

# The Australian Crisis

**Kirmess, C. H.**

A digital text sponsored by  
Australian Literature Gateway

**University of Sydney Library  
Sydney**

**2003**



<http://purl.library.usyd.edu.au/setis/id/kiraust>  
© University of Sydney Library. The texts and images are not to be used for  
commercial purposes without permission

**Source Text:**

Prepared from the print edition published by Thomas C. Lothian Melbourne  
1909 335pp.

---

All quotation marks are retained as data.

First Published: 1909

823.91A *Australian Etext Collections at novels 1890-1909*

**The Australian Crisis**

**Melbourne**  
**Thomas C. Lothian**  
**1909**

## Preface

“THE AUSTRALIAN CRISIS” is the final result of an attempt on my part, early in 1907, to write a magazine article dealing with the dangers to which the neighbourhood of overcrowded Asia exposes the thinly populated Commonwealth of Australia. At that time, my thoughts on the subject resembled those of the Australian multitude: they were disconnected, and more in the shape of a vague fear than defined clearly. However, when I began to work out my problem, I soon recognized that it was too vast for intelligible compression within the limits of an ordinary magazine contribution. I was quite convinced of this when the central idea of the book occurred to me — the possibility of a coloured invasion of Australian territory, organized on such lines that the Australians would be unable to persuade the heart of the Empire that there was any invasion.

This central idea may be termed my only presupposition, for which reason I have been at pains to treat it from every point of view. Granted its feasibility, the whole narrative of Parts I and III follows as a matter of cold, logical necessity. True, the details might vary, but the drift of events would be inevitable in the direction indicated. Part II is an interlude, which has grown out of my deep conviction that Australia would somehow strike a direct blow against the invading enemy. It investigates also the possibility of success attendant upon such an attempt.

There have been a good many abstract warnings of late on the subject dealt with by me. Unfortunately the Australians, who have the reputation of being a rather imaginative people, seem to have no imagination at all where the future safety of the nation is concerned. The past warnings have been ridiculed as being unwarrantably pessimistic. One more bald statement would probably share the same fate. Apparently the Commonwealth can be roused to a sense of its danger only by patient investigation of its real position in the world and of the possibilities arising thence. That has been my purpose.

My book deals exclusively with realities. For this reason it is written in the form of a retrospection from the year 1922 upon events supposed to have happened less than ten years earlier, viz., in 1912. The nearness of the latter date has been decided on deliberately. A deferment of action to a later time would have made unavoidable the introduction of a fantastical element. Nobody can guess what the conditions may be even a decade hence. My purpose did not require the invention of unheard-of war engines or radical changes on the map of the world. On the contrary, the introduction of new

factors, of things that do not yet exist, would only confuse the issue. But every thinking man can foresee the probable political developments of the next few years. I show what is possible under the known circumstances of the hour almost, to-day or to-morrow. And I think if that has no power to compel the citizens of the Commonwealth to seriously consider their position, no dreadful visions of a distant future will.

C. H. KIRMESS

SYDNEY.

\* This forecast romance is something more than a novel: it is a work. So as to secure quicker publication by giving larger instalments, it has been decided not to illustrate "The Australian Crisis."

# Part I: The Feet of Clay

## Chapter I: Ships That Pass in the Night

IN the evening of April 1, 1912, two white men were camping upon a sandy rise overlooking Junction Bay, Northern Territory, Australia. Theirs was a strange presence, at a strange time, in those strange surroundings. But it is just as well that accident or fate had thrown them there, for otherwise this fragment of contemporary history — as matter-of-fact and unemotional as all history must be — would have been bereft even of a picturesque beginning. The air was pleasantly cooling after sunset, under the influence of a light eastern breeze which wafted along the night sounds of many animals from the direction of the lagoon. Low in the western sky the crescent of the young moon hung just atop of the tall timber. Towards the sea everything was very quiet. The sands extended far out to where a broad belt of blue mud deadened the soft ripple of the receding tide.

On the high ground, bare but for scattered tufts of grass, the men were safe from creeping things and mosquitoes. The calm beauty of the night invited to a long vigil of smoking and talking. Naturally, the Northern Territory — its vastness its present state and future prospects — was the topic of conversation. Both men had been animated by the same hopes to try their fortunes there. Now that only a few pompous formalities remained to be gone through before the transfer of the enormous, empty province to the Commonwealth would be complete, a booming prosperity could not fail to come, and they had hastened to the spot to be in its van.

The elder of the two was clearly an Australian by birth — tall, darkish, of that looseness of limb which denotes the breed. His name was Thomas Burt. He was a prospector and miner, and acted, like many others, as a self-appointed pioneer for British Capital, which was expected to become interested once more in the great mineral wealth of the country. Lately he had explored the district south and east of Pine Creek, and returning to this place for a spell, he had there made the acquaintance of his companion, a Yorkshireman, who had imported a stock of merchandise from Sydney into Port Darwin.

The two adventurers, attended by Burt's black boy, had departed from Port Darwin in a northeasterly direction. The Australian scorned beaten tracks, and they had headed straight for the wilderness. Exploration in the season immediately after the rainfalls, which had ceased early this

year, was indeed a rare pleasure. Fresh water was still met with in every hollow, and game abounded. Bush and jungle looked now their grandest and loveliest. Nearer the coast the landscape became more brilliant in colour and variety. The fascination of the interminable solitudes enveloped them until they made up their minds to push right on to the sea. They kept as much as possible to the watershed, where progress was comparatively easy, away from the impenetrable network of creeks and flood-channels, overgrown by rank vegetation. So it happened, that after a leisurely ride of nine days, they emerged upon Junction Bay.

When the faint gurgle of flowing-in waves marked the turn of the tide through the utter stillness, Thomas Burt rose to stretch his limbs, and sauntered sleepily along the crest. The night was so clear that stars visible just above the horizon showed like signal lamps of ships skimming over the dark expanse of ocean. But the Australian did not look for lights out at sea; well he knew that the course for steamers lay far out of the danger-zone of islands and reefs which guard our continent to the north, and that proas, junks or small traders which might venture closer inshore did not waste good oil in those parts. Yet something must have caught his attention, for he peered out a good while over the murmuring waters. Suddenly he gave a sharp whistle, and faced round to his mate dozing beside the dying embers of the fire. He soundly shook the sleeper, and shouted in his ear —

“Rouse yourself and look over this anthill. Take your glass.”

The Yorkshireman stumbled to his feet. Several miles out he espied a gleam which unquestionably came from a well-trimmed ship's lantern.

“It can't be a steamer,” Thomas Burt commented; “they don't show their noses round here for fear of smashing 'em in. As for other navigators hereabouts, they have not the reputation of burning bonfires on their boats.”

He dropped his field-glass lazily. His friend continued watching through his. “I see two lights now,” he said.

The Australian re-applied his glass. “It must be a steamer, then,” he remarked. “They may be drifting.”

They kept a silent watch for some time. From the shore rose the odour of organic things decomposing in stagnant brine. Again Thomas Burt spoke.

“It's two ships. They kept in line, but now they are steering different courses right into the bay.”

The Yorkshireman shivered slightly in the freshness of the small hours. “We might give them a fire signal,” he said.

“Steady!” replied the other. “There's no fog. They've passed the bar a long way. Ah!” He gave a little gasp of surprise, for he had discerned yet more lights. “It's a whole fleet; they are manoeuvring. There is purpose behind this. Our help won't be wanted.”

“Well,” queried the Yorkshireman, “what does it mean, Mr. Know-all?”

The Australian hazarded a conclusion: “I’ll tell you. The Singapore squadron is on a training cruise, though what they are doing here I can’t guess.”

His friend laughed. “Perhaps a new idea to dispose of the scrap-iron ships your people make so much row about. Piling them a-top some reef.”

At this moment a solitary red rocket shot up from the nearest steamer, vanishing in a luminous haze. A merry twinkle of lights from the more distant ships answered the signal.

“You see it is a naval affair,” said Thomas Burt.

The other had a bright notion. “O, yes,” he said, “and I can also inform you that it isn’t the Australian Navy, because it has not been built yet.”

“Lie down flat,” whispered the Australian, dropping to the ground himself.

From the leading vessel, which was bearing inshore gradually, and had approached to within three miles, the beam of a strong searchlight had been flashed on the land, and was now sweeping the shore. After less than two minutes’ play it was masked again.

Through sand and scant grass the two travellers shuffled on all fours until they gained the inner slope of the rise. The Yorkshireman placed a trembling hand on the Australian’s shoulder. “All this is so unaccountable,” he breathed.

Thomas Burt lifted his head cautiously over the crest. The other lights were drawing closer. “Evidently they know what they are looking for,” he said, frowning. “It did not take them long to find out, anyhow, since they have not turned on that ray again. I wonder if they calculated to have unmasked eye-witnesses at this performance.”

“But we’ll have to think of ourselves, mate,” his friend broke in.

The Australian nodded. They covered the ashes of their fire carefully with sand. A call, like the wail of a night-bird, summoned the black servant, who had been soundly asleep near the horses. By order of his master he saddled the animals, and led them further inland behind some thick scrub. The friends examined their guns and pistols, and returned to their posts. It was about two o’clock in the morning, and the tide was near its highest point, almost lapping the base of their lookout.

Five steamers lay in a crescent, stretching east, parallel to the beach. From the forecastle of each, a motionless, blinding cone of light illumined shore and adjacent waters. Although the vessels might be two miles distant, an ever-increasing din could be heard quite distinctly. Suddenly a puffing noise approached, and soon strings of three or four boats, towed by squat motor launches, emerged into the glare.

The friends had to pinch each other to make sure that they were not

dreaming.

About the unintelligible event, the tropical night wrapped her scent-laden cloak, pierced only by a soothing, lulling wind and by the gleam of stars shining in calm aloofness on the high-vaulted firmament. As calmly aloof shone those five bluish rays in front of them, pointing the way for some dark Power creeping upon the sleeping continent with the inevitableness of Fate. So far, noise and shadowy glimpses had a curious atmosphere of detachment about them, as if the scene were projected on curling, hissing vapours.

The spell was rudely broken the instant the searchlights beat on the boats, which promptly executed a smart manoeuvre. Within a hundred yards from shore, the motor launch swung round sharply. But the boats had already thrown loose from her and from each other. On they came nearly abreast, still propelled by the impetus of tugging. As this relaxed, two pairs of oars shot out of each boat and pulled strenuously for the beach. Then, as it touched ground, men leaped overboard and dragged it upon dry sand. Each boat disgorged about a score of occupants, who at once, automatically, began to discharge cargo. First, rifles were brought out and built together in the pyramids characteristic of all trained soldiery. A multitude of cases and bags followed. In five minutes the craft were run into the sea again. Three men jumped in, the oars started working, a file was formed and lines were passed between. Some little distance out, the launch hovered, waiting; promptly she caught up, the boats hitched up, and back into the gloom the mysterious procession puffed.

The watchers strained their eyesight in vain to unravel the identity of these nocturnal immigrants. Not more than 300 yards divided them from the nearest group. But as the latter was approximately interposed between the source of light and the observers, it appeared in merely silhouette, in black outlines against the surrounding brightness. It was evident that strict discipline was being enforced. One man alone gave out commands and was hurriedly obeyed. Of his words, it could only be made out that they were not English. Soon the boats landed reinforcements, ever and ever more. All the men seemed very tired; they lay down in the sand to snatch some sleep. This carelessness proved that the new-comers were not in the least afraid of any hostile attack.

When the two friends recognized that they would have to await the break of day for closer investigation, they left their exposed position and returned to the horses, which they found fastened to trees. The boy was away, but he responded to the call with little delay. Pointing to the sea he said, "Them plurry Chinamen." His senses were sharper, perhaps, and his cat-like agility might have got him very near to the singular visitors. The men looked at one another in silence. Possibly they did not dare to give utterance to their secret suspicions while there was yet hope.

At last dawn paled the east. Along the beach bugles resounded. Some figures appeared on the crest of the rise — still compact black dots against the colouring sky. One pointed to the ground, and shouted. Others ran to join him. The whites knew; the morning glow had revealed their footprints, the imprints of hoofs and other traces of their camp.

Now with the abruptness of tropical latitudes, day broke gloriously. The first slanting rays of the sun lit up many faces on the ridge peering anxiously in their direction. But the thicket hid them well. Both friends focussed their glasses on those multitudinous prying features far off and then exchanged their thoughts in a simultaneous exclamation:

“Japanese! The Japanese!” A bitter curse was added.

Next moment the horses greeted the morning brightness with joyous neighs. Little the brutes knew that they were saluting the Rising Sun. The animals' cries betrayed the presence of strangers. The Japanese rushed to arms, and volley after volley was poured into the forest. But the whites were safe on their swift horses and glided away in true bushman fashion, never exposing themselves. Only once they turned back and fired one round in reply. One pursuer collapsed, shot down. That was Australia's welcome to the invaders. Behind, ringing bugle signals died out echoing in the woods — a last menace and challenge. On the two explorers tore to the south-west, to carry the fateful news to the world of white men.

## **Chapter II: An Unadvertised Immigration Policy**

FOR several years preceding 1912 constant reports of famine in Japan had reached Europe. Travellers had vouchsafed for their accuracy, and much money had been collected abroad, especially among the sympathetic British. The Government of the Mikado did its best to prove its concern and goodwill by continuing an ostentatious policy of emigration to its new possessions, Korea and Southern Manchuria. But those countries carried already large populations, and could only absorb limited numbers. For this reason the Japanese statesmen were compelled to look towards other emptier lands, and they began by turning their attention to the opposite shores of the Northern Pacific. How their bold policy was assailed by the white settlers of the Western Canadian and United States slopes, and how in the end it had to be abandoned, the present generation remembers well. The Eastern Island Empire had to recant its claims for equal rights and recognition of its subjects with the white citizens of American communities. Its submission to the inevitable was rewarded by the successful placing of a loan of £20,000,000 in London, New York, Paris and Berlin.

Foiled in this direction, yet strengthened financially, Japan had leisure to contemplate its failure with a view of profiting by its lessons. Publicity had beaten it. Everywhere on the west coast of North America there lived already too many white men, and every move had therefore been detected and counteracted swiftly. Japan was indeed in serious straits. Cramped for space in spite of victory, surrounded by overcrowded or inaccessible nations, oversea expansion was its necessity. Still suffering from the stress of the Russian campaign, it could think of war only as a last extremity. And the habitable parts of the globe were divided up and strongly held between the White Powers. The problem was to discover a district nominally owned by one of them where the white man had not entered into full possession, and had thus not morally forestalled the right of other races to settle, as long as they were content to do so, under the foreign flag; a district, in other words, where the first steps of peaceful Japanese immigration could not rouse the fierce indignation which they had caused elsewhere. Such a district existed, nearer and more convenient to Japan than any other possible field of exploitation — the Northern Territory of Australia, with its 600,000 square miles and less than 1000 white people.

Japan had long cast longing eyes in that direction. Since the end of the year 1906, a steady stream of its subjects had invaded Java and Straits Settlements. But Java is one of the most thickly populated islands in the world; its acquisition by the Mikado would have meant, apart from other probable complications, the repetition of another and more troublesome Korea. The Straits Settlements were one of the master-keys of British dominion, and were, therefore, well out of Japan's reach as conquests. But as stepping-stones towards the Commonwealth, the temporary penetration of both was invaluable. Thus the ambitious Island Empire cautiously felt its way towards its goal, until its rebuff elsewhere and the slowly-awakening consciousness of Australian public opinion made its rulers fearful of being anticipated by an influx of State-assisted white settlers into the north of the Commonwealth.

Those developments may have precipitated the crisis. But several other facts, which have lately leaked out, seem to prove that Japan had selected the year 1912 for its descent upon Australia for some considerable time past. It is necessary to turn to the Island of Formosa for confirmation. Its helpless population about this time was said to be in such violent ferment (even after more than ten years of Tokio administration!) that a strong army of occupation was necessary. Tokio intimated further that it was desirable under the circumstances to isolate the malcontents from the outside world and from outside encouragement, and it adhered to this policy rigidly, to such an extent that news of interest from the little island dependency hardly got into the European and American press at all in the years just preceding 1912. Formosa seemed to be entirely forgotten — exactly as was desired by Japan.

Yet during this period of silence a very special system of immigration into Formosa was carried on under the direct supervision of the Japanese Government. In some respects it was military settlement, so that the semi-official admission merely strained the truth. But it had several other remarkable features. The immigrants were not soldiers of the line; they were reserve men who had served a full term, and were now in the very prime of life and vigour. People of low stamina might pour into Korea, Manchuria and North China, but they were carefully excluded from Formosa. The plain of Gilan, on the east coast, had been chosen for the site of the settlement. It presents tropical conditions similar to those of the Northern Territory. A still more approximate climate could have been met with on the west coast, with its full-length expanse of alluvial plains twenty miles wide, bounded inland by low hills gradually leading up to the Formosan Alps. But it would not have been so suitable for the purpose, owing to the openness of its geographical situation, facing China, whence it had been colonized. Swarms of junks were always employed in commerce with the mainland, and pried into every corner in the search for profitable business. The populous ports were frequented by

European steamers. So there could have been no secrecy for uncommon proceedings.

The contrast of seclusion on the east coast was great. The Chinese had never crossed the mountains. What population there was consisted of half-tamed aborigines, living in stone huts and tormented by incursions of the fierce, nomadic hunter tribes of the hills. Jungle and thick forests encroached on the plain, which is shut off by high ranges descending vertically thousands of feet into the sea. It rises towards the interior in well-formed tablelands like the Northern Territory, though, of course, on a miniature scale. Here the parallel ends, for the towering Alps of the Formosan background, which send their rushing torrents down throughout the years, have no counterpart in tropical Australia. Yet, on the whole, the climatic conditions are similar. Equal methods of cultivation are rewarded by equally generous results in suitable parts of both countries. In summer the heat is very humid and enervating in Gilan, and people who have lived and worked there would feel the drier heat of the Northern Territory as relief. Considering everything, there can be no doubt that a better acclimatizing stage could not have been fixed upon on the road from temperate Japan to the torrid north of Australia.

At the end of the first quarter, 1911, several thousand Japanese had been concentrated in the plain of Gilan. They lived in large sheds at first, and were subject to severe discipline. No effort was spared to give them a thorough agricultural and pastoral training. According to one investigator, every twelfth man had passed a special Government course in those branches, and was now appointed headman of his fellows, for whose due efficiency he was made responsible. Every form of suitable cultivation was practised, but the greatest care was taken to raise a sufficiency of the necessaries of life, so that the new settlement might speedily become self-supporting. Rice, cane, sweet potatoes and various vegetables were grown on the plain, where goats, pigs, and poultry were also kept. The uplands were given over to wheat and other cereals, and to the pasturage of horses, cattle and sheep. Much attention was paid to the making of roads. In short, it seems that no detail was neglected which might in any way contribute to the success of the great enterprise of which the Gilan colony was only the preparation.

Many medical officers looked after the health of the settlement, and their exertions kept down fever and tropical diseases. Epidemic appears not to have occurred at all. A well-planned diet, combined with thoughtful management, which insisted on just the right measure of arduous open-air toil, and varied it with regular military exercises, promoted moral steadiness and healthfulness. Physical weaklings were eliminated by a judicious weeding-out process, and were repatriated without delay. On the other hand, reinforcements continued to swell the ranks. These newcomers, stimulated by the results already achieved,

sought to surpass them in their own domain, and a healthy, absorbing competition between the camps sprang up. Nothing could have pleased better the supervisors of the experiment. It was certainly a difficult task to hold together such huge numbers of vigorous men long enough for effective training. Mere discipline could not ensure final efficiency. The settlers must also be willing to learn, and to that end they had to be kept in good spirits. Their tempers were, indeed, sorely tried by the incessant hard work until the introduction of a keen sense of rivalry provided a more personal interest and added a new zest to their labours.

Everything went well until the monsoonal deluges of autumn prevented field work to a large extent. Then, at last, the men began to get out of hand. Family instincts could no longer be repressed by toil, high promises, and the weeding-out of the less disciplined. Small bands deserted and roamed the hills searching for wives among the natives. As often as not they never returned. When the need for female partners made itself felt so pressingly, the authorities yielded to it. That they had delayed the matter so long, till nearly the end of 1911, was part of a deep-laid scheme. For the master-minds who had conceived the great enterprise were determined to bend even the natural passions of men to the service of the cause.

The invasion of the Northern Territory was timed to take place at the end of the rainy season (March, 1912), as later events have shown. That was obviously the correct moment, allowing the immigrants to begin cultivation of the soil forthwith and to gather the first harvest in the same year. But the official interest did not permit matters to rest here. It was desirable to bind the settlers to their prospective new homes by stronger ties than manual toil and its reward could forge. Only one possible way existed by which that goal could be attained: family settlement there. This was the consideration why the marriage of the colonists had been postponed. The idea was that the freshly united couples should spend a honeymoon of six or eight weeks in the plain of Gilan. Then the men were to be hurried off to their final destination, there to prepare proper shelter for their wives, who would follow a month or two later. During the last quarter of 1912 children would be born — natives of whom birthright, that most powerful moral or sentimental claim, would entitle to a share in the empty continent.

A simpler and more thorough method of colonization could not be imagined. It has become known to fame as the “Progressive Family System,” and admirers of Japan have called it its master-stroke of policy. The experience of many bitter failures, no doubt, led up to the evolution. For instance, the American venture suffered from being a mere migration of male coolies, with all the imperfections and vices attaching to that limitation. Evidently, a horde of bachelors, transplanted upon foreign soil, yet excluded from intermarriage because of race prejudice, could

not really claim equal rights with the citizens thereof who represented families. Japanese genius had freed the Northern Territory settlement of this inherent weakness of tenure almost from the outset.

About the middle of January, every member of the huge immigration party, which, according to a conservative estimate, numbered now over 6,000 men, rejoiced in the possession of a wife. The young couples lived in wooden huts, constructed in advance by the men. The whole plan of accommodation and activity was as nearly as possible the prototype of the later Australian colony. The dwellings formed isolated villages of about 200 families each, some placed on the flats, others in creek valleys and on the high lands, and linked to a larger coastal settlement by roads and telegraph.

Suddenly the happy communities were alarmed by rumours of impending separation. It is likely that the men had been informed beforehand (some considerable time ago) that they would not remain permanently in Gilan. But that may have been forgotten. At all events, it seems that the reminder came as a rude shock. Still, the men were manageable. Anything can be done with the male Japanese once his patriotism is inflamed. But the women rose in fury. Perhaps they had not been warned when wooed by agency. Now, belated reasoning had no effect. All those subtle policy points, which awed the husbands even if they did not fully understand them, were lost upon the women. What they felt was that they were threatened with the loss of their husbands. The whole weight of female influence was brought to bear on the men. These grew restless. Contrary to regulations, the inhabitants of different villages gathered together to exchange views, and soon the whole colony seethed with discontent. The officers or headmen did their best to reduce their subordinates to order. In vain; the women's influence proved stronger. The men began to obstruct the preparations for departure; punishment of the worst offenders led to open defiance. One morning, a medical officer, going his usual rounds in a village, was set upon by a female mob and beaten to death with stones and household implements. The headman, rushing to his assistance, was wounded and hunted into the bush. After that, the officers telegraphed to Kelung and to Japan for military help.

The Government was greatly surprised. Human feelings threatened to overthrow its careful calculations, because they had not been taken sufficiently into account. That dangerous Japanese tendency, often commented upon, of regarding men as machines, may be right enough where males are concerned. In the Manchurian war it led to frontal attacks against entrenched positions, and yet was a success. But now that the principle was extended to women it broke down. Quick measures of repression were necessary. Already rumours of revolution had got abroad. Tokio side-tracked them by a cablegram, admitting the existence

of trouble in Formosa, but attributing it to rural workers and miners who had imbibed crude notions of Western Socialism. This was also a satisfactory anticipatory explanation as regards the approaching concentration of steamers in Formosan waters, which otherwise might have attracted attention. Everybody would now conclude that they were military transports carrying troops to the disturbed districts.

When the punitive force arrived the men had gone back to work. It was February, and the fields called for industrious hands. Preparations for departure were, however, quite neglected. This passivity did not prevent vigorous reprisals. The village which had given the signal for murder was burnt down, and scores of men and women died by the executioner's hand. Very soon the men, overawed by wholesome judicial massacre, were thoroughly subdued. The great enterprise was saved at the brink of ruin, and full attention could now be devoted to the proceeding embarkation.

Here the marvellous organizing talent of the race had full play. A superficial survey of the transports, it is true, would hardly have suggested fancies of naval glory. They were tramp steamers of 2,000 to 3,000 tons, such as usually carry trade in Far Eastern seas, capable of a steady hourly speed of ten to twelve knots. Everything had been avoided which might have betrayed the real purpose. The exterior of each vessel was weather-beaten and grimy, but inside the greatest order prevailed. Each vessel could house 600 to 800 men in rough comfort. The bulwarks had been raised about a foot above the ordinary, which precaution gave the steamers the appearance of lying high in the water, and would deceive even critical observers, for none could suspect that the buoyancy was not real, and that every inch of space had been scientifically put to the best use. Each craft was fitted with wireless telegraph instruments and a searchlight. All were coaled sufficient to last for the whole distance, but 3,000 tons of best Japanese steam coal were shipped for emergencies by a steamer carrying the latest appliances for coaling at sea. Two swift destroyers acted as guardships and scouts. They had been cunningly disfigured to look like small tramps without losing too much of their speed. There were also cargo carriers and cattle boats, which sailed somewhat later.

The passage of a fleet through the Dutch Indies would have attracted notice. For this reason the transports and subsidiaries were despatched by three different routes, part passing between the Philippines and Carolines, thence through Dampier Straits, and skirting Ceram; part through the South China Sea and Sulu Sea, rounding the east coast of Borneo, and beating east through Flores Sea; and part sailing down West Borneo, entering Java Sea, and finding an outlet south through Lombok Straits. The collier and one destroyer went further west for scouting purposes, intent on passing through Sunda Straits into the Indian Ocean.

As the whole plan had been carefully concerted no accidents occurred, but a Dutch cruiser sighted the destroyer while coaling at sea off Batavia. It happened at daybreak, and the Japanese vessels allowed themselves to be surprised. Though they separated at once, suspicions had been roused already. The destroyer steadily crept north, never revealing its true speed. Such a clumsy-looking, slow-going craft was, however, beneath Dutch notice, which turned to the more imposing collier. The latter boldly showed the flag of the Rising Sun, and steered straight for Batavia Roads, where she replenished her store of water. Her papers were perfectly in order: "ss. *Honjo Maru*, bound for Perth, West Australia, with a trial cargo of Japanese coal." Dutch misgivings, if they existed, vanished before such information. Japanese enterprise was the talk of the day; their coal, perhaps, had not been heard of in connexion with Westralia so far, but everybody knew of the huge goldmines there, which might well look out for cheap fuel.

The collier left next morning and steamed up Sunda Straits, through which dangerous passage the destroyer had slipped during the night. Together they swept the Indian Ocean and Timor Sea to the east. Several proas supposed to have been in those waters never made port. All the routes converged in Arafura Sea, somewhere between Timor Laut and the Aroo Group. From this meeting-place the fleet made its accurately-timed descent, under the shadow of night, on Junction Bay. The strength of the first landing party can only be guessed at. Probably it consisted of about 3,000 men. It is certain that it was rapidly added to, and when the first collision between the races took place the number had at least doubled.

## Chapter III: Dancing on a Volcano

THOMAS BURT and his friend reached Pine Creek on April 6; exhausted and dishevelled. Their news created such an impression locally that a railway engine was placed at their disposal to take them on to Palmerston without delay, and they arrived there about noon the following day. The resident was away, over the Easter holidays, on a shooting excursion. His understudy, full of the importance of his temporary responsibility, granted them a patient hearing. When the bald statement of invasion burst upon his comprehension, he paled visibly. But the more the story was unfolded to his mental gaze, the calmer he grew. It was so palpably impossible. By the time it came to an end he had ceased to weigh its purport. Instead, he was quietly bethinking himself who among his kind friends could have invented and enacted this hoax. Therefore, to the surprise of his interviewers, the Acting-Resident preserved stoic calmness. He satisfied his official conscience by taking a preliminary record. As it was long after tea-time when he had done, he dismissed the friends for the night with thanks and a promise that the matter would be thoroughly investigated.

This diplomatic postponement gave the Acting-Resident leisure to collect his wits. The result of his reflections was that he called, on the morning of Easter Tuesday, a council of his leading brother officials. Bitterly he rued the action. What was a bold and improbable story when told first hand by men who seemed to believe in it, appeared a preposterous joke when recited in a doubting, colourless voice from depositions. It was a merry conference. The listeners tried to surpass each other in sarcastic comments. Was it likely that two men on a holiday trip should penetrate several hundred miles of country only partly charted? Was not game plentiful nearer home? It was, and so was also the opportunity of buying liquid poison from Chinamen or low whites, or, at any rate, opium, which would account for all sorts of raving hallucinations. What about the persons who brought the news? Nothing unfavourable was known of the Yorkshireman. But Thomas Burt had on previous visits incurred the displeasure of the ruling set by his Australian outspokenness and very personal criticism of existing conditions.

The meeting broke up when the two friends were announced. They met with a chilly reception. Nothing daunted, they began the arduous task over again of convincing a prejudiced bureaucrat against his will. Such

was their earnestness that he began to waver and their patriotic hopes to rise proportionally, when an unforeseen development finally sealed the official ear against them.

That morning, April 9, an auxiliary schooner entered Port Darwin. Its owner, and captain of its Malay crew, was a Chinaman named Ah Ting, a well-known identity on the north coast, along which he had been trading for years. People regarded him as one of the few decent Mongolians in the Territory. On several occasions he had been of some service to the authorities, with whom he was consequently on good terms. Yet he was never obtrusive, but went quietly about his own business. However, it so happened that the police inspector had gone down to the water-front after the conference, and, quite casually, he encountered Ah Ting. He came from the East. How fortunate! Did he see any steamers? No. Here the dignitary felt justified to mention the strange rumours. Ah Ting laughed outright. Junction Bay, he explained, was his last stopping-place four days ago. He searched the trepang grounds of that neighbourhood. His eyesight, alas, must be considerably worse than that of his white friends, for he saw nothing. Of course they would send the fleet up. The Inspector hurried away to parade his special information before the Acting-Resident, with the effect that Burt and his friend were hustled off the premises, and were told to be glad that nothing worse happened to them.

The two friends took the only course left open to them. They appealed to the man in the street by spreading the alarming reports broadcast. Out of courtesy they had studiously refrained from doing so before, considering that the Resident should have the privilege of publication. This tactfulness placed them at a further disadvantage. For the members of the conference had meanwhile forestalled them by giving the story from their humorous point of view. And when the explorers came to supply the genuine version, the mythical rendering had already been mentally enjoyed and digested. The pre-requisite of sensation is shocked astonishment. This they had failed to rouse. Instead, they confronted critical appreciation. This joke — to hold up the Government, to bring about a solemn conclave of the chief bosses — was voted excellent. Some of the audience applauded them for having invented a new variation of an old bogey. Till then, the prophets had always pictured a Japanese Armada sweeping down from the north and dictating terms of equality while big guns were trained on the Australian capitals. It was something to hear a different account for once. Others, of a grumbling disposition, objected to being made the victims of an April joke. Even granted that it might have been conceived on the first of the month, still that was no excuse for ramming it down their throats after a week's delay. In short, the laugh had been against the warners, and from that moment all their efforts to awake Port Darwin to a sense of the real

danger were doomed to disappointment.

Two days later the Resident returned. He was a level-headed man, and if he could have heard the report first-hand and could have been a witness of the earnest sincerity in which it was delivered, things might have gone different. Unfortunately, he heard it from the understudy, together with Ah Ting's denial, and this combination convinced him so thoroughly of the preposterousness of the assertion that an interview with the two discoverers could not change his mind.

Burt and his friend were now officially hall-marked as "jokers of promise, but whose present attempt had failed rather badly." As they persisted in voicing warnings, the languid Palmerstonians voted them bores, and forgot about them. So they were pretty much left alone. They diverted themselves by keeping a close watch on Ah Ting. But that, too, came to naught. There were no conspirators sneaking about the back door of that worthy at night. Just as he piled his goods, Chinese tit-bits and knick-knacks, into the front window of his neat cottage in the main street to announce his business, even so he seemed to wear his unblemished character in a glass case open for inspection, with his mingled air of childlike blandness and dignified patriarchalism. Nothing was known of his antecedents; that was in no way remarkable, for the same can be said of all his countrymen up north. But he had resided, on and off, for several years in the place, and was respected even by the many-hued scum. The friends quickly got tired of contemplating so much virtue, while painfully conscious that their own reputations were under a cloud.

They determined to take the first steamer to the south-east. None was due for some time. So they had plenty of leisure to study the peculiar conditions of which they had become the victims. The fact was that tropical Australia was suffering from a surfeit of warnings against the Asiatic menace. Its white inhabitants had one dominant desire: to hear no more about it. The position had been looked at from all possible points of view, and had been pronounced hopeless from every one. Yet nothing happened. There stretched the vast wastes of fertile lands, uncontrolled, open from year's end to year's end, at the very threshold of the overcrowded North. Nevertheless, only stray individuals crossed over, mostly to repent of it afterwards. Mongols and Malays who had entered quickly declined to the lowest levels of degeneration. And wherever they came into contact with the aborigines, it meant rapid, complete ruin to the latter. The vilest corruption spread to them. The death-rate of all the coloured races was terrible.

Sometimes an enthusiast would arrive from civilized Australia, and would talk for awhile. But nobody ever did anything. Soon the microbe of drift permeated his blood, and he would become as languid as the others. The white population of Port Darwin consisted of a set of

officials and of those who catered for their wants. A few shipping agents and South Sea produce dealers constituted the independent citizen class. All considered themselves exiles. The years rolled by, and the procession of new faces went on, but the same stagnation prevailed for ever. Once it had been broken when the great effort was made, and a railway was pushed south as far as Pine Creek. As if in revenge, stagnation had settled on that very railway thicker than elsewhere, if that were possible. Under the law no coloured alien could own mining rights. As the Chinese who did not subsist on trade, vegetable cultivation or laundry work were miners, they had to rent claims for working from the white proprietors, who received anything above 10 per cent. of the gross yield for dummies. Such practices naturally lead to parasitism on the one hand, to presumptuousness on the other. Rusting mining machinery and a few cattle runs in the interior represented the highest attainment of the white race; cabbage gardens that of the yellow race.

It has been said that the Northern Territory was not a white man's land. With far greater accuracy it could have been called No Man's Land. For it is undeniable that the white inhabitants maintained their standard wonderfully well, compared to the physical and moral debasement of the immigrants of all other races. The truth is that it was, and is, the land of the worker; only to the loafer is the climate enervating. And the curse upon it was that no race ever set itself to subjugate the soil, to force from it the richest yield by honest toil. Up to April, 1912, the Northern Territory was really the Country of Hope-Deferred, awaiting its conqueror, and the race — white, yellow, brown, or black — which would first solve its problem by organizing laborious, intelligent cultivation, was destined to rule.

Were the Japanese to be its masters? The two friends had gloomy forebodings. Quite unexpectedly, however, their hopes revived. There was a smart shipping agent in Port Darwin. As it happened, he personated the Opposition, which meant that he had fallen out with the official bosses. Also, he was occasional correspondent for a pushful Melbourne daily. He heard the story. Probably he did not set much store by it, but he chose, as a true Oppositionist, to differ from the authorities. It occurred to him that if they had not reported to headquarters about the affair, he might catch them napping. So, after a conversation with Thomas Burt, he condensed the news into a stirring summary, which he telegraphed to his paper. The editor on receipt was worried by grave doubts. The sensational character of the copy appealed to his journalistic instincts, but he was not sure whether its publication would not offend his readers. For he catered for a highly respectable merchant community, who might resent an attempt to scare them which bore the stamp of impossibility. In this dilemma he decided to bring the message under the notice of the Federal Government. Next day the Resident at Palmerston

received an official inquiry by wire, and after the exchange of several more telegrams, he was instructed to carry out a search. The Federal Government had come to the conclusion that a cargo of Chinamen might have been dumped somewhere upon the coast in evasion of immigration restrictions, as had often been rumoured before.

Two days were spent at Port Darwin fitting the Government yacht for the cruise. A heavy rainstorm delayed her departure for another night, but at last she got away (April 15). All on board, from the police inspector (who was specially entrusted with the investigation) downwards, felt convinced that they were going on a fool's errand. The friends had offered to accompany the party. But the captain ironically insisted that they would not be safe if nothing should be discovered, as his crew were only human after all. So they were compelled to stay behind. On April 22 the yacht returned. The results of the mission were wholly negative. According to the official report, they had steamed along the coast beyond the longitude of Junction Bay, and had landed at convenient points. At Junction Bay a bush fire had raged recently; miles of forest had been destroyed, and the damage done extended far inland. Probably it had been extinguished only by the late rainstorm, which evidently was very severe in that neighbourhood, for fresh water was still found near the mouth of creeks. Neither ashore nor awash were any traces or signs met with betraying that any landing had occurred, or that a large number of men had been in those waters. No human being was seen, not even an aboriginal. They passed no vessels, and only once a solitary column of smoke showed on the horizon, far out towards the ordinary track of navigation.

The two friends were now completely discredited. They did not dare to throw doubt on the thoroughness of the search, for fear of antagonizing the local dignitaries still more. At any moment legal action might be taken against them to wring part of the considerable expenses out of them. Official scepticism had been justified so signally that even the Opposition did not care to associate any further with them. There was a general feeling of relief when the ss. *Changsha* steamed into port, and it became known that they had booked passage by her to the south. Her commander was, of course, duly regaled with the sarcastic version of the story. So he was quite prepared when his newly-acquired passengers boldly appealed to him to swerve off his proper course for the purpose of another investigation, and he blandly informed them that it was really carrying a joke too far to ask that he should risk his ship and his certificate on a dangerous coast. Thus the last hope vanished. Day and night the friends remained on deck anxiously scanning the waste of waters, until the longitude of Junction Bay had been left behind. Then they hid themselves from bantering fellow-travellers in their cabin, defeated, despairing men.

Their retirement did not last long. On the following afternoon the outlook sighted some wreckage floating by. Further on swarms of sea birds were noticed hovering over some undistinguishable, nearly submerged shapes. The steamer slowed down, a boat was lowered. Those submerged forms were found to be bodies of drowned men; of what nationality it was impossible to say, as their features had been largely eaten away. It was certain, however, that they were of either Mongolian or Malayan stock. The ss. *Changsha* was now approaching the wilderness of islands, intermingled with sandbanks and sunken reefs, endangering the western entrance of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Night fell, and she stood by awaiting the dawn. Evidently a ship had come to grief somewhere near, and it was seamen's duty to bring relief, if it were not yet too late. The morning revealed a wreck, driven on the rocks behind Cape Wessel. The captain decided to go over by boat to see for himself. Thomas Burt was permitted to accompany him. The wreck consisted of the fore-part of an iron steamer, firmly wedged in between the rocks. It presented a most singular appearance. The stern of the vessel had broken off, and the sea had swallowed it. But where it had parted from the bows the plates were twisted and rent strangely; fragments of hull and cargo lay scattered for a considerable distance along the line of reef; all the combustible material was charred or scorched, and the metal showed everywhere the peculiar discoloration which follows subjection to sudden enormous heat. No human being, alive or dead, was discovered. Probably the crew had escaped in the boats, which were all missing, and had taken the most valuable cargo away, while the remainder, for some reason, had been flung into the water. At any rate, there was no intact cargo left, though it was possible, by turning over loose heaps of wreckage, to gain a fair idea what it had been made up of. Quite a quantity of modern rifle ammunition was collected, and many broken parts of guns, some bayonets, tools, pieces of agricultural implements, shreds of blankets and of a clothing material similar to khaki, also tinned foods — in short, all the necessaries of life and defence for an isolated settlement in the Northern Territory, as Thomas Burt pointed out. Whoever the mysterious wrecked mariners had been, and whatever might have been their intentions, it was plain that they had tried to obliterate all traces of their misfortune. There could be no doubt about it — the vessel had been blasted asunder deliberately by means of explosives. The work of destruction had not been finished; why, nobody was able to tell for certain. Was it because the supply of explosives had become exhausted?

There were two heroes aboard the *Changsha* as she sped across the gulf to make up for lost time. She arrived at Thursday Island on May 1. Next morning Australia awoke to profound sensation. The Press sported scareheads. At last, after the delay of a precious, irretrievable month, the warning was heeded.

## Chapter IV: Japan Explains

THE Japanese colony in the Northern Territory had been successfully founded. Of its first period of existence and growth no official information has yet become available. It seems that during the few days that followed the landing of the men, stores and stock were discharged in large quantities, and that the fleet then withdrew discreetly, leaving the new settlers to themselves. Since white men had witnessed the invasion, contrary to calculation, and therefore inquiries might soon be instituted, that step was natural. Most likely, as a further precaution against too early detection, the new colonists left the coast altogether and proceeded some miles into the interior, burning the bush behind, so that every vestige of its presence should be wiped out. That, at least, is the only explanation for the negative results of the search from Port Darwin.

Meanwhile Tokio, silent and alert, awaited developments. The triumph of its policy depended on delay. Its subjects were all the time establishing a moral claim and demonstrating their peaceful intentions by patiently cultivating the wilderness. Given two or three months of quiet possession, such marvellous progress would be achieved as would touch the great heart of the British people, provided that it was skilfully and gradually prepared for the revelation. The Japanese statesmen had studied their problem well. Australia was merely a pawn in the game, not a player. Everything turned on the reception which the bold move would have in the United Kingdom. If it was there accepted as a challenge, then indeed a crisis would be precipitated. This was exactly the danger which had to be guarded against; a sudden explosion of British national pride, which would vent itself in the peremptory cry, "Hands off." After that, submission or armed resistance would have been the only alternatives. Perhaps it would not be safe to assert that Japan would not have gone to war under any circumstances; that pushful Power owed its phenomenal rise mainly to its courage in facing the worst and to its infinite capacity in preparing for it. But Japan did not seriously contemplate war. Its rulers relied on their ability to convince the English masses of the harmlessness of the immigration, and to persuade them that the new citizens of their Empire were not standard bearers of militant conquest, but of patient civilization. None knew better that British sentimentality and the White Australian ideal had nothing in common.

Fortune favours the bold. The white witnesses of the landing failed in

their warnings. April passed without alarm, and it was only in May that the cablegrams as to the discovery of the mysterious wreck by ss. *Changsha*, sent the first quivers of vague fear through the Commonwealth. There was really nothing definite about it, as not even the nationality of the wreck was known. Nevertheless, the Federal Government decided to place the facts before the Imperial authorities, together with a report of the Port Darwin rumours. This evoked nothing beyond a formal acknowledgment, and then, it seems, the matter was in the best way of being forgotten.

Several days later, however, the Japanese Ambassador became communicative. Probably Tokio considered that secrecy could not be maintained much longer, and that a voluntary statement, as an act of courtesy to an ally, would serve its ends best. Accordingly, the Japanese Ambassador informed the British Cabinet that the Japanese Consuls in Australia had drawn the attention of his Government to some rumours current there. His Government had pursued inquiries, and it had been ascertained that, in fact, a number of Japanese had entered the Northern Territory. His superiors regretted the occurrence and must decline responsibility, as they had been kept in absolute ignorance. It appeared that a committee of private philanthropists had been formed for the purpose of relieving the chronic famine by removing sufferers from the congested districts, and in its eagerness it had shipped some to the wastes of the Australian North, where it was understood they would prejudice no previous title, as the Territory carried no settled population. His Government apologized that it had failed to control private efforts properly so that no overflow into the possessions of its ally could have happened. No trouble would be spared to get at the exact facts, which would occupy some time. Great Britain would be kept fully informed, and early consideration would be extended to the question of how best to make amends.

The right cord had been struck. A powerful appeal had been made to the sentiment of the average Englishman, while simultaneously his patriotic conceits were flattered. Famished people, frantic but generous measures to help them, and a strong Government expressing sorrow for any breach of proprieties which might have been committed — to turn the scales against such facts would require a strong case indeed. Of course, the explanations and assurances proffered could be read in many ways. But British Ministers chose to take the most cheerful view; their despatches to the Commonwealth reflected it, and consequently had a soothing influence, implying, as they undoubtedly did, that not the slightest misgivings existed regarding a speedy, satisfactory settlement.

Some critics in the Empire were not so easily quieted, and the central authorities might have come in for scathing condemnation if a more convenient scapegoat had not offered in the person of the British

Ambassador at Tokio. It was indeed unpardonable that he had not had the slightest inkling of events happening under his very nose, according to the Japanese version. Yet something can be said in excuse. In Tokio the high game of world-politics was, and is, played at such a pace that it strained every nerve of the accredited diplomats. The significance of incidents of local import escaped them in this whirlpool of excitement. Perhaps the one who least troubled about them was the Imperial representative, resting secure on the loyalty of an ally. Nobody was more surprised than the dignitary himself when he received rather curt orders to investigate the matter on his part. But he was able to elucidate very little beyond what had been voluntarily disclosed. The committee of philanthropists existed, though he was sceptical about the accuracy of the date of its constitution; and its members acknowledged their full and sole responsibility for chartering and employing several steamers for the transport of starving emigrants to the Northern Territory. They also expressed hopes that they might be permitted to ship Japanese women to join the settlers, so that "the stain of immorality might be kept from Australia."

This last intimation alarmed the Imperial Government. It looked like an inspired indiscretion, revealing that some definite plan had been formed; for had the Japanese ever been indiscreet except for a purpose? Henceforth the incident was regarded as serious. When the Ambassador of the Mikado notified his readiness to supply more details (May 13), he was subjected to searching examination. What London wanted to know was why, under any circumstances, the Northern Territory should have been selected as a dumping ground, while the large dependencies acquired in the last campaign were only half filled, and should, therefore, offer scope to private enterprise quite apart from official policy. Was there not enough room for both?

But the Ambassador pleaded impossibility. Those provinces, he said, were reserved to State control. The Japanizing process was being pushed on there with utmost energy, if only for strategic and economic reasons. It could not be accelerated further. What must not be forgotten was that famine conditions prevailed to a large extent on the continent, not only in China, as was well known, but also in Manchuria, and even in Korea. So the syndicate of philanthropists had endeavoured to open new avenues of relief.

