the plain, while the rear was completely protected, so that the landing could proceed until every detail had been completed.

Berlin um Eins! Berlin um Eins!

Das Kleine Journal

Mittags Ausgabe

Berlin, Montag, den 3 September 1910

Triumph der

Deutschen

Waffen

Vernichtung der

Englischen

Flotte

Von Kronhelm Auf

Dem Vormarsche

Nach London

Artillery were massed on both flanks, namely, at Holt and on the high ground near Felbrigg, immediately south of Cromer. This last-named artillery was adequately supported by the detached infantry close at hand. The whole force was covered by a strong line of outposts. Their advanced sentries were to be found along a line starting from Thornage village, through Hunworth, Edgefield, Barningham Green, Squallham, Aldborough, Hanworth, to Roughton. In rear of them lay their pickets, which were disposed in advantageous situations. The general line of these latter were at

North Street, Pondhills to Plumstead, thence over to Matlash Hall, Aldborough Hall, and the rising ground north of Hanworth. These, in their turn, were adequately supplemented by the supports, which were near Hempstead Green, Baconsthorpe, North Narningham, Bessingham, Sustead, and Melton.

In case of sudden attack, reserves were at Bodham, West Beckham, East Beckham, and Aylmerton, but orders had been issued by Von Kleppen, who had established his headquarters at Upper Sheringham, that the line of resistance was to be as already indicated – namely, that having the Holt-Cromer Road for its crest. Cuirassiers, Hussars, and some motorists – commanded by Colonel von Dorndorf – were acting independently some fifteen miles to the south scouring the whole country, terrifying the villagers, commandeering all supplies, and posting Von Kronhelm's proclamation, which has already been reproduced.

From inquiries it was shown that on the night of the invasion six men, now known to have been advance agents of the enemy, arrived at the Ship Inn, at Weybourne. Three of them took accommodation for the night, while their companions slept elsewhere. At two o'clock the trio let themselves out quietly, were joined by six other men, and just as the enemy's ships hove in sight nine of them seized the coastguards and cut the wires, while the other three broke into the Weybourne Stores, and, drawing revolvers, obtained possession of the telegraph instrument to Sheringham and Cromer until they could hand it over to the Germans.

That the Fourth German Army Corps were in a position as strong as those who landed at Lowestoft could not be denied, and the military authorities could not disguise from themselves the extreme gravity of the situation.

CHAPTER V

STATE OF SIEGE DECLARED

That our fleet had been taken unawares was apparent. There were all sorts of vague rumours of a sudden attack upon the North Sea Fleet at Rosyth, and a fierce cruiser battle, in which we had been badly beaten by Germany. It is, however, the land campaign which we have here to record.

The authentic account of a further landing in Essex – somewhere near Maldon – was now published. The statement had been dictated by Mr. Henry Alexander, J.P., – the Mayor of Maldon, who had succeeded in escaping from the town, – to Captain Wilfred Quare, of the Intelligence Department of the War Office. This Department had, in turn, given it to the newspapers for publication.

It read as follows: —

"On Sunday morning, September 2, I had arranged to play a round of golf with my friend Somers, of Beeleigh, before church. I met him at the Golf Hut about 8.30. We played one round, and were at the last hole but three in a second round when we both thought we heard the sound of shots fired somewhere in the town. We couldn't make anything at all of it, and as we had so nearly finished the round, we thought we would do so before going to inquire about it. I was making my approach to the final hole when an exclamation from Somers spoilt my stroke. I felt annoyed, but as I looked around – doubtless somewhat irritably – my eyes turned in the direction in which I now saw my friend was pointing with every expression of astonishment in his countenance.

"Who on earth are those fellows?" he asked. As for me, I was too dumbfounded to reply. Galloping over the links from the direction of the town came three men in uniform – soldiers, evidently. I had often been in Germany, and recognised the squat pickelhaubes and general get-up of the rapidly approaching horsemen at a glance.

"They were upon us almost as he spoke, pulling up their horses with a great spattering up of grass and mud, quite ruining one of our best greens. All three of them pointed big, ugly repeating pistols at us, and the leader, a conceited-looking ass in staff uniform, required us to 'surrender' in quite a pompous manner, but in very good English.

BY THE KING,

PROCLAMATION

FOR CALLING OUT THE ARMY RESERVE

EDWARD R.

WHEREAS by the Reserve Forces Act, 1882, it is amongst other things enacted that in case of imminent national danger or of great emergency, it shall be lawful for Us, by Proclamation, the occasion being declared in Council and notified by the Proclamation, if Parliament be not then sitting, to order that the Army Reserve shall be called out on permanent service; and by any such Proclamation to order a Secretary of State from time to time to give, and when given, to revoke or vary such directions as may seem necessary or proper for

calling out the forces or force mentioned in the Proclamation, or all or any of the men belonging thereto:

AND WHEREAS Parliament is not sitting, and whereas WE have declared in Council and hereby notify the present state of Public Affairs and the extent of the demands on Our Military Forces for the protection of the interests of the Empire constitute a case of great emergency within the meaning of the said Act:

NOW THEREFORE We do in pursuance of the said Act hereby order that Our Army Reserve be called out on permanent service, and We do hereby order the Right Honourable Charles Leonard Spencer Cotterell, one of our Principal Secretaries of State, from time to time to give, and when given, to revoke or vary such directions as may seem necessary or proper for calling out Our Army Reserve, or all or any of the men belonging thereto, and such men shall proceed to and attend at such places and at such times as may be respectively appointed by him to serve as part of Our Army until their services are no longer required.

Given at Our Court at James', this fourth day of September, in the year of our Lord, one thousand nine hundred and ten, and in the tenth year of Our Reign.

"Do we look so very dangerous, Herr Lieutenant?" inquired I in German.

"He dropped a little of his frills when he heard me speak in his native language, asked which of us was the Mayor, and condescended to explain that I was required in Maldon by the officer at present in command of his Imperial Majesty the Kaiser's forces occupying that place.

"I looked at my captor in complete bewilderment. Could he be some fellow trying to take a rise out of me by masquerading as a German officer? But no, I recognised at once that he was the genuine article.

"He demanded my parole, which I made no difficulty about giving, since I did not see any way of escape, and in any case was only too anxious to get back to town to see how things were.