This explanation was plain enough; yet it was merely the prelude to straighter talk. Apparently the Japanese Government recognized that delay and vagueness had been worked for all they were worth. Bold bluff now took their place. The ally was overwhelmed with a veritable deluge of frankness.

A point, the Ambassador said, which his Government desired to make clear was its non-interference with private citizens in the organization

and execution of such a great enterprise. The fact was that, in his country, everything in which the Government of the day participated became a party issue. Political rivalries were so bitter that it might be truthfully said that even the famine was blamed on to the party in power. As no responsible Minister wished to prejudice private charity in the eyes of public opponents, they were compelled to take no notice whatever of these humanitarian efforts either one way or another.

The Ambassador was now in a position to state that some thousand Japanese had been landed in the Northern Territory about half way between Port Darwin and the Gulf of Carpentaria. They were all able-bodied men; sick or old people had been rigorously excluded. As yet no women had been sent; the health, intelligence, and general usefulness of the emigrants were such as would make them desirable workers anywhere. Why had they been disembarked many hundred miles from places where employment was probable, if they were such willing labourers? Why was a secrecy maintained which justified suspicions that the real object of the enterprise was seizure of the land? His Government admitted that the committee of philanthropists must have lost their heads to act as they did. It considered that they went practically mad, face to face with huge numbers of starving compatriots, who were doomed to hunger for want of an outlet, while yet uninhabited stretches of fertile country were only a few days' sail away. Should they obey restrictive laws which condemned them to inhumanity against kith and kin? Or should they help their people if it could be done without violating openly those harsh laws? As for the seizure of land, that was hardly the correct expression, because there was nobody from whom it could be taken. If consular reports were not mistaken, it was free to the landless, even in the settled parts of Australia, to raise and to harvest a crop on unused Crown lands. That was exactly what the famishing refugees did. They were raising crops on unused Crown lands, and did not claim the proprietorship of an acre. What they claimed was the right to keep alive in a district where they competed against no one and infringed on no vested interests. Surely no objections should stand against the dictates of common humanity.

The British Foreign Secretary replied that no doubt humanitarian draperies were convenient garments at times. Nothing could do away with the fact that here they had a large organized force virtually taking possession of country which had been under the British flag well nigh a century. It appeared that peaceable white men had been pursued and fired at. There was not much meekness in that; much more did it look like a criminal attempt to exclude all others.

But the Ambassador protested blandly that his Government knew nothing of blunders which the Japanese exiles might have committed. No means of communication with them existed. Whatever might be their

sins, or crimes, there was no thought of sheltering the culprits. Let them be brought to law and be adequately punished. However, matters might not be so bad. Some excuse might be found for slight excesses. The refugees were in strange surroundings, and therefore liable to sudden panic. Perhaps, under the influence of some unaccountable excitement, they used their rifles unadvisedly. That phase would soon pass.

Then the immigrants were all armed? Why, naturally. Official immigrants, as well as committees organizing private emigration, were supplied with discarded service rifles. In Korea and Manchuria that was absolutely necessary for the safety of the settlers. And the Northern Territory contained much game which, it was hoped, would help to carry the colonists over the worst until the first crops would be harvested.

He became stern then. "There are also," he continued, "lawless characters in every country, particularly in borderlands of civilization. To be perfectly frank, it is not the intention of my Government to allow its long-suffering subjects to become the victims of such. It would have been more in keeping with the traditions of my race to let them perish at home, if they are to perish. But we are no longer fatalists."

Perhaps the Ambassador overstepped his mark in conveying a hint of such directness. But he wound up his explanations in the approved style of guarded diplomacy. His Government, he stated, declined to discuss British supremacy over the Northern Territory, because it must regard the mere raising of that issue as an insult to Great Britain. On the contrary, Japan, true to its alliance, was ready to employ all its naval and military forces against any nation which should dare to challenge that supremacy. Moreover, in proof of its own loyalty, it was willing to waive all claims to the future allegiance of its emigrants to Australia. No refugee had a brighter hope, or a desire more sincere than to be allowed to live and die a faithful subject under the British flag, which to his race was the emblem of justice. Just as in the Straits Settlements the Chinese were made welcome and soon yielded to none in fealty, so nothing better was asked by his compatriots. It was quite true that his Government pleaded that mercy be extended to starving exiles, but it had no sinister motives. In fact, as soon as the Imperial authorities had made known their will and taken the immigrants under their protection, the Mikado would be glad to issue a solemn proclamation, releasing all Japanese settlers in the Northern Territory from their dutiful obedience, and commanding them to be loyal subjects of the King.

That was the parting shot aimed straight at the White Heart of Australia.

## Chapter V: Australia's Reply

THE flutter of excitement into which the Commonwealth had been thrown by the cablegrams from Thursday Island relating to the *Changsha* discovery, died quickly away for want of nourishment. Thomas Burt and his friend were on the water again, bound for Brisbane. Taught by bitter experience, they had resolved not to fritter away their knowledge, but to keep their lips tightly shut until they were face to face with the Prime Minister of Australia, when they would make their great patriotic effort to gain the confidence of that statesman. Accordingly, they refused, on arrival in Brisbane, to supply information to the Press, leaving this to their fellow-passengers, who, knowing of the alleged immigration only by hearsay, preferred to confine their remarks to the wreck. The two friends continued their journey without delay by train to Sydney and Melbourne.

In this way a few more precious days were lost to the Australian people, who, in the absence of all confirmation, began to look upon the matter as a paper scare. Suspicion had always been ripe that Chinese sometimes entered the North without permission. If Japanese coolies should now have followed their example, it was plain that the thing could not go on much longer in this fashion, and that means would have to be devised to close the back-door effectually. It was the duty of Government to see to that and there was really no occasion for alarm. Such was the somnolent habit of thought of the average citizen of the Commonwealth right through the first third of the month of May, 1912, until he was broken of it by an avalanche of disquieting developments.

On May 10 the cablegrams of the morning press announced the official Japanese admission that immigration had really occurred. It caused general consternation. Nobody understood the purpose of this astounding move. While the majority maintained that the admission was a guarantee that the allied nation would assist in the withdrawal of the undesirable aliens, an influential Melbourne daily took the opposite view that nothing worse could have happened. After Japan, it argued, had formally interfered, it was sure to side with its subjects. This conflict of opinion was just arresting general attention when the two friends arrived in Melbourne and sprang their account, which left no doubt that an armed invasion had taken place, upon the already anxious continent. At last they had a full triumph of revenge. After having been slighted for so long

by minor officials they were listened to by the Prime Minister of Australia. And the transparent sincerity of their forceful, concise report gained them his credence to such an extent that a summary was at once made available to the Press on behalf of the Government, thus acquiring the character of an official communication. It created an enormous impression. Within twenty-four hours there rose the cry, from the shores of the Pacific to Cape Leeuwin, that the Japanese must go, and that the insult to the Commonwealth must be atoned for. Backed up by such unanimous indignation, the Federal Government hastened to lodge a passionate complaint in London and to claim boldly the immediate employment of all the resources of the Empire in support of its cause.

The appeal reached Downing Street on the morning of May 13, the date on which the Ambassador of the Mikado chose to throw light on the situation from his point of view. It was a combination calculated to try sorely the patience of the Imperial statesmen. That an intrigue had been laid with consummate skill to shatter the anti-colour policy of the great southern dependency was plain enough. But the question before the responsible rulers of Great Britain was how far they should commit themselves in defence of principles of racial exclusiveness which were not shared by the masses in the United Kingdom. Rashness either way could only lead to disaster. For immense issues were at stake: on the one hand, the estrangement of a proud nation whose alliance was invaluable in Asia; on the other, fierce colonial resentment. British interests, paramount to all other considerations, demanded dilatory treatment of this awkward complication. Accordingly, the reply to Melbourne and the dispatches detailing the latest Japanese explanations were couched in reassuring terms implying full sympathy with Australian ideals though carefully avoiding any definite promise.

These early dispatches are remarkable for one striking omission, which illustrates better than many words could do the infinite capacity of the English Government for "riding a rail" during a grave colonial crisis. While the Ambassador's statement of facts is repeated fully and fairly enough, no mention is made of the Mikado's proposal regarding the transfer of allegiance. It has been attempted to justify the suppression on the ground that the offer was nebulous and that it was merely launched as a *ballon d'essai*. But the true reason why this suggestion was held back was certainly the fear that its introduction would have provoked the Commonwealth beyond endurance and, as far as the latter was concerned, would have put a stop to the further employment of diplomatic means there and then.

Meanwhile, the Press was used to pour oil on the troubled waters and, incidentally, to test popular feeling in Great Britain. That was decidedly in favour of Japan. No daily paper of standing in the United Kingdom had ever been critical regarding the ethics of the alliance. On the

contrary, all had applauded it from the outset and a sudden somersault of any solid public organ into violent denunciation of the ally was therefore out of the question. Some fiercely Imperial sheets ventured on a gentle chiding, but on the whole the printed comments ran on calm, superior, impartial lines and it became quickly apparent that this moderation corresponded entirely with the present temper of the nation. The syndicated cable service of the great Australian dailies was conducted exclusively from London and, in consequence, reflected faithfully the sentiments prevailing there. So it was even in this case. After the first fulminations, there was a marked relaxation, and leading articles appealed to the people of the Commonwealth to curb their passions and to leave their grievances in the hands of the British Government who could be trusted to see justice done. In due course, cabled extracts of these well-intentioned exhortations found their way into the English Press which paraded them as a proof that Australia, with the exception of a few irresponsibles, was quite satisfied to accept whatever settlement the Imperial authorities should consider proper. And thus arose a misconception than which none could have been more dangerous or more fatal to Commonwealth aspirations at a time when the British mind was yet impressionable before it had settled in a definite groove.

All soporific efforts collapsed before the march of events. On May 16 astonishing news reached Melbourne by wire from Port Darwin. A Japanese deputation had arrived at the latter place consisting of three members who made a dignified entry under the folds of a Union Jack. Its mission was to pay homage to the Resident in his capacity as chief officer of the Territory. Though the reception was chilly the members did not seem to notice it. Two of them professed entire ignorance of the English language. That was another master stroke of Oriental cunning, for it left them free to spy about and to assist in every way the third colleague, the spokesman, without exposing them to the slightest risk of contradicting his statements. The spokesman, on his part, made haste to intimate that he exercised no particular authority over his comrades, and that he had not been selected for the leadership of the party by reason of his exalted station in the Japanese community, but simply because he was one of the very few who understood English. Having thus plainly defined his personal insignificance, he was by no means averse to answer questions, and his replies fitted in so closely with the official explanations of the Ambassador that no discerning observer can doubt that both emanated from the same source. Above all, he protested against the description of his compatriots as prohibited immigrants. They knew nothing about that. Kind, wealthy men of their own race, pitying their sufferings from famine, had helped them to leave the stricken provinces. But now they had voluntarily adopted the nationality of the country which enabled them to live and were willing to defend it against all

comers. To give expression to this feeling of loyalty they had travelled so far to make dutiful submission to their new rulers. Everything in connexion with their settlement, he said, was open to official inspection. He could not state the total number of refugees, as they had landed at different points and were widely dispersed. However, he thought they exceeded two thousand. He hoped that business relations would soon be established between them and Port Darwin.

Their solemn exhibition of humble loyalty was not to be its own reward. The deputation pursued more practical aims. Towards the end of the interview, the spokesman informed the Resident that he had been charged by his compatriots to solicit a special favour. It was hoped that the Government might soon see its way to open schools, in which his people could be taught the language and the customs of their adopted country, so that they might quickly become desirable citizens. All expense so incurred would be paid for in produce after the first harvest was gathered.

The Resident assigned an empty cottage for the use of his visitors-in-state and demanded instructions by wire. Late the same evening (May 16) the Federal Executive in Melbourne met in council. A great opportunity was before it, for by a rare chance the invaders had delivered themselves into its hands. Port Darwin being within jurisdiction of the Commonwealth, the whole issue was transferred from London to the Antipodes the very moment that the offenders — or some of them — came within reach of the Australian authorities. Why they should have done so voluntarily cannot be easily explained. Probably Japan tried to bluff the Federal Government into some sort of negotiations with the deputation, when it would have seized upon the slightest signs of hesitation and weakness as evidence for British consumption that Australia itself had recognized that the problem called for diplomatic treatment. If so, its deep plot miscarried, for the Federal Executive was not in the mood for trifling. Its orders to the Resident of the Northern Territory were calculated, on the contrary, to force the game against Tokio as well as against London.

Next morning the three members of the Japanese deputation were arrested on a charge of shooting at British subjects with intent to murder. Other “persons unknown” were joined under the same indictment. But it was only the beginning. Warrants were issued against these “persons unknown, of Japanese nationality, who had entered the country without permission and had murderously assaulted white men, British subjects.” It was a sweeping, skilful move which did away with the international aspect of the case, for it imputed to the refugees a common crime to be dealt with in a common court of law. A few lines from the department of Justice had made outlaws of all the invaders.

Everything depended now on the possibility of proving the charge. The

Federal Attorney-General decided to supervise the proceedings personally on the spot. As a fast P. & O. mail steamer happened to be in port in Sydney, she was chartered under pressure. The Attorney-General, his staff and the witnesses for the prosecution, viz., Thomas Burt and his friend, were rushed by train overland to catch her. At top speed, the splendid liner raced to the north (May 19) and covered the distance to Port Darwin in the record time of just under six days.

Australia was wild with joy over the energetic action of the national Government. Even the great dailies, spoon-fed with Tory sentiments from London, did not care to disagree and were content with some guarded appeals for circumspection and moderation addressed to Parliament. The Continent was now looking forward to the third session of its fourth Parliament, fixed by Executive proclamation (May 18) to open on May 30, 1912.

The Imperial authorities had not apprehended such rash enterprise on the part of the Commonwealth, the limitations of which were so manifest. It possessed no navy, and speedy land communications with the tropical North were non-existent. The deputation incident could not have been foreseen, of course. Still less, that it should be thus rapidly turned to advantage in Melbourne. London resigned itself to let the case proceed on its merits. If the arrested men could be proved guilty, they would have to suffer the penalty for their crime. No civilized people could quarrel about it. Anyhow, the trial would take some time, and for this reason alone it commended itself to British caution — Japan, too, refrained from protest. Doubtless its statesmen had not counted on this development. But they could not deny the right of Australia to have recourse to law, as the alleged offence had occurred within its dominions. For once, they had played straight into the hands of their antagonists and they had now to trust to chance to regain the lead.

The trial lasted one day (May 27). The evidence of the witnesses for the prosecution was unanswerable as far as it went. But the prisoners, who pleaded not guilty, set up a stubborn negative defence. Admitting that they were armed, they stated that the disembarkment had been carried out from several steamers simultaneously, over a wide stretch of beach. They had not discharged their rifles on the morning of the landing and had not heard any shots. It was impossible to refute their denials. The white witnesses had to admit that the Japanese were distributed over a large distance and that they had probably not all taken part in the assault. Identification of the prisoners as active accessories to the crime was naturally out of the question. So the case against the three Japanese broke down and they were released.

But they were immediately re-arrested under the charge of being prohibited immigrants and promptly sentenced to gaol pending the arrival of the first boat bound for the East, in which they were to be

deported. This was at best a Pyrrhic victory, for it restored the international base of the dispute. Not that Japan contested this special decision. That would merely have prejudiced its case. The three men were prohibited immigrants and had gone into a trap. As for the bulk of the new settlers, hidden away in the inaccessible bush, it was quite a different matter. First of all, it would require some effort to bring them to justice. In the enormity of that problem, Oriental cunning would have a fair field to come into play.

Though foiled in one particular, the Federal Government abated nothing of its pushfulness. A proclamation, issued (May 29) to the people of Australia and cabled to London and to the Governments of all autonomous Colonies, called attention to the fact that the Commonwealth was invaded by hordes of murderous criminals carrying arms, who had entered in defiance of the laws sanctioned by the King, and warned every good citizen of the British Empire to have nothing to do with them, but to assist the authorities in every way to punish and to expel the miscreants. Supplementing the strong language, a body of specially picked constabulary was despatched by sea to Port Darwin (May 31). It numbered only twenty-five men, for the Federal Executive, unable to put into the field at once an army strong enough to cope with several thousand armed Japanese, affected to follow the rules of ordinary police administration. Should they be defied, then the matter passed continental confines, and Greater Britain would have to enforce respect for its acknowledged methods of procedure. That, at least, was the contention of the harassed Commonwealth authorities.

Both the proclamation and the threatened resort to force were furiously denounced in the leading Tokio journals, which asserted that there was no justification for them and that the real crime of the helpless refugees was their nationality. Herein, they maintained, lay a mortal insult to the Japanese race and the Government was exhorted not to stand idly by to see violence offered to men of their own colour. Officially stony silence was kept, but nothing was done to curb the intemperance of the Press in its endeavours to rouse popular passions.

The next step of the Federal Cabinet was the publication of the full text of their cable interchanges with London, under the plea that the sovereign people were vitally interested and had a right to know the full extent of their danger. This piece of strategy was contrary to diplomatic traditions and certain to hurt Imperial susceptibilities. Its result, as intended, was a startling convulsion of Australian and Colonial sentiment, leaving no doubt that the Commonwealth was wedded to the principle of a White Continent and would not tolerate any leader who did not champion it against all odds. That manifestation was of the highest value to the Ministry at this moment for Parliamentary reasons. It proved that the continuation of aggressive policy was the will of the people. And

the Opposition would have to conform to it when it came to deal with the bold measures which the Government was formulating.

This memorable session opened on May 30.

## Chapter VI: A Study of British Sentiment

THE Japanese descent upon the Northern Territory had been well timed. Over the world of white men there lingered the afterglow of an epoch of unprecedented prosperity, of which Great Britain had had full measure. Its ruling classes were glutted with success and its enjoyment. Now that the outlook became less bright, their attention was wholly engrossed in the pursuit of more profit, before the oncoming period of depression, universally prophesied by experts. Even the class-war was less fierce; unemployment had steadily decreased for years; wages had been slowly rising, and the toilers' discontent was lulled somewhat by a sense of uncommon economic stability. If there was one wish shared alike by all England, it was the desire that an even tenor of political development, both at home and abroad, might be maintained. Consequently, there was a feeling of irritation when the immigration controversy threatened to cause a disturbance.

Popular resentment, naturally, turned against the side which seemed to aggravate the difficulties of the situation. It was there Japan scored. Officially, it could afford to sit tight and to keep quiet, for its secret work had been so cleverly contrived that it could now be left to itself for a time at least. The Commonwealth, on the other hand, was driven to desperate measures of repression. The shortsighted demagogues and radical journalists, who dominated the English masses, condemned roundly the colonial excitement about a trouble which appeared to them, from their safe distance, fifth-rate at most. Nothing the Federal Government did was thought right by these zealous humanitarians. Its prosecution of the deputation was dubbed puerile exaggeration. The fierce denunciation of subjects of an allied Power in the proclamation was even taken as a reflection on Great Britain for the company kept by it. It was not understood in the Mother Country that the Commonwealth was acting according to the promptings of an irresistible instinct. As creatures of the night, exposed to sudden glare, dart instinctively for the nearest dark shelter, thus Australia, dazed by the sudden perception of deadly danger, started into convulsive movement. But the Commonwealth appeared to the badly-informed millions, who in the last resort sway Imperial policy, as responsible for the biggest part of the commotion, and this misconception disposed them all the more to look with tolerant eyes upon the case as presented by Japan. Tokio had prepared the way to their

overgrown hearts cunningly. It claimed no right; it merely appealed to common humanity. And it thus flattered nicely the popular idea of the Mission of Empire. Here they were asked to stretch forth helping hands to humble supplicants; to elevate a race yet erring in outer darkness, to their own level of goodness; to bestow material prosperity on famishing hordes. Nothing could be more desirable. Nevertheless, a handful of white settlers 12,000 miles away, hardly visible in the surrounding vastness of an empty continent, told them to desist as harshly as if they had no voice in the matter at all.

The English middle-classes, too, have always been moved deeply by religious considerations. Only acute fears, real or imagined, about the existence and growth of the Empire, could overcome their scruples in that direction. Nobody alleged that there was any reason for patriotic anxiety in the present development. The Japanese explanations were modest, even complimentary. The assurance that the immigrants craved the honour to be allowed to live and die under the Union Jack might be said to confer an extra lustre on the grand old flag. The ambitious request did not strike Britishers as very remarkable after all the speculations of recent years, that possibly Japanese soldiers would fight and die some day in defence of India for the Empire. An allied nation, of which such high expectations had been formed, could not be looked upon with contempt. Alas! they were heathens still. But the immigrants, removed from the retarding influence, one might almost say, from the bad example of the millions still groping in darkness in their native haunts, would offer a fair field for missionary work. Many ardent British believers thanked God for the chance.

The economic aspect, which so frightened Australian workers, was not understood by their comrades in the United Kingdom, who had to contend all their lives in free markets against the cut-throat competition of cheap labour, and who had also to put up with a steady inpour of East and South European cheap labourers. Where was the difference? Toilers in the Mother Country did not realize the significance of race contrasts, because, so far, they had not become acquainted with them firsthand. Distance and overcrowding formed a sort of protection. In the industrial districts of Great Britain white skilled and trained labour was so cheap and superabundant, as a rule, that the importation of Mongolians or negroes would hardly have been a paying game. At any rate, it had never been tried systematically. And thus British workers, having been spared the degradation of contact with lower races, could afford to take a lenient view. In their opinion, the difference was only skin-deep at worst. It passed their minds why any one should go into hysterics because a few Japs or Chinese wished to make a living at the other end of the world, where there was so much room for everybody.

Still, the middle and lower classes were not really antagonistic to

Commonwealth ideals. They were merely hampered by the small extent of their knowledge and by the subconscious sense of superiority which warps the judgment of the average Englishman in matters colonial and foreign. Most of them regarded Australia as a kind of prodigal daughter, whose pranks had to be borne with good-humouredly. Her people were supposed to indulge in various irresponsible notions, and to be very ticklish on all labour questions, to such an extent that they had refused admittance more than once to honest Britishers who came looking for work. (This was a Press invention, but it had firmly taken root, nevertheless.) Of the Northern Territory, it was only known that it was very big, very hot, very empty; a gap on the map, yawning for population, yet not at all a white man's land.

But higher up in the social scale there were sections who cherished grievances against the Commonwealth. The banking world and the Stock Exchange interests belonged to them. It is difficult to define the reasons for this scarcely-veiled hostility of British high finance. The antipathy was based partly on sentimental grounds. Political life in the Antipodes was highly flavoured with that democratic levelling spirit which the wealthy classes in England had so often played with for their own ends, and cheated of its prize every time, and which they abhorred, therefore, with the hatred born of instinctive fear of a vague, unavoidable retribution. In a word, Australian democracy served as an irksome reminder of the smothered social conscience of British wealth.

Moreover, the broad masses there had remained very independent and ignorant of the obedient humility which the owner of riches can personally command in the Old World. Instead, the most popular prints were full of cleverly worded and ingeniously illustrated attacks on capitalism, national and international. Political leaders of far-reaching influence had echoed the contempt at times, and in several conflicts big vested interests had not been exalted officially above less gilded claims. There was, too, a steady current of legislation towards the restriction of the money power. Even British Imperialism had come in for criticism, and had been described as world-wide exploitation for the benefit of millionaires at home, with little regard for distant white toilers abroad. Such licence bred reaction. But it was not so much verbal presumptions as material consequences which high finance was troubled about. The new spirit, with its demands for living wages, its regulation of working hours, and restriction of cheap contract labour immigration, its inspection of producing methods and products was threatening the profits of old investments, and made remunerative new investments more complicated.

Capital, always conservative, does not easily accommodate itself to great changes. Above all, it loathes supervision. In the United Kingdom some modifications might be proper. But it had ever been recognized that east of the Suez Canal moss-grown European conventionalities had no

currency, and that the road was left clear there for the unfettered play of commercial genius out on the golden quest, even as it had been in the old merchant-adventurer days radiant with Indian memories of glory and gain. Yet now, in the very heart of those privileged hunting-grounds, an upstart dependency dared to set up as moral arbiter of business methods. And not content to govern themselves in established communities, its citizens claimed control of the whole continent, and foreclosed the tropical north against Imperial enterprise.

Some things are only truly appreciated after they have been lost beyond hope. The whole northern fringe of Australia had lain practically unused for decades. Speculators in London had not perceived the fact that it contained the makings of another India until the definite formulation and adoption of the White Australia policy had made the realization impossible. Then, of course, they did not blame their own remissness, but the impudence of the colonials. For several years a section of the British Press, prompted by disappointed monopolists, conducted a campaign of slander against the young Commonwealth, accusing it of undue interference with private enterprise, and of a deliberate attempt to withhold its torrid districts from colonization. It was ably backed in this particular by "Little England" papers, which disliked the White Australia doctrine just as much, though for exactly opposite reasons. Between them, they drew a glowing picture of what the Northern Territory should be like if, instead of new-fangled theories, the approved traditions of Imperial colonization were followed. It was only necessary to appoint a capable administrator, with Indian experience, and to throw open the country to all comers. Or perhaps, as a sop to national prejudice, it might be reserved to Imperial immigration — of all colours, of course. Here was a chance to relieve the curse of Hindustan, overcrowding, by transferring whole villages and tribes. The new province could thus be stocked with a cheap, submissive, intelligent population, which would transform it into fruitful fields. Rice, cotton, tobacco, wheat and other tropical products could be cultivated. Railways, roads, ports and shipping would have to be constructed, together with the hundred other modern contrivances of trade required to distribute the wealth of the land and to supply the needs of its settlers. And British capital and industries would benefit. Why all these marvellous prospects should be sacrificed for a fad, in the interests of non-existent white citizens who could only be attracted by the certainty of high remuneration, if at all, passed the understanding of the average stay-at-home Englishman. As for the leaders of finance, they could never forgive such folly. The White Australia policy robbed them of profits which were as good as made but for its arbitrary interference. Anything was better than the stagnation which resulted from it. The present development was rather welcomed by the more virulent section as a fitting retribution. And the Press,

influenced by them, began to hint that this complication could never have occurred if the old methods of colonization had been adhered to.

The nobility and gentry of the United Kingdom shared the coolness of the capitalists, partly for the same reasons; partly, however, because of a special class grievance. It may be said that the proud, democratic spirit of the Australian people represented the principle directly opposed to the social conditions which evolved a hereditary aristocracy. The contrast was too great to allow of mutual admiration. All attempts to graft a peerage upon the young continent had failed ignominiously. Some knighthoods had been granted, but it was a strange fact that, in quite a number of cases, men who were considered to have promising prospects before they were thus honoured fell victims to political extinction soon afterwards. The temper of the nation was republican in this respect. Members of the aristocracy, on their part, had not forgotten the origin of the colony. Between its citizens and themselves a great gulf was fixed. Their habits of thought were divided by centuries. Neither was able to take seriously the ideals of the other.

It has been shown that the general sentiments of the people of the Mother Country were widely divergent at this crisis. General sentiments, however, must not be confounded with political convictions. Regarding the latter, their unanimity was wonderful. There is really very little to choose between the most ardent Imperialist and the pronounced Little Englander, when their fundamental attitude towards colonies, particularly autonomous colonies, comes to be dissected. That may sound paradoxical, but it is true. Certainly, they disagree in their estimation, and, consequently, in their policy. But these are mere superficialities. Brush them aside, and there is revealed, at the back of the stolid British mind, the firm belief that the continued existence of the colonies is a benefit conferred upon them by the Mother Country. Through generations this conception has been handed down until recently the loud clamour of the daughter nations, for official acknowledgment of equality, began to tear at its roots. It has been said that but for the secession of the New England States, the idea of colonial equality would never have been formulated. Even so, it caused genuine consternation, though the expression was smothered in a frantic outburst of Imperial enthusiasm, led by patriotic trumpet-calls of a singularly united Press. This surprising unanimity should have given of itself careful observers pause to reflect. It suggested that there was something to be concealed, something to be held back or smoothed over. And all the din could not dispel the silent indignation which welled up in many British hearts. The pretensions were too enormous. Here, on the one hand, stood a nation welded by the storm and stress of a thousand years, by a struggle for bare existence at first, and afterwards for domination; a nation which had shaped Empire, and still maintained it by its sole

strength. On the other hand, there rose a group of immense communities hardly yet advanced to nationhood, never tested in the furnace of adversity upon quality and extent of their own resources: raw materials of Empire, in fact, boldly asking for equality. In the background, as a dim warning, the spectre of the American analogy was made to loom. Thus pressed, Great Britain prepared to concede the demand with good grace. What passed far below the smiling surface, in the subconsciousness of the toiling millions, on whose ever-increasing exertions the grand structure is founded, was conveniently overlooked, and might have been choked in its own profoundness at last. But it was not given time. Japan once showed admirable perception of approaching convulsions in the body of the Russian colossus, and shaped its plans accordingly. Had its emissaries, with judgment still more refined, correctly gauged the symptoms which eddied faintly about the outskirts of Imperial enthusiasm, and allowed for them in the intrigue? At any rate, the spirited, high-souled part taken by the Commonwealth in the campaign for equality had not won many sympathies in the Mother Country.

The members of the British Government stood too high, of course, to be swayed by hidden undercurrents. Whichever party was in power, the leaders, once the mantle of responsibility fell their way, kept one aim steadily in mind — the greater glory of the Empire. That included the advantage of all its constituents, and was the one continuous policy. The second continuous policy embraced the cultivation of close friendship with certain great Powers and particularly the maintenance of the alliance with Japan. Probably it had never been contemplated that there could be a clash between the two. When it did happen, the issue, as it presented itself to the English Cabinet, was mainly a question of expediency. Its first effort was to appease Australian anxiety by insisting on the harmlessness of the incident. Japan, perfectly cordial, rendered the attempt abortive by frankness. It became, therefore, necessary to choose between the permanent estrangement of a valuable ally and the passing temper of dependencies. For of the volatility of colonial resentment repeated proof existed within recent years. No change of front could be charged against the Imperial statesmen. The doctrine of a white continent might well be propounded by the Commonwealth, but it could not be countenanced logically by the mistress of India. She tolerated it as long as its victims were too feeble to raise effectual protests, and Australia stood strong enough to enforce it. Once this assurance failed, a full reconsideration of the position became inevitable. Britannia could not unsheath her sword in such a cause.

Colonial friction with foreign Powers required careful watching. Encouragement in one quarter might lead to trouble in others. Young nations half freed from leading strings are very impulsive, and prone to

try conclusions without urgent need. The weakest point of the immense Empire lay in the danger of a fifth-rate disturbance on the periphery, thousands of miles away from the nerve centres, setting up irritation which might end by convulsing the whole body. That had to be guarded against, for the shock might bring down the nicely balanced structure of British World Policy, the result of infinite care drawn out over a number of years, and now heavy with promise. Japan's continued cordial support was essential to carry the policy to full maturity. Australian aspirations, therefore, would have to be postponed.

It was of material assistance to the Imperial Government that the British Parliament was sitting, and could be made the fountain-head from which soothing and confident declarations poured forth. The Opposition obeyed the time-hallowed custom not to create difficulties in international affairs. Especially where Japan was concerned, the Cabinet might be described as holding a brief for the entire nation. As usual in such circumstances, successive questions were asked and then pompously answered in the House. The replies were so framed that they did not leave the slightest doubt as to the hope of the Ministers of settling the matter quickly and quietly. Further, they indicated that no dictation from outside would be accepted by the responsible advisers of the Crown; that warlike talk abroad should not be considered seriously; and that official relations with Japan were as cordial as ever.

## Chapter VII: Naval Power and World Politics

“THE supremacy of the British Navy<sup>1</sup> is the safety of Australia, and this supremacy is absolute.” That was the conviction in which the people of the Commonwealth, in spite of occasional warnings, placed their entire trust, and with which they justified before themselves and to the world, their shocking neglect of the first principles of defence. But while they were somnolently enjoying the fancied security, the world moved and Japan acted. It is easy to perceive, in the light of later events, the real meaning of the stupendous maritime armaments into which the Far Eastern Power launched out immediately after the successful war against Russia. Its policy aimed at nothing less than the creation of a war fleet, strong enough to overawe even the Mistress of the Seas at a given date, under special conditions, which had been foreseen by the astute statesmen of Japan, who had fully mastered the axiom that victory, diplomatic or otherwise, belongs to the side which can concentrate most power at the critical point. In the present crisis they knew that they would gain all if they could gain time. Whatever might be the extent of British indignation at first, it did not matter as long as it was kept in check by a sense of danger. Patriotic fervour cannot be bottled up. The Imperial authorities would soon come to see that Japan was still necessary to them as friend and ally. Then it might be reasonably expected that the problem of peopling the empty Northern Territory would be left in the hands of those best able to solve it, regardless of the clamours of others who had shirked the question, and owned no battleships to back them up. Tokio, indeed, had built the foundations of its stupendous intrigue upon hard rock.

In April, 1912, Japan possessed six battleships of the latest type, each superior to the famed English *Dreadnought*; another monster of yet improved design was being equipped for sea at Nagasaki dockyard, to be ready for service within three months. Three armoured cruisers of over 18,500 tons, with two more of 19,000 tons, rapidly approaching completion, rounded off the strictly modern armaments. But in addition there were the older vessels, which had given such excellent account of themselves in the late war, and the former Russian ships which had been captured and repaired. The mosquito fleet was far superior, both in quality and number, to the one which had some years ago proved the terror of the enemy. For crews the navy could draw largely, in the event

of war, upon the veterans who had braved the horrors of Port Arthur and Tsushima, the only naval corps extant which had actually been through battle, and was yet available for another round. That was probably Japan's greatest, and quite unique, advantage. These old hands would not be racked by soul-destroying nervousness if they should come face to face with death again, a nervousness sure to play havoc with the efficiency of adversaries who had never passed the ordeal, courageous and well-trained though they might be. Behind the veterans surged on the younger generation of sailors, all fired by fanatic patriotism and by the ambition to enable the achievements of the former, still fresh in everybody's mind, not far-off memories of traditional feats of glory which had happened under conditions quite unmodern. Position, too, favoured the Japanese. Sheltered behind the length and width of the Old World group of continents, they would be able to choose their own battle-ground, and any enemy attacking them had to do so in their centre of power, where they could make the decisive stand in narrow, dangerous seas, familiar only to them, and in conjunction with coastal fortifications and submerged mines.

Great Britain's first fighting line consisted of the original *Dreadnought* and of twelve battleships of a similar, improved type, and of eight other vessels of nearly equal strength and much greater speed, which were classed as cruisers. Four more leviathan crafts were in course of construction, but they could not be made ready for sea before 1913. There was also an enormous host of battleships and cruisers of older designs, many of them superior to anything the Japanese could oppose in those classes. In high sea destroyers and torpedo boats England outnumbered its ally by two to one.

The naval resources at the command of the Imperial authorities offered, therefore, material enough for a combination equal to the task of blowing the Japanese fleet out of the water. There were, however, several points of grave importance to be considered. The evolution of the *Dreadnought* type had revolutionized the theories of maritime warfare. Enthusiasts maintain that one vessel of her design could sink a whole assortment of older battleships without much risk to herself, by reason of her immense superiority in gun-fire, armour, and speed. This opinion had been somewhat modified, but the new principle had been left untouched, that a *Dreadnought* could only be matched by a *Dreadnought*, but not by any number of less up-to-date craft, the success of which, if possible at all, would depend on the incalculable quality of leadership. Accordingly, Great Britain, to discount the risk attendant on war, would have had to place in the fighting line at least one more *Dreadnought* than Japan could bring forward, besides providing for decided preponderance in the other classes. That meant that twelve or thirteen of the largest and most modern battleships and cruisers, at least twelve older first-class

battleships, as many older first-class armoured cruisers, and a cloud of mosquito craft would have had to be despatched to the other side of the globe, 13,000 miles away.

The proposition was impossible of execution, simply because the portion of the British Navy remaining in home waters, after the departure of such a fleet to the Far East, would not have been strong enough to guarantee the safety of the heart of the Empire against the ambitions of European rivals. Both France and Germany would have been given the one and only opportunity for which the fiery patriots of both nations had been waiting in vain for generations, the chance of attempting the invasion of England with more than forlorn hopes of success.

France happened to be on terms of close intimacy with Great Britain. But its people looked with perfect composure at the discomfiture of the Commonwealth, which had prevented the annexations of the New Hebrides by the Republic, and was frankly impatient of its presence in the South Seas at all. The warlike Gallic spirit was certainly decaying steadily under the ever-increasing pressure on its north-eastern frontier. Yet there was no telling that it might not be resuscitated in sight of such a unique opportunity, either of its own accord or under the influence of outside promises and promptings.

But even if France might be trusted, beside it rose a far more dangerous and relentless rival — Germany. This “narrowly confined, yet unbounded” nation, restless, unfathomable, firmly believing in its own glorious future, lifted on the highest crest of the universal wave of prosperity, teeming with a rapidly multiplying population, could not be trusted under temptation. Its forward, enterprising policy was confronted at every turn by the Empire, which had fathered most of the desirable places of the earth before the birth of modern Germany. The latter, therefore, had to play the part of the ambitious, ever watchful Jacob, out after a British Esau, too cunning to barter away his rights of primogeniture. In the immediate past Imperial diplomacy, backed by the Japanese alliance and by the *entente cordiale* with France, had outwitted Teutonic policy in several fields, and sixty-six million Germans were still resenting the supposed humiliation. Would they not see the finger of God in an occurrence which removed the impenetrable naval screen from between their armies and the English shores? Even official assurances of friendship could not have been worth anything under the circumstances.

Germany had seven improved *Dreadnoughts* in active service, and two more were so far advanced in equipment that they could be got ready for war within three or four months. The keels of yet another four had already been laid. There were also four very powerful cruisers, and two more building. Its fleet of older battleships and cruisers was maintained in a state of highest sea-worthiness, and its mosquito craft was both numerous and efficient. The crews, like the fighting machinery, had

never been tested in grim earnest. But they were drawn from the seafaring population, conversant with the intimate ins and outs of their narrow, treacherous waters, and thoroughly trained. What they lacked in tradition was richly made up for by fierce rivalry with the army, the glory of which they did not despair to emulate and to surpass.

The menace of this huge concentration of naval force within 500 miles from London had to be neutralized before the Empire could risk the hostility of Japan. A new British alliance with another great maritime Power, if possible, might have checkmated Germany. Some openings may have suggested themselves. There was France, for instance, still mourning the loss of provinces forfeited forty years ago to the Teuton. A treaty binding the Empire to assist in their recovery within stated time-limits, as the price of immediate naval support, might have been accepted. Unfortunately, even an Anglo-French alliance would not have been a sure check on Germany, which might not consent to wait until a dispute was agreeable to all parties, but might crush the Republic under the weight of numerical superiority while Great Britain was engaged elsewhere.

Russia had no fleet. It did not love the English, whose flirtation with the little brown men was responsible for the collapse of Muscovite expansion in Asia. Its army was nominally formidable, but the task of propping up the tottering autocracy absorbed all available energy and might have become too difficult if the German neighbour should decide to aid secretly the transport across the frontier of war material and explosives for the revolutionaries. Official Russia recognized that friendly relations with the two allied monarchies over the western border were its supreme necessity.

There remained another grand possibility: the enlistment of the United States of America in favour of the British Empire. The Great Republic owned a splendid navy, a large part of which, stationed in the Pacific, could be thrown straight against Japan, while the Atlantic squadron, joining the English home fleet, would render the United Kingdom secure against invasion. Here was a task worthy of a great statesman. If there really existed an Anglo-Saxon community of interests, as expressed in the famous phrase, "Blood is thicker than water," now was the hour to unfurl its banner in the cause of the white race.

But America did not move. It was not forgotten that, a few years back, when its western fringe was in danger of being overrun by an aggressive influx of Japanese subjects, public opinion in Britain had sympathized demonstratively with the latter. America had triumphed over that organized attempt only by strong measures which led to the verge of war, and it could, therefore, afford to watch quietly, as an appreciative spectator, while similar tactics were directed from the same quarter against an English dependency. Besides, there were other potent

considerations which inclined Washington to adhere to a policy of masterly inactivity. Japan had set up as self-appointed Mentor of China, and was patiently instilling a taste for the material benefits of Western civilization into a population of 400 millions, whose needs, once aroused, would overtax the comparatively small resources of the teacher. Then would come the turn of wealthier nations to act the disinterested friend towards China, to find capital for the development of the country, and to reap, in exchange, commercial advantages. And the United States were determined, in spite of temporary unpleasantness, to secure the lion's share, to which they were entitled by position and resources. To this end it was necessary to regain the confidence of the Asiatics, who were deeply offended by forcible exclusion from America. There was only one way of doing it: by treating them with marked respect everywhere else, to prove that colour distinctions did not extend beyond the border.

The British Empire was America's one dangerous competitor in the fight for domination of the Far Eastern markets, and, therefore, to be distrusted. Its alliance with Japan increased its influence, and a quarrel with the ally must weaken its whole position. Great Britain, however, was justified in quarrelling, for even hair-splitting Orientals could hardly raise objections against its defence of a colony by all means, fair or foul. But America had no such motive. If it allowed itself to be drawn into an entangling alliance at this moment, Asia would believe that it was actuated by racial hatred. And in the end, England's refined diplomacy might foist upon the partner all the blame for regrettable necessities, which were bound to occur in such a controversy, and thus divert Mongolian fury and resentment from itself. In that case it would probably succeed in keeping the United States out of the Far Eastern trade altogether. There is no gratitude in business or in politics.

The naval armaments of smaller friendly Powers did not count in this crisis. Japan had chosen the right hour and the right place; indeed, the stars in their courses seemed to fight on its side. Its experiences in the struggle against Russia had first suggested to its ally the evolution of the *Dreadnought* type, which created new conditions in maritime warfare, and practically consigned the older classes of battleships to the scrap heap. Incidentally, this development resulted in a distribution of sea power, which for one fateful moment, at a point which had escaped notice, rendered ineffective British naval supremacy. It was just for a short time. In the course of a few years overwhelming numbers of battleships and cruisers of latest design would have been flying the Union Jack. But the reflection is useless; the need of Empire demanded immediate action, and it could not be risked.

1 AUTHOR'S NOTE. — I have been careful not to overstate the case

against British naval supremacy in 1912. According to the latest available information, Great Britain will have 12 ships of the *Dreadnought* and *Invincible* class afloat at the end of 1911 (*quasi* official), Germany 13 (official), Japan, about 10 or 11 (European estimate). It is, of course, recognized everywhere that England will take steps meanwhile to prevent such an eventuality. I have assumed that she will double her average constructive expenditure for the next three years, though it does not seem likely at present that she will make such a tremendous effort. Further, that both Japan and Germany will not be able to execute their programmes fully within officially foreshadowed time-limits, which every expert will consider a bold assumption. The actual naval position of Great Britain in 1912 will therefore most likely be much less favourable than shown by me.

## Chapter VIII: Colonial Fancies

THE arrival at Port Darwin of the Japanese deputation, and the public professions of loyalty to the British flag by its members, induced the Imperial Government to communicate, without further delay, the Mikado's offer, proposing transfer of allegiance, by official sanction, to the Commonwealth authorities. It was the receipt of this information, as well as tactical party considerations, which led to the publication of all the cable interchanges. Australian statesmen had naturally a much clearer insight into the political instincts by which the other dependencies were swayed than into British habits of mind. Accordingly, they forgot the vexation, which their indiscretion must cause to the latter, in their desire to rally the sister dominions to their side by the disclosure of the Japanese suggestion. Nor were they mistaken in their estimation of the effect. The white colonies, already deeply agitated by the first news of the fresh immigration movement, stood aghast at the cool proposition that a simple oath of allegiance to the King of England should be held sufficient to open a passage for the brown or yellow man into the jealously guarded reserves of the white race. Their stupor, relieved by the energetic action of the Federal executive, made way for a deafening chorus of applause, urging on Australia to persist in its violent course, and calling upon Great Britain to keep its upstart ally in his proper place.

The unanimous anxiety of the autonomous dependencies was perfectly logical; they were all exposed to the same danger. Canada had recently been the playground of Turanian insolence, and it was rather due to the relentless determination of the United States than to British endeavours, that the Japanese immigration into America had been reduced to moderate limits. Its western seaboard, fertile and very thinly populated, stretched invitingly directly opposite the crowded eastern slopes of Asia. There was no guarantee that the latter might not disgorge another unassimilative torrent of humanity upon the shores of Columbia in the future, particularly if the idea should gain ground that the white man was relaxing his hold. Maoriland was in a still worse position. The "Little Dominion" had been even more intolerant of the Asiatic than its big neighbour. Once the coloured alien succeeded in getting a firm foothold there its own policy of exclusion would become untenable. Perhaps South Africa appeared less directly concerned for the moment. Its distance and isolation might prove some protection. Troubled, however,

by the indigenous negro problem, as well as by the imported evil of a growing Indian coolie population, it was also vitally interested in the principle that the white man's pleasure should be the law of the universe. So the ring was complete. Greater Britain was consolidated by common needs and spoke with one voice.

And it pleaded moral justification. The restrictive laws of the several colonies had all received the Royal assent. They were all based on the same premises. Clearly, therefore, if they could be broken with impunity in one instance, they might as well be abolished everywhere, for all the security they would give after that. There was no doubt that the Japanese landing in the Northern Territory was a distinct infringement of a special act, which rendered all the immigrants liable not only to deportation, but also to a fine or imprisonment. But although Australia was thus concerned in the first place, the issue did really pass continental confines. It was Imperial, because the validity of the laws in the other colonies was involved. For this reason, the oversea dominions did not exceed their rights by demanding that Great Britain, as keeper of the Imperial sword, should enter the ring in defence of their privileges.

England looked upon the question in quite a different light. It had, of course, to be admitted that the restrictive laws had been sanctioned. But the Crown could hardly be expected to investigate in every instance whether the self-governing bodies, who promoted such measure, and who were so suspicious of any attempt of interference by the central authorities, had made sure beforehand of their ability to carry out the clauses. A law which cannot be enforced must be bad. Great Britain did not care to identify itself with failures. Moreover, the colonies had their own executives, whom they could hold responsible if scapegoats were required. People and politicians of the Mother Country did not like being burdened with the consequences of the shortcomings of others.

Excitement in the white dominions grew apace. At this early stage Australia managed to keep its indignation well in check, and its public protests, though firm enough, were comparatively free of bombast. Both Canada and Maoriland eclipsed it in outward show of resentment. There, even statesmen who had a reputation to lose, and papers which were known for impartiality and moderation in ordinary times, looked upon war as a foregone conclusion. After the collapse of the criminal prosecution of the Japanese deputation, a paroxysm of disappointed rage swept the two dominions, and the cry for war rose louder and louder. Perhaps this violence was not natural. It may have been an hysterical effort to conceal the military weakness of the colonies, which this crisis threatened to expose to all the world, and which could only remain secret if a patriotic panic in England made available the formidable resources of that Power by forcing the hands of its rulers.

But the Imperial Government was perfectly aware of its peril, and

retained its mastery at home by the judicious use of Press and Parliament. So there was not much danger of a sudden national stampede. All responsible men were profuse in their expression of sympathy with the aspirations of the daughter nations. Nevertheless, all insisted that the Japanese immigration was a local incident which would have to be dealt with in the ordinary diplomatic way. The Stock Exchange advanced the shares of certain cable companies in view of an expected increase of revenue, while the hubbub lasted — a rather facetious compliment. The colonies, however, were not in the humour to appreciate jokes. Exasperated by the indifference of the British people they changed their tune, and threats of war against Japan gave way to threats of secession from England.

Unfortunately, this was not a new theme either. Great Britain was becoming accustomed to these occasional colonial storms. There had been so many of them of late. The Alaska boundary settlement, the problem of foreign possessions in the South Seas, the Newfoundland fisheries dispute, were all cases in point. Every time there had been a furious outburst of indignation, followed by resigned acceptance of the inevitable, under the noble plea of self-sacrifice for the sake of the Empire. The recollection of past scares discounted the effect of the latest sensation upon the stolid English mind, which was influenced by the talk of war and secession, precisely as formerly, by reports of Irish excesses. Instead of betraying fear and precipitancy, it became more obstinate and deliberate than ever.

The root of the trouble was that the military resources of the Empire were Imperial only in name, as they had been paid for almost exclusively by the over-burdened toilers of the United Kingdom. Certainly, some of the colonies contributed a small amount for the upkeep of the navy; yet if the whole sum thus received had been lumped up from the outset, it would hardly have been sufficient for the construction and maintenance of a single *Dreadnought*. Great Britain accepted the dole as evidence of good will, but without the least idea that the givers should thereby become entitled to a share in the control of the armaments, which was, indeed, the colonial contention, not in so many words, but in fact. For if the central authorities alone had the right to grant or to withhold the support of the Imperial forces, in every instance where foreigners threatened the interests of the self-governing dominions, then the latter were in all essentials reduced to abject dependency on England, in spite of airy boasts and complaisant acknowledgments of equality.

The colonies had all along mistaken territorial bigness for power. The misleading appearance of wealth, which was in reality merely the expression of the disproportion between the enormous natural resources of the new countries and their smallness of population, had given them an altogether exaggerated idea of their own importance. Born in a more

enlightened age, free of the inherited economic and political difficulties which cleft the Old World, they scorned the European method of propitiating the insatiable God of Battles, by pouring ceaseless torrents of treasure upon his altars in the effort to keep them bloodless. The colonies preferred more rational investments; their savings went entirely into the work of opening up their vast dominions, and they also mortgaged their future prospects up to the hilt for the same purpose. That was well enough as long as world policy was a hobby confined to European nations. England was too vitally interested in the Balance of Power there, to allow any continental rival to become too strong, either by absorbing weaker neighbours or by establishing new bases in other parts of the globe, which might some day become formidable. A stupendous public debt still remained as a constant reminder of the determination with which Great Britain had fought for security in the past. Where so much had been suffered for the cause, and where, moreover, the probable course of future developments was so well defined, the watchfulness of England might well be trusted, and its daughters could afford to slumber peacefully. But a change came over the spirit of their dreams when Japan, with rapid strides, leapt to the front, and was introduced by the Imperial Government into the sacred circle of Great Powers as its friend and partner in world politics. Some honest fanatics tried to rouse the sleepers. Yet, before they could make any deep impression colonial sentiment was drugged fatally by the outburst of maudlin enthusiasm, which rewarded the valiant ally for his feats against the traditional enemy of Anglo-Saxondom, Russia.

After that the pace became furious. A new Great Power had arisen, removed very far from the centres of British naval supremacy, an aggressive Island Empire, dependent for its existence on the possession of an unconquerable fleet. The two maritime nations were drawn together by the strongest impulses, for they had the choice of but two unalterable alternatives: to be friends or, sooner or later, to fight to the death, as the globe is too small for two naval supremacies. Wisely, they had agreed on the first proposition, which promised a rich harvest to both. All points of difference had been settled, and an extended, closer alliance was formed on the premises of real, mutual equity. And Japan proceeded, at the first opportune moment, to test the sincerity of its friend. It began in Canada, but had to withdraw before the uncompromising attitude of the United States, who dared to enforce a slightly varied Monroe doctrine, even on foreign soil, as long as it was American. Japan, therefore, was compelled to select a field for its experiments where the Monroe doctrine did not apply. Hence its descent upon the Northern Territory. And the rudely-awakened colonies perceived too late that empty square miles don't fight, and that, having neglected to provide for independent means of defence, they were absolutely helpless.

They could not even strike a blow at the invader, which, though perhaps insufficient in itself, might have placed Great Britain in the awkward position of either having to accept the responsibility of such action, and the consequences of such moral support, or else of appearing to desert its children before the eye of an astonished world. For Japan, as well as the invaded district, was accessible only by sea, and the colonies did not own a battleship between them. That was the less excusable when it is considered that much of their wealth was piled up on or near the seaboard, where their magnificent ports and capitals lie open to attack from the ocean or from rivers navigable for *Dreadnoughts*. It is not wonderful that in the dread hour of disillusion, panic shook them like the all-embracing tremors of an earthquake.

Still, some good came out of sound and fury. In Maoriland, the charming home of grandiloquent epithets, the "Defence League of all the Whites" was formed on May 22, 1909, and spread quickly to Canada, South Africa, and even to the United States. The avowed aim of the new association was the creation of a centre of enthusiasm, and the raising of funds for armaments in the interests of Australia. But this original purpose was soon overshadowed by its development into a recruiting organization. Many members emigrated to the Commonwealth, others persuaded or financed patriots and adventurers in the prime of life to do the same, all bent on resisting and repulsing by force the coloured invader. A considerable number of these were Americans from the Pacific slopes — men who did not need to be taught bitter hatred against the Japanese, and whose influence can be traced in the trend of later events. The whole movement may be said to have one achievement to its credit. It properly inspired, or suggested in some way, the formation of the White Guard, of glorious and tragic memory.

## Chapter IX: Parliament

AUSTRALIA was feverish. But its symptoms were quite different from those manifested in the sister dominions, where the colder climate makes people heavy and pessimistic. Of the chorus of rage and fierce denunciation of Japan which resounded there, Australians caught only the note of sympathy and applause which cheered them on to aggressive efforts. The British attitude was not understood at this early time and for this reason people refrained from criticizing it, the more readily as the Prime Minister, in a speech before the House immediately on the opening of the session, had recommended that nothing should be said or done to prejudice the position of the Imperial authorities. The members of the Federal Government chose to take a cheerful view of the future. They recognized — or said so — that caution on the part of the Empire was quite appropriate. So far, London had given no intimation that it was not prepared to insist on the evacuation of the Northern Territory by the undesirable aliens. Its fancy of exhausting, in the first place, all peaceful means to bring about that end, was certainly very trying. But the Australian nation, as a whole, had no suspicions of insincerity, being firmly convinced, in the consciousness of its own importance, that there was too much at stake for Great Britain, for Anglo-Saxondom, for White Humanity, to allow of any lukewarmness. A little bewildered by the delay abroad, the citizens felt relieved to turn their attention to the drastic measures and more drastic proposals of their own leaders. There, at last, was forward movement. Australia experienced the exalted sensations of a young hero girding his loins to beard the prowling enemy in his den. It had so much to do, so many duties to fulfil, that it really had no leisure for sadyed reflection. Everybody discussed the possibility of linking up Port Darwin by railway with the South and how long it would take; or how many men the Commonwealth should be able to put into the field — some day-dreamers approached the half-million in their speculations. Of course, they all presumed that Great Britain would be there to back them up.

On the opening date of the Federal session, May 30, 1912, a proclamation was issued calling to arms Class I of the War Militia, comprising all the unmarried men, and the widowers without children, from eighteen to thirty years of age. The fact was immediately communicated to Parliament and justified as a measure of “Resistance of

an armed invasion of Commonwealth Territory.” This, under the Constitution, amounted practically to a declaration of war.

The mobilization came as a glad surprise after the tension of the last weeks. The liable class precipitated itself into the ranks; if there was any regret, it was that of half-boys and older men that their time for active service had not yet come. Parliament reflected this happy unity. For the moment, all party strife was hushed. Even the action of the Government, which curtailed the time customarily allowed for the discussion of the Address-in-Reply, met hardly with any opposition. On Monday, June 3, the Coloured Inhabitants' Registration Act was introduced and passed through all stages in both Houses within three days. This measure was dictated by the fear of treachery and espionage. It had been the boast of Japan, that before the Russian war every one of its subjects abroad, regardless of social station or individual calling, had served as a spy, whenever an opportunity offered. People were justly afraid that similar tactics might be repeated in Australia. The only means of minimizing the evil was strict control of all Asiatics. Under the new law, every coloured alien was bound to report himself to the local authority within a stated time, and after that once a year regularly. A pass was handed to him, and whenever he travelled from his registered place of residence for more than three days, his movements had to be officially recorded on the back of it. If he could not show his pass, or if the endorsements were not in perfect order, he became liable to imprisonment until such time that he should prove his good faith and harmlessness. And should he fail to satisfy the authorities, who were ordered to keep detailed lists, then he was to be deported from the Commonwealth.

It is to be regretted that these restrictions were necessary, on account of the very serious consequences. The terrible cry of treason had been raised now and must inevitably swell in volume as long as the causes of the national agitation lasted. So far, Australia had treated the inferior races with good-natured contempt. Their influx had been stopped, but those who had already entered were left alone. Now, quite suddenly, they were officially held up to popular hatred and fury. The stigma of outlawry was affixed to all, Japanese, Chinese, Hindus, Afghans, Syrians, Negroes and others, with the single exception of the native aboriginals, who were not credited with sufficient intelligence to be dangerous. Some delay occurred before the white citizens became fully imbued with the sternly repressive spirit which shaped the Registration Act. But the seed had been sown, and in due course the growth of vengeful suspicion convulsed the whole community, causing endless suffering to the innocent as surely as the few who were possibly guilty.

Contrary to routine, this Bill was at once presented to the Governor-General for the King's assent. Meanwhile the House debated an Amendment to the Defence Act providing new rules with regard to

exemptions from military duty. The mobilization was being carried out very thoroughly. Some murmurs of discontentment arose now because of the strictness with which every able-bodied man of liable age was enlisted. Commercial Britons have always loved to let others do the fighting for them. It is therefore easy to imagine what were the feelings of many prosperous parents and relatives who prided themselves on their English descent and habit of mind, when their young men were placed among the common rank and file and subjected to severe drill, with the prospects of a tropical campaign before them. In no country and at no time has it been considered a disgrace to dodge the recruiter. And it was the same in this instance. Forged and bought medical certificates, even artificial crippling, were resorted to, and many a pampered young fellow fled by sea.

The amendment dealt with such evasions, providing that only the certificates of medical men who had been sworn in as Federal officers should be valid. Every competent physician was admitted to the oath. High penalties were enacted against attempts to corrupt the officers and against all malpractices. It was also enacted that men who got married after the date of the proclamation, could not thereby escape liability to military service. And the excuse that a liable person had made arrangements to leave the country prior to the proclamation was especially excluded from the grounds for exemption.

The new clauses were put into operation immediately. Their harshness was, of course, resented violently. Young Englishmen, who had come out on business or for Colonial experience and had remained for over six months, but without any intention of settling permanently in Australia, were debarred from leaving and compelled to join the army. The outgoing vessels were kept under close supervision; escapees who in despair had stowed themselves away or had signed on as common seamen, were hauled back and enlisted. Cable reports of such occurrences found their way into the British Press and the ordinary reader, ignorant of the merits of the case and very shocked at the signs of oppression, looked upon Australia with more unfavourable eyes day by day.

Both the Registration Act and the Defence Amendment may be described as non-contentious measures. Their passage terminated the happy unity of Parliament, for now the main problem had to be faced: the necessity of financing the defence of the Commonwealth, the method of which could not be considered apart from party principles. Enormous sums were wanted to maintain the standing army and to improve its armaments. Moreover, the Railway Bill providing for the immediate construction of the transcontinental railway to Port Darwin would call for millions. It was here the first cleavage occurred between the Moderates, who represented the more conservative interests, and the ardent patriots,

who preferred to suffer everything rather than surrender the White Australia ideal and who included not only people of every political persuasion willing to place fatherland before faction in the hour of national danger, even at the risk of offending British traditions, but also the entire Federal Labour Party. Mainly because of their connexion with the latter, they were soon dubbed "Extremists" by their opponents. Under that name, used at first as a reproach, and then appropriated as a term of distinction, like so many political appellations of the past, they will go down to history.

Once the Party spirit revived the Parliamentary struggle became very confused. Until then, the Commonwealth, as apart from the States, had never raised a loan. Now, Government proposed to do so. In addition, it introduced fresh taxation. To begin with, a Federal income-tax of two shillings in the pound on all annual incomes exceeding £150. Though this was an enormous impost, even the Moderates agreed to the principle, well aware that sacrifices were necessary, and only strove to reduce the rate. But it was merely a commencement. For the Government also insisted on the graduated land tax. So far the advocacy of such a measure had been associated exclusively with the Labour Party, who had never been able to convince a majority of the people of its expediency. That the present crisis was used to push it forward, enraged the Moderates. It was felt as a party affront. And the representatives of vested interests resented this attempted socialistic spoliation, as they termed it, and resolved to resist firmly.

The Moderates, on the whole, were certainly as patriotic as other Australians. True, they paid more deference to the sentiment of the Mother Country, which to many of them was "Home." And they were naturally more cautious, since they stood for the commercial and industrial proprietors, for the men of means and big landholders, who had most to lose. Some of their acknowledged leaders had not always been over-careful in their utterances as to the merits of the Commonwealth case. But they would have died as gladly as any of their compatriots in defence of their country's rights against the invasion of the Asiatic Power. Their objections to a graduated land tax were quite natural. Once the latter had become law, its principle acknowledged, law it would probably remain long after the immediate cause for its adoption had passed away. Before Federation, the predecessors of the modern Moderates had ruled the various States. In those days, the remedy for every financial difficulty had been borrowing. The result was that to-day four millions of people owed nearly 250 million pounds sterling to the British investor. It did not seem to hurt them. Why not follow the time-honoured device? The Moderates advocated another big loan, and were willing to vote a solid income-tax for the interest service. Further they would not, could not, dared not go.

On the other hand, the Government insisted on its graduated land tax. There was no party spirit prompting it. The crisis had not swept away political principles of a lifetime, but no reasonable Australian thought of faction strife just then. The facts were plain. The Commonwealth was entering the gates of a future of which nobody could foretell the portents. Was it wise, was it dignified to pledge the public credit at once to its utmost limits, without an honest attempt to pay out of the national pocket for the national cause? Was it even possible? London was not exactly enthusiastic, to say the least. A financial rebuff at this juncture might be disastrous. (Nobody, of course, had any idea of what was to happen shortly.) But London might be humoured by the creation of good security. The income tax was one means. And the graduated land tax? It was the only other way of raising a large annual amount. It had been talked about for many years. It had many supporters. It would not come as a shock to the people, because they were already acquainted with the idea. And money had to be found. That was why the Government was so determined about it.

So the Parliament battle began. Meanwhile the people looked on stupefied. They only knew that the Continent was in danger, that every moment was precious, that millions of money were wanted. Why was a whole week wasted in talk? Why could not their Representatives agree? Land tax or no land tax, the people were not in the mood for listening to technicalities. Deeds, not words! Find money! In the heat of the financial contest, each side overstated its case. The Moderates were quite willing to pass the income tax, even two shillings if it could not be helped. But as good Parliamentarians they could not have done so without pointing out the enormity of their unselfishness. Was not direct taxation reserved to the States? Look here, how patriotic we are! We sacrifice all ancient traditions — it should entitle us to consideration in other respects! The people outside are muttering: the States! Who thought of them? Commonwealth in danger, not States!

The other side is as explicit. Behind Government, the Labour Party is fighting. None of their responsible leaders would think of taking mean party advantages now. The people outside regard them with friendly eyes. They have always stood for White Australia. Also the graduated land tax has for long been a plank in their platform. But why re-state these things? It takes time even to tell truth, and time is precious! They have not the slightest wish to dwell on these facts. And yet, in the heat of debate! Ah, the people outside are out of order. Parliament, with the best of intentions, is settling down to raise points. The Long Parliament did so, once, around a tottering throne. Likewise a Congress, while a Sub-Continent was blazing to the sky. And a National Convention of France, with Hell hissing from every crevice beneath it. It is the chief delight, the second nature of all elected persons at all times.

A whole week lost! Something will have to happen. Ah, what is this, this fierce cry of rage, like the shout of a Continent? Something has happened! In the midst of hopeless confusion the Governor-General has announced that he has been instructed to withhold assent from the Coloured Inhabitants' Registration Act, on the ground that it is directly opposed to British principles of fairness and offensive to the coloured subjects of the Empire. A bombshell could not have had an effect more deadly. All Australia is suddenly awakening to a sense of its isolation. Government resigns at once (June 19). Melbourne, faithful Melbourne, threatens to lynch everybody who gives way on the colour issue. Did not some prominent Moderates counsel confidence in England but a short while ago? These Moderates will have to live in the House. Woe to those away in the country. They are marked men, exposed to the first fury of a disillusioned populace, insulted, even maltreated. Let nobody dare to form an administration while the Imperial authorities refuse to sanction the Registration Act. His blood upon himself! The State Governors even are moved to action. They report that no living soul can accept responsibility for the public peace as long as this matter remains unsettled. Never before have the cable operators worked so feverishly.

London listens. London waits. Nearly another week is gone. The excitement has not abated one jot. Instead, it has spread round the globe, to the Sister Dominions. They all call on the Mother to honour the will of a free Daughter Nation. London wavers. In the British Parliament the Colonial Secretary explains that the measure includes all coloured races and is therefore not directed specially against the Japanese. (Hear! hear!) Australia holds its breath. Yes, the Crown grants assent at last (June 26). But listen! On the understanding that the Federal Executive is sure of its own ability to enforce the Act. So let it be law!

Government is reconstructed at once. Nobody cares about the singular British reservation, which, in plain language, means that England disavows its obligation to see that the law is respected. Australia will look to that! But shall the financial haggling now start afresh? Wait a moment! Did not some hunted persons, during the period of national delirium, appeal to the authority of the States, since the Commonwealth was headless, heedless? Were there not some responses of smothered eagerness? Nothing has come of it, nor shall ever come of it. Resolution proposed by the Leader of the Federal Labour Party: "That until after the expulsion of the Japanese occupation force the High Court shall not hear appeals on behalf of the States against any action of the Federal Executive as approved by Commonwealth Parliament." *Inter arma silent leges*. In vain the Moderates fight to the last ditch. The resolution passes the Representatives by a majority of seven, the Senate by three.

It is the end. The same majorities vote two shillings income tax, land tax, loan of two millions, which, alas, shall never eventuate. Outside the

people cry with one voice: Dissolution! New elections! The Sovereign of Australia wants to take his fate into his own hands and to re-fashion his court. Some time, of course, has still to be spent, usefully now.

On July 12 the Fourth Parliament of the Commonwealth dies. Double Dissolution it is, befitting the national crisis. The Orators have had their day. Now let the People act!

## Chapter X: Pax Britannica

THE events under review being of contemporary occurrence it is naturally impossible to lay bare the hidden springs which actuated international politics and the workings of which may fully account for the cautious restraint of the Imperial authorities. Secret motives and silent struggles must, of course, have existed, but they are not touched on in the communications between London and Melbourne, and between London and Tokio, which the British Government has found advisable to publish at different times for the information of Parliament. These, together with some duly authenticated, generally hazy ministerial utterances, form the only supply of official intelligence accessible at present. Everything beyond is uncertain. Unfortunately, the period is too recent by nearly a generation for those delightful indiscretions called memoirs.

The Governments of Japan and China protested against the Coloured Inhabitants' Registration Act as soon as its clauses became known. Japan's objections raised no ire in England. That nation was regarded as an equal. But that even the Chinamen should dare to remonstrate, and in such formidable company, was an innovation which could not be stomachd lightly by the Empire-conscious Britons. By the perversity of fate, their resentment fell not so much upon the Chinaman as on the Colony which had made such a slight possible. The protest and the popular distaste had probably some connexion with the refusal of the King's assent to the measure. And when the sanction was granted at last, the Imperial authorities, apart from the special reservation mentioned before, thought fit to request the Federal Government not to take any further restrictive steps without consulting them in advance. They particularly warned against any attempt to subject the Japanese immigrants to a violent police persecution as threatened by the dispatch of a force of constabulary to the Northern Territory, on the ground that such a course was calculated to drive the refugees to despair and might result in armed resistance and bloodshed. The Commonwealth was, however, officially assured that its just rights would be protected by all the forces of the Empire. This was vague comfort, at best, and it drew, consequently, merely an evasive reply. The haste and harshness with which the provisions of the new act were brought into play soon taught the British Government that verbal behests on its part were apt to be

overlooked.

It became therefore necessary to show plainly who was in reality master of the situation. The means employed for the purpose were most emphatic. In the evening of July 1, all serviceable vessels of the Australian squadron left port. Only three small craft remained behind, together with the old gunboat *Protector*, which represented the Commonwealth-owned navy in its entirety. Two days after the departure the British Government coolly informed the Federal Cabinet that colonial provocations were disturbing the friendly relations between the Empire and its neighbours, and that it had been compelled thereby to concentrate the fleet in Eastern waters, at Singapore, as a preparation for all eventualities.

There were voiced in Australia no wild official protests against the withdrawal of the naval screen. Only once was the matter referred to in a dignified manner in the Federal Parliament. Expressions of disgust were left to the Sister-Dominions, which did not disappoint expectations. A perfect yell of execration went up in New Zealand and in Canada.

Especially in the latter colony the Press and the politicians threw moderation to the winds. Oldestablished, reputable papers charged the Imperial authorities with selling their white dependencies to their yellow allies, and delivering them over bound hand and foot. Responsible Canadian statesmen indulged in self-congratulations that they, at least, had not spent money on a foreign navy to be left in the ditch in the hour of need. In New Zealand, a Minister of the Crown refused to be interviewed on the subject, stating as his reason that he could not help talking high treason if he opened his mouth. The sudden explosion alarmed the people of the United Kingdom and had farreaching results. But it did not frighten the British Government, which knew that it was so much empty sound.

Its members were far more concerned about the reports regarding internal developments in the Commonwealth. The overthrow of the Moderates, the rise and popularity of the Extremists, and the forcible opening of new sources of revenue which promised to provide the money needed to open active hostilities against the Japanese immigrants, were so many danger signals. Only in the Northern Territory was an immediate clash between organized forces of both races possible. So far the special constabulary had limited their efforts to Port Darwin and the neighbourhood of the railway, where they found ample work to do. The tributary system of mining was suppressed, and a majority of the Chinese were deprived in this way of their livelihood. Some whites who were disliked because of their familiarity with the coloured scum were tried on trumped-up charges and shipped south. But now Palmerston district was reduced to order, and open preparations were made for an expedition into the invaded territory. Already rumours gained currency that the police

were to be reinforced by militia. The execution of this design would bring matters to a climax at once.

It seems that Tokio, during this anxious period, abstained carefully from identifying itself with its emigrants to the Commonwealth. Nevertheless, it is only natural to suppose that the Japanese statesmen paid close attention to the drift of events and that they entertained grave fears that the presence and plans of the constabulary might precipitate a crisis. There were other threatening developments. Since the first half of June an irregular corps of bushmen, intent on making merciless war on the invaders, was forming in North Queensland. It was called the White Guard, and all the most determined men and pioneers of the back blocks were enlisting in it. Hand in hand with this movement went an evergrowing bitterness against the coloured aliens. Most probably the Japanese Government had agents who kept it well informed of these complications. Whether and how far it used its knowledge to impress on its ally the necessity for rapid, energetic action, must remain pure conjecture in the absence of documentary evidence to date.

The suggestive fact is that on July 12 the Imperial Government proclaimed the north coast of Australia between degrees 132 East and 137 East a closed area for ordinary navigation purposes. All landing and discharging operations within these limits were prohibited except in the case of vessels furnished with special certificates signed by a nominated Imperial agent or by an officer of the British navy. Vessels without such permit approaching to within three miles of the mainland were declared liable to confiscation with all cargo. To enforce these rules, cruisers were despatched from Singapore. A gunboat anchored off Port Darwin. Its commander had orders to supervise the shipping at that port. A strict watch was kept also over the Western shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria by patrolling men-of-war. Of course, no difficulties were put in the way of through navigation from Port Darwin to Bourketown and further east, so that the intercolonial and oversea trade was not interfered with. But the measure practically cut off the invaded territory from the nerve-centres of the Commonwealth, as no convenient overland routes existed. Moreover, to complete the isolation, the commander of the gunboat off Port Darwin was vested with Imperial authority to control not only the waters, but the dry land as well, for the proclamation empowered him to take such precautions, within a coastal stretch twenty miles wide, as he might consider necessary to ensure the proper working of the maritime restrictions. Though the Japanese immigrants were not mentioned once in the extraordinary decree, it was evident to all observers that it was entirely in their favour, and that further proceedings against them from Port Darwin were made dependent on the sanction of an Imperial naval officer. And thus the use by Australia of the only base within striking distance of the enemy was suspended.

This meant, to all intents and purposes, the arbitrary establishment of a British protectorate over part of the Commonwealth. Tokio professed immediately to look upon it as such, and instructed its ambassador to entreat the English Government to garrison the settlements of the refugees by an Imperial force, on the ground that this step would serve best to refute the invidious colonial aspersions that Japan was coveting Australian soil.

Downing Street considered it prudent to explain the motives for its action and to disavow the ulterior aims which were charged against it in an official communication addressed to all autonomous colonial Governments. This document, which was published at once, laid stress on the point that British protection, and still more British citizenship, formed a privilege which could only be extended to applicants who conformed to a certain standard. There was no attempt to define the standard in the document, which, however, ran on with the reassuring statement that there was no reason to apply different rules in the present case. The temporary control of a small stretch of Australian coast line, it continued, was decided on for reasons of expediency, and questioned in no way the sovereignty of the Commonwealth. But as it was clear that the latter was not in a position to deal with the difficulty single-handed, Great Britain had to step in. This necessity had not converted the closed area into a protectorate, and no British garrison would be placed there.

As a further sop for the self-governing dominions, the Imperial authorities suddenly adopted towards Tokio an attitude of impartial firmness. The Mikado's offer was curtly rejected as an attempt to force citizens upon an unwilling nation. His Majesty's Government regretted that subjects of an allied Power had created, by tactless management, an untenable situation. Imperial claims must prevail on Imperial soil. The maritime restrictions would be enforced against Japanese shipping with equal thoroughness as against every other flag. And any interference with Commonwealth navigation by Japanese craft would be regarded as an unfriendly act.

The concluding sentences of the declaration of policy were calculated to appease Australian anxiety. For rumours were about that warships flying the ensign of the Rising Sun had been seen hovering off the coast, and the excited people believed that their mission was to pounce upon the unprotected shipping. Although the absurdity of the idea was palpable, its circulation had already led, in the general nervousness, to a rise of the local maritime insurance rates. It is doubtful whether the belated and merely verbal demonstration regained many colonial sympathies. But it is certain that the strong language of the British Government created widespread consternation in England. There the financial reaction caused by the long drawn-out disturbance overshadowed more and more the political interest. And a sudden fear of

further complications, even of war, removed the last sentimental barrier against a panic in colonial securities.

The London Stock Exchange had taken jokingly the first reports of a Japanese invasion of Australia. Antipodean stocks were looked upon favourably, on the whole, in consequence of the very satisfactory harvest of the preceding year. Quotations ruled rather high, for the prospects of another splendid season as the result of sufficient early rainfalls were just being discounted. The economic outlook in the other self-governing dependencies being similarly reassuring, the condition of the markets for colonial state-land and railway securities could be summed up as remarkably healthy at the opening of the second quarter, 1912.

When the official Tokio explanation became known, consols declined slightly, but recovered quickly on the calmness shown by the Imperial Government. The big financial interests lent their support to steady the home funds, for now that cheaper money could be expected for the summer months the ground was being prepared already for a general rise in the more speculative markets, and a decided weakness in gilt-edged values would have spoiled the game. On reflection, this inflow of coloured labour into the empty spaces of the tropical Northern Territory was voted rather a good thing, and all the better if it should become a permanency.

But there was a small well-informed section with oversea connexions who quickly discerned great possibilities of a political scare. Quietly, a bear position was reared. It is not probable that the professionals committed themselves heavily at the outset: first honours, as is Stock Exchange custom in ticklish cases, went no doubt to gay outside plungers who exist to be egged on and sucked dry. Australian stocks began to give way. Next settlement disclosed a huge bear account. These pioneers fare badly, for strong forces counteracted the decline. People considered that the Commonwealth pace was too tremendous to last, even with all the applause of the Sister-Dominions thrown in. The line of policy which the Imperial Government proposed to follow became more clearly visible and inspired confidence. The fear of international complications diminished accordingly. A satisfactory solution was regarded as possible any day, after which the bulls were expected to have a great innings. This uncertainty, tempered with hopefulness, made prices move in jerks, now up, now down, within narrow limits.

Then came, as eye-openers, news of the mobilization, of the Registration Act and of the crisis in its wake. They marked the first serious set-back of high-class securities and the jubilant inrush of professional bears who were badly bitten however, for a vigorous rebound followed — the British Treasury had entered the fight. Large amounts of consols were taken up. It was rumoured that the Government had fathered a trust formed by leading banks and capitalists to back

colonial issues from time to time, when the depression became too pronounced. No doubt the responsible statesmen wished to financially assist the daughter nations, in the hope that generous economic support would dispel the growing distrust of the latter and would render them more tractable with regard to political necessities.

The Stock Exchange, which was adversely influenced by the protest of the Far Eastern Powers, became more cheerful immediately afterwards on the report of the withdrawal of the Australian squadron, which was hailed as a well-deserved disciplinary lesson for the colonies, and turned gloomy again in contemplation of the overthrow of the Moderates in the Commonwealth and of the frenzy raging in the sister-dominions. The tension was now approaching the danger point, but was relieved once more by the establishment of British control over the invaded territory. Then came the strong note to Tokio, and vague fears of the possibility of war began to haunt the prosperous classes of England. Their alarm found expression in a steady stream of sales of all kinds of securities. Once this instinctive movement was fairly started its persistence defeated every attempt to stem it. And suddenly the bottom dropped out of the colonial markets altogether. Curiously enough, the first big raid was made not on Australian stocks but on Canadian issues. This flank attack showed rare disquisition. Perhaps it was accidental. But it carries the suspicion that at last the master minds of British High Finance had determined on severe chastisement of the obstreperous dependencies. If so, their strategy was helped by the fact that Canadian funds ranged considerably higher than the Antipodean equivalents, without possessing a larger intrinsic value. The reason for this was purely sentimental: it was a manifestation of the popular conviction that the trend of Canadian legislation had so far been more closely on time-honoured English lines. That sentiment being rudely shaken by the uncompromising advocacy in the Great American dominion of Commonwealth methods, the higher prices were no longer justified before critical eyes. Consequently Canadian Threes dropped six points within a few hours. In the midst of wild panic, the more speculative issues followed the head. Canadian Pacific Railway shares lost nearly twenty points before pulling up. Grand Trunk Railway, Hudson's Bay and industrial ventures suffered in proportion. There was no holding back the inevitable after that. The *baisse* tendency spread to other departments. All Australian and New Zealand values tumbled heavily. It became now apparent that the system, championed by colonial treasurers, of draining their states of every surplus shilling so that they may pick up a profit by investment, for fixed periods, at good rates of interest, in London, was at best a fair-weather luxury. At the critical moment, when ready money at call might have done wonders, all the cash was locked up and unavailable.

Next day many descriptions of stock were practically unsaleable.

Support had ceased. Probably the British Government had been converted to the opinion that the cause of peace would be served best by the debacle of colonial finance. Even if it had been willing to help, it had no moral influence. For the economic policy of Great Britain, the unrestricted licence of the individual which is affected there as the commercial ideal, has internationalized the London Stock Exchange and has emancipated it from official control. It has become impossible to emulate the example of Continental Powers who, at times, have transformed the courses of their capitals into machines for waging financial warfare against a political enemy. Even unruly Wall Street is not unmindful of hints from Washington, because its money kings are dependent on indirect support from the national treasury in periods of scare and stress. But the London Stock Exchange acknowledges only one dominating factor: money power.

It seems that Japan had studied the financial side of the problem with its usual thoroughness. Its various funds lost some points during the first week of the panic, mostly on large continental sales. A few English papers, indeed, commented on the unpatriotic method of smashing Imperial values while the securities of the country with which the whole disturbance originated were maintained at a high level. Very little attention was paid in London to such exhortations. The bulk of the prosperous classes was against quarrels with the ally — now more than ever. For the losses were quite big enough already, without any further engineerings of international panics. Moreover, a severe fall in Japanese funds could only be brought about by spreading and magnifying the fears of war, which course would have been certain to affect adversely the price of consols and to lead to still further complications. And the great banks and capitalists were vitally interested that the ring should be kept, that the trouble should be confined to the colonial field. There were, nevertheless, some adventurous *baisse* speculators who organized attacks against the Japanese issues and occasionally succeeded in depressing them sharply. But the agents of Tokio had enormous gold reserves — part of the last loan — at their disposal in London, New York and Paris, and soon forced quotations up again.

Subsequent events impaired the credit of Australia further. Apart from temporary slight recoveries the prices of its State issues continued on the downward grade, until in the darkest days of the Commonwealth the old Victorian and New South Wales Threes went begging at half their face values.

Never before had the airy pretensions of dependencies been reduced to more complete absurdity. The shallowness of the talk of perfect equality, of the right of autonomous states to shape their own destinies, was glaringly exposed. British supremacy had successfully asserted itself. Not by violent altercations or by force, but by the simple process of

lowering the values of colonial stock. It was in vain that the victims shrieked furiously, and that they denounced the methods of the manipulators of the collapse. Undeniably there were sound reasons for the decline, which the sordid features surrounding it could not do away with. It was all very fine to sing high Imperial strains in quiet times. But when the tail tried to wag the dog, when a few free and easy millions attempted to overlord the toiling masses of the United Kingdom who paid for the display, then the make-believe of pretty phrases and ornaments had to be brushed aside. Without regard for the sufferings of individuals, great Britain seized the baton. It was true that the act involved tremendous sacrifice. Many millions of pounds were lost to the backbone of Imperial power, the sober, steady English and Scottish middle classes. That, however, was merely a rearrangement of wealth, and the disadvantages might be turned to profit in the long run, if the decline was severe and lasting enough to cause a permanently higher rate of colonial interest on loans advanced by the mother country.

Nevertheless, the cruel lesson did not have all at once the desired effect on Australia. There was too much at stake for it. It could not acknowledge the mastery of London on any conditions at this moment. It was actually invaded, and the surrender of its principles might have meant its extinction as a white nation. Besides, the force of the blow was not realized fully because the citizens of the Commonwealth were kept in excitement by internal political developments, which appeared far more important to them. Indeed, nothing could have driven more disciples into the ranks of the Extremists than the financial collapse, which must be held largely responsible for the civic convulsions which followed.

But the Sister Dominions were stunned by the shock. The complete cutting off of the national credit sobered the calmer leaders. Appeals to caution were heard above the last wild shrieks for instant succession. That proposition was settled, anyhow. It was recognized that the colonies were wholly subject to public opinion in England, and that they would have to fall into line with the declared British policy regardless of their own wishes, whenever their opposition was taken so seriously as to lead to panic in London. The outlook was black. Many self-governing states had millions of loan funds falling due at early dates, which must be renewed. Most of them had started works, the progress of which called for more loan money. Nearly all had borrowed already to the limit, confident of the exhaustlessness of the British purse and of the splendours of their own future. Even in good times only a small part of the sums required for development could be secured locally. A further part might be had in France, perhaps, provided that deep peace reigned. Under present circumstances the pockets of the whole world were sealed against colonial needs.

Thus the White Dominions had pawned the right to work out their own

destinies and to go their own way. They had pledged so recklessly the national credit, and thereby national independence and honour, that they had become counters in a game in which they had no say. It was no use blinking the facts. There is no equality between creditor and debtor if the latter cannot meet his bills without the help of the former. This unlooked-for position had now arisen: the colonies had no option but to propitiate London by conforming to its views on international issues. After some vexatious delay, they might hope to be allowed again to negotiate for financial accommodation on reasonable terms, though, perhaps, they would have to consent to a higher rate of interest than they were used to in the past.

Some time elapsed, of course, before the return to unquestioning loyalty by Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa was complete. For several weeks after the Stock Exchange panic, colonial indignation seemed to lose nothing of its intensity of expression. Popular orators still bragged of the national ability to stand alone, of being at the mercy of none. But one by one the politicians with any aspirations to responsibility dropped out of the performance. The language of the leading papers became moderate. The "Defence League of All the Whites" began to show signs of paralysis, brought on by the retirement or cool reserve of its wealthiest members. Those who persevered began to lose caste. It was not that the sympathy with Commonwealth aims diminished. But deference to the sentiments which swayed the great heart of the Empire was of higher importance, loyal acquiescence in the world policy of the Central Government took precedence before all other considerations. Once more Pax Britannica ruled triumphant.

## Chapter XI: Furor Australiensis

SO Australia, at last, was made to wake up — under sledge-hammer blows: Imperial attempt of legislative interference, annihilation of naval screen, isolation of the invaded territory, debacle of public finance; under such an avalanche of disasters the young Commonwealth staggered into consciousness of its desperate position. But it was no longer a merciful Commonwealth marching proudly in the van of humanitarian effort. It was a wounded giant groping blindly round, in the first fierce transport of rage, for something he might wreak vengeance on — for some victim. In vain the beginnings of the election campaign! That could wait. Later, when its time was ripe, it would grow of itself into that raging, tearing convulsion known to history, for good reasons, as the “Flaming Elections.” At present the elections seemed too far off to attract popular passion. Some immediate scapegoat was wanted. And who was nearer than the unfortunate coloured aliens still residing in the country? So far the genius of Australia had been opposed to the infliction of personal revenge on private individuals for failings of the race to which they belonged. But where so many sacred illusions were swept away, this fine generosity could not last much longer. Imperceptibly and rapidly the idea gained ground that it must be the first and foremost business of Australia to get rid of the Asiatics altogether, before other problems could be taken in hand. At this moment immigrants from the western slope of North America began to enter the Commonwealth, firstfruits of the “Defence League of All the Whites.” The new arrivals were yet few in number, but quite sufficient to permeate the seething multitudes with Yankee notions of race standards and with Yankee methods of dealing with inferior races.

The storm broke in Melbourne. A pushing Emporium there, famous for topical advertisements, alluded in one of these to the universal brotherhood of man. It also exhibited in one of its show windows a white and a yellow figure shaking hands over a conciliatory motto. Of course commercial men might wish for relaxation of the tension, but a more ridiculous blunder could not have been made just then. Crowds assembled in front of the shop and soon became threatening. The window was smashed and the whole concern on the point of being sacked. Only the valour of the police and the presence of mind of the proprietor saved the situation. Big posters were made hurriedly and

pasted everywhere, reading: "Down with the Japs," "No quarter for Mongolians," "White Australia for ever," a change of mind which satisfied the besiegers and proved a sound stroke of business as well. From that moment onward nearly all shops displayed signs: "No coloured people served." The boycott had begun.

It was merely the prelude to racial convulsions all over the Continent. Some of the worst excesses have become known as the Sydney Riots.

The immediate cause was a quarrel on board a ferry steamer on Saturday afternoon (July 13). A couple of Chinamen were accused of having annoyed, either by looks or words, some white girls. In the end the alleged offenders were thrown into the harbour. When the boat arrived at Circular Quay the police made an attempt to arrest the supposed ringleaders. But they were rescued by other passengers. The Quay is always crowded. Soon thousands thronged round the wharf where the disturbance took place. They were thickly interspersed with rough elements, who quickly got tired of looking on passively. Some Japanese seamen from a Nippon Yusen Kaisha steamer which was in port, passed at this moment and were subjected to jeering remarks. Other coloured marines received the same attention. There are generally plenty of them about in that quarter on their way between the City and the transoceanic steamers. Feeling secure by reason of numbers of supporters within, call, they did not conceal their resentment. A gang of half-grown boys, emboldened by the chance of exhibiting pluck before a large audience, thereupon began to pelt them with dirt. The coloured men retaliated forcibly and some young-fellows were badly beaten. This spectacle infuriated the crowd, while the noise attracted comrades of the seamen from the ships near by. They brought iron bars and other heavy weapons as means of defence. The opposing forces soon came to blows and a pitched battle raged between the white riff-raff on the one hand and a yelling multitude of maddened Lascars, Chinamen, Japanese and other Asiatics on the other. Knives and revolvers came into play. Night had fallen before the police, compelled to side with the populace and to use freely their firearms, succeeded in crushing the resistance of the coloured crews. About a dozen of the fighters and some harmless citizens caught in the throng lost their lives, and many more were wounded.

Crazy with the sight and scent of blood, the masses surged up town, amidst cries of revenge. Their numbers were continually swelled by fresh recruits. A huge mob assembled round Belmore Markets, on the other end of the City, in the Chinese quarter. On Saturday nights a cheap fair used to be held there, which attracted, beside a large contingent of the poorer decent classes, a goodly percentage of the lowest scum. Many selling-booths were hired by Orientals and the coloured element was much in evidence. It is not probable that a demonstration there had been planned beforehand. Rather it may have been that the chance of loot

under cover of racial excitement animated the meanest whites. Anyhow, a series of scuffles ensued round the Asiatic booths, the owners of which defended their property with all the stolid obstinacy which marks the race. In the overwrought state of public feeling, this was sufficient to start a general fray. Even decent, order-loving whites took part in it, and they and meek, peaceable Chinamen battled against one another like maniacs. Everywhere goods were strewn, shrieking women and children were dragged down and trampled upon. The harassed police stopped the uproar by cutting off the electric light. Hundreds rushed to the exits, careless of prostrate bodies which they trod down. Suddenly, a fire broke out in the wooden shed. Somebody picking his way through the darkness and confusion may have dropped a lighted match on the heaps of inflammable stuff littered about. Many persons, men hurt in the fight, women and children, were still in the tottering ancient pile. A terrible panic followed. The flames leapt up and enveloped everything with lightning speed. Within three minutes it had become impossible to save any one. The surrounding streets were choked with multitudes demented by horror. Through them the police, assisted by volunteers, now opened approaches for the fire brigades. No further regard was paid to human life. Over quivering forms, which had been flung into the roadway by the jostling crowds, fire-engines thundered. For the conflagration, raging next to the gasworks in a district of produce and dry goods stores, threatened the whole city with destruction. This was Sydney's delirious night of colour riots.

How many were burnt and otherwise killed had never been officially stated. According to private computations, over two hundred perished. The fire was overcome in the early hours of Sunday morning. Quiet reigned all that day. No coloured seaman was allowed to leave ship. The alien inhabitants kept behind closed doors, and when they ventured forth again they were seldom exposed to anything worse than occasional horseplay. Sydney had had enough of the ruling passion.

The centre of the disturbance swiftly shifted to Melbourne. Some disgraceful scenes occurred there, too, on Saturday night in the pleasure part of Bourke Street. However, the police managed to suppress outrage in that quarter. But the ball had been set rolling. The pushes, alert to perceive the advantage vouchsafed to them by the moral lapse of the community, organized little private raids on unprotected Chinese shops in the suburbs. Windows were smashed, goods robbed, and occasionally, in a well-timed rush, the till-money was carried triumphantly. Bad as this was, when Sunday morning dawned, Melbourne was yet free of murder. The papers, breaking the local laws against Sunday publications, issued extras detailing the Sydney happenings exaggerated beyond their hideous reality. All town discussed them, and in the evening suspicious gangs appeared in the crowded streets. As the aliens had been warned and did

not show themselves in public, the police relaxed their vigilance somewhat, especially as no excesses were reported during the most lively hours. About 9 o'clock noise arose in the Chinese quarter. It appears that a band of larrikins had invaded Little Bourke Street. At that late hour, the Mongolians had most likely grown less anxious, reassured by the previous unbroken tranquillity. Some youths, at any rate, managed to close with the yellow-skins who, conscious of their numbers, struck a defiant attitude. All at once a piercing cry was heard. A young Australian had been stabbed; he staggered along the street, only to collapse in the gutter. Within an incredibly short time, hundreds of rough whites filled the back street, athirst for revenge. Many of them carried weapons. The Chinese retreated behind walls, but it was too late. While the advance of the police was blocked under showers of stones, doors were beaten in, windows forced open, and in dens, courtyards and alleys a mortal combat raged. Half an hour elapsed before the constabulary, with full reinforcements from the central barracks near by, could restore a semblance of order. Several policemen were killed and wounded; the civilian losses on both sides were considerable. It was rumoured that some ruffians, caught red-handed as they were setting fire to a place, were despatched on the spot. On Monday morning Melbourne had resumed its usual busy way. As in Port Jackson, no coloured seamen were allowed to land. And the Asiatic inhabitants were too scared to give further challenge by parading in the open.