"But you don't want my friend, do you – he lives out the other way?" I queried.

"I don't want him, but he will have to come all the same," rejoined the German. 'It isn't likely we're going to let him get away to give the alarm in Colchester, is it?'

"Obviously it was not, and without more ado we started off at a sharp walk, holding on to the stirrup leathers of the horsemen.

"As we entered the town there was on the bridge over the river, a small picket of blue-coated German infantry. The whole thing was a perfect nightmare. It was past belief.

"How on earth did you get here?" I couldn't help asking.

"By water," he answered shortly, pointing down the river as he spoke, where I was still further astonished – if it were possible after such a morning – to see several steam pinnaces and boats flying the black and white German ensign.

"I was conducted straight to the Moot Hall. There I found a grizzled veteran waiting on the steps, who turned round and entered the building as we came up. We followed him inside, and I was introduced to him. He appeared to be a truculent old ruffian.

"Well, Mr. Mayor," he said, pulling viciously at his white moustache, 'do you know that I've a great mind to take you out into the street and have you shot?'

"I was not at all inclined to be browbeated.

"Indeed, Herr Hauptman?" I answered. 'And may I inquire in what way I have incurred the displeasure of the Hochwohlgeboren officer?'

"Don't trifle with me, sir. Why do you allow your miserable Volunteers to come out and shoot my men?'

"My Volunteers? I am afraid I don't understand what you mean," I said. 'I'm not a Volunteer officer. Even if I were, I should have no cognisance of anything that has happened within the last

two hours, as I have been down on the golf course. This officer will bear me out,' I added, turning to my captor. He admitted that he had found me there.

"'But, anyway, you are the Mayor,' persisted my interrogator. 'Why did you allow the Volunteers to come out?'

"'If you had been good enough to inform us of your visit, we might have made better arrangements.' I answered; 'but in any case you must understand that a mayor has little or no authority in this country. His job is to head subscription-lists, eat a dinner or two, and make speeches on public occasions.'

"He seemed to have some difficulty in swallowing this, but as another officer who was there, writing at a table, and who, it appears, had lived at some period in England, corroborated my statement, the choleric colonel seemed to be a little mollified, and contented himself with demanding my parole not to leave Maldon until he had reported the matter to the General for decision. I gave it without more ado, and then asked if he would be good enough to tell me what had happened. From what he told me, and what I heard afterwards, it seems that the Germans must have landed a few of their men about half an hour before I left home, down near the Marine Lake. They had not entered the town at once, as their object was to work round outside and occupy all entrances, to prevent anyone getting away with the news of their presence. They had not noticed the little lane leading to the golf course, and so I had gone down without meeting any of them, although they had actually got a picket just beyond the railway arch at that time. They had completed their cordon before there was any general alarm in the town, but at the first reliable rumour it seems that young Shand, of the Essex Volunteers, had contrived to get together twenty or thirty of his men in their uniforms and foolishly opened fire on a German picket down by St. Mary's Church. They fell back, but were almost instantly reinforced by a whole company that had just landed, and our men, rushing forward, had been ridden into by some cavalry that came up a side street. They were dispersed, a couple of them were killed, and several wounded, among them poor Shand, who was hit in the right lung. They had bagged four Germans, however, and their commanding officer was furious. It was a pity that it happened, as it could not possibly have been of any use. But it seems that Shand had no idea that it was more than a very small detachment that had landed from a gun-boat that some one said they had seen down the river. Some of the Volunteers were captured afterwards and sent off as prisoners, and the Germans posted up a notice that all Volunteers were forthwith to surrender either themselves or their arms and uniforms, under pain of death. Most of them did the latter. They could do nothing after it was found that the Germans had a perfect army somewhere between Maldon and the sea, and were pouring troops into the town as fast as they could.

"That very morning a Saxon rifle battalion arrived from the direction of Mundon, and just afterwards a lot spike-helmeted gentlemen came in by train from Wickford way. So it went on all day, until the whole town was in a perfect uproar. The infantry were billeted in the town, but the cavalry and guns crossed the river and canal at Heybridge, and went off in the direction of Witham.

"Maldon is built on a hill that slopes gradually towards the east and south, but rises somewhat abruptly on the west and north, humping up a shoulder, as it were, to the north-west. At this corner they started to dig entrenchments just after one o'clock, and soon officers and orderlies were busy all round the town, plotting, measuring, and setting up marks of one kind and another. Other troops appeared to be busy down in Heybridge, but what they were doing I could not tell, as no one was allowed to cross the bridge over the river.

"The German officer who had surprised me down on the golf course did not turn out to be a bad kind of youth on further acquaintance. He was a Captain von Hildebrandt, of the Guard Fusilier Regiment, who was employed on the Staff, though in what capacity he did not say. Thinking it was just as well to make the best of a bad job, I invited him to lunch. He said he had to be off. He, however, introduced me to three friends of his in the 101st Grenadiers, who, he suggested, should

be billeted on me. I thought the idea a fairly good one, and Von Hildebrandt, having apparently arranged this with the billeting officer without any difficulty, I took them home with me to lunch.

"I found my wife and family in a great state of mind, both on account of the untoward happenings of the morning and my non-return from golf at the expected time. They had imagined all sorts of things which might have befallen me, but luckily seemed not to have heard of my adventure with the choleric colonel. Our three foreigners soon made themselves very much at home, but as they were undeniably gentlemen, they contrived to be about as agreeable as could be expected under the circumstances. Indeed, their presence was to a great extent a safeguard against annoyance, as the stable and back premises were stuffed full of soldiers, who might have been very troublesome had they not been there to keep them in order.

"Of what was happening up in London we knew nothing. Being Sunday, all the shops were shut; but I went out and contrived to lay in a considerable stock of provisions one way and another, and it was just as well I did, for I only just anticipated the Germans, who commandeered everything in the town, and put everybody on an allowance of rations. They paid for them with bills on the British Government, which were by no means acceptable to the shopkeepers. However, it was 'Hobson's choice' – that or nothing. The Germans soothed them by saying that the British Army would be smashed in a couple of weeks, and the defrayment of such bills would be among the conditions of peace. The troops generally seemed to be well-behaved, and treated those inhabitants with whom they came in contact in an unexceptionable manner. They did not see very much of them, however, as they were kept hard at work all day with their entrenchments and were not allowed out of their billets after eight o'clock that evening. No one, in fact, was allowed to be about the streets after that hour. Two or three people were shot by the sentries as they tried to break out in one direction or the other. These affairs produced a feeling of horror and indignation in the town, as Englishmen, having such a long experience of peace in their own country, have always refused to realise what war really means.