The example set by the two sea-capitals was emulated all over the interior of the Continent wherever the hated aliens dwelt. A long list of deeds of violence against a helpless minority stains the fair record of Australia here. Everywhere the same features were repeated. Ingrained contempt changed into sullen suspicion; some imprudence or impudence committed by a yellow man followed by a white blaze of indignation quenched only by the trickling of the red blood of the maimed offender or his unfortunate kinsfolk. A number of the wildest outrages has never become known outside a restricted local circle. They are of interest only to the student of national waves of dementia.

In the big ports the resentment against the coloured aliens smouldered on, although its expression did not again become so sanguinary. The struggle became now economic.

On Wednesday, July 17, 1912, an edict was issued by the Trades Halls of Sydney and Melbourne forbidding to the affiliated maritime unions any work in connexion with any vessels carrying coloured crews. Every Australian port, large or small, fell into line loyally as soon as the telegraph had transmitted the message. With twenty-four hours, it had become impossible along the whole coast of the Commonwealth to coal, load or discharge, or even to victual ships coming under the prohibition. The employers of the sea-capitals very naturally tried to break down the

boycott. But they found few willing hands to aid them. A handful of unfortunates recruited by King Hunger — for that potentate too was on the point of invading the Continent where his very name had been unknown so long — were overawed by the populace and had to be withdrawn, since even the police would not guarantee their safety. The imagination of the whole nation was fascinated by the boldness of the boycott. Though the White Australia doctrine was threatened at the heart, the Extremists, undaunted, declared that the Ocean should be white as well. It was not a new policy, as it had been a pet ideal of advanced patriots of years, and had been officially advocated by the Commonwealth delegates at the last Imperial Navigation Conference. But its reassertion in the present crisis was a stroke of daring worthy of the stern Romans of old who carried war into Africa while unconquered Hannibal still menaced their gates. Alas, the times and circumstances were very different now!

Nevertheless, at first, results were not of a kind to make the Extremists repent of their thoroughness. The suffering on account of the partial stoppage of oversea circulation was counteracted to some extent by a sensational decline in the price of the necessaries of life. Monopolistic rings, which had kept high the local values while shipping cheaply for competition in the world's markets, collapsed when the shrinking of export facilities overwhelmed the outlets with supplies of perishable goods.

While the maritime boycott was in full swing, news arrived from Queensland of further excesses eclipsing in cruelty the southern riots. In the latter, the white riff-raff had borne the largest share. It was quite different in the North, while on the contrary decent, influential white men were the ringleaders. In tropical Queensland, Japanese used to run many of the bad houses, to which coloured womenfolk resorted. Unfortunately, the matter did not rest there. They insisted on running them on such peculiar lines of their own that it had often been prophesied that one day the whole thing would be washed off in blood. After the invasion, the hatred of these Pandars was augmented by the fear that every one of them might be a spy. Their opportunities in that direction were certainly considerable by reason of their trade. The disgust which had accumulated against them had become at least equal to the ferocity which burned negroes at the stake on the other side of the Pacific.

Upon this poisonous ground Western Americans, with all their traditions of race violence, set foot in quest of the White Guard. It is not probable that their influence was employed in the interests of law and order. Soon after their advent, in poured the reports of how the South had dealt with the Asiatics. What followed has never been cleared up fully. It seems that a secret league was formed among the best white elements and rapidly extended to all the picturesque townships scattered along the

blue Pacific and round to the Gulf of Carpentaria. One evening, nearly a fortnight after the capitals had given the signal, an end was made with one accord right over North Queensland (July 27). The brothels were entered, all inmates seized. Of the subsequent proceedings no official version exists. Close private inquiry on the spot would be unsafe, for too many influential persons are still alive who were deeply implicated in the conspiracy. Apparently the culprits were not only exterminated, but exterminated in the most degrading fashion. In towns where only a few were taken, they were burnt at the stake. Where the numbers were larger, they were hanged and made targets of. So far it is hardly possible to pity the victims much. But there is one blot. The coloured trade goods disappeared for ever. These unfortunates, brought up to a life of infamy, perhaps sold into it by fond parents, were irresponsible. Some say that they were shot and buried quietly; others, that they were drowned. As a fitting termination, the Asiatics who plied less contemptible callings received warning that their safety could be guaranteed only until after the departure of the next few steamers bound north.

The first news of anti-colour riots was served up to the British public as Sunday reading. Several up-to-date preachers referred to it in their sermons, likening the misguided Antipodeans unto Assyrian wolves. On Monday the London Stock Exchange marked its disapproval in a more practical manner by depressing Australian State funds several points more. And they fell still lower when the meaning of the boycott was realized. There never was a worse dislocation of trade. The leading shipping companies met boycott with boycott by holding back steamers due for the journey out or by diverting them to other parts of the world, and by cabling orders for the vessels in Commonwealth waters either to leave undischarged or to be laid up where they happened to be at the time. The stoppage sent up the prices for meat, butter and fruit in the markets of the United Kingdom. Moreover, the woollen industry began to suffer under the uncertainty of the outlook in the chief wool-producing country at a period when the early shearing should have started.

But the material losses were of small account compared to the damage inflicted upon the national pride. The greatest indignation was caused by the alertness of competitive foreigners to gather profits at the expense of British shipping supremacy. Continental lines discovered a method to end the deadlock. As is well known they already maintained regular services and had secured a large portion of the best paying Australian trade. Very quickly they rushed out a steamer-load of white seamen sufficient to work their laid-up vessels independent of coloured labour. Other steamers manned exclusively by European crews followed in quick succession, calling at English ports for cargo and thus giving a long start to the enterprising Continentals, who were placed incidentally in a position to dictate monopoly rates for return freight. At last the

British companies had to adopt the same course. The counter boycott was broken. For the moment white labour had won the day. And the foreigners had established still more firmly their hold on Pacific trade.

The disgust of classes and masses alike in the United Kingdom against the Commonwealth had had time to become deep-rooted when the first rumour of the Queensland atrocities — so called by the London Press — leaked out. Public opinion was emphatic in condemnation. The effect was electric and transformed the existing bitterness into a dead set against Australia which nothing could overcome. Should Britannia bare her righteous sword in defence of such brutal, bloody deeds? The thing was not to be thought of. Several sensational journals demanded bombardment of the guilty ports and a blockade of the Commonwealth until all the perpetrators of the outrage should be punished, and until satisfaction should be given to the insulted nations. There can be no doubt that the series of violent outbreaks, and particularly this culmination, did immense harm to the Australian cause. Above all, weak-kneed adherents in the sister dependencies who were peering round anxiously for a chance to conciliate the financial over-lords, were supplied with a pretext to recant their former implicit applause under the plea of horrified humanity. From this period may be dated the ascendancy of the Moderates in the other autonomous colonies.

Japan and China renewed their protest in more pressing terms. Ominous accounts were bruited about of significant movements on the part of the navy of the former Power. The Imperial Government promised a searching investigation and immediately lodged a claim with the Commonwealth for a substantial indemnity to be paid to the victims or their relatives. The Federal Executive replied that they were willing to consider favourably all reasonable demands on condition, however, that the beneficiaries should agree to leave the Continent for ever. Moreover, they insisted upon the speedy removal of the prohibited immigrants from the Northern Territory, on the ground that without such a safeguard they were unable to guarantee the non-recurrence of excesses. It was a clever piece of strategy, diverting the attention from the past to the future by a counter-claim the perfect legality of which rather weakened the case for Asia as long as it was not complied with. The advisers of the Mikado did not relish the proposition.

## Chapter XII: Preat! (The Flaming Elections)

DECKS clear for action! What matter if a world outside cries horror over thee, Australia? Better be Devil than King Log, croaked over by Frogs. The violent rearrangement of race-standards, too, was merely an incident of clearing the decks, had become, in the fatal course of the stars, thy Necessity. Onward, Australia, now face thy other Necessities.

Only a month has gone by since Parliament wrangled about financial tricks. How ridiculous it looks to-day, this fierce debating of a loan and what should be done to make it attractive! How very simple everything has become! Loans! The whole rich world has not a penny to spare for Australia. Even a usurer would not lend to a dying man who has already pawned his valuables. If thou wilt money, get thee to thy own pocket. Let us count up the cost. Armaments by sea and land: they will swallow millions. Transcontinental railways: tens of millions. Be humble, Australia, thou canst not do it!

It cannot be done? This is election time. What throngs round the platforms! What seas of heads and excitement! What strange mutterings, stranger silences! Listen! Listen to the men to whom the people of Australia listen. They do not talk of impossibilities. Are we not, value calculated for heads, the wealthiest nation on earth? Where are the limits of our rural production? Our mines, but last year, yielded in gold alone sixteen million pounds sterling! Who dares suggest that this treasure, torn from the bowels of our country by our hands, is not ours for the sacred purpose of defending our rights? Private claims? Fatherland before dividends! Traitors and cowards are those who say otherwise.

Traitors! Yet another old-world word, the true meaning of which had never before been fathomed in Australia. Multitudes mutter it, half shyly at first, with downcast eyes. Already they steal furtive glances at each other. Whisperings rise into plain language. Traitors! Are there any such among us? That Hell-Hound, Political Suspicion, is unchained. Its bark shall be heard throughout the length and width of the Commonwealth; its bite, too, shall kill without mercy.

Look at the men who draw the largest crowds. Nearly all our polished orators are gone, Moderates and Extremists alike. They were far too prettily articulate to voice the tempestuous fury now coursing through the veins of the nation. Only a few who have overcome their Parliamentary experience are still tolerated. Beside them other leaders, unknown to

fame the day before yesterday, have risen into prominence; persons quite ignorant of diplomatic methods of expression, yet possessed of something infinitely more impressive at the present moment. Note the gloomy fires of conviction smouldering in their feverish eyes! They unburden themselves, in endless procession, at every busy street corner in city and country town, at all times of day and night. Money! Find money! is their eternal refrain. Money to blaze a track to the invaded northern wilderness! Money for armaments to strike at the enemy! Millions of money. And at all times, day or night, listeners crowd round, eager to absorb, to discuss every new suggestion. It is a continual roar, accentuated by yells of defiance, broken into by groans of dissent, and reasserted triumphantly in thundering applause, as some appeal strikes home. What strange words the attentive ear catches above the din! Forced loans! Embargo on gold exports! Absentee taxes! Ah, the money must be found. Shout again, ye patriots! Drown protests in applause! Let universal hoarseness be the badge of patriotism! Roar of storm, roar of sea, what are ye against the roar of a despairing people!

Tremble, therefore, ye Moderates! All those who have to lose most. Call it not spoliation, class war, socialism. Not the bitter partisan would dare to think of faction shibboleths now. It is Necessity! Life or Death of a White Continent! Those pitiless new leaders do not stoop to inquire how a man voted in the past, or what are his general political principles. Even many a smiling Labour orator, happy in the knowledge of having whooped all his life for a White Australia in well-rounded periods, has been pulled up short by them with that icy question: What else did you do for the cause besides talking? and has been ordered rudely to stand down. No Parliamentary procedure here. Down they did step, pale, noiseless, under storms of angry hoots and jeers, to political extinction. Where such things are happening daily, what chance for the faltering Moderate's excuse: The whole nation neglected its defence! All are equally guilty! All should suffer equally! There should be no singling out by which some are made to lose more than others! Ah, my friends! A continent in convulsions is not a Court in Equity. Those others will have their full share of suffering exacted from them. They will have to hunger, to die; it is all they can give. But the fortunate some ones whose all includes the ability of material sacrifices will also have to give this all, as a privilege and honourable duty; their lives, too, if necessary. What is the use of digging up old party differences, as if they did matter now! Are you willing to lay down everything to save White Australia? Are you for or against the Sacred Will of the People? That is the only test.

Honour where honour is due! Many prominent Moderates are doing their best without any invitation. Among them men who have always held strict views on the rights of property, and of whom unselfishness is least expected. They are spending their cash, they are mortgaging their

possessions — God knows at what heavy loss, for the first weeks after the London panic are not the correct time for financial transactions. Some are equipping companies. Orders for four completely armed torpedo boats, payment for which is guaranteed by private deposits, are cabled to Europe. Alas, not everybody can be a hero. Every man of means has already suffered terribly, directly or indirectly, by the funds debacle or the maritime boycott. Wives and children have to be considered. Moreover, who can say that the Commonwealth will win? If not, what then? Good Moderates, we shall have beggared ourselves for nothing! Let us bestir ourselves. Let us appeal to common sense. It may be dangerous, but desperate men must risk something. The call is not made in vain. Some courageous Moderates begin to talk back at the pitiless street leaders. Our battle cry? Filial obedience to England! It is, after all, the grand old Mother Country. Even the Extremists cannot deny that without its help we cannot succeed. Our proposals? Accept unreservedly the intervention of the Imperial authorities in the Northern Territory dispute on condition that the Japanese Government will undertake to stop all further immigration! Unhappy Moderates, not far wrong! — whom fear made drop, by accident, on a constructive idea. So much the worse for you, because you are an hour too early. Blood, red blood of white men alone, can cool the delirious fury of Australia. Meanwhile the new suggestion complicates the confusion. Numbers of the old generation, who were born in Great Britain, listen. Their responsive chord has been struck — for the last time. Good patriots, these old folks, but not good enough for the present emergency. So their sons think — native Australians, who know little of past associations. Bark, Hell-Hound: Father suspect to son, son to father! Families rent by deadly enmity! Tears and curses. Some more poison. Will the cup never fill?

It is filling, steadily. It is brimming over. What hurrying, shouting, haranguing in the busy street! A human torrent surges in front of a newspaper office. Of late the Press has obediently reflected the overwhelming national opinion. But now one important daily has come out in defence of the Moderate proposals. In support, it has published some severe condemnations of the Commonwealth attitude from British contemporaries and has even dared to point the moral in a leading article which seemed to approve to some extent of those strictures. The crowd have set out to ask the meaning of this relapse; they have arrived to give their answer. Down with traitors! Constables, do not strike patriots! Crash of breaking glass; men, mounting on other men's shoulders, climb through the windows; the police guard, attacked from rear and front, is overwhelmed; the torrent pours its hundreds into the building, whence the terrified staff have escaped by a back entrance. Smash! Those linotypes will never print offensive views again. All the reinforced police

can do is to dissuade the avengers from burning down the whole concern. Thus the People have corrected the Press. There will be no need to repeat the lesson.

The mouthpiece silenced, it is the turn of the instigators. Triumphant procession along the main thoroughfares. Those quaint figures dragged in front and kicked at, spat upon by the populace, are the effigies of prominent Moderate spokesmen, which will be cremated publicly. Half the city leaves its work to witness the solemn function in the park. Bright are the flames, more fiery the oratory. What can the police do? They are but men, patriots too. Still they have presence of mind to send urgent warning to the objects of national aversion. It was high time. Excited multitudes returning from the park gather before the offices of some leading offenders. Down with traitors! has become, under the stimulus of mock executions, death to traitors! Thanks to the foresight of the police, the terrible words do not yet become terrible deeds, for the intended victims are in hiding, where they will remain for many a day. Ridicule ruins their cause all over the country.

Straightforward Moderation is dead. With their battle-cry: No surrender of the White Australia doctrine! the Extremists will carry every electorate. It is madness to fight them on that issue. Instinctively, the remnant of Moderates tries a diversion by the introduction of minor questions into the election campaign. Rattle, rattle, old bones: Sectarians, Single-Taxers, State-Righters, to your guns! Political extinction threatens all of you! Fate offers you a rallying-point. A session of the State Parliament of New South Wales has begun. All eyes of a continent are looking towards Sydney.

New South Wales Parliament has been convened (July 16), for the purpose of assisting the Federal authorities in the organization of defence. Very laudable intention! Why, then, are various hostile allusions to the growing pretensions of the Commonwealth tolerated? Why do not Ministers state more definitely their conviction that everything, even constitutional points which might be interesting in peaceful times, has to be subordinated to the vital needs of the hour? Could not a more suitable moment be found for the airing of the well-known grievances of the Mother State? Defence is hardly mentioned. The Moderates, dominating the Government Party, are fighting tooth and nail for a diversion, in the forlorn hope of inflaming party passion. Who can blame them? It is their last chance. Alas, the floodgates of Parliamentary talk are opened again; who can shut them? Not the Labour Opposition. It is very strong, and most patriotic. But it is not foolish enough to terminate this opportunity of exhibiting its patriotism in brilliant colours. So it only creates scenes in the House, which end in the exclusion of the majority of its members for three sittings. Finality seems as far off as ever. Sydney grown restless. Those pitiless street leaders, who have no time either for

Moderate tricks or Labour tactics, become attentive. What! shall the world think that Australia is disunited because a handful of professional politicians cannot hold their tongues? Much good have they done!

On Tuesday, July 23, the debate on the Address-in-Reply is to continue, after having swallowed all last week. Suddenly it is interrupted by a hoarse roar outside. Honourable members pale visibly. Macquarie Street is a sea of heads, all turned in gloomy menace towards Parliament Buildings. The officiating Senior Constable whispers to the Speaker. The House begins to thin rapidly. Mr. Speaker, in a great hurry, adjourns it. Too late. Ghosts of all departed Parliamentarians! Some thousand rude feet of unelected persons trample upon the sacred precincts. A few daredevil members who strike the attitude of Roman Senators are hustled, flung out bodily. It is the end of the Mother State dignity. Ministers have fled for their lives. Until nightfall, New South Wales is without a Government. Then, under cover of darkness, a semblance of order is restored. The Cabinet, as many of it as can be found, agree on the needful: indefinite prorogation of Parliament. Henceforth the Federal rulers may sleep quietly, if the utter collapse of State assertion can lull them in the present circumstances. The entire East, nerve centre and backbone of the Commonwealth, is solid. All the old fads, bugbears but four months ago, have dissolved in the furnace-heat of national excitement.

And now commences — retribution! The first days of August witness the growth of the movement known to history as the Baiting of the Moderates. Alas, unhappy Australia, how changed thou art in so short a time! For a hundred years, thy men, whatever their political differences, have fought each other on terms of equality; they have never yet forgotten that antagonists, though misguided or wilfully blind, were men and brothers; they have listened before they struck; they have reasoned; above all, they have forgiven. But to-day? Proudly be it said humanity dies hard in Australia even in this frightful crisis. Innumerable instances are still told how men generously risked their lives to save others whom they loved not, how political enemies of a lifetime rushed to rescue each other and, clasped in mutual silent embrace, disarmed for the moment the mob fury. What are such isolated rays of light upon the surging sea of national despair, clamorous of victims! Ever since the race riots, it has been dangerous to express any opinion not concurrent with the popular conviction. Now it becomes a crime even to say nothing. It seems so suspicious. If one is a good patriot, why not state the fact boldly? Aye, and act up to it? Suspicion is the great sickness of this people so bitterly disappointed in the Empire. After that experience, what is not possible? What if by some mysterious means the Moderates should manage to control the New Parliament? The idea is extravagant, ridiculous. Yet otherwise sane citizens discuss it under their breath, their brows clouded

with grim determination. Rather anything, rather death! Smash the Moderates' organizations! Burst up their meetings! Hunt down their partisans!

Nomination Day arrives (July 31). It seems to confirm the secret fears, for Moderate candidates stand for a good many electorates. Poor fellows, at any other period they would be sincerely pitied. Not among them are the traitors to be sought after who would destroy the Commonwealth. Every one would bear arms for his country. But patriotism, too, has its bounds. It is the courage of despair which animates them. Shall they all be beggared? Shall their women and children starve? They will, if those stern street leaders get their way. No, a thousand times no! While the Moderates, who have to lose most, can help it, the Extremists shall not conquer, come what may.

The roar of the streets has become deafening. The Moderates have no chance there. They met by invitation, their electioneering takes the form of a vigorous house-to-house canvas of all possible supporters. The streets scent danger. Patriots meet and speak openly. Why this sneaking conspiracy? It must be stopped. But how? There is only one means. And so the last, worst happens. The canvassers are tracked down, private houses entered, law and order completely set at naught. Riot and flame! Death cries! The Moderate cause extinguished by terror! Yet with all its terror, wonderful is the oratory of the streets, which glorifies every deed of violence. Heartbeat of a maddened nation! Not the desultory talk of former elections, when some party or persons tried their best to divert Australia from its vital interests for the sake of their own aggrandisement. Lifegiving talk, straight to the point! Like panting of enormous machinery getting up steam ready to rush, to crush down, to create!

August 10 is Polling-Day. Such enthusiasm was never seen. Dying citizens totter to the booths to record their votes; they know it is their last sacred duty upon this earth. All country roads are black with the multitudes of vehicles and passengers streaming to the polling-stations. Some districts poll nearly every registered vote, in none does the percentage fall below ninety. And now the returns roll in. Four Moderates have just squeezed into the Senate, six into the Representatives; all the rest are Extremists. Many brilliant men of all the old parties find themselves left in the cold. Their places have been usurped by those pitiless street leaders. For once Australia has chosen a Parliament of Necessities, not of Ornaments.

Triumph! Triumph! And a deep, sudden hush! Do the people realize what this victory has cost and that it is only a beginning? Not a long respite is granted. Already a new tremor of excitement issues from Melbourne. The Federal Government is thrown into feverish activity. Again something has happened. Several elections have been prevented

by riots in Western Australia.

Western Australia! Why, nobody has thought of it! Accessible only by sea, hidden behind the turbulent waters of the Great Bight, it slipped from the popular mind during this convulsive period. There are less than 300,000 souls thinly fringing its coast or dotting its desert goldfields. Less than 300,000 human beings in a million square miles, in complete isolation. They cannot be a great help, and the Commonwealth has more important matters to trouble about. The seaboard, it is said, does not cultivate Federal sympathies. Its numbers are not awe-inspiring. As long as the East is solid, nobody need worry about the West, which will follow the example of the former. Such are the notions of the average Eastern citizen.

The Federal authorities have so far shared this point of view; the more indignant are they now. Western Australia, of all places! Did we not place entire confidence in it? When after the conference in Melbourne of all our District Commandants prior to the mobilization we dismissed the others again did we not keep back here the Commandant of the West because he was of more value for the pressing work at headquarters than for drilling the scarce recruits in his own department, who might be licked into shape just as well by local soldier men? True, the Commandant himself, an officer of merit, by name and title Colonel Ireton, warned us that his absence might lead to complications. At any rate, we have now sent him back at last. He is on the water this very moment. Wait till he has landed if he will not make things hum!

Things are humming already, it seems. Perth, too, has its streets, but they roar a tune very different from the East. The maritime boycott has made the loose connexions with the nerve-centres of the Commonwealth looser still. Listen, for a change, to the particular Western note. It started right in the Australian key. We, too, have raged and trembled about the invasion. Then came, at the most inopportune time, the financial debacle. We had just negotiated a huge loan, sufficient to counteract for some years our chronic deficits. Of course, all these sweet hopes have now come to nothing. Should we not be disappointed? Are our politicians wrong in charging the failure against the Federal embroilment? For we have solid grievances. We joined the union on the distinct understanding that the construction by the Commonwealth of a transcontinental railway across the deserts to South Australia would be taken in hand at once. Nine years have passed and only a survey has been sanctioned on the result of which, it is now said, the execution of the work will depend. Meanwhile, South Australia, which has always done its worst to block our scheme, need not wait for its own transcontinental railway. Do they not talk of unheard-of sacrifices to be borne by the whole continent to make it possible? Sacrifices! Nothing else has ever been our share! Under the rules of continental free trade, the more advanced East pours

in manufactured goods and agricultural produce in cut-throat competition with our local articles. Are we ever to suffer thus and to get nothing in return?

There is in this world a sure retribution in store not only for every sin of commission, but for also every sin of omission. Cut off by waterless wastes of land, by watery wastes of sea, the West has little in common with the main body of Australia. Such an isolated detachment must bear bitter fruits. Many public men of the State have been pronounced Anti-Federalists. Of late there has been a lull in the expression of their sentiments. But the financial failure revives the criticism. Mistrust follows in its wake. Is it to be pay, pay, pay, without end? And for what purpose? Can the Commonwealth, which spurns the advice of Great Britain, win? We, the State, have every reason to be friendly with England, our Mother! At any rate, she cannot fail us. She may not wish to fight on account of the incursion of a few thousand Orientals upon the Northern Territory. But if ever Japan should descend upon the west coast, which commands the routes to India and South Africa, she cannot remain inactive. So what have we to fear? Why should we ruin ourselves for the Commonwealth, which laughs at the idea of straining its purse for our sake?

Thus the talk grows wilder. Of course, it is only talk. None of the glib critics has any clear idea of what is to be done. None of them is conscious that they are firing a train connected with a hidden mine of latent rage the explosion of which will rain blood upon all Australia. But if men walk the brink of a precipice they should beware of giddiness. This continual play upon grievances may yet inflame popular passions which the talkers never reckoned with.

The election campaign is now at its height in the West. And here the Moderates, shouted down and hunted out in the East, get a hearing. The sea coast, in contrast to the interior, has always been Moderate. Its well-to-do middlemen have been struck hard at their most vital point, their pockets, by the maritime boycott. The farmers, too, conservative and parochial as everywhere else, back them. They know that the goldfields, Federal to the back-bone, will return Extremists. All the more reason why the Coast should see to it that the other side is not quite silenced. But is it possible? Labour-in-politics, with its White Australian platform, is strongly organized even here. In the last Parliament, one of the seaside constituencies was represented by a Caucus man. Can he be ousted? It shall be tried!

All the time, the telegraph is transmitting confused reports of the terrible struggle in the East. Still, they are quite sufficient to embitter the campaign of the coast. The Moderates, feeling themselves in strength, are fighting like demons! They have hit on a happy name: the Great Westralian Party! So violent are their arguments, so strong their

grievances, that many a good Labour man cannot quite shut his ears against them. Nevertheless, the toilers are too strictly disciplined as that they could be relied upon. They may humour the loudest talkers, but who knows how they will vote? The nearer draws that fatal hour of decision, the more soul-racking grows the suspense of the Moderates. They cannot explain away the complete mastery of the Extremists everywhere else. Will they be extinguished here, too? Their antagonists pursue the campaign steadily, without the wild fever of the East, yet without laxity. This calmness is aggravating. We Moderates are in force in this corner. Why not use it? Why not do as we are done by all over the Continent? Is not the Commonwealth devouring us? Rouse party fury! Burst up meetings! Shout down the enemy! Alas, it is not always that two can play at a game. The Extremist gatherings are thickly attended, every attempt to break them up is stoutly resisted; they hurl defiance with mocking cheers: "Federation for ever!" And so it happens on the eve of Polling-Day that the surging crowds of State partisans, beaten back with hard blows in their last great effort and despairing of success, yell answer: "Down with the Commonwealth!" The streets of Perth resound with the echoes of popular fury, which die away in the night, little heeded.

Voting is brisk next day. The polling, proceeding orderly during the morning, soon leaves no doubt that the Extremists will retain Perth and may win Fremantle. These startling rumours are whispered round among excited mobs of State-Righters, whose temper is swiftly rising beyond control. And suddenly, the mine blows up. There is a wild rush upon a polling-booth in the threatened constituency. The officials are attacked, the ballot boxes seized and smashed, voting-papers and lists torn up and scattered. After that, nothing can hold back the rioters. Mobs, continually swelling in numbers, hurry to the next booth and repeat the work of destruction, among cries of: "What's the good of Federation!" "We don't want the Commonwealth!" "Down with the Federal black-guards!" Fate flies swiftly. By five o'clock in the afternoon, nearly every polling-station within the three metropolitan divisions had been similarly ransacked.

That is the news which agitates the Central Government and penetrates on stormy wings into the remotest recesses of the Commonwealth. What matter that Perth sobers down, that State authorities and local Press declare with one voice that the whole affair has been a mere street disturbance caused by a spontaneous impulse due to disappointment and fear, totally unpremeditated? Quite right; but what are facts against frenzy? Do not argue, act! One thing only is clear: Federation has been insulted, the elections are cancelled. Why are not the culprits brought to justice? The whole solid East gasps but two words, which the Federal Executive duly telegraphs: immediate satisfaction: the Coast receives the imperious message indignantly. Why are we to prosecute every second citizen? Men, too, who have done nothing worse than allowing

themselves to be carried away by a mistaken outburst of State loyalty? Let the East mind its own business. How is it that their own jails are not overflowing? Such violence as they indulged in we never thought of! The State hesitates; its Parliament is being convened; that may decide how amends are to be made. Delay therefore. And the Commonwealth has time to reflect. What kind of reflection! The new members, those pitiless street leaders, look to it that the insult is never forgotten. Western Australia! Is it not there that public men dared to boast, among great applause, that they were willing to draw swords to sever the bonds of Federation? At that time, the Commonwealth, being then in its right senses, smiled and went about its work. Now, in its mad hour of disaster, the Commonwealth remembers! What if they meant it? So this insult, and all that led up to it, was merely accidental? Listen to the reawakening roar of the East! Is not Western Australia our biggest gold producer? Do we not propose an embargo on gold exports? Is there nobody who might be interested to thwart us? Questions like these, once asked, shape their own answer in such a crisis. Ah, it is conspiracy! An attempt to rend to pieces our indivisible continent! Bark, Hell-Hound of Suspicion! Gnash thy teeth! Out of thy hundred throats spit black poison! Westralia, a human life is staked on every minute of delay! Quick, for God's sake and thy own! Strike down the offenders with iron hand! Or thyself shall thus be struck down.

The Flaming Elections may be said to have terminated the first great epoch of Australian history. So far the young community has developed largely on the lines of older civilized white nations, sheltered for all purposes, as it fancied, beneath the world-sweeping draperies of the British Empire. That illusion has now been shattered. Upon the outer gates of the Commonwealth a relentless enemy hammers, with whom there exists no possibility of mutual understanding and conciliation. Within, those who have to lose most and whose most sacred duty it should have been, for this reason, to organize the defence, are victimized of necessity. The accompanying convulsions are paralyzing the national vigour. Still worse, one of the links binding the component parts of the Continent is on the point of snapping under the strain of misunderstanding, jealousy, suspicion, and the spectre of fratricide rises against a background of inextricable confusion. To crown all, public credit, the life-blood of modern defence, has been cut off without mercy at the critical moment. All the bonds of nationhood, in the accepted sense of the term, seem to break together.

---

## Part II: The Romance of the White Guard

## **Chapter I: The March over a Thousand Miles**

THE deliverance of the Commonwealth depended entirely on material force. But a century of peaceful development based on legislation had modified profoundly the character of the people. There existed, particularly in the more settled parts where politics had been raised to the level of a fine art, an almost superstitious belief in the power of law. Though it may sound strange, it is a fact nevertheless that the ordinary citizen was firmly convinced that restrictive enactments, duly sanctioned by Parliament, formed an unsurmountable bar against coloured invasion. This respect before the law is certainly the best proof of the high standard of civilization to which the Australians had risen. Unfortunately, though well aware that the crowded millions of Asia were impelled by instinct or necessity without regard for codified reason, they had neglected to draw the correct conclusions from their knowledge. Only very slowly did they recognize that force, brutal force, alone could save them. The unquestioning confidence in the efficiency of moral pressure can be traced right through the first period after the invasion, up to the refusal of Royal Assent to the Coloured Inhabitants' Registration Act. Then came a period of doubt and anxiety, followed at last by the violent reaction of repentant disillusion as expressed in the anti-colour riots.

Far removed from the law-bewitched nerve-centres of population, there lived a more aggressive type of Australian. Away out in the backblocks in the borderland of savagery, the skin-hunters, drovers, station-hands, prospectors and other adventurous vagrants heard the rumours of the invasion which spread like wild-fire to the loneliest camps. Many set out for the coast, eager for closer information which promised stronger excitement. Nothing more seems to have come of this spontaneous movement in the southern parts. But in North Queensland, the near neighbour of the invaded territory, it led to important developments. As the travellers met, they began, of course, to discuss the news: reaching the more settled districts, they exchanged ideas of revenge and retribution with kindred spirits. And in this casual manner was evolved the bold project of a raid against the Japanese. It was a tremendous enterprise, considering the distance and hardships which had to be overcome. But the daring bushmen made little of natural obstacles in those feverish days. Everybody was acquainted intimately with the

terrors of the wilderness and had braved them often before. Everybody could ride and thought nothing of sitting a horse day after day, week after week. Everybody bore in his heart undying hatred against an enemy who contested the white supremacy and who was doubly loathed because of his inferiority of race, environment and ideals. Probably it will never be known to whom honour is due for having originated the patriotic conception. Before it matured and was put into execution it was possibly influenced by outside suggestions.

At any rate, it was not long before the project met with official encouragement. The State of Queensland, with Federal sanction, proclaimed the formation of an irregular defence corps, ostensibly for the purpose of guarding the western frontier which travels for its whole length with that of the Northern Territory. For the Commonwealth Government, who controlled, under the terms of the constitution, the regular army, preferred to have nothing to do officially with a volunteer force. In this way a greater freedom of movement was ensured to the latter and immediate Federal responsibility for its actions was evaded. Secretly, however, they furnished arms and advanced money. But though the local and central authorities worked hand in hand at first, their interests soon began to clash. Queensland, of course, wished to launch its best manhood against the enemy in a supreme effort. On the other hand, the officers of the regular army claimed all the able-bodied men included in Class I of the militia for service. Their demands were upheld by the Federal Executive, which, perceiving the first ominous signs of civic disruption, desired to increase the power of the Commonwealth against separatist tendencies of which the Northern State was suspected at this early time. The only means to defeat the insatiable zeal of the regular officers consisted in rushing the liable men out of their reach, and the local organizers were not slow to act accordingly, with the result that the preparations were hurried very much. Still, a great deal of energy and thoroughness was devoted to the cause. Rifles, ammunition, horses and stores were despatched to Bourketown, which became the centre of the enterprise. Several able and strenuous patriots proceeded by sea to Port Darwin, where they founded a secret league of active sympathizers and arranged a system of support. This place, being the solitary white stronghold near the scene of operations, was, indeed, the only base from which some help might be rendered once the campaign had begun properly. At the outset, it was planned to transport the raiders by steamer across the Gulf of Carpentaria and to land them within easy striking distance of the enemy. But the idea was abandoned owing to the fear of Japanese cruisers, which were supposed to hover round the coast.

Tokio received probably early information of the new danger menacing the Japanese settlement. There is the fact that Downing Street made inquiries — which it would hardly have done without prompting — in

Melbourne and afterwards in Brisbane with regard to the object of the irregular armament. The artful reply was to the effect that it was merely intended to protect the stations and the stock route within the possible zone of the activity of the immigrants, in short, to safeguard the recognized property of white people in those parts. As it was not likely, however, that the Imperial authorities and the pushful ally behind them would accept such an explanation as final, the organizers decided to baffle any further restrictive attempts by coming to the point at once. Without waiting for reinforcements, the first company of the irregular corps entered upon its famous ride over a thousand miles of desert and jungle against an enemy whose numbers and resources were absolutely unknown.

A finer body of men never took the field to do battle for Aryan ideals. It was composed of the sturdy sons of the Australian bush set off by just a dash of a more refined cosmopolitan element made up of a few Americans, Canadians and Australian city bred. All the members were in the prime of manhood and health. None were frightened by the prospects of hardships and isolation. The latter was indeed necessary to the success of their sombre mission, the import of which they realized instinctively, though perhaps nobody cared as yet to define it in plain words. But they felt that nothing less was expected of them than the extermination of the invaders. That was, after all was said, the only way to punish and to end the intrusion of the alien race on Commonwealth soil. Mercy had not — could not have — a place in this tremendous enterprise born of mortal hatred and big with the certainty of terrible privations. Neither would mercy be pleaded for. Away in the silent wilderness, in the fight against a determined foe who had had leisure to acquire a good deal of bush-knowledge and whose martial qualities were above suspicion, there would be no room for sentiment. The gallant volunteers were convinced from the beginning that victory alone could save them from the only other alternative — death. But they did not worry much about fears of failure. In the midst of the unbroken solitudes, their thoughts were fully occupied with preparations for the task before them.

Tokio, again, seems to have been informed almost immediately of the departure of the first company. At any rate, it addressed another appeal to London reiterating the willingness of its former subjects to become British citizens, and adding a warning that the advisers of the Mikado could not accept responsibility for the tranquillity of the nation, if harmless settlers of their own race should be treated with violence. The Imperial Government communicated this intimation to the Federal Executive and demanded guarantees that the peace would not be broken. Melbourne retorted that it had nothing to do with the irregular force, which was regarded as a special State constabulary, and that it must disclaim all liability for the actions of the latter. This was the last official

reference to the volunteers: soon afterwards, international anxiety was monopolized by the anti-colour riots in the south. But probably there was some connexion between the evasiveness of the Commonwealth attitude and the closure by Great Britain of the Northern Territory coast.

It seems that the Japanese had not reckoned with the volunteer movement in spite of their characteristic thoroughness. There are many good reasons, however, which would account for the oversight. In the first place, the project to carry war into the settlement across an unknown wilderness, barren of any resources upon which the aggressors might fall back, was so audacious, even quixotic, that the methodical Japanese mind may well have refused to consider it seriously. Moreover, though the emissaries of the Mikado had no doubt studied the Commonwealth with a perspicacity similar to that displayed elsewhere in the past, they had naturally turned their attention to the centres of population and national power. Japanese squadrons visited the big ports frequently, almost regularly. Tourists had travelled over the pleasure resorts, merchants had looked over the country in all directions in ostensible pursuit of business, and a more intensive research had been carried on by pseudo-Chinese or frankly Japanese domestics, artisans and gardeners, by Asiatic delegates of Christian religious sects, and in every other practicable way. But all these moved, or drifted, into the more settled parts or at least into the households of the great landholders. And they found there all the symptoms of indolent culture, love of play, indulgence in luxuries and careless national pride, which seemed so real though they were, after all, merely the result of imitation, by a section of the young community, of the economic excrescences of old Europe. The Japanese agents may have reported all they saw. But apparently they did not penetrate under the surface and overlooked the typical Australians: the hardy pioneers who wrestled with and conquered hostile nature in the arid heart of the Continent, the selectors, stockmen, miners, drovers, carriers and other bushworkers who loved an uncrowded life on the borderline of civilization. And such spies as gave them a passing glance may have been deceived by the peculiarities of the men of the vast interior. For the solitude, monotony and sadness of the bush breed, as a natural protection against its oppressive influence, a picturesque emphasis and descriptive exaggeration of the language of its dwellers, which conveys to the superficial observer an impression of irresponsibility on their part. This is especially the case if the language takes the form of boastful carelessness or disdainful blasphemy, which serves — and often is meant to serve — as a cloak for the true sentiments — pride of battle and triumph in the face of disheartening difficulties; fierce devotion to the boundless sweep of virgin country which every bushman regards as the priceless inheritance of his race; and an unconquerable love of freedom as the pre-requisite of life. The rough

outside had hidden these sterling qualities from the prying eyes of the Asiatics, and the threatening concentration of the bushmen came as a surprise to Tokio.

The first company of volunteers left Bourketown on a Sunday, June 16, 1912, after divine service, and was escorted to the boundary of the township by an immense concourse of people. The bells of all the little churches and chapels rang, volley after volley was fired, and cheer on cheer went up. It was an outburst of wild enthusiasm and patriotic rejoicings. They called themselves the "White Guard," a name as appropriate as it was happy and inspiring. The White Guard departed 615 members strong, all well armed and mounted. There were 200 reserve horses, most of them carrying stores. The advance was rapid in the first stages. They rode into Woolagarang, 140 miles away on the Northern Territory border, on the third day after sunset. Progress became more difficult now, for they had to pass through almost unknown country to reach the McArthur River. But they pushed on without delay and arrived on June 24 at Booraloola, where they crossed the stream.

So far their route had skirted the jungle for the most part and the enervating charm of this Lotosland had tired the men. Though its tortuous formation, full of fantastic vegetation and animal life, offered so much variety, it seemed always the same kind of change, lulling to rest and forgetfulness. Above all, the slow silvery trickle of water like mocking voices of wood sprites beneath the impenetrable, luxuriant undergrowth, imparted to the parched-out, sun-baked riders a tantalizing yearning after dreamful ease. True, there were dangers everywhere. The jungle was alive with gliding, running, jumping, gloom-loving things. Snakes, centipedes and large spiders abounded. Some men had been bitten; they had been driven mad for the time being either by excruciating pain or by the horror of the thing; two had died. Mosquitoes and ants swarmed in places, and though every measure of protection was taken, some would find an opportunity for inflicting their tortures. But the memory of hardships on the march faded away in the strange drowsiness borne on the cool night-air. When on an open patch high up the creek bank the camp fires had been lit and evening had turned the sky of burning blue into ethereal green and gold, a forlorn enchantment began to weave its meshes round the weary adventurers. Dark shadows indicated the tangled undergrowth below. The tops of the higher trees rose over them like a grey mist rolling upwards. Much more distinct in the clear atmosphere above these swam the proud fronds of palms, the slender stems of which could be rather imagined than perceived. The sky paled rapidly, pierced by the leisurely steady flicker of stars like pleasing fancies slowly embodying themselves into clear thought. A noisy chorus of parrots and other birds filled the woods. Bats began to circle. Some kangaroos might bound across the line of sight, or the patter

of a troop of emus would be heard. Long after dark, sleepless listeners could often distinguish, above the many rustlings, whisperings and cracklings of night life in the tropical jungle, the heavy wing-flappings of geese as they flew on in ghostly files changing from pool to pool. Early in the morning the air was sparkling fresh and the green looked many degrees brighter in the first slanting rays of the sun. The sombre undergrowth dissolved into quaintly shaped, delicately leaved shrubs bearing gorgeous blooms or luscious berries or into dainty tree-ferns and dwarf-palms. Graceful garlands of creepers linked majestic trees, and even above their mighty crowns the palms reared their heads in effortless supremacy. Setting, colour scheme and scale of vegetation seemed to be conceived always in the superlative. Human energies could not resist for long the voluptuous invitation to forget that there was such a thing as purpose in life. The jungle breeds slavery. It will have to go if the white race wants to people the Northern Territory.

After the crossing of the McArthur River the real hardships of the enterprise commenced. The White Guard had determined to attempt a short cut across the interior to Katherine, a mining camp situated about sixty miles south of Pine Creek, the terminus of the railway from Port Darwin. Four hundred miles stretched before them, never yet traversed by white men. Nevertheless, general relief was felt when the jungle was exchanged for the dry plains. The members were by no means too well under control, and there had been signs of impending demoralization. But this would have to give way now to strict discipline, for the only chance of overcoming the dangers of the desert ride lay in mutual loyalty and prompt obedience to the leaders. The contrast between the creek country and the interior plains is unsurpassed in the world. The blazing sun cracks the grassy surface. No shadow offers anywhere; the patches of sparingly foliated gum trees afford none, neither do they give any shelter against the clouds of fine dust sweeping along before the steady breeze. The outlook is bounded only by the horizon, apart from an occasional sandstone ridge, often intersected by quartz bands of blinding whiteness, and rising above the level like a petrified wave of desolation. From its summit the eye roams over dismal views of weird melancholy. The rugged patches of forest below consist of trees huddled together so closely that their tops of dull, drab, contracted leaves, thus seen from above, give them the appearance of thick scrub. And the belts of real scrub are frequent too, which can be traced for long distances by the lines of glistening sand-hills driven up by the wind against the living barrier of invincible growth. All over the plains depressions occur suggesting creek beds, in which, however, no water can have run for ages, for ancient gum trees grow in them, besides acacias and shrubs. But it is at the bottom of such depressions that water is found, sometimes in a deep hole difficult of access, sometimes in a pond or in a chain of ponds, surrounded by

swamp gums. Unfortunately, these abound also in many low-lying spots without surface water, and their deceitful presence adds thus to the tortures of the thirsty.

Still, the White Guard managed to push forward. Often the endurance of the horses had to be taxed to the utmost on the long stages intervening between waterholes. The men had to fall back largely on the provisions which they were carrying. For fresh meat they depended on rock wallabies, and now and then on a kangaroo. Plump pigeons furnished a welcome variety of diet. These were the only birds thriving on the plains, with the exception of uneatable kites living on grasshoppers. Mere good intentions were not sufficient to sustain the men on this march of privation. The weaklings of the force did not survive the test. Some died outright from exhaustion; others, maddened by the exertions, by heat and thirst, stole away into the desert to perish. And others again committed suicide by bullet or blade. Their comrades had no time to mourn them. On they rode, and the dust soon blew over their tracks and obliterated all traces of the heroic venture. And the dingoes, the haunting, sad howls of which resound over the plains in still nights, cleared away the remains of the fallen. All the men were unanimous on two points: that there was no possibility of retreat by the road they had come, if they should be beaten or weakened, and that it was not probable that many reinforcements would reach them by the same route. The White Guard emerged at last from the Unknown at All Saint's Well, on the overland telegraph lines. Three days later (July 11) it camped eighteen miles north-east of Katherine, on a pond in the bed of the river of that name. It had lost eighteen men and over sixty horses during the passage across the interior.

When the White Guard left Bourketown, the bonds of discipline were very loose. A leader had been chosen, by name McPartoch. He was a robust Scot, member of the League of Frontiersmen, and had seen much fighting in the British Colonies before he settled down to a small cattle run near the Gregory River. From the outset of the panic, he had thrown himself with enthusiasm into the movement for resistance by force, and the rapid formation of the first corps was due partly to his endeavours. His experience, patriotism, straightforwardness and Scotch common sense marked him for its command. But his appointment was the only approach to a military system, and the White Guard had to evolve its organization on the march.

There was much in this method to recommend it. The aspirants to leadership underwent the most rigorous practical test imaginable. They had to prove not only their circumspection and resourcefulness, but also that they had the gift of handling men. So, after a week's march, a mere handful of serious candidates remained. As befitted such a democratic set of volunteers their foremen were finally selected by the equal vote of all. McPartoch refrained carefully from showing favour for any one — a

well-considered impartiality which increased his influence and popularity immensely. But on his suggestion it was decided to fix the number of sub-leaders at six, which left each one in command of about a hundred men, and to confer upon them the title of lieutenant. Every member of the corps pledged himself beforehand to strict obedience. The men who were chosen to the responsible posts proved themselves worthy of the confidence bestowed on them by their comrades by their behaviour in the subsequent campaign. Among them was Thomas Burt, who, after the trial of the Japanese delegates at Port Darwin, had proceeded by sea to North Queensland and had interested himself at once in the volunteer movement. His accurately kept diary is the only reliable source of information about the evolution, the march and the first campaign of the White Guard. (His friend, the Yorkshireman, had had enough of colonial experience and had just escaped compulsory enlistment by taking first steamer from Port Darwin to Hong Kong.) Of the other five lieutenants two were Queenslanders; New South Wales, Tasmania and Canada supplied one each.