"The German fortifications went on at a rapid rate. Trenches were dug all round the northern and western sides of the town before dark on the first evening, and the following morning I woke up to find three huge gun-pits yawning in my garden, which looked to the northward. During breakfast there was a great rattling and rumbling in the street without, and presently three big field howitzers were dragged in and planted in the pits. There they stood, their ugly snouts pointing skyward in the midst of the wreck of flowers and fruit.

"Afterwards I went out and found that other guns and howitzers were being put in position all along the north side of Beeleigh Road, and round the corner by the Old Barracks. The high tower of the disused Church of St. Peter's, now utilised for the safe custody of Dr. Plume's library, had been equipped as a lookout and signal station."

Such was the condition of affairs in the town of Maldon on Monday morning.

The excitement in London, and indeed all over the country, on Tuesday night was intense. Scotney's story of the landing at Weybourne was eagerly read everywhere.

As the sun sank blood-red into the smoke haze behind Nelson's Monument in Trafalgar Square, it was an ominous sign to the panic-stricken crowds that day and night were now assembled there.

The bronze lions facing the four points of the compass were now mere mocking emblems of England's departed greatness. The mobilisation muddle was known; for, according to the papers, hardly any troops had as yet assembled at their places of concentration. The whole of the east of England was helplessly in the invader's hands. From Newcastle had come terrible reports of the bombardment. Half the city was in flames, the Elswick works were held by the enemy, and whole streets in Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland, and Tynemouth were still burning fiercely.

The Tynemouth fort had proved of little or no use against the enemy's guns. The Germans had, it appeared, used petrol bombs with appalling results, spreading fire, disaster, and death

everywhere. The inhabitants, compelled to fly with only the clothes they wore, had scattered all over Northumberland and Durham, while the enemy had seized a quantity of valuable shipping that had been in the Tyne, hoisted the German flag, and converted the vessels to their own uses.

Many had already been sent across to Wilhelmshaven, Emden, Bremerhaven, and other places to act as transports, while the Elswick works – which surely ought to have been properly protected – supplied the Germans with quantities of valuable material.

Panic and confusion were everywhere. All over the country the railway system was utterly disorganised, business everywhere was at a complete deadlock, for in every town and city all over the kingdom the banks were closed.

Lombard Street, Lothbury, and other banking centres in the City had all day on Monday been the scene of absolute panic. There, as well as at every branch bank all over the metropolis, had occurred a wild rush to withdraw deposits by people who foresaw disaster. Many, indeed, intended to fly with their families away from the country.

The price of the necessities of life had risen further, and in the East End and poorer districts of Southwark the whole population were already in a state of semi-starvation. But worst of all, the awful truth with which London was now face to face was that the metropolis was absolutely defenceless.

Every hour the papers were appearing with fresh details of the invasion, for reports were so rapidly coming in from every hand that the Press had difficulty in dealing with them.

Hull and Goole were known to be in the hands of the invaders, and Grimsby, where the Mayor had been unable to pay the indemnity demanded, had been sacked. But details were not yet forthcoming.

Londoners, however, learnt late that night more authentic news from the invaded zone, of which Beccles was the centre, and it was to the effect that those who had landed at Lowestoft were the IXth German Army Corps, with General von Kronhelm, the Generalissimo of the German Army. This Army Corps, consisting of about 40,000 men, was divided into the 17th Division, commanded by Lieutenant-General Hocker, and the 18th by Lieutenant-General von Rauch. The cavalry was under the command of Major-General von Heyden, and the motor-infantry under Colonel Reichardt.

NOTICE

TO ALL GERMAN SUBJECTS RESIDENT IN ENGLAND

WILHELM.

To all OUR LOYAL SUBJECTS, GREETING.

We hereby COMMAND and enjoin that all persons born within the German Empire, or being German subjects, whether liable to military service or not, shall join our arms at any headquarters of either of our Army Corps in England within 24 hours of the date of this proclamation.

Any German subject failing to obey this our Command will be treated as an enemy.

By the EMPEROR'S Command.

Given at Beccles, Sept. 3rd, 1910.

VON KRONHELM,

Commanding the Imperial German Army in England.

According to official information which had reached the War Office and been given to the Press, the 17th Division was made up of the Bremen and Hamburg Infantry Regiments, the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg's Grenadiers, the Grand Duke's Fusiliers, the Lübeck Regiment No. 162, the Schleswig-Holstein Regiment No. 163, while the cavalry brigade consisted of the 17th and 18th Grand Duke of Mecklenburg's Dragoons.

The 18th Division consisted of the Schleswig Regiment No. 84 and the Schleswig Fusiliers No. 86, the Thuringen Regiment, and the Duke of Holstein's Regiment, the two latter regiments being billeted in Lowestoft, while the cavalry brigade forming the screen across from Leiston by Wilby to Castle Hill were Queen Wilhelmina's Hanover Hussars and the Emperor of Austria's Schleswig-Holstein Hussars No. 16. These, with the smart motor infantry, held every communication in the direction of London.

As far as could be gathered, the German commander had established his headquarters in Beccles, and had not moved. It now became apparent that the telegraph cables between the East coast and Holland and Germany, already described in the first chapter, had never been cut at all. They had simply been held by the enemy's advance agents until the landing had been effected. And now Von Kronhelm had actually established direct communication between Beccles and Emden, and on to Berlin.

Reports from the North Sea spoke of the enemy's transports returning to the German coast, escorted by cruisers; therefore the plan was undoubtedly not to move until a very much larger force had been landed.

Could England regain her command of the sea in time to prevent the completion of the blow?

That night the London streets presented a scene of panic indescribable. The theatres opened, but closed their doors again, as nobody would see plays while in that excited state. Every shop was closed, and every railway station was filled to overflowing with the exodus of terrified people fleeing to the country westward, or reserves on their way to join the colours.