In the apportionment of duties which followed the appointments, Thomas Burt was entrusted with the commissariat. This service was without doubt the most difficult to render satisfactorily. For it had been agreed upon on all sides that the stores should be kept in reserve for emergencies. Meanwhile the White Guard depended chiefly on the results of the hunt for sustenance. As long as it marched through the jungle game was plentiful. Nevertheless, in the beginning the best part of a day was wasted several times to procure a sufficiency. It was evident that a better system would have to be organized and with this end in view the commissariat was created; 120 men were placed under Thomas Burt's command. All the surplus horses and stores were entrusted to their care. And the best bushmen, to the number of fifty, were formed into a sub-company of hunters. They travelled in advance until they reached a spot where good sport might be expected. Then they fell to work, until often the sombre forest and jungle re-echoed the shots as if a great battle was already in progress. The spoil was piled up to be bagged by the comrades, while the marksmen would ride on to the next promising hunting-ground.

Later this arduous task was simplified with the help of natives. Some genuine tribes still roamed at that time the vast interior, shy of either white or yellow men, and thus free of the depravity of the coastal blacks. They lived entirely by the chase, and in periods of starvation were supposed to resort to cannibalism. Withal, they were not considered treacherous, and not so lazy and abandoned as those aboriginals who have mixed with higher races, but rather gay, healthy and active. McPartoch was diplomatic enough to overcome their initial suspicions that the whites intended to drive them out. Once confidence was

established by just treatment and presents of tobacco and small silver coins, the volunteers reaped many benefits. The natives possessed an intimate knowledge of the plains and were most valuable guides to the waterholes. Moreover, they could indicate the richest haunts of game and were skilful to secure it with less noise than a shotgun made, a method which would be of enormous advantage as soon as the White Guard should be in touch with the enemy, to whom random shots might betray its whereabouts. McPartoch, therefore, determined to enlist a number of the blacks. Their services were bought readily by little gifts. Great, however, were the lamentations of their chiefs who protested against the desertion of their choicest warriors; they had to be propitiated, too, for the White Guard could not afford to leave enemies in its back. Forty picked aboriginals accompanied the volunteers. They were, of course, supplied with horses and learnt quickly to manage their animals and to get pace out of them. It was partly due to their assistance that the White Guard crossed the interior without suffering worse losses.

In camp on the Katherine River the White Guard was joined by twenty-seven volunteers from the Palmerston district who brought several hundred reserve rifles and much ammunition smuggled in from Queensland as well as some luxuries in the shape of tobacco and liquor, and thirty spare horses. The latest news and rumours current in Port Darwin about events in the South cheered the weary patriots, as they heard for the first time of the overthrow of the Moderates and of the uncompromising attitude of the Commonwealth Government. But the information that the Imperial authorities had just ordered the closure of the Northern Territory coast caused profound consternation. At Port Darwin a strict control had already been established; all firearms had been seized by the naval commander as far as it was possible for him; those who wished to retain the use had to take out a licence and to sign a guarantee. The volunteers from Palmerston district were even afraid that a naval detachment might be sent after them once the reason of their departure and their whereabouts became known. To ward off surprises on the part of compatriots of the second degree, the White Guard shifted camp about fifty miles further north-east to a chain of waterholes in a creek bed known as Snowdrop Creek, and scouts were posted to guard the approach from the railway line.

## Chapter II: In Touch with the Enemy

THE White Guard decided to make the camp in Snowdrop Creek the base of all further operations. Part of the stores and ammunition were hidden away thereabouts. A large shelter shed was constructed, with the idea that it might serve as a hospital some day. A paddock was fenced in for the horses. And to the north a track was blazed, marked for many miles in such a fashion that no true bushman could miss his way back to camp. Several parties of scouts had gone in that direction, accompanied by natives. The country which they had to traverse forms the backbone of Arnhem Land and rivals in barren desolation the arid plains over which the adventurers had come.

Nearly a week elapsed before the first parties of scouts returned. They had discovered Japanese villages much further inland than had been expected. On the high plains, in fact. How far it was from there to the sea they could not tell. For afraid of surprises, they had not penetrated far beyond the foremost lines of the enemy. They had a good reason for this display of caution. The settlements, two of which they had located at a distance of about eighteen miles from each other, were linked up by telegraph, and other wires had been detected stretching away into the unknown North. Other signs of intelligent management and organization abounded. Cultivation paddocks extended round the villages, the bush had been cleared away and the timber had been used in the construction of neat little houses.

The failure of the scouts to explore the Japanese position thoroughly was redeemed somewhat by their activity in another direction. They had made a searching survey of the intervening country and had found a convenient locality which could serve as a stage of the impending campaign, being in much closer proximity to the enemy. Thomas Burt refers to the matter in his diary as follows: — “Our scouts urged that the present base was very suitable as a final refuge, but not within reasonable striking distance, particularly because the hill district was too awful to be crossed more than once except in case of direst need. They recommended that we should move about ninety miles to the north-east to a gully where fresh water was plentiful and whence the Japanese outposts could be reached in an easy ride of two days.” The suggestion was acted upon at once. Nearly all the spare rifles and ammunition, and half the stores were taken to the new camping-ground, which, as subsequent exploration has

proved beyond doubt, was situated in one of the head gullies of Liverpool River. And for greater security of retreat two different routes were marked from there to Snowdrop Creek.

Everything was avoided which might convey a premature warning to the enemy. McPartoch never ceased to impress this necessity upon his men, which may account for the want of push exhibited by some of the scouts. But all precautions were in vain, as was shown when two bolder pioneers, who had relied on the fleetness of their horses and good fortune to carry them right to the seaboard, returned to the new base in company of a Japanese dignitary attended by two servants. It was altogether a curious incident. The two whites had come unexpectedly upon a number of Japanese working in a depression in the forest, who did not give them time to escape unnoticed, but, throwing away their implements, rushed forward to meet them with all the signs of pleasurable excitement. It was, for representatives of the ruling race, too late then to run away from unarmed Asiatics. So they allowed themselves to be escorted to the nearest village, where to their great surprise they were welcomed by an English-speaking, polite headman, who gave a dinner in their honour. Under cover of his hospitality, he questioned them closely on the motives of their presence in those parts, and even alluded, in an easy, confidential way, to the White Guard. But the Australians remained perfectly cool, as if they did not know what he was talking about. They played the part of tourists on an excursion from Port Darwin. After dinner, the dignitary arrived on horseback and was introduced by their host. He, too, proved to be a good linguist and interesting gossip and did not forget to refer to the Queensland irregulars also. At last he said: "I have been entrusted with a mission to the commander of the White Guard. As you, gentlemen, have come to enlarge your knowledge of the Northern Territory, you would surely like to make the acquaintance of this distinguished officer; if so, I shall be glad to show you the way in the morning." Enraged at the manner in which they were made the dupes of the wily Asiatics, the Australians agreed on condition that he would guide them back if he failed. They stayed for the night with their host and were made quite comfortable. The Japanese dignitary kept his promise. Starting at sunrise, he conducted them back to camp without going wrong once, and he did so, moreover, in record time, arriving in the middle of the second day. The two whites noticed that he was guided by minute signs on tree stems and rocks. It was proof that the enemy, on his part, had explored the country well.

The Japanese dignitary did not beat about the bush. He requested the honour of an interview with McPartoch, and told him that the headmen of the settlement had been warned — by the Imperial authorities at Port Darwin, he pretended — that a large number of Queenslanders were moving against them in no friendly spirit. For some days the outposts

had reported their presence. So it had been decided that he should hasten to meet the whites to assure them that his race stood for peace and progress. As the white friends who accompanied him and whom he had encountered in the zone of settlement could confirm, the only war his compatriots were waging was against vermin and wilderness. In doing so they were fighting for the cause of humanity and civilization, and they would allow nothing to stand in the path to hinder them. Therefore he had come to implore the whites that they might not break in suddenly and without notice upon the refugees, because the latter, in their ignorance, might take alarm and might, if thrown into a state of excitement, inflict very serious harm upon incautious, unannounced visitors.

The menace, lurking beneath the calm courtesy of this emissary, aroused the anger of the white leaders. They regarded him as a spy. Some demanded that he should be treated as such with all severity, and a good many others were in favour of his retention as prisoner. But he never flinched when McPartoch told him plainly that he had a good mind not to permit him to go back. The Japanese dignitary wanted to know what he had done to deserve punishment. He had placed himself in their power, trusting to the principle accepted by all civilized people, that voluntary negotiators should be immune, whatever the quarrel might be. And he added that, if he should remain away for long without any satisfactory explanation, his compatriots would lose confidence in the fairness of the whites. For which reason he recommended strict adherence to international custom and to the highest standard of fair dealing in all relations between the two races, as a matter of the greatest interest to the Australians, who were in a minority in these parts and should, therefore, for their own sake, be the champions of law and order.

After a short deliberation, it was decided that the dignitary should be allowed to return to his own people, together with his servants. But he was asked to understand that the White Guard did not recognize him officially, and that he would not be looked upon and treated as a messenger of peace if he should be overtaken after a period of grace of twenty-four hours had elapsed. It seems that his dauntless bearing and cool audacity gave rise to some anxious discussions among the volunteers about the chances of the expedition, though it is most unlikely that anybody should have proposed the abandonment of their task. Probably the bushmen indulged merely in that inveterate habit of theirs to "argue a point," to dissect sportively the pros and cons of their chances. There must have been some dispute, because without some reason McPartoch would not have delivered the following address, which has been written down in Thomas Burt's diary:

"Australians! Comrades!" he said, "was our cause just when we set out, or were we fools to come all this way? If the latter is the case, it behoves

us to finally expose our true character by applying for board and lodging to the British authorities at Port Darwin. For back we cannot go. Apart from a worse repetition of the hardships which have cost already the lives of so many brave friends, how could we dare to show our faces again anywhere among upright sons of the Commonwealth after a ghastly failure through cowardice? If we were right in the beginning, I do not see that our risks have become heavier meanwhile. We came to make war on the invaders and we did not count on any help from outside. Some may say that the Empire must have forsaken us, judging by the impertinence of the enemy. Let it be so, or otherwise. It cannot make our sight keener, our aim surer, our rifles carry any further. And it is on these matters our own cause, the cause of Australia, depends for success. If the people of the Commonwealth seem to hesitate and to be slow of action, it must be because they are not fully awake to their danger, or because they do not yet trust firmly their own strength. It is for you to decide if by our example we could inspire our nation with this confidence, if we could impel her to get rid of doubt and doubters, to rally to our side in the fight for our common destiny. I believe we could. Let us but maintain our position, and we shall not stand alone for long. Six hundred willing whites should be able to render the soil of their country too hot for brown or yellow mongrels to camp on. And should defeat be our lot, all I can say is this: let the survivor remember that Australia is big and full of harbours of refuge where patriots need not fear betrayal.”

This manly speech brushed away all scruples, if such had really existed. Loud shouts of applause rewarded the brave commander. The dice had been cast. A handful of bold bushmen had declared war to the knife against the subjects of a great power. Camp was broken immediately afterwards as a precaution against a possible Japanese surprise, and was re-formed at a point about fifteen miles further north under different conditions. For now, so near the enemy, concentration of the whole force in one spot would have been courting disaster. It was never done again over the entire period of which records are left. Instead, an ever varying number of sub-camps became the rule, mostly three or four, but as many as six or seven in dangerous localities, and the number was never the same for two nights running, for the purpose of confusing the scouts of the enemy. The camps were arranged now in a straight line, now in some simple geometrical figure, as suggested by the nature of the ground. Sentries kept up the connexion between the sub-camps, which were strictly guarded. The night was divided into three parts, and one third of the inmates watched while the others were sleeping.

During the stay on the Katherine River the organization had been perfected. The leaders had recognized that the nature of the country and the disposition of the men made pitched battles an improbability. The White Guard was, indeed, best fitted to guerilla warfare, which would set

free every man to act according to his own ideas and to exploit his own knowledge of the bush to the greatest advantage. Under such circumstances the course of contest would be sure to become most intricate. In desultory action it is necessary to specialize the management, so that individual impulse may be given a wide field, while timely checks are ever in readiness to be applied at the right moment in the proper place. It was evident that six lieutenants would be unable to exercise such intimate control. This consideration led to further incisures. Each company was divided into three sections which were entrusted to sub-lieutenants; each section was broken up into three files under the command of sergeants. Thus responsible leadership was created for every file of ten men. The entire staff was selected by equal votes; each company and each section picking its own favourites. But once the choice had been made, stern discipline was exacted. Yet so devoted were the men to the cause, or so little leisure for quarrel was left them by the vigilant enemy, that there are actually no records of insubordination in Thomas Burt's diary. The sub-lieutenants were distinguished by a thin red ribbon, the sergeants by a thin black ribbon worn on the left sleeve. For the democratic spirit of the force did not permit the use of more pronounced badges, which, besides, would have given a cue to the Japanese marksmen. Perhaps for this reason the Commander-in-Chief and his six lieutenants did without any decoration, relying wholly on their well-known identities.

All the search parties had returned. Only in one further instance the enemy had taken notice. It happened to a file led by a daring Queenslander, who was bent on a flying trip right through the invaded territory. Skirting a village the file was called upon to halt. They rode on, until a hail of bullets, whistling over their heads, stopped them. There was a shout. On all sides Japanese broke cover, waving white handkerchiefs in sign of peace. One of them advanced smiling, asking in very good English whether the visitors had a permit. "Australians do not carry permits on journeys in their own country," was the cold reply.

"It is indispensable these times to prevent misunderstandings. I believe you can get them on application to the Imperial authorities at Port Darwin," the Japanese said. "With a permit, I shall be glad to show you over our little settlement myself," he added. "Without one, your way lies there." He pointed south.

"You're wrong. To the north, to the sea," the Queenslander cried, with a curse. "I'll see who can stop me."

His interviewer turned to give an order. Quick as lightning, the Japanese disappeared behind trees and rocks. But the muzzle of their guns showed threateningly. The spokesman changed his tone, "Don't be a fool," he exclaimed, in a stern voice. "Within fifty yards round about, you are outmatched ten to one. One signal from me — or one insult," he

cried, for the Queenslander raised his whip, "and you will be wiped out. I act on my orders, I warn you. We don't want bloodshed. Our race is strong and proud enough not to wish to fight with odds on our side."

The white men had to accept the position. They had no orders to open hostilities. Of course, they might have feigned retreat, and might have continued their advance afterwards. But such a course would have exposed them to similar, or worse, insults at any time. So they turned back, vowing vengeance under more favourable circumstances.

The humiliation was felt deeply by their comrades. Nevertheless the occurrence lifted a weight off their minds. There had been harassing doubt about the method of opening hostilities. The idea of marching into the Japanese zone of settlement and beginning to shoot people on sight right and left without proper warning, had always seemed hateful. All qualms of conscience or chivalrous objections were set at rest now. For it was the enemy who had committed the first act of war by stopping the advance of white Australians with bullets. If their own rifles rang out, it would be in reply to a challenge and in retribution. Every man yearned for the moment when first blood would be drawn. Realities were wanted to give relief from ever-increasing nervousness which, apart from the influence of isolation and uncertainty, was fostered by the anxiety of the returned scouts, many of whom seemed to scent spies everywhere. That the Japanese had a splendid intelligence service and followed closely every movement of the White Guard, was proved, indeed, by the events of the immediate past. Obviously, the best defence against their tactics was a rapid blow at the heart of their organization, strong enough to crumple up the artfully woven net in which they evidently thought to enmesh the Australians.

High spirits, gaiety even, marked the last day of the great march which brought the White Guard right up against the enemy. It camped at night less than fourteen miles from the nearest Japanese village. The men were in fine condition, and so were their horses, after the interval of rest. Australian horsemen have no peers the world over. They relied on their extreme mobility. Fear was far from their hearts. Like a hailstorm they hoped to sweep over the Turanians, beating to the ground all resistance, and vanishing into bush and jungle before the enemy would have time to collect his wits. The volunteers knew well that their opponents, whose military virtues they respected otherwise, did not excel mounted. That was the great advantage of the White Guard, as long as it did not permit itself to be drawn into a pitched battle, where its superior agility would be neutralized. McPartoch and the more thoughtful leaders never ceased to warn their men against mock heroics.

And their persuasion counted for something. So stern, so bent on success were these six hundred Australians, that they even agreed in solemn council that night to sacrifice their wounded rather than to make

a stand under unfavourable conditions. Rescue work was to be strictly limited. If a man fell, a comrade might help him on to his horse, or might get a sound horse, if handy. But if the man was too badly wounded to maintain himself in the saddle, and the enemy was pressing hard, then he should be left to his fate. For the attempt to assist a dangerously wounded comrade would soon gather about him more or less stationary and exposed groups of his mates, who would form a welcome target for the hostile marksmen under cover. The weal or woe of incapacitated individuals could not be allowed to threaten the cause with ruin. Even if one or the other might be saved temporarily he had not much chance to survive the tear and wear of the campaign, without the slightest hospital comforts. He would be a drag on the force, his sufferings would probably depress the spirits of his comrades, and there would be no equivalent for all this trouble. It was better not to try. If the wounded man had energy to scorn the mercy of aliens, the last shot from his revolver would place him beyond their reach.

Such were the merciless yet necessary rules formulated by the gallant volunteers, before whom there was no other alternative but victory or death. In practice the rigour abated somewhat. Within each file the promptings of natural friendship drew together little clans of two or three or four members, and it soon became customary among these to bind themselves solemnly that, whatever might befall until the end of the war, they would live and die together. Friends thus linked always rode and fought side by side. As only a few men were involved in each case, and this system served to restrain outsiders, the leaders tolerated it. It was, of course, understood that, where duty demanded such heroic self-sacrifice, there could be no room for Asiatic prisoners. That logical conclusion required no official proclamation.

On July 20, 1912, early in the morning, the White Guard advanced to the assault. Every man knew that the first clash could not be delayed for many hours longer, for the line of march led straight upon the southernmost Japanese village. They rode in a very open formation. The rifles of the vanguard, composed of one company, extended over a wide stretch of country. Two more companies protected the flanks, a fourth the rear, while the other two companies occupied the centre. Spare horses were divided among the groups to provide against losses, but the reserve animals and the stores, which had been re-packed on the quieter steeds, remained with Thomas Burt's commissariat company in the middle column. Altogether, the few hundred men covered, from the scouts of the extreme front to the last rear file, about five miles in length and three miles in width. Though very often lost to each other's sight, the divisions remained in perfect touch by means of a simple code of signals — animal cries, in the striking imitation of which bushmen are adept. As they developed their lines in halts and dashes, it would not have been

possible even for a careful observer to estimate correctly the strength of each unit or of the entire force. This was another measure of protective deception well thought out.

The scouts had advanced about eight miles when they were challenged suddenly by a small detachment of Japanese who pushed forward boldly within talking distance, waving white handkerchiefs. McPartoch had ridden immediately behind the vanguard and hurried to the spot, curtly asking what they wanted. The Japanese, meanwhile, had thrown down their ensigns of peace and raised a long pole, on which they unfurled a Union Jack. Then they solemnly bared their heads to the flag. The Australians looked on in stony silence. McPartoch repeated his question. In reply the flag was pushed under his nose, as if it was expected that the white man should salute it. He pushed it disdainfully aside, among shouts of derision from the volunteers. Next, the Japanese covered themselves before the spokesman, addressed him in these words: "In the name of His Britannic Majesty! why do you come here in martial array? We are peaceful subjects of His Imperial Majesty. You are welcome, but first lay down your arms!"

A roar went up. All the pent-up fury, all the mortal hatred against the impudent invader who dared to dictate to Australians on Australian soil, found vent in it. A hundred muzzles were lowered — the answer came in a flash. From the bodies of the fallen Japanese, dark blood oozed, staining the Union Jack which had tumbled in between them. McPartoch dashed forward and seized the flag. The van wavered for a second or two, then swept back in wild stampede, fleeing instinctively from a prepared trap. And the whole White Guard was engulfed in the panic-like retreat. It saved them from loss. For immediately afterwards, from thickets on the left flank and from a ridge in front the enemy discharged volley after volley. Some miles back the fugitives eased their pace. As the men of the different companies met, pale, dishevelled, they broke out, all at once, in a great shout of laughter. It ran right through the ranks. The tension was relieved. They were now committed irrevocably. Swiftly and resolutely they faced round again. Order was restored. The scouts plodded on tenaciously, and soon the firing began quite lively. At last the death struggle between the two races had begun in earnest.

## Chapter III: The First Campaign

McPARTOCH determined to dislodge the enemy. The nature of the country favoured the display of Australian bush craft. A shallow, densely wooded depression was in front of the strong ridge occupied by the Japanese and a belt of scrub bent round its flank. They were soon expelled from the forest and scrub, but made a stubborn defence of the hill, whence they made frequent sallies against the Australian vanguard which had dismounted and crept forward steadily. But the position was too strong to be taken by frontal attack without disproportionate sacrifice. At length the white commander tried a ruse. He ordered his rear company, which was out of sight of the enemy, to the back of the ridge under cover of the scrub belt. Then the vanguard fell back, feigning exhaustion. This stratagem proved successful. The defenders, noticing the front attack was weakening, dashed out in great force, flinging aside the scouts. They found, however, their further advance stopped by terrible volleys from the Australian's main lines and were driven back again. Before they could regain their original position, it was carried from flank and rear by the ambushade, and they were surrounded by a ring of fire. Only a few escaped. About 300 Japanese corpses were counted in the bush. Twenty-one Australians were missing.

After all, McPartoch was only half satisfied. His own losses were considerable. But the worst was that here, at the outset of the campaign, the White Guard had been drawn into a pitched battle, in spite of all good intentions to the contrary. As it happened, fortune had smiled. If reinforcements could have been hurried up on the other side, victory might have been turned into disaster. And the Australians, elated with success, might now be tempted to try a similar game under less suspicious conditions without reflecting that even in this case surprise tactics had won the day. McPartoch addressed his men on the subject in great earnest, candidly blaming himself and warning them that, if any section should imitate his proceedings without special orders, it would be left to its fate, because he would not consent to ruin the cause for its safety.

The advance was resumed. About noon, the White Guard skirted the southernmost settlement of the Japanese. Scouts dismounted and approached cautiously. It was not long before they drew fire. But nothing could be seen of the defenders, who remained invisible throughout,

though the Australians, enraged by the shooting of a comrade, tried every means to lure them from their haunts. This peaceful village was, in fact, a well-contrived fortification, like all the others which were subsequently discovered. It was surrounded by a breast-high earth rampart steadied with logs. The abutting huts were constructed of stout timber with narrow slits on the outside in place of window-openings. Each formed a separate stronghold and was so flanked by others that even if it should be carried by storm, a destructive crossfire could be concentrated upon it from the nearest buildings. Big logs, apparently thrown about carelessly, afforded in reality cover for free communication between the several points of importance within the settlements. Many strong trees and some patches of scrub had also been left standing within its confines and completed the almost bullet-proof screen behind which the inhabitants could move in comparative security. Outside, a large space had been cleared thoroughly from protecting vegetation, thus offering no scope for bushman tactics. The village stood on a gentle slope. No doubt wells had been dug inside providing for an independent water supply. A few hundred men could hold it against an army without artillery. They could only be dislodged by a general assault, and the White Guard was not strong enough to risk many lives in such a desperate venture.

After a close watch extending over several hours, enlivened by an occasional exchange of shots, the siege was raised. A mile outside, the telegraphic connexion was cut off by the removal of a long stretch of wire. As the search parties had reported already, a network of telegraphs linked up the Japanese settlements. Information of every movement of the Australians, therefore, was sure to be transmitted without delay to headquarters, wherever that might be. The White Guard was determined to find out. That night it camped ten miles to the rear of the first unconquered line of the enemy.

The Australians rode on all next day (July 21) without meeting with any traces of Japanese occupation. They had been compelled, on account of the advanced season, to swing round to the east, so that they might remain in the vicinity of water. Incidentally, they hoped to outflank in this way the foreworks of the enemy. For it was the aim of the White Guard to locate his headquarters or capital. McPartoch conjectured that it must be situated on or near the seaboard. Before accurate knowledge had been acquired of the Japanese centre of power, it was impossible to form a useful plan of campaign.

The night passed without disturbance. But on the following morning (July 22) the Australians became soon aware that they were being shadowed. Sometimes, they caught a glimpse of horsemen dashing across some far-off opening in the forest. It was the first intimation that the enemy had a cavalry force. A few were laid low with unerring aims, but, of course, the whites could not waste time in the pursuit of solitary

foes. By noon, these scouts had disappeared entirely. An hour later, the Australian vanguard came unexpectedly upon a village. All at once it received fire from a point about a mile to the west of the settlement. The leading company rushed forward, under the impression that the inhabitants, working in their paddocks, had been cut off from their base. But McPartoch, old campaigner as he was, restrained his men and contented himself with concealing two sections in a patch of scrub whence their rifles commanded the settlement. Then he began to surround the locality from which the shots had been fired. He was soon satisfied that he was opposed by a force of several hundred men, evidently a military unit, and as eager for the fray as the White Guard. As they were in thick country, where bushman skill had a fair chance, he attacked them with two companies. The Japanese, impatient of battle, met his advance with a vigorous counterstroke, calculated to push the Australians back in the direction of the village. But the latter, experts at taking cover, withstood the blow. The struggle became very bitter. At its height, the villagers, who so far had given no sign of existence, suddenly dashed from behind their ramparts to take the White Guard in the rear. So they exposed themselves to the fire of the two sections hidden in the scrub, who poured volley after volley into them. They wavered, then turned and fled. To complete their defeat, a few mounted files swept down upon them, riding them under foot. But the mounted files were subjected to a severe fusillade by the defenders of the village who had not participated in the sally and who shot upon them without regard to the damage they might do to their own compatriots who were still outside.

The ambush of the Japanese had failed, their field force was enveloped and in danger of annihilation, when an unexpected noise of rifle discharges coming from the extreme rear induced McPartoch to break off the fight hurriedly. The commotion was caused by Japanese cavalry which was engaging, at this critical moment, the last lingering lines of Australian scouts. It was not numerous, and was quickly repulsed. But it had gained its end. The White Guard retreated in some confusion, which cost several valuable lives. Once more it had been impossible to restrain the ardour of individuals. Even the cautious commander had been carried away by his zeal. And again the result had been a pitched battle, with its corresponding neutralization of the one great Australian advantage of superior mobility. If there existed no possibility of preventing this, it was easy to foresee a day when the Japanese, improving in staying capacity as they became ingrained to guerilla warfare, would succeed to lure on the White Guard until they should be able to overwhelm it by force of numbers. What did it matter that the Australians would sell their lives dearly? The enemy could evidently afford huge losses, as was shown by his action of firing into a crowd of his own people to deal death to its

pursuers.

Sixteen Australians had been killed. A score was wounded. Among the latter was a young Tasmanian, who had been shot through the neck. He was a mere boy, about twenty years old, and very much liked. Often he had entertained the older comrades by exultant little stories of his sweetheart, a photograph of whom he cherished as his most precious possession. Now he was carried back from the battlefield in the arms of a herculean mate, his eyes closed, his face the pallor of death, while beside the pair his own horse cantered like a big, faithful dog. Not before the White Guard fixed camp for the night, many miles from the scene of bloodshed, could he get medical attention. Then it was too late. The young fellow died under the hands of the doctor. His comrades stood by silently, while the doctor, who seemed strangely interested, made a post-mortem examination. Suddenly he jumped up. "By God," he cried, "I had my suspicions before. This settles them. Boys, they are using dum-dums against us as if we were niggers. This wound would not have been mortal if it had been caused by a Christian bullet. It was a dum-dum did the work."

He showed the men the jagged sides of the egress hole, the torn, widened channel of the projectile. For the moment they were too stupefied to say much. The poor boy was buried under a big tree, with the picture of his sweetheart upon his breast.

Then the necessities of the living demanded their right. As it had been impossible the last few days to secure a sufficiency of game, and as it was prudent to reserve the tinned provisions for a real emergency, the Australians had been forced to rely for food mainly on the superfluous horse of their dead. It was not a time to cultivate an over-dainty taste, and once the prejudice had been overcome, the flesh of young horse became recognized as a toothsome diet and as the great stand-by for men who, being in the saddle all their waking hours, required strong, sustaining meat. The horse of the fallen Tasmanian was selected for the evening repast. But in this case, the simple act of killing an animal for food was transformed into a rite of terrible significance.

Thomas Burt, in his diary, has left a suggestive description: "How the idea originated," he writes, "I can't explain. Several men of his section ran into the bush and returned with some flowery creepers and bright-leaved boughs. With these they garlanded the horse as if for sacrifice. He was shot, and after the jugular vein had been opened for bleeding, they dipped their fingers into the gore, whereupon they joined bloodstained hands and swore a frightful oath, calling on the name of the dead boy, that they would never spare the life of a Japanese, war or peace. This example had a hypnotic effect. Men rushed in from all sides to imitate it. Everywhere groups formed of bloodsmearred comrades, the camp-fires playing gruesomely on their inflamed faces and eyes reflecting a

paroxysm of rage, who took the vow in the same words, often in low, strained voices which imparted to it the character of some ghastly incantation.”

The manufacture of dum-dums by means of removing or cutting the tops of bullets became at once the established industry in the Australian camp. Their employment by the enemy had silenced for ever the last lingering misgivings prompted by humanitarian considerations. The Japanese had revealed their secret thoughts: that for the white vermin infesting the tropical wilderness dum-dums were the correct thing.

Benefiting by the experience of the last two days, McPartoch again subdivided his force by halving the files into squads, doubling the number of sergeants. This measure resulted in a more perfect scouting service and a still looser formation, which permitted a more rapid withdrawal from action of the units. So, under the pressure of circumstances, a wonderfully agile and elastic organization had been evolved. Some further adjustments were made calculated to increase the efficiency. Till then, rests on the march had been ill regulated, and particularly the breaking of camp in the morning had often been somewhat disorderly. It was now ordained that breakfast should always be finished before sunrise and that a general halt should be the rule during the hottest hours of the day, provided that the safety of the corps should allow it.

Early next day (July 23) there was no sign of the enemy. Everything seemed favourable to a swift advance. The changing character of the vegetation left no doubt that the coast was not very distant. Surface water was met with more often, and the White Guard was now able to travel right across country in a north-westerly direction. It passed one village during the morning, and later two artificial clearings in the forest. Had these latter been abandoned as places for habitation, or were they being prepared for new settlers? In the second case, where would the settlers come from? Would they be drafted from older villages or from concentration camps on the sea board? Or would new imports arrive from oversea? So early, according to an entry in Thomas Burt's diary, the white men were struck by this idea of a steady inpour of invaders.

But, after all, progress was not so rapid as had been hoped for. The country became more difficult. In places the high plains dipped steeply into creek valleys, which were covered half-way up with dense jungle and formed ideal hiding nooks for ambushes. Further north the network of water-courses, dry channels, headlands, jungle, forest and rock became ever more intricate. It was impossible to explore thoroughly over such ground. Several times the intrepid Australians had to turn back in their tracks, confronted by insurmountable obstacles. These happenings caused much anxiety. For if ever their advance should be barred by natural impediments while the enemy was so close in pursuit

that they would have to fight a retreat through his ranks, terrible disaster might follow. But apparently the enemy had lost touch again, for they did not see a single Japanese scout that day, and the inhabitants of the solitary village passed by them did not venture outside their ramparts.

Next morning (July 24) the White Guard was crossing the head of a gully when it received fire from a narrow neck on the further side. Its march, of course, was delayed while its scouts pushed forward to reconnoitre the hostile position. The enemy seemed to have counted upon this hesitation. Suddenly, a strong division of Japanese cavalry attacked the Australians in front and from the left flank. It had abandoned the Fabian tactics for which it had been distinguished hitherto. Instead, it dashed in at a tremendous pace, and so wild and well-directed was its charge that the foremost squads of the White Guard were cut to pieces. Reinforcements rode up quickly, throwing themselves into the battle with enthusiasm. They belonged to Thomas Burt's company, which now shared in the struggle for the first time. The famous diarist himself led his men, whose dexterity on horseback soon outclassed the Turanians. Still, the latter resisted stoutly. Though overwhelmed on all sides, they preferred to die rather than to give way. And those who fell mortally wounded took a parting shot at the horses of their opponents if they felt their sight growing too dim to hit the men, or they killed their own animals. There was a grim significance in that act. For the White Guard, unhorsed, would be doomed to speedy extermination in the hands of their relentless enemies.

The cavalry contest had diverted the attention of the Australians from the Japanese infantry in front, which had had time to develop long lines of marksmen in the scrub. And these now made a furious assault on their part. At the same time, a desultory fusillade came from the rear and left flank. It proceeded in rapid succession from several places and led McPartoch to the belief that more cavalry was approaching from that quarter. He apprehended another rush, with the result that his force would be caught between two fires. He also recognized that the infantry, extended in a thin line followed by two more lines, could not be repulsed without great loss on his part. Already men and horses were falling under their deadly volleys. Instantly, he gave the order to retreat. The signal ran along his ranks and next moment the White Guard was racing away, bearing to the left, and over-riding the Japanese horsemen, who had survived the encounter with Thomas Burt's company, in their flight. Once more the volunteers had escaped with honour, but not unscathed. Forty-one comrades were missing. Six more were so badly wounded that, though they had contrived to save themselves from the battlefield, they were unable to ride on any longer.

Here was a new problem. Men were in the ranks who had been wounded lightly — on this occasion there were about two score of

them — and who had been able to look after themselves, when the surgeons, who numbered four in all, had dressed their injuries. Two or three, indeed, had committed suicide, when they felt worse and did not wish to become drags. But not everybody possessed strength of mind to emulate this heroic example, though there was none unwilling to sacrifice his life in honest fight. As mercy was neither expected nor conceded, the possibility that men struck within an ace of death should escape only to collapse in utter helplessness a little later had not been thought of previously. Instinct revolted against the idea that disabled comrades, still warm with life, should be left behind to perish in the wilderness or by the hands of loathsome aliens. It did not matter that a solemn covenant existed approving of such a course — the thing could not be done. On the other hand, the safety of all demanded that the mobility of the White Guard should not be lessened.

A handy bush carpenter solved the difficulty by devising a combination of stretcher and chair, made of stout sticks and a wicker work of pliable boughs, and provided with uprights at the back which would keep the occupant in a half-sitting position with his legs stretched level before him. The whole was well secured with telegraph wire and covered with blankets and clothing to ease its roughness. Each stretcher was mounted on a quiet horse. Then the wounded man was lifted into it. By means of a long bridle, he could control the animal himself, if he felt well enough, otherwise, a comrade would lead it. Ingenious as this moving field hospital had been arranged, the ordeal, which the sufferers had to undergo during the swift march of the White Guard over rocky ground or through forests where the horses stumbled over roots and creepers, was terrible and killed most. Still, the best had been done for them under the circumstances, and a few were saved, and were spared ultimately for a kinder fate than was in store for their hale mates.

The best part of the afternoon was spent in caring for the wounded; so that not much progress could be made during the remainder of the day. But the scouts discovered two telegraph lines running parallel to each other at a distance of about three miles and in an almost straight northerly direction. There could be no doubt that these wires connected outlying villages with the Japanese capital and that the White Guard was now right in the centre of the zone of settlement. The lines were not cut, so that the enemy might receive no warning of the whereabouts of the Australians. The night passed without disturbance.

In the morning (July 25,) it was found that two of the badly wounded men had died. Some others, who had been reported as slightly hurt and had been present after the battle, did not respond to the roll call. Everybody knew what this meant: a few more brave hearts had felt unable to keep up the pace any longer and had retired to some quiet nook to make an end, so that they might not become a burden and an

impediment. Gloom began to spread among the patriotic rough-riders and grew ever more supreme. The gaiety and high spirits so natural to the children of sun-kissed Australia, which had marked the commencement of the enterprise, vanished bit by bit, as the terrible odds against which they were fighting were more clearly realized. None, of course, had believed that they were marching against famishing weaklings. All the same, none had expected such fierce opposition. The majority had not troubled themselves much about the details of the impending campaign. It had been sufficient for them to know that the Commonwealth was invaded and that every good Australian was bound to revenge the insult. Still, at the back of the mind of nearly every one traditions of the colonial exploits in the Boer war had survived and made him look forward to something like it: a series of raids on farms and ill-defended settlements, a continual harassing of the enemy, sudden surprises, a never-ending guerilla war in which the mounted bushmen had imagined themselves as appearing, phantom-like, now here, now miles away, but always aggressive and vanishing before the adversary should have recovered breath to strike back. And this game was to be continued until the Turanians should be reduced to such despair that they should have to appeal to Great Britain for protection, which would never be granted, or else to land armies, and thus to reveal their real designs, when the Empire, for its own sake, would have to rally to the side of the Commonwealth.

It was a beautiful dream, but the disillusion came after the first few days of the campaign. Then the Australians began to understand the haughty bearing of the Japanese dignitary who had warned and vexed them. He had an army at his back, perfectly organized, splendidly equipped, under a subtle leadership undaunted by disaster and losses. The latter had been enormous, but it seemed that the enemy looked upon them as fair payment for experience. Possessed of such spirit, he might bring about a complete reversal any day. Already the Japanese were not content to defend themselves; they had taken the offensive and had thus touched the weakest spot of the White Guard. For a corps of horsemen, with no stronghold to fall back upon, without reserves, living from hand to mouth, must become demoralized in the end if they were made the hares instead of being the hounds. The enemy had the advantage of the inner line of well-placed fortifications in telegraphic inter-communication and, consequently, of a reliable intelligence service. His scouts rivalled the Australians in daring. And the latter noticed resentfully that the brown men looked spick and span in prime condition, while they themselves began to have a rather tattered appearance.

Possibly this contrast of drab raggedness fast losing the faintest vestige of smartness was more than anything else responsible for the depression ruling in the ranks of the White Guard. The influence of the natural

surroundings was another dispiriting factor. Thomas Burt's diary gives, in itself, a very good indication of the progress in intensity of the sombre moodiness which cast an ever-darkening shadow over the gallant band. At first all sorts of little traits are noted down in it, personal items and even humorous snapshots such as a man might write who had gone on an excursion of pleasurable excitement. As the days passed, the purely human interest grows steadily weaker, until it gives way entirely to military records, of councils of war, of moves and counter-moves, of battle, pursuit and plans, of privations and losses, in short, to records of the technicalities of the campaign. Towards the end, the clearness of the depositions suffers under an intrusion of speculation about the enemy and about the chances of success, and the accents of the hopelessness of it all became dominant. Then men, even the leaders, appear puny, mere drifts on the implacable course of events, even as in the moment of an earthquake the whole surface, hills, rivers, houses, trees, people, everything, seems insignificant in the sway of the all-enfolding tremor-waves.

There is a remark in the diary to the effect that the author could not turn his thoughts upon any other subject but the enemy. Others confessed the same. They were strangely fascinated by the stealthiness of his methods, so much so that the bravest would run all sorts of unnecessary risks to investigate more closely. Scouts pushed on and on, fancying that they had picked up some thread of special information, until they had lost all connexion with the main force, though they knew that they were infringing discipline by their action. Something unfathomable seemed to lurk in the silent bush and to lure them on. There was monstrous deliberation, an impassive stolidity foreign to white men, something vague and fantastic like a troubled dream about this menacing settlement of an Asiatic race separated from them by a mutual gulf of incomprehensibility. It was as if a monster had made the wilderness its lair and was lying in wait there, playing its warriors like pawns in a game of chess, without compassion, without fear, and planning all the time the destruction of White Australia. Men unconsciously lowered their voices discussing it. Often in the stillness of night, men would suddenly cry out in their sleep and jump to their feet, startled by a nightmare of the unutterable horror they were fighting against.

The supposed proximity of the Japanese main settlement induced McPartoch to exercise the greatest carefulness. But an incident happened after a ride of some hours which convinced him that for once the enemy had lost touch entirely or had miscalculated the whereabouts of the Australians. For the White Guard overtook a Japanese detachment of about 200 men marching north, which allowed itself to be attacked unawares. Here, at last, the volunteers had a chance to spring a surprise in the style which should have been the rule of the campaign as once

imagined by them. And they acquitted themselves handsomely. Only a few Japanese escaped into the bush. As a military force, they were wiped out completely, at a cost to the Australians of but two men killed and three slightly wounded.

After this exploit, McPartoch turned to the north-east. He suspected that the noise of the battle might have been heard in the capital of the enemy, which could not be distant, as the White Guard had crossed several telegraph lines in rapid succession which were no longer running parallel to each other, but converging upon a point farther north. And he concluded that on the spot where they would intersect the Japanese headquarters must be situated. He was leaving the straight direction because he wished to evade the reinforcements which the enemy, alarmed by the shooting, might hurry up.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when some vanguard scouts on the left wing reported that they had had a glimpse of a large river, or inlet of the sea, and of a big settlement on its far side. Half an hour later, McPartoch and his leading officers were scanning the scene through their glasses. There lay, on the western shore of a sheltered inlet about two miles wide, a town or rather a group of four villages, sharply divided like the quarters of a mediaeval city, round a central fort. The fort stood on a gentle rise and consisted of several wooden sheds or barracks surrounded by an inner wall and outer rampart and ditch. All the telegraph wires ended in a small watch-tower on top of the biggest building, thus marking it as the headquarters. Sentinels paced to and fro, and several hundred men were being drilled in the grounds of the fort. It was evident that considerable excitement prevailed. Messengers on horseback arrived and departed frequently. A large cavalry force left town. The men of the White Guard knew the reason for the activity. It was they who were being searched for.

They were separated only by a sheet of water from the goal of their endeavours. Yet they saw that it was unattainable. The Japanese capital was impregnable. Thousands were guarding it. Thousands more were doubtless scouring the country to take revenge for the massacre of the morning. It did not seem to enter the mind of the enemy that the Australians were on the opposite bank. Half a dozen boats and a steam launch were anchored in the inlet, but nobody came to use them for investigation. McPartoch, on his part, was careful not to betray the whereabouts of the White Guard. Of course, the men could not be restrained from having a peep. But they had to dismount in the bush and to creep up softly by twos and threes. Night was falling while they were still thus engaged. And under the sunset sky of gold and green the settlement and the cultivation paddocks around it looked indescribably peaceful. But the Australians could not permit themselves to be deceived by appearances. The leaders recognized now that they had located the

headquarters of the enemy, that their hope of success did not lie at its gate. Its neighbourhood was fraught with danger of annihilation to them. Their only chance lay in the open country against the isolated villages. Perhaps they might yet achieve something there, after having gained a thorough knowledge of the Japanese methods.

Above all, the White Guard required a reasonable rest of a few days after the unbroken excitement of the first week's campaign to recuperate its moral balance and to prepare a sensible plan of further activity. But no respite could be had as long as the Australians remained within a short distance from the enemy's centre of power. The leaders, indeed, looked forward with grave anxiety to the night which of necessity had to be spent so near to it. Tinned provisions were served out, no fires were allowed. Retreat was the password for the morning.

## Chapter IV: Retreat and Reinforcement

THE ignorance which the movements of the enemy on the previous day seemed to imply regarding the whereabouts of the White Guard, was either another strategic trick from the outset to lull into a false security the watchfulness of the volunteers, or it had been dispelled very quickly. Even before dawn the Japanese scouts began to attack the outposts. Probably the former had marched throughout the night, guided by the light of the full moon. The Australians broke camp hurriedly and rode to the east, partly with a view of outflanking the pursuers and partly because they were afraid of being surrounded on the land side and driven back upon the inlet of the sea, if they made a stand in this unfavourable position. The country was not at all suitable for the full development of cavalry. It was flat, covered with thick jungle and permeated with a tortuous network of channels, mostly dried out, but forming veritable pitfalls among the dense vegetation. Apparently the Japanese had limited their pioneer efforts of civilization to the districts further west over the water, for there were no traces of settlement here. But that they had explored and charted this wilderness was evident from the rapidity with which their own forces moved. Moreover, they had pressed the local natives into service as guides.

The aboriginals of the interior accompanying the White Guard were nearly as much at a loss in the coastal jungle as their masters. They were, however, ahead of the latter in their ability to make themselves invisible during critical periods. This trait had been noticed from the first. Every time a battle waxed hot, they had vanished mysteriously, rejoining the volunteers when the air was clear again. During the whole course of the campaign, they had lost so far less than half a dozen of their number, which fact was the best proof of their sagacity in taking care of themselves. The White Guard did not resent their caution. It had never been intended to make them fight for the cause of White Australia. That was the sacred privilege of the ruling race. The blacks were employed as hunters and scouts, and in this capacity they had proved serviceable and willing enough. When the first shots were exchanged that morning (July 26) they had all stolen away quietly, and their prolonged disappearance was accepted as a sure sign that serious trouble with the enemy was brewing.

The Australian van and right flank suffered heavily under the fire of

Japanese marksmen concealed in the thick growth. After a ride of about two hours, the foremost squads came to a bare patch, a kind of spur of the high plains. Here they were charged by hostile cavalry. A fierce battle raged for half an hour until the aggressors, cut to pieces and much reduced in numbers, fled back. But the delay enabled Japanese infantry to concentrate behind their gallant horsemen in such strength that the further progress of the White Guard was effectively barred. It turned north, towards the sea. Again the cavalry attacked, to gain time, so that the infantry might push on in that direction. Though decimated, the mounted Turanians had lost nothing of their energy. But the exasperated Australians were now determined to make an end of them, regardless of cost. After a terrible struggle they succeeded. The Japanese cavalry was annihilated and all its surviving horses captured. Nevertheless, the purpose for which it had sacrificed itself, had been attained. Long lines of infantry hemmed in the van and both flanks of the White Guard.