The incredulous manner in which the country first received the news had now been succeeded by wild terror and despair. On that bright Sunday afternoon they laughed at the report as a mere journalistic sensation, but ere the sun set the hard, terrible truth was forced upon them, and now, on Tuesday night, the whole country, from Brighton to Carlisle, from Yarmouth to Aberystwyth, was utterly disorganised and in a state of terrified anxiety.

The eastern counties were already beneath the iron heel of the invader, whose objective was the world's great capital – London.

Would they reach it? That was the serious question upon every one's tongue that fevered, breathless night.

CHAPTER VI

HOW THE ENEMY DEALT THE BLOW

Meanwhile, at the regimental depôts feverish excitement prevailed on Wednesday, September 5, now that every man was ordered on active service. All officers and men who had been on leave were recalled, and medical inspection of all ranks at once commenced. Rations and bedding, stores and equipment were drawn, but there was a great lack of uniforms. Unlike the German Army, where every soldier's equipment is complete even to the last button on the proverbial gaiter, and stowed away where the owner knows where to obtain it, our officers commanding depôts commenced indenting for clothing on the Royal Army Clothing Department and the Army Corps Clothing Department.

A large percentage of men were, of course, found medically unfit to serve, and were discharged to swell the mobs of hungry idlers. The plain clothes of the reservists coming in were disposed of, no man daring to appear in the ranks unless in uniform. Von Kronhelm's proclamation having forbidden the tactics of the Boers of putting mere armed citizens into the field.

Horse-collecting parties went out all over the country, taking with them head-collars, head-ropes, bits, reins, surcingles, numnahs, horse-blankets, and nose-bags. These scoured every county in search of likely animals, every farm, every livery stable, every hunting-box, all hound-kennels and private stables were visited, and a choice made. All this, however, took time. Precious hours were thus being wasted while the enemy were calmly completing their arrangements for the long-contemplated blow at the heart of the British Empire.

While the War Office refused any information, special editions of the papers during Wednesday printed sensational reports of the ruthless completion of the impenetrable screen covering the operations of the enemy on the whole of the East Coast.

News had, by some means, filtered through from Yarmouth that a similar landing to those at Lowestoft and Weybourne had been effected. Protected as such an operation was by its flanks being supported by the IVth and IXth Army Corps landing on either side, the Xth Army Corps, under General von Wilburg, had seized Yarmouth, with its many miles of wharves and docks, which were now crowded by the lighters' craft of flotilla from the Frisian Islands.

It was known that the landing had been effected simultaneously with that at Lowestoft. The large number of cranes at the fish-docks were of invaluable use to the enemy, for there they landed guns, animals, and stores, while the provisions they found at the various ship's chandlers, and in such shops as Blagg's, and the International Stores in King Street, Peter Brown's, Doughty's, Lipton's, Penny's and Barnes's, were at once commandeered. Great stores of flour were seized in Clarke's and Press's mills, while the horse-provender mills in the vicinity supplied them with valuable forage.

Beyond these few details, as far as regarded the fate of Yarmouth, nothing further was at present known.

The British division at Colchester, which comprised all the regular troops north of the Thames in the eastern command, was, no doubt, in a critical position, threatened so closely north and south by the enemy. None of the regiments – the Norfolks, the Leicestershire, and the King's Own Scottish Borderers of the 11th Infantry Brigade – were up to their strength. The 12th Infantry Brigade, which also belonged to the division, possessed only skeleton regiments stationed at Hounslow and Warley. Of the 4th Cavalry Brigade, some were at Norwich, the 21st Lancers were at Hounslow, while only the 16th Lancers were at Colchester. Other cavalry regiments were as far away as Canterbury, Shorncliffe, and Brighton, and although there were three batteries of artillery at Colchester, some were at Ipswich, others at Shorncliffe, and others at Woolwich.

Therefore it was quite evident to the authorities in London that unless both Colchester and Norwich were instantly strongly supported, they would soon be simply swept out of existence by the enormous masses of German troops now dominating the whole eastern coast, bent upon occupying London.

Helpless though they felt themselves to be, the garrison at Colchester did all they could. All available cavalry had been pushed out past Ipswich, north to Wickham Market, Stowmarket, and across to Bury St. Edmunds, only to find on Wednesday morning that they were covering the hasty retreat of the small body of cavalry who had been stationed at Norwich. They, gallantly led by their officers, had done everything possible to reconnoitre and attempt to pierce the enemy's huge cavalry screen, but in every instance entirely in vain. They had been outnumbered by the squadrons of independent cavalry operating in front of the Germans, and had, alas! left numbers of their gallant comrades upon the roads, killed and wounded.

Norwich had, therefore, on Wednesday morning fallen into the hands of the German cavalry, utterly defenceless. From the Castle the German flag was now flying, the Britannia Barracks were being used by the enemy, food had all been seized, the streets were in a state of chaos, and a complete reign of terror had been created when a company of British Infantry, having fired at some Uhlans, were ruthlessly shot down in the street close by the Maid's Head.

In addition to this, the Mayor of Norwich was taken prisoner, lodged in the Castle, and held as surety for the well-behaviour of the town.

Everywhere Von Kronhelm's famous proclamation was posted, and as the invaders poured into the city the inhabitants looked on in sullen silence, knowing that they were now under German military discipline, the most rigorous and drastic in the whole world.

A special issue of the "Times" in the evening of the 3rd September contained the following vivid account – the first published – of the happenings in the town of Goole, in Yorkshire:

"Goole, September 3.

"Shortly before five o'clock on Sunday morning the night operator of the telephone call-office here discovered an interruption on the trunk-line, and on trying the telegraphs was surprised to find that there was no communication in any direction. The railway station, being rung up, replied that their wires were also down.

"Almost immediately afterwards a well-known North Sea pilot rushed into the post office and breathlessly asked that he might telephone to Lloyd's. When told that all communication was cut off he wildly shouted that a most extraordinary sight was to be seen in the River Ouse, up which was approaching a continuous procession of tugs, towing flats, and barges filled with German soldiers.

"This was proved to be an actual fact, and the inhabitants of Goole, awakened from their Sunday morning slumbers by the shouts of alarm in the streets, found, to their abject amazement, foreign soldiers swarming everywhere. On the quay they found activity everywhere, German being spoken on all hands. They watched a body of cavalry, consisting of the 1st Westphalian Hussars, the Westphalian Cuirassiers, land with order and ease at the Victoria Pier, whence, after being formed up on the quay, they advanced at a sharp trot up Victoria Street, Ouse Street, and North Street to the railway stations, where, as is generally known, there are large sidings of the North-East Lancashire and Yorkshire lines in direct communication both with London and the great cities of the north. The enemy here found great quantities of engines and rolling stock, all of which was at once seized, together with huge stacks of coal at the new sidings.

"Before long the first of the infantry of the 13th Division, which was commanded by Lieutenant-General Doppschutz, marched up to the stations. They consisted of the 13th and 56th Westphalian Regiments, and the cavalry on being relieved advanced out of the town, crossing the Dutch River by the railway bridge, and pushed on as far as Thorne and Hensall, near which they at once strongly held the several important railway junctions.

"Meanwhile cavalry of the 14th Brigade, consisting of Westphalian Hussars and Uhlans, were rapidly disembarking at Old Goole, and, advancing southwards over the open country of Goole Moors and Thorne Waste, occupied Crowle. Both cavalry brigades were acting independently of the main body, and by their vigorous action both south and west they were entirely screening what was happening in the port of Goole.

CITY OF NORWICH

CITIZENS —

AS IS WELL KNOWN, a hostile army has landed upon the coast of Norfolk, and has already occupied Yarmouth and Lowestoft, establishing their headquarters at Beccles.

IN THESE GRAVE CIRCUMSTANCES our only thought is for England, and our duty as citizens and officials is to remain at our post and bear our part in the defence of Norwich, our capital now threatened.

YOUR PATRIOTISM, of which you have on so many occasions in recent wars given proof, will, I have no doubt, again be shown. By your resistance you will obtain the honour and respect of your enemies, and by the individual energy of each one of you the honour and glory of England may be saved.

CITIZENS OF NORWICH, I appeal to you to view the catastrophe calmly, and bear your part bravely in the coming struggle.

CHARLES CARRINGTON,
Mayor.

Norwich, September 4, 1910.

"Infantry continued to pour into the town from flats and barges, arriving in endless procession. Doppschütz's Division landed at Aldan Dock, Railway Dock, and Ship Dock; the 14th Division at the Jetty and Basin, also in the Barge Dock and at the mouth of the Dutch River; while some, following the cavalry brigade, landed at Old Goole and Swinefleet.

"As far as can be ascertained, the whole of the VIIth German Army Corps have landed, at any rate as far as the men are concerned. The troops, who are under the supreme command of General Baron von Bistram, appear to consist almost entirely of Westphalians, and include Prince Frederick of the Netherlands' 2nd Westphalians; Count Bulow von Dennewitz's 6th Westphalians; but one infantry brigade, the 79th, consisted of men from Lorraine.

"Through the whole day the disembarkation proceeded, the townsmen standing there helpless to lift a finger and watching the enemy's arrival. The Victoria Pleasure Grounds were occupied by parked artillery, which towards afternoon began to rumble through the streets. The German gunners, with folded arms, sat unconcernedly upon the ammunition boxes as the guns were drawn up to their positions. Horses were seized wherever found, the proclamation of Von Kronhelm was nailed upon the church doors, and the terrified populace read the grim threat of the German field-marshal.

"The wagons, of which there were hundreds, were put ashore mostly at Goole, but others up the river at Hook and Swinefleet. When the cavalry advance was complete, as it was soon after midday, and when reports had come in to Von Bistram that the country was clear of the British, the German infantry advance began. By nightfall they had pushed forward, some by road, some by rail, and others in the numerous motor-wagons that had accompanied the force, until march-outposts were established, south of Thorne, Askern, and Crowle, straddling the main road

at Bawtry. These places, including Fishlake and the country between them, were at once strongly held, while ammunition and stores were pushed up by railway to both Thorne and Askern.

"The independent cavalry advance continued through Doncaster until dusk, when Rotherham was reached, during which advance scattered bodies of British Imperial Yeomanry were met and compelled to retreat, a dozen or so lives being lost. It appears that late in the afternoon of Sunday news was brought into Sheffield of what was in progress, and a squadron of Yeomanry donned their uniforms and rode forward to reconnoitre, with the disastrous results already mentioned.

"The sensation caused in Sheffield when it became known that German cavalry were so close as Rotherham was enormous, and the scenes in the streets soon approached a panic; for it was wildly declared that that night the enemy intended to occupy the town. The Mayor telegraphed to the War Office, appealing for additional defensive force, but no response was received to the telegram. The small force of military in the town, which consisted of the 2nd Battalion Yorkshire Light Infantry, some Royal Artillery, and the local Volunteers, were soon assembled, and going out occupied the strong position above Sheffield between Catcliffe and Tinsley, overlooking the valley of the Rother to the east.

"The expectation that the Germans intended an immediate descent on Sheffield was not realised, because the German tactics were merely to reconnoitre and report on the defences of Sheffield, if any existed. This they did by remaining to the eastward of the river Rother, whence the high ground rising before Sheffield could be easily observed.

"Before dusk one or two squadrons of Cuirassiers were seen to be examining the river to find fords and ascertain the capacity of the bridges, while others appeared to be comparing the natural features of the ground with the maps with which they all appeared to be provided.

"As night fell, however, the cavalry retired towards Doncaster, which town was occupied, the Angel being the cavalry headquarters. The reason the Germans could not advance at once upon Sheffield was that the cavalry was not strongly supported by infantry from their base, the distance from Goole being too great to be covered in a single day. That the arrangements for landing were in every detail perfect could not be doubted, but owing to the narrow channel of the Ouse time was necessary, and it is considered probable that fully three days must elapse from Sunday before the Germans are absolutely established.

"An attempt has been made by the Yorkshire Light Infantry and the York and Lancaster Regiment, with three battalions of Volunteers stationed at Pontefract, to discover the enemy's strength and position between Askern and Snaith, but so far without avail, the cavalry screen across the whole country being impenetrable.