At last, the genius of the invading race had invented a method of counteracting the superior mobility of the raiders. It consisted in the employment of thin files of infantry, no longer stationary, but hurling themselves against the horsemen, taking advantage of every tree and rock for cover, yet ever advancing and followed by other files like successive waves of destruction. Horsemen had no chance against such rushes. They could not override them. They might fling them aside, only to be confronted by the second and third lines, while the first one, which had been broken through, would re-form and pour a deadly fire into the rear of the advancing cavalry.

This method was tried for the first time on this occasion with very satisfactory results. Before order had been restored fully in the ranks of the White Guard after the cavalry contest, an infantry rush occurred. It increased the confusion, and after a short stand the Australians were repulsed. Some daring scouts of the enemy had got into the rear already. About eleven o'clock the squads of the extreme western flank touched the inlet again and had another glimpse of the capital. In the blinding noon glare of the sun the impression was no longer peaceful. Even as they looked, troops were hurrying over the cleared cultivation paddocks, no doubt sent to help in the work of destruction. The fort, in its inaccessibility, seemed to represent the embodiment of the deep Oriental disdain against the Whites whose Star Cross was to pale in the Northern Territory before the victorious rays of the Rising Sun.

The position of the Australians was desperate. Behind them the river; to the east, and bending north and south, superior hostile forces. Everything had remained quiet so far to the south-west, but this silence was really disquieting, because the connexion between the Japanese headquarters and their eastern army lay across that line, and it was natural, therefore, to assume that strong reserves were massed in that

neighbourhood. McPartoch held a hurried consultation with his lieutenants, in which it was decided to strike out straight to the south, in the hope that the enemy might be compelled to disclose his plans more fully by a diversion in this direction.

Fortune favoured the White Guard. As it happened, the Japanese had concentrated the bulk of their army in the east in their eagerness to block its progress. Their southern outposts, commanding every opening in the jungle, every neck between creeks, had thus been denuded temporarily of defenders. When the volunteers were falling back, the defect had been noticed and reinforcements were despatched. But it was too late. The Australians, wheeling south with great rapidity, ousted their opponents in a series of magnificent charges. To delay them, the last remnant of cavalry at hand was thrown against them. But they had learnt from their experience of the morning. They wasted no more precious time in a pitched battle. Cutting a way through the cavalry and overriding the van of the infantry reinforcements before they were able to develop their new tactics, the White Guard at last escaped into the open. It continued its ride all the afternoon, unpursued, and fixed camp for the night well out of the enemy's reach.

The death list of the battle was enormous. Two lieutenants, five sub-lieutenants, a surgeon, fourteen sergeants and sixty-eight men were missing. Moreover, forty reserve-horses had been killed and some stores were lost with them. This latter calamity was relieved somewhat by the seizure of over sixty Japanese horses, which were mostly Australian-bred. There was irony in this. Commonwealth citizens had reared the stock, had realized a profit on it, and now it was employed to defeat their compatriots. For without efficient cavalry, the enemy would hardly have been able to take the offensive against the White Guard. More stretchers were constructed for the transport of the badly wounded. Of the first batch, only two were still surviving. Eleven others were added that night.

Burdened with this further impediment, the leaders were compelled to come to a clear understanding about the further course of the campaign. They conferred during the evening, and before sunrise next morning (July 27), they placed the results of their deliberations before a general council of war, which had been called together originally for the purpose of rearranging the decimated units and electing subordinates for the fallen officers. McPartoch, in another manly speech, pointed out the insurmountable difficulties in their path. It could not be denied, he said, that the White Guard had been thrown upon the defensive owing to the overwhelming numerical superiority of the invaders, and that it could not hope for victory under the circumstances. He regretted that it should have been his advice, in the last instance, which had persuaded them to carry through the desperate venture at a loss, so far, of almost a third of their comrades. Here the brave fellows interrupted him with cheers and passed

a resolution by acclamation, thanking him for his unselfish leadership and assuring him that he continued to possess their full confidence. His proposals were warmly debated. But in the end they were carried with practical unanimity. Retreat, as speedy as possible, to the base in Snowdrop Creek was determined on, so that the wounded might receive proper care. And a thorough consideration and final decision regarding future action was to be postponed until after that. It was a touching attempt at self-delusion. For in his heart every man felt convinced that a handful of white fighters could not defeat the organization created by the enemy, though every one be a hero. Yet they tried to evade that last bitterness, the open acknowledgement of failure to each other, as long as there was a chance.

The march was resumed. They were still within the danger zone, in the circle of outlying villages. One they passed before noon, but its inhabitants did not seem to take any notice of them. McPartoch had decided to travel straight south to avoid the jungle with its rank vegetation, which would have delayed progress, and with its animal pests, which would have tormented the wounded. In the afternoon they skirted another village. They kept always to a rough track cleared by the enemy. Shortly before sunset they came to a waterhole in a depression, about twelve miles further on, and camped there for the night. It was by no means an ideal spot strategically, being surrounded on three sides by a wide sweep of hill country and on the fourth to the north, by a belt of thick scrub and patches of acacias which restricted the outlook. But the volunteers knew that the Japanese main force could not have kept pace with them on their retreat and they did not particularly fear attack from the isolated settlements, because according to all previous observations, these did not contain more than one hundred, or at most two hundred, men each. Of course, the usual watch was kept.

But the White Guard had underrated the resources and tenacity of the enemy, who again took advantage of the moonlight to creep up to its position. This time the Japanese scouts penetrated silently the line of outposts and with the dawn, a furious infantry assault was directed against the two most exposed sub-camps of the Australians. Fortunately, some confusion ensued among the enemy in the dim light. His own scouts shot upon mounted reinforcements hurrying to their help, apparently taking them for the withdrawing volunteer outposts whom they had passed under the cover of the scrub. Thus the occupants of the sub-camps were enabled to escape, leaving tents, blankets and other belongings behind them. These were secured, however, in a successful counter-attack immediately afterwards. Day had now broken fully and revealed a large force of Japanese infantry approaching from the high ground to the west. Already they were forming the long thin files preparatory to one of their characteristic rushes. McPartoch had just time

to sound the signal for retreat, when the first line hurled itself against the Australians, coiling about their flanks like a poisonous breath before which men and animals staggered and fell. The rear of the White Guard resisted for a moment, then followed the others in headlong flight eastwards. They were pursued by cavalry.

For an hour the volunteers rode on without lessening their speed appreciably. And still the Japanese horsemen doggedly stuck to them. Their presence was a disagreeable surprise to the Australians, who had flattered themselves that they had exterminated the mounted service of the enemy, and who were now running away from an inferior number of that arm. McPartoch had to yield at last to their entreaties to make a stand. The rear faced round. But the shock of the outset proved too much for it. It had to give way, and the hostile cavalry, still about 150 strong, fell upon the centre of the White Guard, commanded by McPartoch in person. Here the advance was arrested. The Japanese, surrounded, were shot down in numbers. The survivors, however, never wavered. Their leader, a man on a splendid horse, gave them a wonderful example of heroism. Riding into the thick of the fight, he brought down man after man, seemingly invulnerable himself. He came within ten yards of the Commander-in-Chief when suddenly a member of the Port Darwin contingent cried out: "Ah Ting!" At the exclamation, the Japanese leader half turned, and found himself face to face with McPartoch. Two pistols were levelled at the same moment, two shots rang out in one. Ah Ting threw up his arms and fell to the ground, dead. McPartoch's mare staggered and broke down, throwing her rider. Some men ran to his assistance and lifted him on to Ah Ting's horse. The fall of the leader decided the fate of the Japanese, hemmed in on all sides. They perished manfully.

The contest had reduced the number of the White Guard to about four hundred, counting in the badly wounded. To make matters worse, McPartoch was half-dazed in consequence of his accident. He surrendered the command to Thomas Burt until he should have fully recovered. Under the pressure of their misfortune, the volunteers did not have leisure to ponder over the fact that such a large force, independent of the main army of the enemy, should have been away in the open country. If they could have done so, the truth might have dawned upon them, and thus warned, their ultimate fate might have been different. For it is most likely that this force had been despatched, even before the rout of the White Guard near the capital, with a view to cut off its retreat. Of course, the truth will never be known until the Japanese choose to publish it. But appearances seem to show that they made this attempt thus early, the repetition of which was to be so terribly successful afterwards. Ah Ting, no doubt, had been entrusted with the execution of the task. He failed because the Australians retreated too quickly. And

rather than return a beaten man, he sought death. It is impossible to explain in any other way his fool-hardy pursuit of a superior number of superior horsemen.

Next day (July 30) the White Guard passed the southernmost village, where the parting shots of the campaign were exchanged. It was noticed that the telegraph lines had been repaired already. On the following evening (July 31) the Australians camped again upon the old spot at the head of Liverpool River. They spent a day there recovering vigour after their exertions and afterwards continued their retreat to the base in Snowdrop Creek, arriving on August 2. The seven badly wounded comrades who still survived were then removed with infinite care to Katherine and distributed among trusted friends. So well was the secret kept that the Imperial authorities at Port Darwin remained in ignorance of these happenings. But perhaps they did not wish to know anything.

A general council of war held in Snowdrop Creek decided that it would be madness to renew the fight. The only question under dispute was the manner in which the White Guard should be disbanded. Some adventurous members proposed that they should all return to Queensland by the route over which they had come. They had no doubt that reports of the campaign had transpired in Palmerston, and they were afraid of arrest if they should place themselves within reach of the British commander in that port. The overwhelming majority, however, justly dreaded the overland march mainly because the dry season was now far advanced. In the end, all agreed to send a deputation to Port Darwin to investigate the real state of affairs there and to arrange, if possible, for a quiet refuge and gradual absorption of the volunteers in that district, whence they might disperse by sea by and by.

Meanwhile the White Guard remained at Snowdrop Creek to await the result of the mission. And during this period an event occurred which changed the destiny of the corps. Quite unexpectedly, reinforcements from Queensland arrived at Katherine (August 7) and, in due course, were directed to the camp. The new-comers were in a pitiable state, having traversed the same overland route, conducted by aboriginals. They had lost thirty-two men on the march. According to their statements, the deficiency of water in the Interior precluded absolutely all further help by land until the end of the year. But they did not mention this to discourage the others. On the contrary, as soon as they had refreshed themselves by a few days' rest, they declared themselves quite ready for action. The relief force was certainly a fine body of men. It numbered 564 members, with 200 reserve horses and a vast quantity of stores. Cosmopolitan elements had entered into its composition to a much larger extent than in the case of the first corps. For before the date of its departure (July 16) from Bourketown there had been time to get to North Queensland for adventurers from all the states who objected to the

drudgery of regular drill and were yet too patriotic to shirk the duty of defence. In addition there were over a hundred Canadians and Americans from the Western Slopes.

The views of the old campaigners — the heroes of the first campaign — were strongly modified by the fresh development. The optimists among them were inclined to bury the remembrance of the terrible experience of the recent past under a hope of revenge, now that the losses had not only been made good but the original fighting strength had been increased by one-half. Others, more cautious, pleaded that the Japanese had gained an intimate knowledge of Australian tactics and would be able, therefore, to meet all efforts with even deadlier effect than in the opening struggle. These warners reminded their comrades that the enemy thought nothing of sacrificing the life of his own warriors. They doubted if even the united white forces would be sufficient to expel or to exterminate the invaders. Anything less would not be worth the risk of so many lives valuable to the Commonwealth. Was it not better to wash their hands of a hopeless affair and to save themselves for another battle some day, in the regular army of Australia, where their experience would be of the highest importance?

But the reinforcements wanted war. Their leader offered to serve under McPartoch. They could certainly make out a good case. Having come all this way, they claimed the right to be given a show. It seemed unfair to desert them. No description of Japanese methods and the hardships of a campaign could cool their ardour. They still believed fondly in the immense superiority of their own race. Their point was that if the enemy had gained knowledge, so had the Australians, and that the imperfections natural to a first effort need not be repeated.

These remonstrances were not wasted. Yet more than by anything else the old campaigners were influenced by a singular circumstance. The mission returned from Port Darwin to camp on August 14. It brought all the news of the anti-colour and election riots, from which one fact could be gathered plainly — that no support could be expected from the Federal authorities, whose energies were absorbed fully by civic disruption in the centres of population. But the mission had to tell of something much stranger. Nothing at all was known in Port Darwin of the doings of the White Guard. Its sympathizers, indeed, had become quite anxious about it. Was it loafing? Had it no courage to come to blows? These were the questions which assailed the members of the deputation, whose replies were received with incredulity. There could be no doubt that the Japanese had been absolutely silent on the subject, that they had lodged neither protests nor appeals. It seemed that they regarded the White Guard with calm contempt and officially ignored its existence.

No intelligence ever caused a more profound sensation or more violent indignation. With feelings akin to consternation the heroes of the first

campaign asked one another what might be the policy of Japan that it did not seize the opportunity to condemn publicly a raid of irregulars which could not have cost it less than a thousand lives. It drove the blood from the heart of the brave men who had fought so hard and borne so much, to contemplate how their exertions were stifled in studied silence. Were they of so little importance? So they had not made themselves dreaded enough? Had all the sacrifices, the deeds of mates now dead and rotting in the interminable bush no worse effect on the enemy than so many flea-bites, scratched casually and dismissed from memory? Ah, they had not done yet! The brown horror would yet squeal at the top of its voice for protection against the intrepid sons of Australia! The lofty disdain displayed by the Japanese so incensed the old campaigners that the resentment practically decided the issue. A vote taken exclusively among them, which every man bound himself beforehand to stand by, resulted in favour of a second campaign by a twelve to one majority.

Although the leader of the reinforcements — a Canadian named Grimpan — had announced his willingness to serve under McPartoch, he objected to being reduced to mere lieutenant, while others previously under his command were elevated to the same level. A regrettable element of jealousy, foreign to the old campaigners, was thus introduced. The matter was compromised by forming two companies of 150 men each, with five sub-lieutenants, and by appointing the Canadian to the command of one of these. It was also arranged that the supreme leadership should revert to him in the event of McPartoch being killed or disabled. All the old campaigners regarded the second concession as an affront, for they looked upon Thomas Burt as the rightful heir-presumptive to the honour, as his stewardship during the last stage of his retreat had won their entire confidence. For the moment the settlement was accepted, but the slight rankled nevertheless.

The command of the other increased company was entrusted to Thomas Burt, who again received that most responsible office, the commissariat. He would have preferred a place in the fighting line, but he bowed to the pleading of McPartoch, who knew only too well that the very existence of the White Guard depended on the safety of the stores and particularly the horses, and that it was to be feared just for this reason that the Japanese would try to gain possession of or to destroy them. In the commissariat was also vested the supervision of the aboriginals. The old band seemed to have sustained some loss, after all, in the final stage; about a fourth of their number was missing. Now the blacks brought by the reinforcements were added. The total, then, amounted to about eighty. On the whole, the second instalment was not up to the former level. It had not been treated with so much consideration by its masters, and sulked rather. A close watch was very necessary.

Among the old campaigners there were several of the lighter wounded

who had not quite recovered. Some of them were, for the purpose of war, no better than cripples. Yet they craved permission to share in the new venture. But McPartoch would have none of them. He even refused to move while they were present. So these brave fellows, twenty-three altogether, had to return to Katherine, thence to Port Darwin and civilization. To one of them Thomas Burt entrusted his diary — all that is left of it. And this foresight has preserved to white humanity the only strictly contemporary record of the first campaign of the White Guard — one of the most unselfish and tragic sacrifices of all times.

## Chapter V: The Second Campaign

OF the second campaign, no well-ordered written record of an eye-witness exists, nothing indeed, at all comparable to Thomas Burt's diary. That able patriot perished in the unknown. Some survivors have given their versions of different phases of the disastrous enterprise, though not always quite as lucidly as could be wished, and their reports have been pieced together as well as possible in this account, which therefore cannot be regarded as absolutely correct in every detail. Even the dates cannot be ascertained exactly. It is known, however, that the White Guard left the base in Snowdrop Creek on August 17, 1912.

The volunteers then numbered about 900 men, with 250 reserve horses, and were accompanied by 80 aboriginals. Two companies, led by the Canadian Grimpan and by Thomas Burt, consisted of 150 men each. It seems that in every other particular the organization evolved and well tried during the first campaign was adhered to. The force reoccupied the camp at the head of Liverpool River for one night. There some surplus stores were hidden away. Two days later, in the early afternoon, it arrived once more in the neighbourhood of the southern-most Japanese village. A few settlers, working in the cultivation paddocks, were cut off and killed. But though the enemy appeared to be surprised, he gave no chance. The vanguard, rushing forward in the hope of carrying the village before the inhabitants should have time to think of the defence, found itself exposed to a severe fire and had to retreat. No further attempt was made; the main corps passed by at a safe distance, as if it was not thought worth while to risk lives in an attack upon a fortified outpost.

If McPartoch had wished to convey this impression, of which there can be no doubt, his ruse proved successful for once. The Japanese seem to have allowed themselves to be inveigled into a false sense of security. They did not keep in touch with the White Guard, which, in reality, came to a stop only eight miles further on in a dense bush, awaiting the night. For it had been decided to assault the hostile position after dark. The idea was to employ fire as well as the sword against the invaders; it is, indeed, already mentioned in Thomas Burt's diary. Then it came to nothing. But now more careful preparations had been made. A supply of kerosene and torches had been drawn from Port Darwin, and thus the execution of incendiary plans had become feasible.

The moon, past the first quarter, facilitated the task. About 11 p.m. the

village was surrounded by strong detachments. Apart from these, a storming party had been formed, consisting of fifty picked volunteers. At midnight, when the moon was sinking in the west, the charge was delivered. The Japanese sentries were on their guard. But making their accustomed rounds, they had all been marked and were shot down. Before the inhabitants, startled by the noise, had time to fly to arms, the stormers jumped the low rampart, carrying light bags filled with dry twigs and grass and saturated with kerosene, which they piled against the walls of the nearest houses. In a moment the highly inflammable stuff blazed up. Among the settlers indescribable confusion reigned. Some dashed forward recklessly to fling the burning bundles aside, but they fell instantly under the massed volleys of a hundred crack shots. Within a few minutes, the sun-dried timber of the huts on the east side of the village was well alight and the inmates had to run for their lives, pursued by the bullets of the triumphant Australians. Their task was finished. They had now merely to look on while the fresh eastern breeze spread the flames to adjoining buildings and over the wooden defence works. Above the roar of the conflagration rose the frenzied cries of the victims, blinded by the glare and suffocated by the smoke, doomed to death within and without their perishing homes. As the assured success of their scheme of vengeance calmed the wild excitement of the volunteers, they began to wonder why the Japanese did not try to escape. Suddenly somebody made a remark about the shouting. Next moment all the men about him found themselves listening attentively, all struck by one idea. They could now distinguish plainly above the throaty voices of men quite different treble shrieks of agony, as of women. The surviving inhabitants were by this time huddled together at the western extremity of the village. The flames, bursting through the clouds of smoke, threw a flickering light over the several groups working away desperately to clear a free zone which the fire should be unable to overleap. In their feverish haste, they exposed themselves recklessly within easy range of the Australian rifles. But an awful hush had fallen upon the volunteers. Hardly a shot was discharged now on their part. For in the uncertain illumination they had discerned, beside the well-known, squat shapes of their foemen, other more slender forms, some crouching in wild fear, others dashing about planlessly, rending the air with high-pitched yells. They were women. But how did they get there? The question passed from mouth to mouth, sending a thrill of horror through the ranks of the White Guard. Never before had the old campaigners set eyes upon them, or known of their presence in the hostile camps. They began to understand why the Japanese had not made a bold bid for escape at the outset. It was because their womenfolk were too panic-stricken and they would not leave them behind. Now it was too late. The flames had leapt the break before it was complete. Among the doomed inhabitants a

command was given in a clear, firm voice. There was a last appealing cry, cut short by a great volley. The slender forms dropped to the ground, dead. In a flash, the squat shapes jumped the rampart and threw themselves upon the aggressors. For a minute or two the rattle of pistols and revolvers was audible above the roar of the conflagration. Then the surrounding darkness of the bush swallowed the surviving Japanese. This finish cost the White Guard five lives, and as many were wounded.

In the morning, one of the missing Australians was found in the bush, with only a slight hurt on his right arm, yet dead. A Japanese, twice shot through the chest, was clutching his throat with both hands; the cold, stiff fingers nearly met in the flesh, so savage his grasp had been. No truer expression could have been imagined of the mortal hatred which inspired the fighters of both races and of the grim determination of the Asiatics; the members of the new contingent were deeply moved by the sight.

Inspection of the ruined village, where the charred timber was still smouldering and a stench of burnt flesh filled the air, left no doubt that women had fallen victims. So many female bodies, disfigured by the blaze which had consumed their clothing, were discovered, that there was only one explanation for their presence; they had been the wives of the settlers. The enjoyment of victory was spoiled completely by this untoward incident. All white instincts rebelled against the slaughter of women. And horrible as it was, the Australians could not banish the thought that it would happen again, unless they were to abandon the struggle. For if they wished to retain the offensive and to prevent the enemy from always choosing his own battle ground, they would have to strike at other settlements in the same way, regardless of the possibility that both sexes might dwell within. From a patriotic point of view the White Guard had even the right to welcome the terrible complication, because it might divert the attention of the Japanese and loosen the bonds of discipline. No feelings of repugnance could absolve the Australians from the plain duty towards their country to exploit this temporary advantage. It might not last long. The enemy, who had fought well for the sake of the young colony and from race pride in the past, was sure to surpass himself in defence of the most sacred personal possession, as soon as he should have recovered from his initial surprise. The volunteers yearned for the clash of arms in the field. Unknowingly they had been made women-slayers. That stain would have to be washed out in more blood, the blood of men and foes. And thus the second campaign became from the outset what the refined savagery of the Japanese would have it as proved by their employment of dum-dums in attack and females in defence: a merciless scramble for mastery as between primeval beasts in the tropical wilderness which fitly surrounded them.

The White Guard rode on unmolested all day. The next village had been deserted by the enemy and was burnt down. But while the Japanese

kept out of sight, the aboriginals of the force began to create trouble. As usual, they had remained invisible during the night attack. Now it was noticeable that they kept much more to themselves than formerly. Their sulkiness, which since the arrival of the second band accompanying Grimpan's corps had become more and more pronounced, caused some anxiety. The blacks of the interior were not considered to be naturally treacherous, but of course they had their price. And if the Japanese should see their way to offer better terms, larger presents of tobacco, silver, arms, and especially liquor, than were in the gifts of the White Guard, then it was conceivable that the natives might be seduced from their present loyalty. There was, however, the reassuring thought that it would not be easy for the enemy to gain the confidence of the aboriginals. Of themselves, the latter would not dare to make advances. The only danger was that the Japanese might use the coastal blacks for the purpose of establishing relations. But it was known that deadly enmity prevailed between the tribes of the interior and those of the coast. When they met, the stronger, according to all precedent, would make a meal off the weaker. Where such customs ruled, it was difficult to imagine where the chance of peaceful dealings could come in. With this consideration the Australians silenced their secret misgivings. For the natives had proved so useful in many respects that they did not view with equanimity the prospect of dispensing with their services. It seemed, however, that the blacks, with the instinct of primitive beings, felt the distrust with which they were regarded. Perhaps it was in consequence of this that their morosity increased steadily. Some of the boldest even ventured to complain that morning that their horses were no good, and to ask McPartoch that they should have the pick of the reserve horses. Needless to say, they did not get their will.

At night a council of war was held. The more optimistic new members looked upon the fact that the enemy had abandoned one village as proof of his unpreparedness and surprise at the return of the White Guard. Accordingly, they recommended a rapid attack upon his capital. Though the old campaigners were less enthusiastic, they were not impervious to the pleadings of their inexperienced friends. If the Japanese headquarters should also be encumbered with womenfolk, as was probable, then the chances might not be so bad. After all, dash and daring was the life-blood of the hazardous enterprise. It was resolved to face the risks by attempting a night attack, or a day and night attack combined, against the capital. The fate of the White Guard was to be staked upon one throw of the dice. That, according to common report, was the project, the deliberate aim, the hope of the Australian leaders. Its boldness shows that the infusion of fresh blood had brought about a resurrection of high spirits. Or perhaps, as far as the old campaigners were concerned, the stage of mental depression, under the stimulating influence of the latest

horrors, had been finally superseded by ferocious exultation.

About noon on the following day the vanguard approached another village. It was found to be strongly occupied. Moreover, a large detachment of the enemy had transformed a rocky ridge to the west of it into a fortification. McPartoch, foreseeing a pitched battle, gave orders to ignore the Japanese by passing to the east of the settlement. But the reinforcements, and even many of his old men, entreated him to attack the position. They proposed to repeat the strategy of incendiarism after nightfall and to make this possible, the enemy outside had to be dislodged first. He granted their request reluctantly and at 2 p.m. an action was begun. Progress was slow and its successful culmination was spoilt by a furious sally of the villagers, which rolled back the eastern enveloping lines and allowed the Japanese field force to slip through the opening into the settlement. This, too, was evacuated later in the evening and all the occupants got away. Ruddy flames, soon afterwards, informed them of the fate of their recent homesteads.

The White Guard pursued in the moonlight without much success. Four camps were formed at last, and, as usual, a full third of the force was put on watch service. Nevertheless, just before dawn some Japanese infantry managed to penetrate into the northernmost sub-camp, which was occupied by men of the reinforcements. A panic broke out among these and several were killed or wounded before relief arrived, and exterminated the aggressors. It was a most unfortunate affair, especially in its consequences.

For three men had been so badly hurt that they were unable to ride. Transport by stretcher was out of the question. The Australians could not storm the capital of the enemy and guard a hospital at the same time. That was so evident that the men, agreeing that the former should be attempted, had come to an understanding during the same council of war that the helpless wounded should kill themselves. As cases were conceivable where the energy of the doomed might not be equal to his duty, all the comrades of each squad had bound themselves that in such an extremity one of them should administer the *coup de grâce*. It was terrible, yet necessary. Death was the only manly way out. For such was the loathing of the coloured aliens that no member of the White Guard would have accepted mercy from their hands, even if it had been proffered. Nor would he allow his friends to do so. A sense of rough justice, perhaps, had also something to do with this determination; white men were too proud to accept from the enemy what they would not have granted him in return. And a lingering end in the wilderness, by starvation or vermin, was too cruel for contemplation. Two of the badly wounded were firm enough to shape their own destiny. But the third one faltered on the brink. He was shot through the right lung, near the heart, and could not possibly live. So a friend, drawn by lot from his squad,

rendered him the merciful service which, in saner moments, he would not have refused to a comrade in his own hopeless condition. It was the first time that the stern measure had to be resorted to, and though the men had adopted the rule voluntarily and knew what it might mean to every one of them, its translation into reality had a depressing effect on all.

The advance was resumed. Again it was afternoon before the enemy was encountered. He was in great strength, at the edge of the jungle country, and employed new tactics. The country was very broken; gullies and ridges alternated. His infantry formed long, thin lines as usual, but they were stationary. The rushes were left to small detachments of cavalry, which, sweeping forward from a fold in the ground where they had been hidden, drove back the Australian scouts upon the main body, and then returned to shelter while the pursuit of the volunteers was stopped by the terrific fire of the infantry, which, moreover, drew its file steadily longer, enveloping the flanks of the White Guard. After a desultory fight of about an hour, the Australians, retreating somewhat, succeeding in luring the hostile cavalry further into the open and inflicted severe punishment upon it. A little later their scouts on the western wing outflanked the Japanese files and rolled them back. Shortly before sunset the enemy began to retreat in good order into the protective jungle.

Some Australians had concentrated their fire during the final struggle upon a diminutive cairn on a ridge, the defence of which had been well sustained. As they did not notice anybody leaving this sheltered spot in the general retreat, their curiosity was aroused. They crept up cautiously and their suspicion that the occupants had remained in possession was quickly verified by several volleys, resulting in the death of two comrades. About twenty Japanese issued from the neighbourhood of the cairn, running hard to escape. Finding themselves outmatched by the horsemen, a few returned to it and resisted stoutly every attempt to dislodge them. But the Australians were the better marksmen, and soon the last defender had fallen. Their pains were rewarded by a most important discovery. The cairn, which a short distance off looked like a natural feature of the country, was artificial and served as rampart of a circular cavity staved and planked with boards. On the floor were several sleeping places, and telegraphic apparatus was mounted on a rough table against the wall. From there a cable was laid along the ground, hidden in the rubble, for over a mile to a large tree on the slope. The wire ascended its stem and was thus continued overhead. The whole cunning contrivance made it most unlikely that the subterranean station should be found even by an unusually persistent white man who might have followed the wire and even traced the cable. There being no indication of its termination so near at hand, he would very probably get tired long before he reached the cairn. Thus accidentally these volunteers had

stumbled upon the true explanation of the marvellous accuracy of Japanese information. For such pits, in telegraphic connexion with the nearest village or directly with headquarters, might — and undoubtedly did — exist all over the zone of settlement, and from them an incessant watch could be kept on every movement of the White Guard, which, though perhaps passing within close range, would not be aware of prying eyes.

The enemy fell back, undefeated, his cavalry guarding the rear and keeping in touch with the Australians, who camped on the battlefield, where, in a gully, a plentiful supply of fresh water had been discovered. Each company formed a separate camp, the two largest in the centre, and three on each side. The Japanese being so near, McPartoch expected a troubled night. Exactly for this reason he had stopped the march early. While the full moon shone brightly, his sentries could be trusted to ward off the prowling scouts of the enemy. In the small hours before the dawn, it might become necessary to have every man under arms. Rest for men and horses had to be snatched while it could be had.

McPartoch's fears were more than realized. About 3 a.m. fierce skirmishing began all along the lines of the furthest outposts. Through the dim light diffused by the moon, now low on the western horizon, lithe forms wriggled from cover to cover among the dark patches of thick scrub, a thousand times more deadly and hateful than reptiles. Steadily they moved forward against the white men, who had to gather in groups of two or three and to change places continually for protection. Not many years ago, comfortable Australians at cosy breakfast tables had been delightfully thrilled by stirring descriptions in the morning press of the patriotic daring of the little brown men, who in white Manchurian winter nights glided snakelike behind big lumbering Russian sentries and, jumping on their backs, slit open their throats or strangled them in noiseless death embrace. Perhaps none of the interested readers had thought for a moment that one day in the near future Australia's best and most unselfish sons would be exposed to all the horrors of this applauded artfulness. Now and then flames leapt out of some thicket, followed by rattling reports. Then there was the trampling of hoofs or a heavy fall. Silence afterwards, or as often, the guttural call, in the plaintive note of the wild swan's cry, of some Australian crouching behind the carcass of his horse and signalling for help. On the other side, the shrill whistle of the lucky Japanese marksman was heard, appealing to his mates to back him up so that his work might be finished thoroughly. A reckless abandon was over this nocturnal carnage. Life counted as nothing on both sides. Each fighter was like a tiger at bay, contemptuous of bullets, intent, with bared claws, on his chance of a murderous bound. Slowly the white scouts were driven back. After two hours they had suffered so heavily that the camps had to be alarmed. McPartoch gave orders not to

prolong the skirmishing, and led his force into the jungle to the north before daylight. And the enemy was soon outdistanced.

Very early that morning some scouts on the extreme western wing made a strange discovery. They had a glimpse of a strong Japanese detachment on the march. But it did not proceed north, as might have been expected, while the White Guard was threatening the capital so closely, but actually hurried south as fast as due precaution against possible surprise permitted. Cavalry covered its advance. Apparently, McPartoch and his subleaders did not attach much importance to the reports. Perhaps they thought that it was a belated relief corps. At any rate, they refused to turn out of their way in pursuit of this isolated detachment and thus to waste time. Nevertheless the singular fact was talked about a good deal, as the survivors testify. Considered retrospectively, it throws a flood of light on subsequent events which have never been explained fully.

The Commander-in-Chief had really no leisure for abstract speculations on the meaning of some particular hostile move. He was kept busy attending to immediate difficulties. During the night skirmish, several coastal blacks, who had actively engaged in it on the side of their Japanese masters, had been killed. They, at least, had not vanished from the danger zone as was the habit of the natives of the interior, who were nowhere to be seen, as usual. But it seemed that the latter had been audible. Several Australians stated that they had heard a call peculiar to the loyal aboriginals, which had not been included in the signal code of the White Guard, and which, moreover, the coastal blacks had never been known to employ. This might mean that the loyal natives had merely warned each other. On the other hand, it might mean that they had been bought over. At any rate, on former occasions they had either not hovered round the battlefield or they had at least remained silent, for nobody had heard their call before under similar circumstances. The change of habit aroused the latent suspicions anew. Had they turned spies? No doubt the Japanese could offer better inducements. The only question was whether they had succeeded in establishing relations. But perhaps the blacks had met half-way. Even a black might see, as somebody remarked bitterly, that the White Guard was playing a losing game.

During the first hours of the march, and afterwards while the Australian had a hasty, belated breakfast near a small pond on the foot of a hill — for they had now entered the jungle country where water was met with throughout the year — a good many natives rejoined the force. They kept apart, however, showing pretty clearly that their temper had not improved much. Some were smoking. This was certainly uncommon, as the last dole of tobacco had been handed out to them more than twenty-four hours ago. Natives do not hoard their possessions in this way

as a rule. One of the whites, struck by an idea, went up and managed to get a piece of tobacco from them. On comparison it was found to be different from any brand in the Australian stores. The blacks were examined, but they sheltered behind the sulkiness affected by them ever since the opening of the second campaign, and no explanation was coming forth. This untimely obstinacy settled their fate. Such subsidiaries could be tolerated no longer. They might make away at any moment with the horses they were riding, or they might even steal more horses. A few volunteers, remembering their good services in the past, advocated simple dismissal. But it was too risky to let these cunning aboriginals go forth as open foes; they knew too much of the organization and resources of the White Guard. Some sterner Australians, who had been through the war in South Africa, remembered how the Boers used to deal with Kaffir boys who had become dangerous or superfluous. Necessity demanded a similar course. The unfortunate blacks, whose horses had been watched closely during the discussion, were suddenly surrounded and shot down. And like punishment was meted out to every absconder who returned later.

After this act of red-handed justice, a roll-call was held, which revealed that the losses in battle had reduced the White Guard to 753 men. Though the percentage was enormous, it compared very favourably with the death-rate during the first campaign and the old hands were accordingly elated. Before the count-out had been finished, there came from the north, very faintly, yet very unmistakably, the sound of a steamer's siren. The effect was electric. The sea had wafted greetings to them on the breeze. It was near, the goal was at hand. All minds turned to the great task immediately before them. Every one agreed that the signal must have proceeded from a vessel in the inlet, probably a Japanese steamer, and that they were at most a dozen miles inland. If the Australians wished so, the decision must fall that night. And many powerful reasons urged them to strike the supreme blow at once. Behind them, large, unbeaten forces of the enemy were massed. But these had been outdistanced and were therefore useless for the defence of the capital. The slightest hesitation would give them a chance to come up, and then the outlook for the White Guard, caught between two fires, would be black indeed. It was true that failure of the attack would probably mean extinction, for in that case the White Guard, defeated and demoralized, would be driven right back upon the army in its rear. That terrible alternative, however, could not be evaded by Fabian tactics. The only way to escape from it was by a rapid diversion either to the east or west, in both of which directions the enemy did not seem to be in great strength yet. Instant advance or instant diversion — that was the real question before the volunteers. And there were not wanting voices who recommended the latter. A calm survey of the position could, indeed,

only lead to one conclusion: that the odds against the success of a direct assault upon the Japanese headquarters were too tremendous to be faced. But the overwhelming majority regarded the suggestion to turn aside within sight of the goal as nothing less than disloyalty against the fallen comrades whose self-sacrifice had enabled the survivors to penetrate thus far. The worst that could befall them was to die as those heroes had died. To the everlasting glory of Australia, its White Guard scorned the counsels of cowardice at this frightful crisis and decided that the only alternative before it was Victory or Death.

The volunteers made every preparation during this halt. Two companies were appointed storming parties and two more for each of these were told off as special support, while the remaining two largest companies, under Grimpan and Thomas Burt, were to form the reserve under the direct command of McPartoch. Every stormer received two bags filled with dry twigs and grass, two tins of kerosene about half full, and a dozen torches. The surplus horses and stores were divided equally among the six companies, barring the storm parties. It was past midday when the march was resumed.

Of the great assault no detailed description can be rendered with any claim to accuracy. None of the survivors have been able to give more than a medley of personal recollections confined within narrow limits, owing to the fact that the main action was fought in the night and extended over a wide stretch of country. The White Guard followed a rough road leading straight north. Its advance was slow, with a very broad front, for scouts were pushed out for miles east and west on either wing. About 3 p.m. Japanese infantry contested further progress, but the Australians burst through its lines in a splendid dash. At sunset they reached the border of the jungle, within two miles of the capital, the buildings of which, dominated by the fort, could be discerned plainly across the cultivation paddocks. They remained under cover until it had grown quite dark. Then the scouts pushed forward: they were met by outposts of the enemy and the battle waxed fierce at once. The Japanese had drawn several lines of barbed wire across the paddocks, about a foot from the ground. These had to be cut, in spite of swarming multitudes of the brown men, before a general attack was possible. A company dismounted and went to the assistance of the scouts. Fighting with the courage of despair, they gained their end under terrible hardships and losses. By 9 p.m. the remnants were right in front of the rampart of the south-eastern quarter; a passage had been cleared for the storming parties. Just as the moon rose these advanced at a terrific pace. But a determined sally from the south-eastern quarter drove them back. For an hour the wildest struggle raged round that locality. For the Australians wanted to set fire to the settlement at the eastern end, whence the breeze would spread the flames. Again and again they tried, and always without

success. The defenders of the western quarters left their fortifications in large numbers and pressed upon the flank of the White Guard. At last three companies had to turn against them to stop the enveloping movement. The western Japanese lines were broken and hurled back. Close behind them, and mixing with their rear, poured the aggressive volunteers, and among them a number of stormers. These, seizing the opportunity, penetrated into the eastern corner of the south-western settlement, piled their bags against the nearest buildings, and applied matches. Before the enemy was well aware of it the conflagration had made good headway. Every attempt to extinguish it failed. As the flames towered up, cheer after cheer rose from the decimated ranks of the White Guard. With renewed ardour the men returned to the attack upon the south-eastern quarter. But the enemy, recognizing the impossibility of saving the burning section, hastily withdrew the troops from there and used them for the defence of the other threatened position. At the same time the infantry, which had been scattered in the afternoon, opened fire upon the Australian reserve from the jungle. Front, flanks and rear of the White Guard were assailed simultaneously by overwhelming Japanese forces. It did no longer fight for victory, but for life. About midnight McPartoch gave the signal for retreat. By the light of the moon and the reflections of the conflagration, now at its height, the survivors cut their way through the opposing hordes. The supreme effort had been defeated.

The enemy did not pursue closely. Mutual exhaustion had the effect of a short truce. A few miles away in the jungle the Australians gathered once more. They snatched a short rest before dawn, and continued their retreat at sunrise. Their position was truly hopeless. They did not number over four hundred. All the leaders, with the exception of McPartoch, Thomas Burt and Grimpan, were missing. As the death of half the sub-lieutenants and sergeants had broken up the organization completely, and as there was no time to restore order, these three divided the command — Thomas Burt led the van, McPartoch the centre, Grimpan the rear. For about two hours the White Guard rode on swiftly. Only the most necessary scouting was done. Everybody knew that the Japanese forces, which had been outdistanced during the three previous days, would be encountered again. The one chance of the volunteers lay in their speed, which might yet carry them through the hostile lines, before the enemy to the south had been fully informed of the events of the night and had perfected his plans for the annihilation of the fugitives.

About 10 a.m. the first shots were exchanged. The Australian vanguard immediately headed off to the west, as had been arranged between the leaders. But it was subjected to a furious fire and fought to a standstill. Meanwhile, the centre, under the intrepid McPartoch, threw itself right forward and was soon at close quarters with Japanese infantry, the foremost lines of which it scattered. Already McPartoch had given the

signal for the other divisions to follow him through the opening, when he noticed that some of the scouts broke down with their horses, while others parried theirs and turned back. The animals had become entangled in coils of twisted barbed wire, which had been hidden in the long dry grass. A little further on several lines of wire were stretched from tree to tree one above the other, thus forming an insurmountable obstacle, behind which the enemy lay in wait. And away to the north signals could be heard more and more plainly, leaving no doubt that the garrison of the capital had started in hot pursuit.

A New South Wales man, named Terry, who had been wounded in the night and was half dead from loss of blood, here sacrificed himself to save his comrades. Urging his horse forward at a terrible pace, he burst right through the iron fence. Man and horse tumbled to the ground on the far side, cut to the bones by the wires. But the end had been gained. The centre of the White Guard poured through the gap, riding down the astonished enemy. Immediately after it followed Thomas Burt's company. Unfortunately the rear, under Grimpan, had moved far to the east, where it was engaged in a fierce fight so deeply that it did not respond to the calls. Rather than leave it to its fate, some brave fellows volunteered to ride back. Meanwhile the main body hovered round the opening to prevent the enemy from repairing the breach.

An anxious quarter of an hour flew by, giving the Japanese time to recover from their surprise and to hurry reinforcements to the critical point. Before these were in position, however, Grimpan's company had come up. With cheers the march was resumed, among a thick hail of bullets. Suddenly McPartoch was seen to fall. A few comrades rode to his side to carry him off. He stumbled to his feet, only to collapse again in violent pain. A dum dum had struck him in the hip. His parting words were a command to his men to look after themselves and to follow Thomas Burt as the leader whose experience and circumspection might still save them. Then he drew his revolver and killed himself, true to the last to the rules of the White Guard.

## Chapter VI: The Death Ride

THE death of the beloved Commander-in-Chief electrified his troops. Far from discouraging them, it filled them with a supreme desire for vengeance. They fought like demons and inflicted tremendous losses upon the ever-increasing swarms of the Asiatics. Still, all this bravery was thrown away. Conquest was out of the question. Cavalry from the capital now entered into the contest. During a temporary lull, Thomas Burt, assisted by thoughtful friends, succeeded in reorganizing the retreat. But the enemy granted no respite yet. Japanese detachments held favourable positions for many miles along the western flanks, and action after action had to be fought, with the result that the White Guard was pressed more and more to the east. Late in the afternoon the pursuers were left behind. The night was spent with hardly a pretence of a watch service. But the camp was not harassed. The exhaustion seemed to be mutual.

At dawn the Australians, somewhat refreshed by the unbroken rest, continued the flight. Of the gallant nine hundred, only about two hundred and sixty survived now. All the proud hopes of two days ago had vanished. Instead, quarrel arose within the ranks. Grimpan, the leader of the reinforcements, claimed succession to the chief command, in accordance with the original arrangements. Every one of the old campaigners, and not a few of his own people, objected fiercely. It was he who had commanded the rear, the delay of which had led up to McPartoch's death. Probably he was not to blame, and there certainly seem to have been no allegations that he did not equal the bravest in courage. Yet the fact told against him. Besides, Thomas Burt enjoyed greater confidence; he was McPartoch's choice, and it had been entirely due to his efforts that order had been restored on the previous day. Thus he was already the supreme leader by reason of his merits. Still, Thomas Burt stood down for the sake of peace. But less than two hours later Grimpan was missing. Some personal partisans, fellow-Canadians, raised accusations of foul play.

Shortly afterwards the Japanese attacked again, near the place where the White Guard, but five days ago, had burnt down a village after driving back victoriously a detachment of the enemy. It seemed that the latter had waited patiently thereabouts for the return of the Australians. Thomas Burt now took command as a matter of course. All his skill and

devotion, however, could not make up for numerical weakness. After a disastrous fight, the volunteers were thrown still further east, hotly pursued by a small body of cavalry. As on the previous day the Japanese had again attacked from the west and their horsemen did not so much pounce straight upon the White Guard as ride parallel to it on its western flank. There is a grim significance in this fact. It is just conceivable that Thomas Burt, who had explored the country before the invasion, might have resolved to retreat directly upon the Pine Creek. The successive attacks from the west may have given him the impression that large hostile settlements were situated in the intervening district, the present condition of which was totally unknown to the Australians who had entered upon both campaigns from Liverpool River and were therefore only acquainted with the eastern part of the zone of settlement. It is, indeed, probable that this cunning Japanese strategy induced Thomas Burt to avoid unknown risks by regaining his old base in Snowdrop Creek viâ the head of Liverpool River, every inch of which route the bushmen were familiar with. And thus, it appears, he played right into the hands of the enemy.

During the last struggle some Australian scouts on the extreme western wing had been cut off from all connexion with the main force. They, too, were hotly pursued by Japanese cavalry and at nightfall they had given up all hope to regain the others. There were eighteen of them, and one of the number was a volunteer from Port Darwin. This man suggested that they should try to reach the railway. Under the circumstances his advice was accepted. The little band had a final skirmish with the enemy next day and lost five comrades. The thirteen survivors arrived at Pine Creek a week later, utterly exhausted.

With the exception of the thirteen, who were separated from the remainder, not one member of the White Guard has ever returned to the haunts of civilized men so far as is known. Its fate is one of the unexplained mysteries of history. There is only one document in existence which, if genuine, may throw some light on the matter. It was found, in 1917, about a day's ride south from the site of the base at the head of Liverpool River in a hollow log, faintly marked, which had evidently been overlooked by the Japanese. The discovery was made by a party of English tourists, among whom, however, one of the wounded men of the first campaign had managed to get himself included. Being, therefore, familiar with that strange wilderness, he was the actual finder. The document was enclosed in a gun-metal watch-case. It was merely a crumpled slip of paper bearing the following pencil inscription —

“Again attacked this morning. Enemy occupied our base beforehand. Are still 116 strong. No surplus horses. No stores. Am slightly wounded. — T. B.”

The writing differs so much from that of the diary that some experts

doubt if it was done by the same hand. But it must be remembered that the writer, according to his own statement, was wounded and probably in the last stage of despair and exhaustion.