GOD SAVE THE KING

PROCLAMATION

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

In regard to the Decree of September 3rd of the present year, declaring a state of siege in the Counties of Norfolk and Suffolk.

In regard to the Decree of August 10th, 1906, regulating the public administration of all theatres of war and military servitude;

Upon the proposition of the Commander-in-Chief

IT IS DECREED AS FOLLOWS:

(1) There are in a state of war:

1st. In the Eastern Command, the counties of Northamptonshire, Rutlandshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, and Middlesex (except that portion included in the London Military District).

2nd. In the Northern Command, the counties of Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, and Yorkshire, with the southern shore of the estuary of the Humber.

(2) I, Charles Leonard Spencer Cotterell, his Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for War, am charged with the execution of this Decree.

War Office, Whitehall,

September the Fourth, 1910.

"The people of the West Riding, and especially the inhabitants of Sheffield, are stupefied that they have received no assistance – not even a reply to the Mayor's telegram. This fact has leaked out, and has caused the greatest dissatisfaction. An enemy is upon us, yet we are in ignorance of what step, if any, the authorities are taking for our protection.

"There are wild rumours here that the enemy have burned Grimsby, but these are generally discredited, for telegraphic and telephonic communication has been cut off, and at present we are completely isolated. It has been gathered from the invaders that the VIIIth Army Corps of the Germans have landed and seized Hull, but at present this is not confirmed. There is, alas! no communication with the place, therefore, the report may possibly be true.

"Dewsbury, Huddersfield, Wakefield, and Selby are all intensely excited over the sudden appearance of German soldiers, and were at first inclined to unite to stem their progress. But the German proclamation, showing the individual peril of any citizen taking arms against the invaders, having been posted everywhere, has held every one scared and in silent inactivity.

"Where is our Army?" every one is asking. The whole country has run riot in a single hour, now that the Germans are upon us. On every hand it is asked: 'What will London do?'"

Reports now reached London that the VIIth German Army Corps had landed at Hull and Goole, and taking possession of these towns, were moving upon Sheffield in order to paralyse our trade in the Midlands. Hull had been bombarded, and was in flames! Terrible scenes were taking place at that port.

On that memorable Sunday, when a descent had been made upon our shores, there were in German ports on the North Sea nearly a million tons gross of German shipping. Normally, in peace time, half a million tons is always to be found there, the second half having been quietly collected by ships putting in unobserved into such ports as Emden, Bremen, Bremerhaven, and Geestemunde, where there are at least ten miles of deep-sea wharves, with ample railway access. The arrival of these crafts caused no particular comment, but they had already been secretly prepared for the transport of men and horses while at sea.

Under the cover of the Frisian Islands, from every canal, river, and creek had been assembled a huge multitude of flats and barges, ready to be towed by tugs alongside the wharves and filled with troops. Of a sudden, in a single hour it seemed, Hamburg, Altona, Cuxhaven, and Wilhelmshaven were in excited activity, and almost before the inhabitants themselves realised what was really in progress, the embarkation had well commenced.

At Emden, with its direct cable to the theatre of war in England, was concentrated the brain of the whole movement. Beneath the lee of the covering screen of Frisian Islands, Borkum,

Juist, Norderney, Langebrog, and the others, the preparations for the descent upon England rapidly matured.

Troop-trains from every part of the Fatherland arrived with the punctuality of clockwork. From Düsseldorf came the VIIth Army Corps, the VIIIth from Coblenz, the IXth were already assembled at their headquarters at Altona, while many of them being stationed at Bremen embarked from there; the Xth came up from Hanover, the XIVth from Magdeburg, and the Corps of German Guards, the pride and flower of the Kaiser's troops, arrived eagerly at Hamburg from Berlin and Potsdam, among the first to embark.

Each army corps consisted of about 38,000 officers and men, 11,000 horses, 144 guns, and about 2,000 motor-cars, wagons, and carts. But for this campaign – which was more of the nature of a raid than of any protracted campaign – the supply of wheeled transport, with the exception of motor-cars, had been somewhat reduced.

Each cavalry brigade attached to an army corps consisted of 1,400 horses and men, with some thirty-five light machine guns and wagons. The German calculation – which proved pretty correct – was that each army corps could come over to England in 100,000 tons gross of shipping, bringing with them supplies for twenty-seven days in another 3,000 tons gross. Therefore about 618,000 tons gross conveyed the whole of the six corps, leaving an ample margin still in German ports for any emergencies. Half this tonnage consisted of about 100 steamers, averaging 3,000 tons each, the remainder being the boats, flats, lighters, barges, and tugs previously alluded to.

The Saxons who, disregarding the neutrality of Belgium, had embarked at Antwerp, had seized the whole of the flat-bottomed craft in the Scheldt and the numerous canals, as well as the merchant ships in the port, finding no difficulty in commandeering the amount of tonnage necessary to convey them to the Blackwater and the Crouch.

As hour succeeded hour the panic increased.

It was now also known that, in addition to the various corps who had effected a landing, the German Guards had, by a sudden swoop into the Wash, got ashore at King's Lynn, seized the town, and united their forces with Von Kleppen's corps, who, having landed at Weybourne, were now spread right across Norfolk. This picked corps of Guards was under the command of that distinguished officer, the Duke of Mannheim, while the infantry divisions were under Lieutenant-Generals von Castein and Von Der Decken.

The landing at King's Lynn on Sunday morning had been quite a simple affair. There was nothing whatever to repel them, and they disembarked on the quays and in the docks, watched by the astonished populace. All provisions were seized at shops, while headquarters were established at the municipal buildings, and the German flag hoisted upon the old church, the tower of which was at once used as a signal station.

Old-fashioned people of Lynn peered out of their quiet respectable houses in King Street in utter amazement; but soon, when the German proclamation was posted, the terrible truth was plain.

In half an hour, even before they could realise it, they had been transferred from the protection of the British flag to the militarism of the German.

Ere sundown on Sunday, stalwart grey-coated sentries of the Guards Fusiliers from Potsdam, and the Grenadiers from Berlin were holding the roads at Gayton, East Walton, Narborough, Markham, Fincham, Stradsett, and Stow Bardolph. Therefore on Sunday night, from Spalding on the east, Peterborough, Chatteris, Littleport, Thetford, Diss, and Halesworth, were faced by a huge cavalry screen protecting the landing and repose of the great German Army behind it.