Curiously enough, about the same time a Japanese, who had fled his country for some offence and was engaged in the household of a British merchant in Hong Kong, indulged in some indiscretions. When his stories began to attract attention he disappeared unaccountably, for which reason it has been impossible to verify the reports. This fellow seems to have boasted that he helped to conquer the Northern Territory. His version was that immediately after the burning of the first village a Japanese force, consisting of infantry and cavalry, set out to seize the Australian base (he meant the camp at the head of Liverpool River, no doubt). When the remnant of the White Guard returned, a series of severe struggles followed, in the first of which it had been completely surprised and had lost its baggage. The wounded men were “put to sleep” by the surgeons. All the dead, white or brown, were cremated. The end came one morning before dawn, when in the moonlight the last survivors were surrounded and destroyed. But the Japanese did not lose so many fighters as had been feared.

The statements of the talkative Japanese domestic are quite compatible with the shred of information on the tiny slip of paper. And his disappearance certainly does not disarm the suspicion that he spoke the truth. The few lines — or rather death cries — which have been recovered do not probably represent Thomas Burt's whole account of the second campaign; he must have continued his diary, for the survivors all agree that he wrote a good deal. This priceless manuscript may have perished in the flames together with the corpse of its author, or it may be hidden away in some secret archives in Tokio.

Though it may seem incredible, the fact is that the Japanese have never admitted, either officially or unofficially, any knowledge of the existence of the White Guard. Tokio simply sheltered behind the plea that there was no official connexion with the late subjects of the Mikado, who were considered, to all intents and purposes, as British citizens in an Imperial colony. The settlers themselves have remained marvellously silent with regard to this matter. It is easy to see why they should do so. If ever the people of the United Kingdom should wake to a clear understanding of the terrible treatment meted out to its kinsmen, before the affair has passed into ancient history, all the little peevishnesses and jealousies would vanish before the thunderclap of a national explosion, the consequences of which would be incalculable. That a bloody secret should be known to thousands of Orientals without ever being divulged to Europeans by one of them was by no means a unique occurrence. And in this case the Japanese had the advantage that, as a result of their refined diplomacy, the Australian nation was confronted with issues of

such vastness that, for the moment, the guerilla war in the far north of the Commonwealth seemed to be of very little importance compared to them. The vanishment of twelve hundred men, who had never been prominently before the public eye, attracted hardly any attention. And the handful of survivors lay low in the Palmerston district, afraid of arrest by the Imperial authorities. Moreover, for several months afterwards, the fate of the main body of the White Guard remained uncertain. It might have been mad enough to attempt the overland retreat to Queensland. There is the possibility — and if ever the Japanese should be hard pressed for an explanation, they will probably fall back upon it — that this attempt was made. Possibly the bones of the volunteers are strewn about some dried-out waterhole, or buried in the sand-drifts of the interior.

But Australians do not believe it. And with due regard to Thomas Burt's last message, as well as to the Hong-Kong indiscretion, the main features of the final struggle, as it must have been, may be reconstructed without any special effort of the imagination. While the White Guard was still dreaming of conquest after the burning of the southernmost village and the annihilation of its inhabitants; while its members, thinking that they had struck terror into the hearts of the enemy, were pushing forward to deal a decisive blow at his nerve-centre of power; all the time a Japanese army marched southwards, patient, day after day, sure of ultimate revenge, leaving detachments in commanding positions, probably near the principal waterholes, and never resting until it had occupied the Australian base. The bulk of this force consisted, no doubt, of the garrison of the southern belt of outlying villages, some of which the volunteers had found deserted. If so, the distance which had to be traversed by it cannot have been over eighty miles and it must have had plenty of time to enter into possession and to prepare its future course of action before the White Guard returned. There is something fascinating about the tenacity, thoroughness and subtle leadership of the Japanese which compels admiration and places their conduct of this obscure bush campaign on a level with their world-famous exploits on the Manchurian plains. That must be admitted, though white men may regret the fact. It mattered nothing to the invaders that an Australian élite corps was threatening their capital. Not content to ward off the danger, they organized, simultaneously, a deadly counter-attack.

Their calculations proved correct. Crushed between overwhelming numbers, the White Guard fled for life. For two days Japanese detachments harassed its western flanks, driving it eastwards so that it might not escape from the prepared trap. Then, when it had passed out of the zone of hostile settlement to supposed security and was approaching the base, the enemy suddenly swept down upon it, causing a wild stampede in which the reserve horses and stores were left behind.

The last night. Utter exhaustion in the Australian camp. The leader wounded. The moon, proud and early on that triumphant night of fire and sword which marked the outset of the second campaign, rises late, waning. Her misty beams light the way for Asia's hordes, valuing life only as a means of destruction, who creep up steadily, stealthily on all sides. A final roar of battle. At daybreak the Turanians look upon their completed work. Surgeons deftly move among the fallen volunteers, dispensing the crowning mercy where the suffering is not yet ended. Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. They are excellent men, though not Christians. The first rays of the morning sun glitter upon the metal and glass of cool little syringes, as, one by one, the wounded men are "put to sleep." Meanwhile the Japanese troops have been busy heaping together dry wood. The corpses are flung on top, and soon the flames envelop them. It was an appropriate termination — the blazing funeral pyre; just the manner in which the old Norsemen, whose blood had rolled in the veins of many of the dead patriots, used to honour fallen heroes. That probably Turanian carcasses were consumed in the same fire did not lessen the grandeur of the end; these were merely additional fuel.

So it may have been. Some day the Japanese may tell a later generation their version of the racial struggle. Then the details will have to be modified most likely. But one thing is certain. The short and hitherto uneventful history of the youngest Continent has been ennobled by one sublime episode which ranks equal to the proudest traditions of Old World nations — the Death Ride of the White Guard.

---

## Part III: Birth-Pangs of Twentieth Century Nationhood

## Chapter I: Storm-Clouds Gathering in the West

ON August 12, 1912, two days after the Federal election riots in Perth and Freemantle, ss. *Katoomba*, under charter to the Commonwealth, steamed into the latter port, and landed the Federal District Commandant, Colonel Ireton, and two staff officers. His instructions were most severe. For the ease with which the entire East had been brought to bow to the supremacy of the central authorities, had led these to believe that the adoption of similar measures would have similar results in West Australia. Colonel Ireton was the right man for the task, but with the wrong orders, into the composition of which no spirit of forbearance had entered, nor any consideration that the State might have a mind of its own.

Even before the arrival of the Commandant, the local Government had received a peremptory wire from Melbourne demanding the punishment of the ringleaders in the election disturbances. And on the day following his return, the State legislative discussed the matter. It was a stormy sitting. Ministerial partisans pointed out that Western Australia was by no means the only place where acts of political violence had occurred. The Attorney-General denied that there were any ringleaders in the case, which he termed a spontaneous mob excess. In the end a resolution passed regretting the incident, and appealing to the Federal authorities to let bygones be bygones and to fix a near date for another polling, when care would be taken that the irregularities should not be repeated.

Though this attitude was studiously moderate, the temper of the local governing classes was not, as Colonel Ireton soon discovered. He found the coast militia totally disorganized. Owing to his prolonged, though unwilling, absence, Federal influence in the army was dead. Class I had been duly recruited in accordance with the proclamation, but it had fallen under the control of the State Government, which had appointed officers from the leading families on the coast, who were known for their separatist leanings. The Commandant's first act, therefore, was to call upon the Premier to cease all interference and to assist him to re-establish Commonwealth authority. In reply the Cabinet insisted, before everything else, on a guarantee that the constitution would be respected in all particulars. Colonel Ireton declared that such an undertaking was outside his department.

Immediately the cry of Federal insolence was raised. Another debate

took place in the Assembly, the Premier calling attention to the fact that the arbitrary resolution of the late Federal Parliament had removed legal means of safeguarding the constitutional rights of the State. Other speakers complained that nothing had been done to strengthen local fortifications, although money had been poured out for such purposes in the East; that would show the danger of trusting entirely to the Commonwealth rulers for the defence of the State. The outcome was another resolution affirming the need that Western Australians should remain masters in their own house, and authorizing the Premier to retain control of the army unless constitutional guarantees were given.

Colonel Ireton received due information of this decision together with the intimation that the local forces would be organized on Federal lines, to which end his advice would be welcome. Moreover, he was assured that the troops would always act in harmony with the Federal army, provided that there would be no demands the fulfilment of which would leave the State defenceless. This was a plain hint that the local levies would not serve outside West Australia. The Colonel refused to recognize restrictions. He boldly proceeded to Perth barracks and appealed to the patriotism of the rank and file. His antagonists evidently did not care to employ personal violence against him. But they hit upon a means much more effectual and insulting. The soldiers were ordered out of his presence by their own officers and marched off rifle on shoulder, leaving him in possession of the empty building.

The Commandant, in a towering rage, wired a detailed account of the affront to Melbourne. It made a profound impression there, and from that moment, probably, may be dated the triumph of Extremist policy against the obstinate State.

He was instructed by telegraph to allow nothing to stand in his way, and to seize control of the militia at all hazards. It was simply to be insistent from a safe distance. The Colonel could not help noticing how fierce passions were being worked up. Harsh measures, he knew, would precipitate a crisis. He was not merely a military man, but a patriot. And it caused him intense pain to think that his actions might end in bloodshed. For two days he tried to come to a friendly understanding by a judicious use of private persuasion. But he was quite unsuccessful. Even Labour men and advanced Radicals, who had the reputation of being staunch Federalists, held aloof. For the issue was no longer theoretic. By the resolution of the late Parliament, and by subsequent developments in the East, the Commonwealth rulers had shown disrespect of constitutional obligations. Whatever their private opinions were as to the necessity, or otherwise, of this policy, Western Australians, within the circle of influence of the local authorities, now drew together in defence of their State. History repeats itself. It was the same thing in America fifty years ago. There, in the southern parts, many

citizens lived, whose hearts were with the north for the abolition of negro slavery. Yet, when the call to arms sounded, they enlisted loyally under Confederate colours, in the cause of their home states against overbearing Washington. Matters were not advanced so far in Western Australia, but the current ran already in that direction.

Colonel Ireton recognized that his mission on the coast had failed. He could do nothing there. The naval detachment on board ss. *Katoomba* was not under his direct orders, and in any case too weak to be of any use. For a moment he thought of throwing up his commission. But that would merely have meant his professional ruin. Australia had no need of men in high positions who lost heart in a crisis. Moreover, his retirement would not improve the outlook. On the contrary, it would probably increase the madness of the State-Righters, There was still one chance for the Commandant — the miners of the interior were true Federalists. If he could get away to the goldfields, he might win their allegiance and, by training them to war, overawe the coast.

To gain time, and to throw his enemies off the scent — for they closely watched him — he fell ill. Nothing could have pleased the local authorities better, since it allowed them to postpone harsh measures while they quietly strengthened their hold on the masses. Colonel Ireton sent for the commander of ss. *Katoomba*, a naval lieutenant born in South Australia, whom he trusted and with whose assistance the escape was arranged. It was certain that, as soon as it became known in Perth that the Colonel was in the interior, his telegraphic connexion with headquarters would be interrupted. For this reason he wished to take with him the wireless apparatus fitted on the *Katoomba* as well as two experts to work it. As for the electricity required Kalgoorlie would not miss it.

The young lieutenant played his part well. Colonel Ireton got worse and worse, so bad, in fact, that he could not receive visitors for several days. Long cyphergrams were exchanged with Melbourne, but, under the circumstances, no suspicions were aroused. The two experts, with the wireless apparatus, left by rail, in ordinary garb, without attracting any attention. And on August 21, after the arrival of the mail steamer from Europe, a middle-aged gentleman of commercial aspect booked passage to Kalgoorlie by first train. It was the Colonel! SS. *Katoomba* remained in port for the best part of another week. Then she, too, steamed away. The entire Federal establishment on the West coast, which was looked upon with so much hatred and annoyance, had vanished suddenly.

## Chapter II: The Mastery of the Goldfields

COLONEL IRETON, alighting in Kalgoorlie, found himself in surroundings very different from those he had fled. However, he was quite prepared for this, for twice before he had been in the interior on journeys of inspection. He was not recognized and, indeed, he did not choose to proclaim his individuality and his purposes all at once. Instead, he renewed old acquaintances and made it his business to gather a circle of influential supporters round himself on the quiet. In this respect, he met with much success, and within twenty-four hours he felt strong enough to throw off his disguise.

The population of the Eastern Goldfields — as of all others — consisted mainly of adventurers who had drifted there from all parts of the world. Victorians, whom the decline of their own mines had driven further afield, and men of the other states of Eastern Australia, preponderated. There were many Europeans and Americans, but hardly any natives of Western Australia. Such a mixture of international elements did not understand the narrow parochialism of the coast. From the very nature of their toil in a hot desert country, at the bidding of wealthy companies, the shareholders of which resided mostly in the distant pleasure grounds of the globe, the miners were imbued with advanced socialistic ideas. Their vote had carried the accession of the State to the Commonwealth and was responsible for its permanent exclusive representation by Labour men in the Federal Senate. Moreover, the mining electorates never failed to send advanced Socialists into the House of Representatives, as well as into the State Assembly. In short, politically they formed a pronounced contrast to the coast, where a majority of the people cherished Moderate ideals and, consequently, resented fiercely the tendencies of the interior. For as the result of co-operation between the coastal labour minority and the interior Labour majority, advanced radicalism dominated the local legislature and continually menaced the coastal vested interests.

Yet the bonds of union were stronger than the mutual aversion. For the barren, arid goldfields depended absolutely on regular outside supplies of the necessaries of life and of all luxuries, which could only be drawn from the west coast as long as no transcontinental railway existed. On the other hand, the social and economic organization of the Coast was based on the needs of the goldfields, and must collapse if these should be

diverted to other quarters.

When the Japanese invasion became known, the goldfields had faithfully reflected the alarm of the Eastern States and had loyally indulged in anti-colour riots after the fashion set there, though on a smaller scale. The energetic steps taken by the Commonwealth to create a national army roused much sympathy. In all the centres, Class I formed companies who zealously practised shooting. As the policy of the central Government became more relentless, so martial enthusiasm increased. Many a patriot, tired of the monotony of the dusty desert, looked forward gladly to the chance of a change, particularly if it should be full of excitement. Message after message was despatched to Perth demanding instructions and officers, and, above all, modern arms. Nearly every man possessed an ordinary shot gun, good enough to serve for drill or even firing practice. But the recruits were eager to have proper service rifles, so that they might get rid of the idea that they were playing. The State authorities, however, were not in a hurry to equip and train the miners. They could not hope to exact support for the cause of narrow parochialism from this large body of reckless, self-conscious Federalists. Perth, therefore, aimed at keeping the population of the gold-fields unorganized while arming, and thus placing in an advantage the coastal districts.

Colonel Ireton, on reaching Kalgoorlie, discerned at once that the underhandedness of the State Government had resulted in universal discontent. Many leaders of the miners were quite circumspect enough, especially with the aid of the latest advices, to penetrate the real meaning of the neglect. He set himself, without delay, to benefit by the resentment. Having assured himself privately of the assistance of a number of stout partisans, he called a secret meeting of the leaders of trades-union and friendly societies. Economic and political organization was very complete, and every association had become a centre of the malcontents. It was on this occasion that the Colonel threw off his reserve and carried his audience by a straight-forward, patriotic appeal. He received a unanimous promise of support. But it was now necessary to prevent that Perth should be warned early. He proceeded to the Post Office, and, proving his authority, ordered that no telegrams dealing with political and military developments, and no cypher telegrams, should be forwarded to the coast. He had no difficulty there, as he had to do with Federal officials. This precaution did not suffice, however. There were the railway telegrams, of which he had to secure control. Moreover, if he did not wish to see defeated all his efforts to maintain secrecy, he had to interrupt the train service, so that the conveyance of passengers or letters might be impossible. As the railway was under State management, he had to employ force. At the head of a numerous band of patriots, he overawed the staff of Kalgoorlie station. His wireless experts seized the

telegraph. Others removed vital parts from engines, and even blocked and guarded the line. A special train, managed by the most determined and trusted Federalists, was despatched in the direction of Perth. These men were under orders to confiscate or destroy every telegraphic installation as far west as Merenden, to block the line at that place, to keep a strict watch there, to disable or to shunt back to Kalgoorlie any engine on the wayside stations. Colonel Ireton had opened hostilities. To account for the stoppage of the railway traffic, the authorities in Perth were informed by wire that a great train disaster had occurred. Apart from misleading them, this move was calculated to attract as much rolling stock as possible. The Colonel compelled the station people to make urgent appeals for relief trains, which he intended to seize, thus diminishing the means of communication at the disposal of the State.

Such strenuous measures could not remain secret even for hours. Kalgoorlie was thrown into fits of wild excitement. And the Commandant deemed it wise to take the citizens into his confidence forthwith. At night he addressed a huge open-air meeting by torchlight and unfolded his plans and his reasons with the utmost frankness. He said that he was instructed by the only lawful authority to organize the militia of the State, and that he would do so, even if he had to lead the loyal miners upon Perth. He adjured his audience to stand by him in defence of White Australia, in defence of the glorious inheritance of their race. He said that he did not plead for mercy or for favours; he merely pleaded that they should act like men, not like cowards, and should declare their allegiance there and then — for the misguided West Coast or for the Commonwealth. The ground had been well prepared by his supporters, and hurricanes of cheers signified the decision of the gathering. Afterwards the town council held a special sitting. At midnight the Federal Commandant was introduced, and the members placed themselves at his disposal in a body. He lost no time. Next morning he attended a conference of the managers of the chief local mines and promised that the stoppage of traffic would not last for over five days, on his part. Training hours were fixed in a friendly spirit so that the unavoidable work of the industry should not be interfered with. Then he worked out a simple but efficient course of military exercise and appointed the first batch of officers of the local militia. He slept in the train which rushed him off to other centres. His journey was an unbroken triumphant process. Everywhere he received ovations; everywhere he won the gratitude of the most influential and capable partisans by rewarding them with officerships. Within a few days Colonel Ireton was the undisputed master of the great Eastern Goldfields.

Meanwhile, relief trains rolled down from Perth. The comedy with regard to the imaginative disaster was, indeed, well maintained. Detailed lists of the casualties and descriptions of the losses were wired to the

departmental heads. It was alleged that the line had been torn up and that considerable time must elapse until repairs could be finished and the traffic resumed. That all seemed so reasonable that no suspicions were aroused. Goods trains, too, went down the line. For there had been quite a burst of orders from the interior. Shrewd traders foreseeing prolonged trouble, thought it worth while to increase their stocks. Colonel Ireton rather encouraged this business venture — for reasons of his own. The merchants had fullest use of the telegraph for the transmission of open commercial messages.

But never an engine, or a car, or an employee returned from the West. Something seemed to be radically wrong. The responsible managers became restless. And the Minister for Railways had just decided to travel to the scene of the accident when the secret of the Colonel's illness leaked out. An employee, anxious for promotion, evaded the watch set by the Federals by leaving Southern Cross on a bicycle one dark night. He stopped a down train, but had much difficulty in convincing the startled attendants that he was not joking. The train was rushed back to the coast, where the news created consternation. Colonel Ireton was nearly forgotten. His retirement was explained satisfactorily by his illness. Courteous inquiries were as courteously acknowledged by his orderlies, who guarded his sick-bed and regretted deeply that personal callers could not be admitted, on account of the patient's nervous breakdown. Nobody really cared about him as long as he lay quiet. Disabled, he was preferable even to a more pliant substitute. And now the truth came out that his illness was a trick, as well as the railway disaster, and that he was in a position to menace the State authorities. Perth rang with the news. The two orderlies, hearing of it, hurried on board the *Katoomba*, which left Freemantle at once.

Until then (August 28) the State Government does not seem to have regarded seriously an armed conflict with the Commonwealth. Probably the former considered that it could bullock through by sheer obstinacy, relying not a little on the inaccessibility of its nerve centres by land, and on the fact that its antagonists possessed no navy. This assurance was no longer possible. Colonel Ireton's actions spelt compulsion. At the same time the complications caused by them went far to make a peaceful understanding unlikely. While only the Commonwealth had to be reckoned with, such an understanding might not have been popular, but it was neither very distasteful. It was quite different now that a Federal officer had succeeded to seduce a component part of the State to disloyalty. The whole west coast felt the blow as a mortal insult. Under such pressure, submission would be dishonour, and was therefore out of the question. As it had been all over the Continent, so it was in its western corner: when the crisis developed, Extremists gained the upper hand. Though the Government did nothing for some days, seemed,

indeed, to be paralysed, strong influences were at work under the surface, shaping rapidly a course towards open resistance against the Commonwealth. The movement was directed by the officers of the local militia, who were afraid, with some reason, that the first Federal measure would be their own removal, after the insubordination and malice with which they had treated their lawful chief. Those who had shown their disdain too openly might expect even worse punishment. The fruit of their alarm seems to have been a regular conspiracy for the purpose of retaining power by means of the continuance of State control over the troops. These officers, forming the best organized body in the community, and being connected by ties of kinship with the leading families, rapidly acquired influence enough to overawe the official Government. While Ministers were still feebly struggling against being reduced to mere puppets of a military oligarchy, an incident happened which spurred the malcontents to action and committed the whole State to a policy of violence.

Immediately on receipt of the first news of the Japanese invasion, the Federal authorities had ordered war stores in England. After the mobilization, Parliament had voted large amounts for further purchases. As haste was deemed an important consideration, these had not been confined to Great Britain, but ready modern armaments had also been bought up in Europe and America. Among the latter was a large parcel of rifles — several thousand — with proper ammunition, and two light batteries of four guns each, from prominent German factories. A German steamer, manned entirely by a white crew, brought them out, and called also at Southampton, in consequence of the British maritime counter-boycott, where she shipped several thousand regulation service rifles. Somehow, in the stress of work, the responsible Federal officials seem to have lost sight of this cargo. At any rate, the vessel steamed into Swan River for further orders (September 2). The Freemantle agents informed the local authorities. A hurried meeting of the Cabinet was held. This was the crisis; for the seizure of all the high-class war materials would ensure the superiority of the coastal militia over any forces which Colonel Ireton might be able to put forward. But it would also be tantamount to a challenge against the Commonwealth. Some Ministers had not lost yet all sense of proportion and entreated their colleagues to be calm and loyal. At this juncture, it was proposed that the commanding officer should be consulted. That settled the question. The military demanded practically unanimously that they should be provided with the best weapons available, to which right they claimed to be entitled as much as their Eastern comrades. The Government declared its willingness to accept the consignment on behalf of the Department of Defence. It was landed quickly without demur, for the agents, overwhelmed with profitable business on account of the maritime trouble,

wanted to get the steamer away as quickly as possible.

When the vessel arrived at Adelaide, the occurrence became known, and a torrent of abuse was poured upon the Federal authorities for the carelessness of their officials. The Commonwealth Government breast the criticism by assuming at once an uncompromising attitude. Perth was requested by telegraph to make immediate restitution of Federal property. But the more closely the State rulers inspected their acquisition, the less did they feel inclined to part with it. Moreover, they were already committed too far. Even a belated submission had ceased to be regarded as a guarantee against reprisals. Too much bitterness had been engendered; the populace began to grow accustomed to the idea of resistance in preference to slavish obedience. Better, the State-Righters argued, a fight in the open, now that the local troops were splendidly equipped, than exposure to the silent revenge of the Continental Extremists after the last constitutional safeguards should have been surrendered.

The Government of Western Australia replied that State money had been spent in the purchase of war materials and that, therefore, the people of the West were entitled to a share. Particularly so since a Federal officer had created dissensions within the community and was doing his worst to bring about a breach of the peace. Nevertheless, restitution would be made on condition that Colonel Ireton should be recalled, and as soon as he had left the state. Melbourne rejected these terms and repeated its demands, adding, moreover, a request for a formal apology and punishment of the responsible officials. Perth, in return, remained obdurate and revived the question of constitutional guarantees foreshadowing an appeal to the Imperial authorities for protection in case of coercive measures. This message terminated the diplomatic intercourse between Commonwealth and State.

## Chapter III: Clash of Arms

EVEN when the Government of Western Australia seized the consignment of Federal armaments, it had not finally decided on open resistance against the Commonwealth, though this action was distinctly hostile. Nothing illustrates more plainly the irresolution than the fact that the telegraphic connexions between Colonel Ireton and Melbourne quarters were not interrupted until the middle of September. So the Colonel had received timely warning of the improved equipment of the coast militia. But he was urged nevertheless to establish Federal authority throughout the State, by all means and at all hazards. In this effort, the cyphergram stated, he would be assisted by armed co-operation on the part of the Commonwealth, if it should become necessary. The Central authorities, and the Extremists at their back, dared at least to face the situation squarely. However, as soon as the wires snapped Colonel Ireton found himself completely isolated. The Federal department had not finished its wireless installations, and so his own apparatus was useless. He was thrown back on his own resources at a most trying time.

The District Commandant had made good progress with the organization of the miners. He had gained the confidence of his subordinates, and generally made the men feel that they were now parts of an efficient machine which could be relied upon to work smoothly. He hoped that a month's patient drill would render his forces superior to the coastal militia. It was a bitter disappointment for him to hear that, owing to a departmental blunder, the enemy had been given the advantage of better armaments. But he wisely kept his troops in ignorance of this! His own equipment had been a source of trouble to him from the outset. Altogether, he could put forward about 5,000 old service rifles, which had been sent down in the past from the coast which, with usual selfishness, had retained the newer patterns for its own use. In addition, there were on the goldfields about 4,000 shot guns of all makes, which had been requisitioned for public needs. Under any circumstances it was risky to match an army possessed of such weapons against a better-armed enemy. But when the latter was now equipped with the most modern rifles, and with artillery into the bargain, the venture became well-nigh desperate.

Inactivity, however, presented a danger still worse — the certainty of

being starved out. Since the State rulers had found out the trick of the alleged train disaster, railway communication with the coast had ceased entirely. And the goldfields were absolutely dependent on imports for the necessaries of life. Thanks to the speculative enterprise of the traders, substantial additions had been made to the stocks. The traders were not permitted to reap the benefits of their smartness immediately. As soon as it became evident that the trouble would be prolonged, Colonel Ireton declared all provisions Government property and paid for them in receipts for settlement by the Federal authorities. This precaution staved off a panic. But it did not really improve the situation, which was, briefly, that, with the utmost care and economy, the resources of the eastern goldfields might last, without supplements from outside, into the second half of October. By the end of that short period of grace, therefore, new sources of supply would have to be opened either by the decisive victory or by the unconditional surrender of the army of the interior.

Everything considered, the Colonel did not feel justified to wait idly until the Commonwealth should have struck a blow. His orders were peremptory. Hesitation would merely discourage his men. Perhaps the Coast would submit rather than fight all Australia, which would be inevitable if it should forcibly resist him. His hopes of peaceable settlement, however, were rather low. Neither did he overlook the formidable difficulties in his path if the Coast should make a stand. But, at any rate, an active campaign would teach his forces the practice of war and would prepare them for a great effort when time should be ripe for co-operation with a Federal expedition. These reasons induced Colonel Ireton to push forward. On September 18 he moved his vanguard by rail to the vicinity of Spencer's Brook Junction, which was occupied after a sharp skirmish with a picket of the enemy the same night. The consequence was that the railway communication between the State capital and Albany districts was cut off.

On the following morning, the citizens of Perth and Freemantle were startled by the alarming headlines of the Press: "Civil War," "Commonwealth Breaks Constitution." "Federal Commandant Opens Hostilities." By noon an official proclamation was published calling to arms all males from eighteen to under forty-five years of age. In the Assembly, the Premier declared that they would uphold the rights of the State, war or peace. The Government was, indeed, confident that the attack would be repelled. For the call to arms was, after all, only a formality. Class I stood ready to take the field. And during the last few weeks rifle corps and volunteers companies for the older classes had sprung into being by private efforts. It was well known that the enemy was badly equipped and had no artillery. The only point on which the State-Righters were anxious was whether the local Labourites would

espouse the State cause or whether they would refuse to fight their comrades of the interior, in which case resistance would be practically at an end. But the Labourites sided with their fellow-citizens. Probably the alarming reports spread broadcast in the capital about Colonel Ireton's tactics were not without influence on their final decision. In fact, the invasion had degenerated into a great victualling raid. Conscious of the menace of famine, the miners confiscated all the live stock and all the provisions in the agricultural districts where they found themselves. That was unavoidable, but it had a very bad effect, especially as there were some ugly incidents of maltreatment of the enraged owners. There was no time for calm reasoning. Every man on the coast fancied that not only the community but his personal property was in danger. And the subtle contrast between opulent city and predatory province, which stretches through the ages, was revived in this modern place, under modern conditions, fanning world-old passions to fever-heat.

The command of the State army was entrusted to a retired British officer of distinguished career who had settled on a small estate near Perth, and with an energy and thoroughness peculiar to old military men, had identified himself with the cause of West Australia to such an extent that he hated the very name of the Commonwealth. His name was Morthill, and he was honoured by the title of "General," perhaps because the Federal leader ranked only as Colonel. General Morthill enjoyed the entire confidence of his staff, and soon became the virtual dictator of the State, in whose hands the responsible ministers were as soft wax. He was, in every respect, a foeman worthy of Colonel Ireton's steel.

General Morthill's task was by no means simple. There was a large element of uncertainty about the situation, which had to be faced — the possibility of a Federal attack from the sea. To meet this danger, he concentrated his army at Perth. It consisted of nearly 4,000 well-trained men of Class I, who were all armed with new regulation service rifles, and of a reserve of 6,000 men, who were now being organized and for whom an abundance of good modern rifles was available. There were also the two batteries which had been seized, and four older, somewhat heavier guns. The General was a little inconvenienced by the shortage of rolling stock, owing to Colonel Ireton's confiscation of railway material of the Eastern line. In consequence the traffic of the other lines had been reduced to narrow limits, and every engine and truck which could be spared had been brought to the capital, the terminus of all the railways, whence, accordingly, troops could be moved out rapidly in every direction. Against Colonel Ireton's forces, the General, who fully recognized their desperate situation, proposed to play a waiting game, in the hope that they would be starved quickly into surrender. Their danger, however, was also their protection against attack. For the small State army could not be wasted in warfare in an arid desert, dependent on a

single railway line. Wherefore only a detachment was posted at the fringe of the agricultural country to prevent raids by the enemy.

But the occupation of Spencer's Brook Junction was eagerly accepted by General Morthill as a challenge to battle. Both sides spent the following day hurrying troops forward. On September 20 the first skirmishes were fought and towards evening a State company succeeded in ousting the miners from a prominent hill, known as Mount Mary, which commanded the station. After that Colonel Ireton decided to retreat. His opponent had at least 5,000 men on the spot, while his own numbers did not exceed 4,000, because he had to leave behind strong detachments to guard the railway and the waterworks against treacherous destruction, there being some State sympathizers on the field, though they did not dare to proclaim themselves as such. Above all, the day's struggle had convinced him that he had no chance against the superior equipment of the enemy, whose fire was effective over a much longer range. During the night the army of the Interior entrained for the east and the main body was beyond the reach of General Morthill at dawn. The Colonel, however, to mask his failure and to counteract the discouragement likely to follow in its wake, had resolved to execute a surprise attack upon the most advanced State position.

For this purpose he retained 400 volunteers. A train stood ready about a mile beyond the slopes of Mount Mary, its last two carriages occupied by marksmen. Before sunrise (September 21) the volunteers crept uphill towards the hostile encampment, and as soon as it was light enough, a rush was made. But the enemy was on his guard General Morthill had decided on the previous evening to mass his foes on Mount Mary and to plant artillery there. Some reinforcements had already arrived under cover of the darkness. So, after some disorder at the outset, resulting in heavy losses on the part of the defenders, the fight came to a standstill. And soon the superior numbers and weapons of the State troops began to tell and the miners were thrown back. Before they could regain their train and safety, General Morthill, hurrying up, launched a counter attack. A party of his sharpshooters took up a sheltered position on the slopes whence they could range over the whole ground over which the volunteers had to return. Colonel Ireton was wounded in the arm. Just as he reached his carriage, two guns opened fire. There was only one escape left to him, if he did not wish to fall into the hands of the enemy with all his men. That was to leave the loiterers to their fate. After a warning whistle and another short wait, which during the struggle raged round the cars, the occupants of which fired from the windows and platforms, the train started, carrying off about 230 passengers. The other 170 stayed behind dead or wounded and in captivity. Altogether it was a disastrous affair for the Federals.

Colonel Ireton did not deceive himself regarding the consequences of

the rebuff. His men, it was proved, were equipped too inferiorly to hold their own against the State troops. The usefulness, even the salvation, of his organization depended now on Federal action from the sea, which would divide the forces arrayed against him and would give him a chance of co-operation. Two days after his return to Kalgoorlie, there was a development which somewhat revived his hopes. At last he was able to communicate with Melbourne by wireless telegraphy. The main station had been constructed at Cape Borda on Kangaroo Island, which was already in cable connexion with the Continent. Three steamers, fitted with the necessary apparatus, completed the system. One was stationed in the centre of the Great Australian Bight near the point of intersection of 131° East and 35° South, another about five degrees further west and the same latitude, and the third was anchored in Port Esperance. This latter intercepted the messages from Kalgoorlie, only slightly more than 200 miles distant in a straight line, and transmitted them by way of the floating station to Cape Borda. None of the intervening spaces exceeding 300 miles, the installation, after some experiments, served its purpose very well.

Colonel Ireton at once telegraphed a summary of his failure to headquarters and insisted on the following alternative. Either a maritime expedition would have to be dispatched within ten days, or he would have to disband his forces and to surrender arms and his person, to prevent the horrors of famine in the loyal districts under his care.

But he was not the only one who received encouragement about this time. On October 1 a British cruiser steamed into Swan River to the immense joy of the coastal population, which knew that its leaders had appealed to London for Imperial protection less than three weeks ago. The arrival of the warship was interpreted as a prompt response and hailed as proof of British sympathy for the State. And the local Government did nothing to disabuse the masses, though it was aware that the demonstration, in reality, meant nothing of the kind. The cruiser had been sent to re-assure and to calm the people, not to excite it. For the lessons of the immediate past had not been quite lost upon England. Its statesmen did not wish to interfere in the domestic arrangements of the Commonwealth. Any other course would have been open to the suspicion that it was an attempt to exploit the present unhappy situation of Australia, and would probably have led to a violent revival of indignation in the sister-dominions. Moreover, educated political thought in Great Britain favoured Federation of the distant possessions as a means of concentrating and increasing Imperial power. Assistance to secession in one case, for the sake of temporary advantage, would have created a fatal precedent which in future might be fastened upon by malcontents in other colonies. For this reason alone it was not to be countenanced for a moment. Perhaps the trouble in itself was not

regretted in London. While it lasted, the Commonwealth certainly could not devote much attention to the Northern Territory, and things there would be allowed to settle down. But all that would come about without Great Britain taking sides. Accordingly, the reply to the anxious State Government was couched in non-committal terms and merely expressed a firm hope that all parties would adhere strictly to a constitutional course.

It was a pious wish. Already rumours were current in Perth that a Federal fleet was on the point of sailing for the west coast. The Commonwealth Government, while maintaining the greatest secrecy with regard to the strength of its preparations, had allowed this fact to leak out, in the hope to alarm its antagonists and to induce them to concentrate their forces in defence of the capital, relieving the pressure on Colonel Ireton's army.

The Colonel, now in constant communication with headquarters, did not fail to scatter broadcast the good news of approach of succour from the East among his faithful followers. The work of reorganization proceeded with renewed energy. He established a reliable scouting service. His horsemen starting from a point on the railway about thirty miles east of Spencer's Brook Junction, which point he had fortified as an advanced base, made stubborn incursions into the enemy's territory. It was arduous work, in which many lives were lost, for in this guerilla warfare no side gave quarter. The most daring scouts pushed forward to within sight of Perth and kept the Colonel informed of every important movement of the hostile army.

Meanwhile General Morthill did not sleep on his laurels. He quite realized his danger of being caught between two fires. Yet he did not lose hope. His troops had already shown fine spirit. They fought for home and hearth, and had this advantage, that they were not in their own country, where the entire population was backing them up, where losses could be promptly filled and the wounded would be sure of loving care. On the other hand, the Federals would be absolutely dependent on a floating base, and from the moment they set foot on land they would find themselves on hostile soil, without any refuge in case of rebuff. The same considerations applied to Colonel Ireton's army, which, with every mile of its approach towards the coast, would be removed further from friendly support. General Morthill was inclined to underrate the importance of the miners. He knew that they were armed badly, and concluded from the hurried retreat after the first encounter that they were not possessed of the right enthusiasm either.

Business was at a standstill in Western Australia. The Government had no longer any real influence. For some days, there was much talk of its resignation. But as such a course would not have relieved its members from the responsibility for events which had already happened it came to

nothing. The military opposed resolutely all backsliding tactics and insisted that the State should face its fate with dignity. Probably there was still a hope that allround firmness might lead to Imperial intervention. The Cabinet again protested by cable in London. But the Imperial authorities did not choose to depart from their attitude of correct reserve.

It was evident that the State stood alone. The Government now called upon General Morthill to see that the community be in a position to repulse outside violence. He became dictator. At his command Albany district was abandoned, and its defenders withdrawn to Perth, on the principle that the available forces, small as they were, should not be distributed over large distances and exposed to the danger of being cut off. Nine thousand men were massed within fifteen miles radius from Perth Post Office, and 3,000 more were camped at Midland Junction, ready to be thrown against the army of the interior, which was further opposed by a vanguard of 600 men strongly entrenched at Spencer's Brook Junction. Albany and Freemantle ports were mined.

These were the preparations of the State when the Federal fleet was signalled in its waters off Port Esperance (October 4). It stood out to sea again and proceeded to Albany, where a demonstration was made (October 5). For several hours the big steamers hovered round the entrance of King George Sound and several shells were fired into the quiet town. At nightfall the fleet continued its journey. There was method in these manoeuvres. The Federal Commander-in-Chief had established wireless communications with Colonel Ireton and had exchanged plans of the campaign. The delay in the South had the purpose of attracting attention to the threatening invasion, and of facilitating thus the quiet advance of the army of the Interior within striking distance.

Colonel Ireton acted promptly. He had organized a mounted corps of 2,500 men and had equipped them with the best rifles. But this was his striking force, which he wished to keep intact for the decisive blow. The honour of opening the road was reserved to the second line, consisting of about 4,000 miners, who were to return to the gold-fields as soon as they had succeeded. About noon on October 5 the miners attacked the entrenched position of the State vanguard, after scouts had blown up the railway behind to delay the hurrying up of reinforcements. They were repulsed several times with severe losses. Again and again they charged, until after more than two hours they carried the rebels' camp. The still fierce resistance was stamped out finally by the free use of handbombs — a miner's contrivance. Only about 200 survivors escaped. The casualties of the victors outnumbered the entire strength of the defenders before the battle.

Before nightfall another engagement was fought along the railway line

between the retreating miners and belated State reinforcements. But Colonel Ireton, with his picked cavalry and others, to the number of 4,000 altogether, did not wait for them. Instead, he turned southwards and occupied York, on the direct highway to Perth, in the afternoon. His chances were much improved. He had captured nearly all the modern rifles with which the State vanguard had been armed and, moreover, he had gained a start of several hours. In fact, he had outflanked the enemy.

General Morthill, who had hastened to the scene of trouble on the first news, was the man to make good a passing mistake. As soon as his scouts had informed him of Colonel Ireton's movements, he stopped the fight and arrested the advance of his troops. All night he diverted further reinforcements to the neighbourhood of the highroad, a distance of about ten miles over rough tracks in hilly country. His intention was to seize Mount Observation, fifteen miles from York in the direction of Perth. But herein he was forestalled by the Colonel, who had dispatched a vanguard to occupy this commanding point, and who followed with his whole army at dawn on October 6. All day long, the miners held Mount Observation successfully in a merciless struggle, mainly owing to their exclusive employment of handbombs, with which they repeatedly defeated the frantic rushes of the State troops at the critical moment. In the afternoon, however, a most discouraging development occurred in the rear of the Federals. General Morthill had repaired the railway and had sent several trains filled with troops to within two miles of York, which township had fallen into his hands. The retreat of the army of the Interior had been cut off. Its direct advance by road on the capital had also become impossible, because the enemy, though not yet victorious, was invincible by reason of his numbers and his equipment. Next morning, then, it would be surrounded on all sides. Artillery would come into play against it. And the final result, under such circumstances, could not be doubtful.

Colonel Ireton had, of course, left his wireless apparatus on the goldfields. So he was absolutely isolated from the outside world, without accurate knowledge of the activity of the Federal fleet. But he was aware that by this time the latter must be ready to land the army of invasion, and that the descent upon the coast would be attempted southwards of Freemantle. If he, therefore, wished to be of service in the decisive battle, he had only one chance of arriving early enough, or at all. It was quite feasible for him to evade to the south, before the ring had been closed tightly, and to lead his mounted corps over rough country and through thick forests upon Rockingham, in the vicinity of which township the disembarkment would probably take place. However, if he did so, he would have to sacrifice the infantry of miners, which, contrary to original plans, had followed him so far. Its presence would merely have hampered the rapid passage of the cavalry. With a heavy heart the

Colonel divided his forces. After the losses of the day, still about 3,200 men remained. Two thousand horsemen he placed under his own command. The others, 900 men, infantry, and 300 men, cavalry, exclusive of the wounded, he entrusted to the leadership of his oldest captain. About three o'clock in the morning, Colonel Ireton, with his 2,000 riders, crept down the eastern flank of Mount Observation and marched south. Soon the deep head gullies of Helena River separated him from the State army; from that section of it, he had to fear no more.

At daybreak (on October 7) the Federal fleet appeared off Freemantle and began to shell the town. But the forts made such stout resistance that two hours later the fleet headed southwards again, without having accomplished much. The information was telegraphed to General Morthill, who was busy preparing a new attack on Mount Observation. That able leader perceived the vital necessity of crushing the army of the interior at once, before an invading force should be ready to co-operate with it. His conviction found expression in a series of furious assaults on the miners' position. The heroic little party of defenders had formed numerous subdivisions to mask its weakness and practised bushman warfare with admirable tenacity. About 9 a.m. the camp was carried. Shortly afterwards General Morthill, whose presence was urgently required on the coast, returned to Perth, leaving his most trusted subordinate to finish the work of destruction. This the latter did thoroughly. The miners were hotly pursued and driven right into the arms of the State detachment approaching from York. And the proud subordinate, looking about him on the field of carnage strewn with over three thousand dead and dying men, little dreamt of Colonel Ireton's escape, but reported to his General that the active army of the interior had ceased to exist.

## **Chapter IV: Civil War in Australia and Its Inevitable Result**

THE Federal Parliament assembled on August 28, 1912. The first weeks of the session were given over largely to the evolution of order out of the chaos of the elections. Where so many interests clashed, where so many intricate political questions required the utmost nicety of balancing and confidential negotiations before they could be handled safely, the startling developments in the farthest West were rather welcomed by Parliament as a means of diversion. At first nobody understood the seriousness of the situation. But when the drift of events at Perth became unmistakable, the great governing party of the Extremists entered wholeheartedly into the contest. Among them the most uncompromising and aggressive patriots, in whom, whatever their former political opinions, the crisis had fostered the wish to end the States misery for ever, blended with men whose economic ideas were socialistic and pre-required, if not a united Universe, at least a closely-knit Commonwealth for an experimental base. Both these sections had thus, from different motives, the same interest to seize this chance of enhancing Federal supremacy. After the confiscation of armaments in Perth, the Government hastened to fall in with their demands of rigour, which, indeed, no one in the House opposed. For the remnant of Moderates had learnt the value of silence on all points where Commonwealth and State Sovereignty collided; they did not wish to expose their patriotism to further suspicion.

Votes were passed to enable the Executive to grapple with the rebellion, as it was termed. Troops assembled at Adelaide, drawn from New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Steamers were bought or chartered and altered into transports. While these preparations were going on, the reports of the defeat of Colonel Ireton reached Melbourne. The Government was accused by its own supporters of unnecessary delay in the despatch of the penal expedition, and saved itself only by promising that an army strong enough to impose the will of Parliament upon the rebels would leave within a week.

On October 1, 1912, the Federal Fleet departed from Adelaide conveying 15,000 men with 28 guns. After demonstrating off several points on the coast of West Australia, it arrived, about ten o'clock in the morning of October 7, off Rockingham, the port of the Yarra Timber

Company, situated about fifteen miles south of Freemantle, and, after a short bombardment of the little township, began to land there the army of invasion. Telegraph and telephone reported the news to the State authorities, and large forces were immediately hurried southwards from Perth. Early in the afternoon, the first shots were exchanged between the scouts of the two armies. The Federal Commander-in-Chief was not at all anxious to precipitate battle. He knew well that his men were raw soldiers, and therefore liable to sudden panic. The enemy, on the contrary, could not be supposed to be suffering from similar weakness, having already become accustomed to concerted action under fire in the struggle against the miners. For these reasons the Commander-in-Chief did not like to take chances; he preferred to go slow and to rely on the more thorough training of his men, on his superior artillery, the efficiency of which could be augmented by the guns of his four auxiliary cruisers, as long as he remained within range of the latter.

General Morthill, who arrived at Clarence, halfway between Freemantle and Rockingham, at 3 p.m., was, on the contrary, eager to strike a decisive blow, being aware that the Federals, after having been cramped together on board ship in rough seas for a week, could not be in the height of condition. He rapidly led his vanguard against the Federal outposts and succeeded in sweeping them back. Night fell and stopped further progress. But the State troops were able to occupy Mount Brown, a prominent hill less than four miles distant from Rockingham, and to place eight guns in this commanding position.

This move practically forced the continuation of the battle next morning (October 8). For Rockingham could not be held by the Federals unless the galling fire from the State batteries on Mount Brown was silenced. During several hours a murderous struggle raged round the hill. The decision was brought on at last by a tremendous bombardment of General Morthill's key from the cruisers. One of the vessels took ground and had to be abandoned, sinking soon afterwards. But the heavier calibre of the remaining three ships' guns proved too strong. A State gun was wrecked. The defenders suffered terribly. By noon they had to quit the position, which was occupied at once by two Federal regiments with four batteries.