Slowly but carefully the enemy were maturing their plans for the defeat of our defenders and the sack of London.

CHAPTER VII

DESPERATE FIGHTING IN ESSEX

London was at a standstill. Trade was entirely stopped. Shopkeepers feared to open their doors on account of the fierce, hungry mobs parading the street. Orators were haranguing the crowds in almost every open space. The police were either powerless, or feared to come into collision with the assembled populace. Terror and blank despair were everywhere.

There was unrest night and day. The banks, head offices, and branches, unable to withstand the run upon them when every one demanded to be paid in gold, had, by mutual arrangement, shut their doors, leaving excited and furious crowds of customers outside unpaid. Financial ruin stared every one in the face. Those who were fortunate enough to realise their securities on Monday were fleeing from London south and westward. Day and night the most extraordinary scenes of frantic fear were witnessed at Paddington, Victoria, Waterloo, and London Bridge. The southern railways were badly disorganised by the cutting of the lines by the enemy, but the Great Western system was, up to the present, intact, and carried thousands upon thousands to Wales, to Devonshire, and to Cornwall.

In those three hot, breathless days the Red Hand of Ruin spread out upon London.

The starving East met the terrified West, but in those moments the bonds of terror united class with mass. Restaurants and theatres were closed; there was but little vehicular traffic in the streets, for of horses there were none, while the majority of the motor 'buses had been requisitioned, and the transit of goods had been abandoned. "The City," that great army of daily workers, both male and female, was out of employment, and swelled the idlers and gossips, whose temper and opinion were swayed each half-hour by the papers now constantly appearing night and day without cessation.

Cabinet Councils had been held every day, but their decisions, of course, never leaked out to the public. The King also held Privy Councils, and various measures were decided upon. Parliament, which had been hurriedly summoned, was due to meet, and every one speculated as to the political crisis that must now ensue.

In St. James's Park, in Hyde Park, in Victoria Park, on Hampstead Heath, in Greenwich Park – in fact, in each of the "lungs of London," – great mass meetings were held, at which resolutions were passed condemning the Administration and eulogising those who, at the first alarm, had so gallantly died in defence of their country.

It was declared that by the culpable negligence of the War Office and the National Defence Committee we had laid ourselves open to complete ruin, both financially and as a nation.

The man-in-the-street already felt the strain, for the lack of employment and the sudden rise in the price of everything had brought him up short. Wives and families were crying for food, and those without savings and with only a few pounds put by looked grimly into the future and at the mystery it presented.

Most of the papers published the continuation of the important story of Mr. Alexander, the Mayor of Maldon, which revealed the extent of the enemy's operations in Essex and the strong position they occupied.

It ran as below:

"Of the events of the early hours of the morning I have no very clear recollection. I was bewildered, staggered, dumbfounded by the sights and sounds which beset me. Of what modern war meant I had till then truly but a very faint idea. To witness its horrid realities enacted in this quiet, out-of-the-way spot where I had pitched my tent for so many years, brought them home to me literally as well as metaphorically.

"I had run down Cromwell Hill, and seeing the flames of Heybridge, was impelled to get nearer, if possible, to discover more particularly the state of affairs in that direction. But I was

reckoning without the Germans. When I got to the bridge over the river at the foot of the hill, the officer in charge there absolutely prevented my crossing. Beyond the soldiers standing or kneeling behind whatever cover was offered by the walls and buildings abutting on the riverside, and a couple of machine guns placed so as to command the bridge and the road beyond, there was nothing much to see. A number of Germans were, however, very busy in the big mill just across the river, but what they were doing I could not make out. As I turned to retrace my step the glare of the conflagration grew suddenly more and more intense. A mass of dark figures came running down the brightly illuminated road towards the bridge, while the rifle fire became louder, nearer, and heavier than ever. Every now and again the air became alive with, as it were, the hiss and buzz of flying insects. The English must have fought their way through Heybridge, and these must be the bullets from their rifles. It was dangerous to stay down there any longer, so I took to my heels. As I ran I heard a thundering explosion behind me, the shock of which nearly threw me to the ground. Looking over my shoulder, I saw that the Germans had blown up the mill at the farther end of the bridge, and were now pushing carts from either side in order to barricade it. The two Maxims, too, began to pump lead with their hammering reports, and the men near them commenced to fall in twos and threes. I made off to the left, and passed into High Street by the end of St. Peter's Church, now disused. At the corner I ran against Mr. Clydesdale, the optician, who looks after the library which now occupies the old building. He pointed to the tower, which stood darkly up against the blood-red sky.

"Look at those infernal Germans!" he said. "They can't even keep out of that old place. I wish we could have got the books out before they came."

"I could not see any of our invaders where he was pointing, but presently I became aware of a little winking, blinking light at the very summit of the tower.

"That's them," said Clydesdale. "They're making signals, I think. My boy says he saw the same thing on Purleigh Church tower last night. I wish it would come down with them, that I do. It's pretty shaky, anyway."

"The street was fairly full of people. The Germans, it is true, had ordered that no one should be out of doors between eight in the evening and six in the morning; but just now they appeared to have their hands pretty full elsewhere, and if any of the few soldiers that were about knew of or thought anything of the interdiction, they said nothing.

"The crash of a salvo of heavy guns from the direction of my own house interrupted him.

"That'll be the guns in my garden," I said.

"Yes, sir, and they've got three monstrous great ones in the opening between the houses just behind the church there," said Clydesdale.

"As he spoke, the guns in question bellowed out, one after the other.

"Look – look at the tower!" I cried.

"The light at the top had disappeared and the lofty edifice was swaying slowly, slowly, over to the left.

"She's gone at last!" exclaimed Clydesdale.

"It was true. Down came the old steeple that had pointed heavenward for so many generations, with a mighty crash and concussion that swallowed up even the noise of the battle, though cannon of all sorts and sizes were now joining in the hellish concert, and shell from the English batteries began to roar over the town. The vibration and shock of the heavy guns had been too much for the old tower, which, for years in a tottery condition, had been patched up so often.

"As soon as the cloud of dust cleared off we ran towards the huge pile of débris that filled the little churchyard. Several other people followed. It was very dark down there, in the shadow of the trees and houses, despite the fire-light overhead, and we began striking matches as we looked about among the heaps of bricks and beams to see if there were any of the German signal party

among them. Why we should have taken the trouble under the circumstances I do not quite know. It was an instinctive movement of humanity on my part, and that of most of the others, I suppose.

"I caught sight of an arm in a light blue sleeve protruding from the débris, and took hold of it in a futile attempt to remove some of the bricks and rubbish which I thought were covering the body of its owner. To my horror, it came away in my hand. The body to which it belonged might be buried yards away in the immense heap of ruins. I dropped it with a cry, and fled from the spot.

"Dawn was now breaking. I do not exactly remember where I wandered to after the fall of St. Peter's Tower, but it must have been between half-past five and six when I found myself on the high ground at the north-western corner of the town, overlooking the golf links, where I had spent so many pleasant hours in that recent past that now seemed so far away. All around me were batteries, trenches, and gun-pits. But though the firing was still going on somewhere away to the right, where Heybridge poured black smoke skyward like a volcano, gun and howitzer were silent, and their attendant artillerymen, instead of being in cover behind their earthen parapets, were clustered on the top, watching intently something that was passing in the valley below them. So absorbed were they that I was able to creep up behind them, and also get a sight of what was taking place. And this is what I saw:

"Over the railway bridge which spanned the river a little to the left were hurrying battalion after battalion of green and blue clad German infantry. They moved down the embankment after crossing, and continued their march behind it. Where the railway curved to the right and left, about half a mile beyond the bridge, the top of the embankment was lined with dark figures lying down and apparently firing, while over the golf course from the direction of Beeleigh trotted squadron after squadron of sky-blue riders, their green and white lance pennons fluttering in the breeze. They crossed the Blackwater and Chelmer Canal, and cantered off in the direction of Langford Rectory.

"At the same time I saw line after line of the Germans massed behind the embankment spring over it and advance rapidly towards the lower portion of the town, just across the river. Hundreds fell under the fire from the houses, which must have been full of Englishmen, but one line after another reached the buildings. The firing was now heavier than ever – absolutely incessant and continuous – though, except for an occasional discharge from beyond Heybridge, the artillery was silent.

"I have but little knowledge of military matters, but it was abundantly evident, even to me, that what I had just seen was a very formidable counter-attack on the part of the Germans, who had brought up fresh troops either from the rear of the town or from farther inland, and launched them against the English under cover of the railway embankment. I was not able to see the end of the encounter, but bad news flies apace, and it soon became common knowledge in the town that our troops from Colchester had not only failed to cross the river at any point, but had been driven helter-skelter out of the lower town near the station and from the smoking ruins of Heybridge with great loss, and were now in full retreat.

"Indeed, some hundreds of our khaki-clad fellow-countrymen were marched through the town an hour or two later as prisoners, to say nothing of the numbers of wounded, who, together with those belonging to the Germans, soon began to crowd every available building suitable for use as an hospital. The wounded prisoners with their escort went off towards Mundon, and are reported to have gone in the direction of Steeple. It was altogether a disastrous day, and our hopes, which had begun to rise when the British had penetrated into the northern part of the town, now fell below zero.

"It was a black day for us, and for England. During the morning the same officer who had captured me on the golf course came whirling into Maldon on a 24-h.p. Mercedes car. He drove straight up to my house, and informed me that he had orders to conduct me to Prince Henry, who was to be at Purleigh early in the afternoon.

"Was it in connection with the skirmish with the Volunteers?" I asked.

"'I don't know,' was the reply. 'But I don't fancy so. In the meantime, could I write here for an hour or two?' he asked politely. 'I have much to write to my friends in Germany, and have not had a minute up to now.'

"I was very glad to be able to oblige the young man in such a small way, and left him in my study till midday, very busy with pens, ink, and paper.

"After a makeshift of a lunch, the car came round, and we got into the back seat. In front sat his orderly and the chauffeur, a fierce-looking personage in a semi-military uniform. We ran swiftly down the High Street, and in a few minutes were spinning along the Purleigh Road, where I saw much that amazed me. I then for the first time realised how absolutely complete were the German plans."

"Tuesday, September 4.

"About six o'clock this morning I awoke rather suddenly. The wind had gone round to the northward, and I was certain that heavy firing was going on somewhere in that direction. I opened the window and looked out. The 'thud' and rumble of a cannonade, with the accompaniment of an occasional burst of musketry, came clearly and loudly on the wind from the hills by Wickham Bishops village. The church spire was in plain view, and little faint puffs and rings of grey smoke were just visible in its vicinity every now and again, sometimes high up in the air, at others among the trees at its base. They were exploding shells; I had no doubt of that. What was going on it was impossible to say, but I conjectured that some of our troops from Colchester had come into collision with the Germans, who had gone out in that direction the day of their arrival. The firing continued for about an hour, and then died away.

"Soon after eight, Count von Ohrendorff, the general officer commanding the 32nd Division, who appeared to be the supreme authority here, sent for me, and suggested that I should take steps to arrange for the manufacture of lint and bandages by the ladies living in the town. I could see no reason for objecting to this, and so promised to carry out his suggestion. I set about the matter at once, and, with the assistance of my wife, soon had a couple of score of more or less willing workers busily engaged in the National Schoolroom. In the meantime the roll of a terrible cannonade had burst forth again from Wickham Bishops. It seemed louder and more insistent than ever. As soon as I got away from the schools I hurried home and climbed out on the roof. The top of the Moot Hall and other coigns of vantage had all been occupied by the Germans. However, with the aid of a pair of field-glasses I was able to see a good bit. Black smoke was now pouring from Wickham Bishops in clouds, and every now and again I fancied I could see the forked tongues of flame shooting up above the surrounding trees. A series of scattered black dots now came out on the open ground to the south of the church. The trees of Eastland Wood soon hid them from my sight, but others followed, mingled with little moving black blocks which I took to be formed bodies of troops. After them came four or five guns, driven at breakneck pace towards the road that passes between Eastland and Captain's Woods, then more black dots, also in a desperate hurry. Several of these last tumbled, and lay still here and there all over the slope.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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