The advantage gained by the Commonwealth troops was exploited with energy. Another battery was established even further north on the road bend between Mount Brown and Clarence, well within the cruisers' range. Meanwhile the State army had retreated behind Clarence, which was burning fiercely. It was nearly three o'clock in the afternoon when a strong force of Federal volunteers rushed at them to complete their overthrow. But General Morthill was not beaten. Now that he had withdrawn his whole army beyond the cruisers' range, his resistance became desperate. Rush after rush was repulsed. And in the end, his front

lines turned tables on the Federals in a furious counter-assault. Broken and decimated, and not too brilliantly supported, the volunteers fell back. Close behind, in hot pursuit, followed the West Australian élite, the sporting young manhood of Perth and Freemantle. General Morthill, by a masterly stroke of tactics, diverted them upon the advanced battery on the road bend. The covering Federal force, about 600 men strong, suddenly found themselves confronted by overwhelming numbers pressing so closely upon them that the batteries on Mount Brown and the cruisers had to cease fire in that direction, fearful of shelling their own ranks. It was the culminating moment of the battle. The Western Australians — in imitation of the miners — used handbombs with such deadly effect that every attempt to reinforce the advanced position was defeated. After a strenuous quarter of an hour, two-thirds of its defenders lay dead or wounded; who of the survivors could run, did so; and the battery was in the hands of the State army. But now, the spot having been abandoned by their own side, the Federal artillerists had their chance. From hill-slope and sea, they swept the battery with a hail of shell. As quickly as relays of horses could be brought up to remove the conquered guns, they were shot down. At last men hitched themselves to the guns, trying to drag them away, but they too, were mowed down in ranks. The position had become untenable. So the battery was wrecked with bombs. Then the State troops retreated, and the oncoming darkness saved them from further losses.

The terrible struggle of the afternoon left both armies in possession of the lines occupied by them at its beginning. General Morthill held a council of war, which resolved that the further advance of the Commonwealth should be contested inch by inch. Trenches were thrown up during the night. The State troops derived considerable encouragement from the arrival of reinforcements, belated portions of the Eastern division which had operated against Colonel Ireton. These, after the supposed annihilation of the miners, had thoroughly destroyed several miles of the Kalgoorlie railway. Not the slightest danger, therefore, was apprehended from that quarter.

All this time, Colonel Ireton was making a forced march across the Darling Range, that low cordillera unsurpassable in tristness, barrenness and steepness. His division passed the first night on a high hill near the junction of the gullies through which, in wet seasons, the waters rush which then form Helena River. About sunset on the second day they crossed the railway south of Kelmscott. The roar of the guns, twelve miles away, was plainly audible. Farms dot the country hereabouts, but the miners were not regarded with suspicion. Everybody took them for a Southern contingent which had been compelled, owing to the wholesale railway destructions, to make this short cut to the sea. Thus no warnings reached Perth in time. Just while the mortal combat round the advanced

battery was at its height, two orderlies sent forward by Colonel Ireton reported themselves to the Federal Commander-in-chief. Officers departed hurriedly to confer with the Colonel. It was arranged that the miners should spend the night near a pond, still eight miles from the battlefield, so that the men and horses might be quite refreshed and fit for the great task before them. Many messengers passed between the two Federal camps in the dark hours, and the plan of action in the morning was perfected.

At dawn the Commander-in-Chief informed his army that Colonel Ireton would attack the enemy without delay. The news caused unbounded joy. Soon the frontal battle was renewed with undiminished vigour, but the Western Australians planted firmly on a bush-covered ridge behind trenches repulsed every effort, and their ten guns, three towards the sea, three in the centre and four on the Eastern wing, replied uninterruptedly to the fierce cannonade of the Commonwealth artillery. Three hours elapsed, and still the Federals had made no headway. Many anxious eyes and ears were straining for a sign from the miners.

Colonel Ireton proceeded with the deliberation of a man sure of success. Leading his little army right into the rear of the State position upon the road from Clarence to Freemantle, he concealed an ambush of 400 men in a forest patch. The remainder of his troops silently enveloped the eastern wing of the West Australians. Suddenly 1,500 rifles burst into flames in flank and back of the Rebels. A thundering charge of cavalry flung aside the rear guards, rode down the detachments covering the eastern battery, and conquered the four guns, among wild shouts of "Colonel Ireton! The Miners!" Throwing round the guns, the miners opened fire at point-blank range upon the State centre, supported by a deadly fusillade. Further south, the Federals broke into frantic cheering, hurling themselves upon the trenches where they no longer met with resistance, and exerting the pressure of victorious thousands upon the wavering enemy. Nothing could stop the panic in the State ranks. General Morthill tried to save his remaining guns and to organize a retreat. For a few moments he revived the courage of his immediate followers by his personal heroism. In vain. Quickly he fell, mortally wounded, fighting valiantly to the last. It was the signal for his troops to begin throwing away arms and to stampede, a lawless rabble, towards Freemantle. But the ambushade soon barred their progress. Behind the Federals pursued hotly. No quarter was given. Only very few of the vanquished, who had the presence of mind to capture riderless horses, arrived at the port before the victors.

The chief instigators of Western Australian resistance had proceeded on the previous day to Freemantle, where they would be nearer the scene of action. As soon as they heard of the defeat, they rushed to the river and surrendered themselves to the commander of the British cruiser. This

officer thus found himself in a most uncomfortable position. He had, of course, been friendly with these men. And now they threw themselves upon his mercy. He knew that the Commonwealth authorities would be furious if he gave them shelter. But he also knew that Great Britain always protected political refugees. So he allowed them to stay on board until he should have consulted his superiors by cable. While terror stalked the cities and every acre for fifteen miles south was red with the blood of victimized patriots, the ringleaders, whose blunders and obstinacy were responsible for everything, were out of immediate danger.

By noon Freemantle was completely in the hands of the Federals, who hurried on, by rail and road, to the capital. Perth offered no further resistance. Colonel Ireton, at the head of his mounted miners, was the first to enter it — a fine compliment paid him by the Commander-in-Chief. His men were quartered in the General Post Office and he himself was the guest of the State Governor, whose authority for the last few weeks had been more nominal than ever, all the most important and far-reaching measures having been ordered in the form of departmental instructions issued by General Morthill. A proclamation was fixed at the principal street corners guaranteeing the safety of private citizens, but stating that every one who should be taken prisoner in State uniform after sunrise next morning would be dealt with summarily.

The State army, as an organized force, had ceased to exist. During the afternoon and evening, its scattered units continued to pour into the outskirts of Perth. The more orderly elements who lived there or had friends or relatives near, destroyed their uniforms and reassumed common garb. Others bought or begged or, in the general confusion commanded ordinary clothing and set out for the country. But a more reckless or patriotic remnant refused to submit so quietly. There was a small nucleus of resistance left. Several companies of the reserve who had remained in the capital and its port on police duty or for supervision of the supplies service, had retreated to Guildford, that rural suburb of Perth, at the first news of the disaster. Here they were joined by numbers of Irreconcilables. At first they had no common aim. But a former Federal officer, who had violated his oath by fighting for his State and was quite aware that no mercy would be extended to him and his kind, proposed that they should retreat to the northern farming district and carry on their defence from there, as all avenues of escape by sea were cut off. Of course, only horsemen could take this risk. Moreover, it was important that they should be provided with the necessaries of life, with victuals, spare clothing, money and valuables. These could be had at Guildford, but not for the asking. For the terrified inhabitants, trembling for their own skins, did no longer look with favour upon a soldiery which was important to protect them.

There was no time for parley. What was not given voluntarily, the Irreconcilables seized by force. Where resolute men defended their property arms in hand, blood was shed. All the fury and despair of the losers broke out in a final orgy. Soon the flames of pretty residences towered against the midnight sky, like giant torches in honour of civil war. Happily, the horror did not last long. Colonel Ireton, roused from the first comfortable sleep which he had enjoyed for months, came to the rescue of sacked Guildford. An ever brightening glare in the east directed his march. After a short, sharp encounter with the completely surprised Irreconcilables those of the latter, who had their horses handy, got away. The less fortunate ones were shot. And the deliverers spent the small hours fighting the flames.

For the next week, the Commander-in-Chief, in his capacity as Federal High-Commissioner, was kept busy reorganizing the civil government of Western Australia. His task was not easy, as all the leading men of the State had fled the country, or were dead or in hiding. Military officers filled the most important posts temporarily. The first practical work was the repair of the railways and the despatch of provisions to the Goldfields. Colonel Ireton was sent on a special mission to Kalgoorlie to convey the thanks of the Commonwealth to the loyal miners and, incidentally, to supervise the transport of the enormous quantities of gold piled up during the interruption of the coastal train service.

Later, the Colonel was employed to stamp out the last embers of the rebellion. Troops were transported by sea to Dongara and Geraldton. Armoured trains were fitted to control the northern line. A war of extermination was waged against the Irreconcilables who were commanded by former Federal officers who had sided with the State. These held out for weeks in inaccessible localities on the fringe of the farming districts. But their wants soon reduced them to stock-raiding and other predatory practices, with the result that in the end the whole countryside made common cause against them, and so the last phase of the fratricidal struggle deteriorated into a man hunt away in the backblocks north of Perth and the southern districts, full of heroic incidents, but devoid of historical interest except as far as serving, by reason of its sordidness and cruelty, to extinguish thoroughly any lingering sympathy which the coastal population might still cherish for the lost cause of Western Australia.

Like all civil wars within civilized communities, the rebellion was marked by extreme bloodiness. Considered relatively, the sacrifice of life had scarcely ever been equalled. Of the Federal regular forces, about 1,200 men were killed and nearly twice as many wounded. The casualties of the army of the interior were even higher; it is computed that 3,500 miners died in battle or perished afterwards. The State army is said to have lost 7,000 men, though no doubt many of the wounded

recovered under the care of their friends. These numbers do not include the victims of the campaign against the Irreconcilables, whose last stand was literally smothered in blood. Altogether, it is hardly an exaggeration to place the deathroll at over ten thousand. Such a sacrifice of Anglo-Saxon life had not been contemplated for generations. And the entire population of the mutinous Coast did not reach 150,000 souls!

Yet terrible as the ordeal was, it had its uses. It removed for ever the contention that the Continent lacked internal stability. Parochial politicians had so often played with the idea of secession that the world had become doubtful whether Federation expressed the true sentiment of the Australian people. The energy with which the struggle for mastery had been conducted and the rapid, complete victory of the Commonwealth provided the answer. The lesson had been taught that no backsliders were tolerated, and that Australia was indivisible.

All eyes turned now on the Federal Parliament, the sole arbiter over the fate of the West Coast. Contrary to the fears of many, the ruling majority, though dominated by the Extremists, showed wise moderation. Complete amnesty was granted to the rank and file who would join the Commonwealth colours within a month from date of proclamation. This extended to the irregular officers, with the limitation that these were to be transferred to the Eastern States and enlisted there without regard to their former rank in the rebel army, a humiliation mitigated, however, by the promise that they would be allowed, after a while, to qualify for promotion by examination. All private citizens, who would take within a month a new oath of allegiance to the Commonwealth before specially appointed commissions, were granted immunity from prosecution for any political or military acts in connexion with the late insurrection which might become known subsequently.

Excepted from the general pardon were Federal officers who had violated their oath by fighting for the State. Much might be said in excuse for their transgression, but it was considered advisable to make a warning example of them. That these men were quite conscious of the enormity of their offence is proved by the fact that not one of them surrendered to the mercy of the victors. Penalty of death was pronounced against them. It was in reality superfluous; for the survivors had all joined the Irreconcilables, who were shot without trial whenever caught.

Throughout Australia, the sheltering of the ring-leaders of the revolt on board a British cruiser was resented bitterly. Melbourne at once opened negotiations with London for their extradition. But the English Government refused to do so on the ground that their crime was political.

In vain the Federal Executive urged against this contention that the refugees were British subjects who had committed high treason, not foreigners worthy of protection against tyranny. To cut short the dispute, the cruiser was ordered to Colombo, where the fugitives were landed. So

they escaped the felon's death, and Parliament had to discover other means of punishment. Their private estates were declared to have reverted to the Commonwealth inclusive of all rights and future benefits to which the former owners and holders might be entitled. In this way the nation became possessed of much city and country property in the West, as well as of a large amount of money, valuable mining interests and other securities. However, generous provision was made for the families of the culprits; wives were granted annuities of £200 each, with an addition of £5 per year for each child under age. But a very important restriction was inserted: the recipients of such annuities were bound to reside in Australia. Thus the escapes were deprived of re-union with their families, or, as an alternative, the latter forfeited all claims of financial support.

Under the firm management of the Commander-in-Chief, order in West Australia was being restored. Life began to return to its ordinary channels; men again schemed and toiled for wealth. The removal of so many leading citizens had made room in front for others; and in the renewed vigour of business people strove to forget the hideous memories of the recent past. But this was impossible while military government continually reminded them of it. Therefore, genuine joy and gratitude was felt when it became known that a Civil High Commissioner had been appointed (October 30), and that, moreover, the choice had fallen upon a fellow-citizen, who in the days before Federation had been the idol of Western Australia and whose sympathies for his own State were above suspicion.

Timely relentlessness, then, as timely forgiveness, had restored — for ever, it is to be hoped — the unity of the Commonwealth.

## **Chapter V: Great Britain Garrisons the Northern Territory**

EVER since the closure of the Northern Territory Coast the British Government had been anxious to extend its control right over the district invaded by the Japanese. It is doubtful whether it was prompted by its ally; if so, the latter must have felt somewhat fearful of the White Guard, then on its march; and the eagerness, calmness and destructive thoroughness with which that body was met rather discount this assumption. Quite possibly the English Cabinet was moved entirely by a desire to achieve some progress regarding the interminable Australian entanglement, not only from reasons of Imperial import, but also from party-tactical considerations. So many signs were laid at its door by an amiable Opposition — estrangement of the Colonies, insecurity of foreign policy, financial weakness — that it was about time Ministers should score on their part, if they did not wish to be overwhelmed politically. The difficulty was to find a method which could be represented to the Home electors as tending towards a final settlement while meeting also with Australian applause.

The Imperial statesmen found themselves in a tight corner. Though the masses of the people, in their present temper, would have applauded any pressure put upon Australia, it would have been very unsafe to rely too much on the fact. As soon as calmness would prevail once more) everybody would be forced to admit that it was not the Commonwealth which had started the trouble, though its methods of dealing with it might be considered objectionable. Democracy is always sure to turn back from its extreme moods and to crush in the process the tools which gratified them. Apart from this danger, fully recognized by the astute managers of the party in power, it is certain that these were honest patriots and quite willing to help forward the cause of Australia as long as such a course did not imperil the delicate balance of international forces upon which their world-policy rested.

The Federal intimation that compensation would be granted to the sufferers from the anti-colour riots, on condition that the Japanese would leave the Northern Territory, was made by London the base of negotiations with Tokio, which was informed that the justice of its protests and claims would be greatly enhanced in the eyes of civilized humanity, if the immigrants, who had in effect broken the laws of the

community entered by them, would be repatriated. In exchange for this graceful re-arrangement, Great Britain promised that it would use all its influence to mitigate the severity of the Commonwealth enactments against Asiatics.

But the Japanese very naturally preferred the bird in hand, and pointed once more to the famine existing in their provinces, as rendering impossible the proposed step. London retorted that nobody asked them to return the refugees to the districts whence they had come originally, while in the Island of Formosa and on the mainland fertile, thinly settled lands abounded. In reply, the advisers of the Mikado stuck to their batch of old excuses. Their ally was quite right, and even as was suggested, they did unceasingly. Consequently, all resources were strained to breaking point in the effort of hurrying famishing hordes to salvation in those inviting spaces. However, there was a limit; it would be criminal to dump larger numbers without preparations and provisions to keep them alive. Others would be doomed to perdition, if a check was applied in favour of outsiders who were well off where they were now.

It seems that the British Government went so far as to propose unofficially that the Imperial Exchequer should bear a share of the repatriation expenses, in recognition of the economic crisis which Japan was just passing through. But Tokio, on the ground that it would be more merciful to shoot the thousands of refugees than to kill them by slow starvation, refused definitely to agree to their removal, insisting that they were interfering with nobody's rights. Moreover, it revived the offer regarding the transfer of allegiance. Nothing was gained by the diplomatic effort, except that Japan did not choose to push any further its claims for an indemnity and satisfaction from the Commonwealth. Meanwhile, the control of the Northern Territory waters was quite one-sided. It was absolutely preventive with regard to Australia navigation. But if the stories of naval men, since retired, can be believed at all, there is no doubt that the restrictions were merely formal as far as Japan was concerned. Steamers under the ensign of the Rising Sun were always hovering about the prohibited coast, ostensibly employed to convey stores and love-gifts from their native country to the "famishing exiles." So much has been admitted, in fact, by members of the English Cabinet, who have stated in Parliament that out of humanitarian considerations the supply of provisions to the settlement had been permitted, because such large numbers could not support themselves in the wilderness from the outset, and because, as long as their presence was tolerated, it would have been an impossible cruelty to let them starve. Apparently the indulgence was carried to the extent that the Japanese vessels were never searched and that nobody watched their movements closely. Under the circumstances it can be imagined easily how the cunning Orientals may have taken advantage of the laxity. Not only the manifold necessities

and even luxuries of life in an uncultivated country were imported, but also arms, ammunition, more men, and lastly the women who had formed part of the original settlement in Formosa and were to bring forth shortly a new generation, heirs by birthright of the new land.

Perhaps the British Government received, about the end of July, some special information which made it desirous of exercising, after all, a closer supervision. At all events, it proposed to the Federal authorities that an Imperial garrison should be placed in the Northern Territory. At first Melbourne would not hear of this, suspecting, no doubt, that a wish to interfere with the movements of the White Guard lay at the bottom of the suggestion. Moreover, its materialization would have looked very much like the establishment of a British protectorate over a province of the Commonwealth. But time passed, and nothing became known of any brilliant achievements on the part of the White Guard. Then came the revolt of Western Australia, and the turmoil and convulsion of that great crisis seemed likely to tax the resources of the Federation to the utmost for a long period. At this juncture London renewed its proposition and undertook, in proof of its good faith, to issue a declaration to Tokio, stating that the occupation of the Japanese settlement by an Imperial garrison would be on behalf of and without prejudice to the sovereign rights of the Commonwealth. As an additional bait it was hinted that the occupation would prepare the way for a later substitution of the Federal garrison after the restoration of law and order throughout the Continent. Probably this last suggestion induced the Federal Government to consent. After some further negotiations, Great Britain gained its point. No time was lost in giving effect to the agreement.

On October 1, 1912, a force of 400 marines, drawn from Singapore, landed in Junction Bay. Two days earlier the Imperial Government had addressed the note to Tokio, which had been formulated as the prerequisite of the occupation. The advisers of the Mikado confined themselves to a courteous acknowledgement. And the Japanese settlers welcomed the garrison among great rejoicings. For nearly a week the most suspicious landmark in the wilderness was the Union Jack, which, on its pole, seemed to be their most cultivated plant. The fort in the centre of the main village was given up to the marines as barracks — the same block of buildings upon which little more than a month ago the doomed heroes of the White Guard had gazed with eyes burning and mortal hatred in their hearts. Everything was done to make the new occupants comfortable. Very soon the headmen, quiet citizens in shabby European dress as befitted honorary magistrates of a struggling community, paid calls to do homage to the English officers, for whom, afterwards, a gay round of life began. The Japanese, with childlike blandness, quickly won their hearts: what a good impression the members of the garrison gained is plainly discernible in the books and

articles written by some of them.

Sport, of course, was the chief means of combating the dullness of the sojourn so far from civilization. Nearly every form of it could be had in a district abounding with animal life, some of it not altogether harmless. A coolie was told off as body-servant for each officer, and others were ready to obey their orders, happy as kings at the magnificent remuneration of a shilling per day. But the rank and file were not forgotten either. Plenty of amusements were provided for them also; they had even the advantage of their officers, for no settler would dream of expecting payment for voluntary assistance rendered. An Anglo-Japanese cricket-match was arranged and went in favour of the British, as might have been guessed. In water sports, however, the Japanese more than held their own. At one end of the capital several houses of pleasure catered for the men, at whose command was a considerable number of lubras of all ages and some Malay women. Later, several geishas lent variety to the charms. A more select establishment in another quarter was reserved for the officers.

In spite of so many diversions, the garrison found leisure to explore the district thoroughly. It had the guidance of Japanese dignitaries who explained everything. Nevertheless, in the voluminous reports of the commanding Lieutenant-Colonel not many fresh facts are brought to light. They are marvels of exactness, but their compiler did not view things with those "eyes full of suspicion" which enabled Thomas Burt to discover so many formidable defence works. The British were, and felt, safe with friends. That has to be remembered at perusal of their despatches. The breast-high ramparts behind ditches must have appeared to these observers as mere lines of demarcation, and the logs placed cunningly to provide shelter passages as trees felled for timber or firewood, for nowhere are these features alluded to as possible fortifications. Some comment, however, is made with regard to the exceeding solidness of the houses, built not of boards but of stout timber, forming the outer ring of the villages.

There is nothing but praise on the state of the cultivations and the good condition of stock. "Apart from the race question," the Lieutenant-Colonel sums up in one report, "there can be no doubt that these industrious settlers have done a great service by their careful cultivation and methodical penetration of the wilderness." In another one he says: "Judging from what I have seen, not only in the central settlement, but in and around the outlying villages, I must state that English colonists, working individually, could hardly have done better. Occasionally an experienced farmer might have done better in some particular, but there would not have been such systematic thoroughness. The immigrants are eager to ask advice, and now that they have become better acquainted with us, they are glad of any casual hint which helps them to improve on

their work. Unfortunately," he continues, "the poor fellows do not always seem to be sufficiently educated to grasp our meaning, and persist in going on as they did before." The Commandant shows that he has not grasped the working of the Japanese mind nor its method of cloaking iron tenacity under bland, seemingly yielding civility, or he would not have made such a refreshingly artless remark. He mentions that a quarter of the capital was being reconstructed at the time of his arrival after having been destroyed by fire; also, that during his wanderings he came across several burnt-out villages. No doubt these were the places burnt by the White Guard. But that struggle, or any fight against white men, was never alluded to by the Japanese in the presence of the British. Probably the garrison, fresh from Singapore, had either not heard of, or paid no attention to, the rumours at this early period.

Yet one fact impressed even the unsuspecting Lieutenant-Colonel: the complete absence of any male aboriginals, while so many native women were about. Inquiries on this subject evoked a rather feeble reply on the part of the Japanese. The lubras, they said, had been sold to them by their relatives, who, however, could not immediately enjoy life on the proceeds because the supply of tobacco and liquor to the blacks was prohibited. Therefore the latter had probably departed to the vicinity of Port Darwin, where they would have better opportunities. Others had always been shy of approaching the settlements, being afraid that they would be forced to work. But these stories, no doubt, were made up. It is not difficult to imagine why the presence of the male natives must have been inconvenient to the immigrants. The fellows had seen too much and might begin to boast of it to the British as soon as they should have discovered, with natural cunning, that the white and yellow races were really opposed to each other in spite of momentary friendliness. Moreover, the blacks were no longer useful as guides, since the country had been explored thoroughly, nor as subsidiaries, now that no further attacks were apprehended. On the other hand they might have become troublesome enemies in the bush. That possibility had to be guarded against. Probably the Japanese copied the example of the White Guard and butchered the male aboriginals.

However, the British accepted the explanation of their fellow-subjects of the second degree. As was the case all through, nobody felt called upon to push independent investigations. Some exceptions to the rule, men who had grown somewhat suspicious, perhaps on account of vague tales of the lubras, were discouraged officially to pursue too far adventurous quests, which it was by no means their duty to engage in. Imperial troops had to preserve above all England's old reputation of dealing fairly by Asiatics. A prying policy among people who showed every confidence and friendship would not have been in account with this aim. The moderation had its reward. The longer the garrison stayed

the more British interests benefited, and the popularity of the Empire became even more pronounced among the brown candidates for citizenship under the Union Jack.

## Chapter VI: A Transformation Scene in the North.

THE Imperial garrison had hardly arrived in the Japanese settlement when the Federal Government began to regret that it had ever consented to its establishment. It had done so in the belief that the internal dissensions in Australia would be prolonged. The rapid and complete triumphs of the Commonwealth army had proved the wrongness of that assumption. Immediately after the occupation of Perth, the Federal Executive cabled to London that it was now prepared to garrison and to police the Northern Territory with Australian troops. But Great Britain was not at all pleased with the offer and objected that Australia was still practically at war with Japan. Melbourne, however, hastened to deny the existence of a state of war as strongly as it had insisted on it a few months ago. *Tempora mutantur.*

Every report of the excellent relations between the garrison and the invaders increased the disgust of the Commonwealth patriots, whose secret hopes that the Imperial force would serve as an exponent of white supremacy were quickly superseded by suspicions that the whole display was more in the way of a compliment to the Japanese than a measure of protest against their claims. The Extremists, particularly, professed deep anxiety lest the British statesmen should be encouraged by the exemplary friendliness which had sprung up between their soldiers and the public enemy of Australia to make permanent the present arrangement. Under the constant pressure from all sides, the Federal Government continued to urge its request. Its main point was that London had promised the substitution of Australians, and that otherwise the Commonwealth would not have acquiesced in the matter at all.

Great Britain was very unwilling to withdraw its men. At the same time, however, its rulers had learnt by the experience of the past half-year and were not at all desirous of further colonial quarrels. Already the temper of the great southern dependency grew very ugly over this affair. Press and politicians there threatened that Federal troops would be sent into the invaded district even without Imperial permission, and that England would be given a chance to prove whether it would dare to interfere with Australian actions on Australian soil. If so, then, it was pointed out, let Canada look to it that it might not be treated one day after the same fashion in Columbia, or New Zealand in the North Island, or South Africa in any of its own large possessions. In fact, here were all

the materials for another national explosion in all the autonomous dominions, cowed as they were for the moment. Faced by these awful possibilities, Great Britain felt inclined to yield, especially as the Commonwealth merely proposed to place a garrison in the Northern Territory, not an army.

But there was another factor which had to be reckoned with — the Japanese Government. Though no doubt well informed about the new Federal demand, it maintained a correct silence, any arrangement about the Northern Territory being clearly an internal affair in which only the Empire and the Commonwealth were concerned. An opportunity to speak their mind, however, came to the discreet advisers of the Mikado when the impending change was communicated to them by the allied power. Then Tokio, calm and courteous as usual, mentioned its misgivings. It recognized that it had no voice in the matter, but asked to be allowed to express regret that its former subjects should lose a protective force which had shown them so much kindness, and also to utter a hope that the successors would cultivate similar good feeling. Only thus the full benefits of the labour of the immigrants could be secured for their adopted country. For the refugees were proud of their race and conscious of the service they were rendering to humanity by civilizing the wilderness. They were also very sensitive, a quality which they shared with all Japanese, for whose resentment of irritation or insults nobody could accept responsibility, least of all their own Government, which was only too painfully aware of this particular national failing.

The Imperial authorities did not hesitate to cable a full account of the diplomatic pronouncement, so carefully veiled in its language and yet so ominous, to Melbourne. But the Commonwealth was bent on having its way, and London did not care to oppose its demand much longer. Hardly had the consent been gained when two crack steamers of the Federal fleet were raced from Adelaide, where they had been overhauled, to Perth. There Colonel Ireton embarked with a large special staff of the most energetic and promising officers and 350 picked men, who had all been through the Western campaign (November 2, 1912). The whole force proceeded by sea directly to the Northern Territory and arrived at the mouth of the inlet, on which the Japanese main settlement was situated, on the morning of November 11. On the same day the British garrison evacuated the fort for their successors and was taken by the Federal steamers to Port Darwin, whence they returned to Singapore. Both these vessels were fitted with wireless telegraphy. One anchored in the harbour of Port Darwin, the other in the inlet leading to the fort. In this way Colonel Ireton was in practically uninterrupted communication with headquarters in Melbourne.

The Japanese settlers extended an outwardly cordial welcome to the

new garrison. They sported once more their large stock of Union Jacks. But the Australians were less appreciative than their predecessors and refused to salute the flag, the use of which by the aliens was, speaking strictly, improper. Moreover, as soon as they had entered into possession of the fort, they lowered the British ensign flying over it, which had originally been supplied by the Japanese, and unfurled the Commonwealth banner. The significance of these actions was not misunderstood by the ceremonious Orientals. The friendly services of the polite brown men, so highly valued by Tommy Atkins, were now rarely asked and always paid for, a practice which reduced the mutual relations between the two races to cold formality and prevented absolutely the growth of a better understanding. Colonel Ireton did not regret this development. He had his instructions. The encouragement of fraternizing tactics was not mentioned in them. His garrison was expected to show plainly by its conduct who was the sovereign of the country. His duty was to explore the invaded district thoroughly, to gain an intimate knowledge of the enemy's methods and resources and, if possible, some insight into his further plans; in a word, to prepare everything for the ultimate campaign. And he set to work upon his task with rare zeal.

Many reports compiled by the Colonel or members of his staff, dealing with the subject, very detailed and from every conceivable point of view, are now in the Federal archives. Through all of them runs the same note of astonishment at the efficiency of the Japanese organization which is also sounded in the official reports of the British garrison, though the Australian comments are more subdued and tinged with a bitterness reminiscent of Thomas Burt's diary. Great changes, of course, had taken place since the latter was written. The soothing influence of womanhood, of motherhood, was now penetrating the whole settlement. Numbers of children were born there daily. Perhaps no other fact did more to deepen the coolness between the two races into revengeful estrangement. For the Australians, who keenly missed appropriate sex partnership of their own race, watched helplessly the rapid progress of the despised Asiatics from a mere horde of invading nomads into a settled nation bound to the conquered soil by the most sacred ties — by little brown babies quite unconscious of their own significance, all young Australians — Austral-Mongoloids. And the white heirs to the Continent had to stand by impassively, condemned to look on and to record the event. Contrary to ordinary Oriental customs, the women were splendidly cared for. They were forbidden field work and other hard tasks. District medical officers made regular rounds several times a week through all dwellings, and in the capital the married couples frequently assembled in the Public Hall to hear lectures in their own language, probably on sex hygiene and the treatment of infants. Evidently the Japanese authorities had thoroughly mastered, and were not afraid to carry into practice, the principle that

public health and the protection of child-life before and after birth is the first duty and the grandest asset of a progressive State.

The neighbourhood of the main settlement had been cleared for miles from bush and jungle: irrigation had turned swampy lagoons into paddyfields protected by strong embankments at the mouth against the brackish water of the inlet. A mixed system of farming had been devised. Each family owned a plot of some acres which the proprietor cultivated individually and the produce of which belonged to him. But large areas of the richest agricultural and pastoral land were reserved near each village and were worked by gangs of the male inhabitants, who had to give their services in regular rotation once or twice a week. These gangs were also employed to clear the country and to make roads. And they did the harvesting both in the private and public blocks, under the leadership of the elders, who directed them in such a way as the condition of the fields seemed to demand, without fear or favour of individuals. Such a system was possible only for a highly enlightened race or for a slavishly disciplined one. While it lasted it must beat out of sight any results obtainable by individualistic white colonization. The Turanians bade fair to establish a record which Aryan people would be unable to equal. If they were allowed to go on, their claims to possession would become ever stronger by right of their achievements.

That the invaders had no intention of leaving Australia was evident from the diligence with which they made themselves at home. Several roads were made connecting the capital with the outlying settlements and the latter among each other. Their construction was solid though rough, and they led over the high ground, wherever possible, so that they were little exposed to damage by floods in the wet season. Where swamps had to be crossed, the roads had been steadied with logs, and light wooden bridges, easy of repair or renewal, were thrown over creeks. Then there was the network of telegraph lines. It was really difficult now to get lost in the district, which less than a year ago had been an impenetrable wilderness.

Relentless war was waged by the Japanese against vermin; thus they justified their possession of arms. They drove away the romance of the tropical bush, and wherever they went they created an atmosphere of hard work-a-day reality. But this was the inevitable result of civilization, which at last had come in triumphantly in spite of the Australians who had hesitated too long about it. The wholesale destruction of game in the vicinity of the main settlement compelled the garrison to rely for its food supply almost entirely upon Port Darwin, where Federal depôts had been established. Several vessels catered for this service, and combined with this open purpose the more secret one of closely watching the coast.

The Japanese possessed two steam launches, a cutter and half a dozen whale boats. A wharf was under construction for building more small

craft locally. The timber was derived from the opposite shore of the inlets about two miles further up, where thick forest slipped down nearly to the water's edge. In this locality a saw mill was situated. That was not the only factory. Near the wharf a flour mill was in course of erection, though the machinery had not yet arrived. Around it several large stores for the collection of surplus produce had already been finished. Each stood isolated, surrounded by a high earth rampart and a ditch filled with water. These were the largest buildings in the capital, with the exception of the central offices, the headquarters of the district and municipal authorities and the terminus of all the telegraph lines. In an adjoining outhouse, a steam engine, coupled to a dynamo, furnished the necessary electricity. The public hall was another large edifice and appeared to serve both as a temple and a lecture-room, where often in the evenings addresses were delivered to crowded audiences. As the Japanese language was employed exclusively, the whites had not even a decent excuse for being present. The purpose of these meetings, however, seemed to be quite harmless; apparently they dealt chiefly with demonstrations on agricultural subjects, such as irrigation and the use of modern implements.

Though the discipline of the invaders was marvellous, they were managed so discreetly and their authorities dispensed with pomp and circumstance to such a degree that it was difficult to discover the real rulers. Colonel Ireton observed that much deference was paid by the multitude to the medical officers, which conduct is quite intelligible in the light of subsequent revelations regarding the part played by them in Formosa. But he soon noticed that they, too, received orders in turn from higher instances. At the head of the whole organization stood a board of five Elders, as they named themselves in English. Every member of this set seemed to wield equal power. In their dealings with the Australians, they consulted together about every step. The Board of Five was the final court of justice and inflicted capital punishment. Many of its responsibilities, however, were transferred upon the Headmen, who governed each quarter of the main settlement and every village. These again were assisted by small councils of the most worthy citizens. No military display was indulged in; although all the inhabitants of the capital owned rifles, they never underwent any warlike training within the knowledge of the Federal garrison for the whole period during which the latter resided in their midst. Nevertheless it is probable that at least one or two high military officers served in the Board of Five, that every headman was a staff officer, and that the village councils consisted in reality largely of former non-commissioned officers. Everything, in fact, was calculated to preserve discipline and to prepare defence.

After a fortnight of strenuous work, Colonel Ireton was able to draw a map of the invaded district, in which, besides the capital, seventeen

outlying villages are shown, the nearest about twelve miles and the most distant over ninety miles away from that centre. He computed the population from the number of private dwellings, which were as a rule tenanted each by a family consisting of husband and wife. As every quarter of the main settlement contained between five hundred and six hundred residences of this kind, and the villages from one hundred and fifty to three hundred each, he calculated that the total number of adult inhabitants could not be much less than twelve thousand. In addition, there were the infants, which continued to be born at such a rate that the natural increase of the community at the end of the first year would amount to about forty per cent.

Colonel Ireton prided himself on his conviction of having charted everything worth notice. His surprise passed all bounds when a party of his men reported that they had discovered, on a hunting trip, a path not on the map leading south-east to the banks of Liverpool River, where they had met with a gang of about 150 Japanese actively engaged in clearing the land and utilizing the timber for the construction of houses. Near by were temporary shelters after the fashion of the aboriginal miamias. None of the gang understood English, so that no verbal information could be had, and protracted investigations failed to reveal any clue as to the manner in which these immigrants could have got into this place. But the headman of the nearest charted village, over twenty miles away, who was known to speak broken English, volunteered an explanation. He said that the gang had come from a settlement farther west, the inhabitants of which had quarrelled, because they belonged to adjoining districts in Japan, separated by fierce rivalries and long wars for ages. The faction whose forefathers generally had the worst of the deal had been taunted with the fact, when remembrances were exchanged, to such an extent that the strife of long ago had nearly been revived. To prevent such a calamity, it had been decided to remove one of the contending clans by forming a new community. The statement was so uncommonly straightforward that it roused the suspicion of the whites, for as a rule the Japanese were most discreet, especially where the concealment of internal difficulties was concerned. So the party visited several villages farther west on its return. But everywhere a full complement of male and female residents was found. It was strange, because no women were with the gang on Liverpool River.

The fact set the Colonel thinking. To his knowledge, all the western settlements were inhabited by couples. Therefore, if the story of the headman was correct the outside faction must have left its wives in the care of traditional rivals. That was most unlikely. Sexual jealousy was the only passion of the patient, toiling immigrants which had sometimes asserted itself so strongly in ugly brawls that its existence could not be hidden entirely by their leaders from the prying Australian eyes.

Suddenly the truth dawned on Colonel Ireton. These womanless colonists were not exiles from another camp. They were new arrivals. Their presence meant that, while he was scouting inland to obtain accurate information with regard to the resources of the enemy, a steady stream of the invaders kept pouring in all the time. Until he should have discovered by which way they came and at what rate, all his calculations were valueless. It was certain that they did not enter the country from the official port, for his garrison watched the approaches and surroundings closely and Federal steamers patrolled frequently the whole western expanse of coast on their journeys to and from Port Darwin.

The waters farther east were supposed to be searched regularly by British men-of-war, for the prohibition of commercial navigation there had not yet been cancelled. In reality, the supervision was very lax. A small cruiser stationed at Thursday Island made occasionally the round of the Gulf of Carpentaria. It had never called at the Japanese port or in Junction Bay since the Federal occupation. Practically, the enemy had a monopoly of several hundred miles of coast line, where many sheltered inlets invited unostentatious landings. Colonel Ireton remembered that he had had a significant warning immediately after his arrival. The experts managing the wireless telegraph on board the steamer which conveyed him here had mentioned that the apparatus was intercepting wireless waves from an apparently very distant source. Two days later a Japanese steamer made her appearance and proceeded right up to a jetty running into deep water in the inlet, near the stores, where she discharged cargo for the settlement. The Colonel and his staff were invited by her captain to lunch on board, and were afterwards shown over the vessel, which was of the tramp type, tidily kept, provided with up-to-date discharging gear, manned by an ample Japanese crew, and fitted with apparatus for wireless telegraphy, a fact which interested the Colonel more than anything else. As he could not discover anything like a wireless station ashore, he concluded that the steamer must have communicated with other vessels far out at sea. Having accounted thus to his own satisfaction for the observation of his experts, he forgot the incident. But now he began to doubt the correctness of his former surmises and resolved to investigate personally and at once.

## Chapter VII: Like Tigers at Bay

EARLY on November 25, 1912, Colonel Ireton left the fort with an escort of two officers, a sergeant and four men. The latter led several spare horses carrying provisions and a collapsible boat, the parts of which were well hidden under the other baggage, for the explorers did not wish to let the Japanese into the secret of their destination. With this intention they travelled due south to deceive possible watchers and also to evade the swamps and creeks of the coast. Ostensibly they were bound on a hunting trip. About noon on the following day they turned eastwards and were soon out in the original wilderness. Progress was slow, continually impeded by natural obstructions. But from time to time a marked tree or rock was passed showing that the intrepid invaders had penetrated even here, and these observations filled the explorers with fresh hopes. At nightfall they crossed Liverpool River and camped not far from its right bank.

Next morning they pursued their quest further. Fortune favoured them. They found a track running from the north-east to the south-west about four miles distant from the river. It was very rough, but its condition indicated plainly that it was much frequented. Soon it bent round to the north near a village in a clearing. There were many dwellings, but only very few settlers were to be seen. It occurred to the Colonel that this must be a kind of half-way house established for the comfort of weary immigrants on their march to the interior, and that a similar station was probably situated on the banks of Liverpool River at the end of another day's journey, which station he had missed luckily by crossing farther down. He had no wish to make his presence known to the villagers, who might have means to warn the secret coastal base — the existence of which could no longer be doubted — of the approach of the whites. Much time was lost in the endeavour of the little party to pass through the bush surrounding the settlement out of sight and hearing of its inhabitants. The explorers were just expecting to come out on the track again when the din and tramping of a large moving crowd made them recoil. They left the horses in care of some of the rank and file far back in the thickets; then the officers crept forward cautiously to ascertain the cause of the commotion. They beheld a force of about two hundred Japanese marching inland. A vanguard of twenty men, rifle on shoulder, headed the procession. Behind, in motley array, the main crowd

followed, some carrying burdens, others leading horses laden with crates of living poultry or with bulky packages, still others driving cattle, sheep and goats. Another armed detachment brought up the rear. It was afternoon before the track was clear once more. The explorers pushed on for another twenty miles and camped for the night in a sheltered spot.

Little more than two hours' spirited riding after sunrise (November 28), and the party had the first glimpse of the sea — the endless, sparkling crescent of Boucant Bay. At this point the track turned sharply to the west to the mouth of Liverpool River. Quite unexpectedly it opened upon a village on a side channel of this river, nestling in a fold of the ground, which position, in conjunction with thick lines of high mangroves on the banks, hid it completely from the sea. It seemed that the Japanese were using the place merely as a temporary convenience, as a residence for immigration officials. It consisted of less than twenty houses and three large sheds serviceable as stores or barracks. There was no sign of any cultivation around it. About a mile further down was an opening in the mangroves. A log-paved road led down to it from the sheds and a gang of coolies were removing goods from there on hand-trucks. The explorers hurried down and espied a large steamer standing out to sea. It was too late to stop her for inspection, but that was really needless. There could be no doubt that she was the transport which had landed the immigrants encountered on the previous day. Moreover, something else attracted the Colonel's attention. A small steamer lay motionless in the mouth of the river, a few hundred yards away. She had two very high masts, with loose wire dangling from the top. One glance through his glasses convinced the Colonel that this was the floating Japanese station for wireless telegraphy. He jumped into a boat and was paddled over. For the sake of safety, his escort carried a supply of Commonwealth flags, one of which was unfurled with satisfactory results. The crew lined up, cheering. Unfortunately, that was the only British accomplishment acquired by them. None, from the captain downwards, confessed to a knowledge of the English language. They did not try to interfere with the close inspection to which the vessel was subjected, and which proved it to be admirably adapted to its purpose. On the contrary, their courtesy was perfect, but explanations, of course, were impossible in the absence of an interpreter.

On shore the farce continued. The headman of the village gloried to conduct his visitors in dumb show. It was noticed, however, that he persistently overlooked a certain building, on which, consequently, their curiosity soon centred. As the door was locked and the guide did not seem to understand that the key was wanted, Colonel Ireton and his officers entered through a window, to the pantomimically expressed horror of their cicerone. The place was a splendidly equipped telegraph office, though there were no overhead wires. The wires disappeared in a

wooden pipe running down the wall. This was another proof of Japanese cunning. The station was evidently connected with the capital by underground cable. Subsequent investigation upheld this supposition, and revealed plainly the whole scheme of the enemy's carefully planned communications. Every fresh reinforcement was thus telegraphed to the capital where the Board of Five was kept informed of all details and was enabled in turn to use unimpeded and unsuspected the wireless service of the existence of which no white man had dreamed. It was possible, indeed likely, that other floating stations were hidden in unfrequented waters among the island clouds to the north of Australia, forming a connexion between Tokio and the new Japanese colony.

Colonel Ireton did not prolong his stay. He was powerless to interfere at present and wished to transmit his astonishing discoveries to headquarters as rapidly as possible. For a moment he felt tempted to cut the cable, but he was sensible enough to recognize the uselessness of such an action. He departed the same afternoon, intent on following the track right to its end. Next day the party covered sixty miles and passed five villages, two of which were mere refreshment stages, but the three others lay in fertile country farther south and teemed with population. No women were visible — conclusive evidence, beside the unfinished state of the settlements and the backwardness of the cultivation paddocks, that the inhabitants were recent arrivals. Some miles farther on the track, which after crossing the river had turned due west and then north-west, lost itself altogether, and the explorers had to face again the hardships of slow, pathless progress, until in the afternoon of November 30 they crossed a telegraph line and knew that they were within the confines of the district of older settlement. Under the circumstances it was not wonderful that neither the Imperial garrison nor the Federals had conceived any suspicion of a beyond, owing to the prudent policy of the Japanese to leave a broad strip of untouched wilderness between their public and secret spheres of operation.

The Commandant's return was timely. The garrison was in danger of getting out of hand, irritated by the demeanour of the invaders, whose coolness began to change to defiance, as many incidents, petty in themselves, showed. He affected to ignore them in the hope that a bolder move on the part of the enemy might give him an opportunity to employ stern measures. It occurred very soon. Probably the Elders were much annoyed over his successful excursion, which had taken them by surprise, and were eager to get in a counter-stroke. They requested the honour of an interview (December 2) in the course of which they intimated that they wished to terminate the occupation of the fort by the Federal troops, because they required it for their own use. They justified this remarkable demand with the plea that the fort had been built by Japanese labour and was therefore the property of their community.

Admitting that they had loaned it to the Imperial garrison, such courtesy did not signify that they had parted with the rights of ownership to all comers. The former surrender was an acknowledgement that they considered themselves part of the British Empire. The Australian army was not Imperial, but a local force, and they had never asked for a Federal garrison. At any rate, the site was too central and too valuable for military purposes and was wanted for civic extensions.

Colonel Ireton replied that the site, and indeed all the land occupied by the Japanese, was vested in the Commonwealth and had never been lawfully alienated. His interviewers did not wish to open that portentous question, yet they were not so easily beaten. Politely declining to discuss this point with a military officer, they attacked his position from another quarter. Apart from the issue of ground rights, they said, there could be no doubt that the buildings belonged to their community, wherefore they craved permission to remove the materials, as timber was getting scarce in the immediate surroundings of the capital and was urgently required for new constructions.

The Colonel simply stated that he knew nothing about the men who built the fort. It might have been their people, or it might not. However, he took it over as the successor of the Imperial garrison and meant to keep it. Here, indeed, the Japanese had committed a sin of omission. In their joy of having in their midst an Imperial force, the presence of which gave an air of loyalty and legality to their sinister proceedings, they had not foreseen that one day Federal troops might be substituted. The evacuation of the fort had been a spontaneous act of gratitude, without any records or reservations in writing. They had now occasion to repent of their hastiness. For Colonel Ireton was not a man who overlooked any weakness in the armour of his adversaries, and declined politely but firmly to discuss the matter any further. A letter addressed to him by the Board of Five was returned with the remark that he regarded this particular incident as closed.

On the following day (December 3) a Federal cargo boat arrived from Port Darwin with stores for the garrison and steamed right up to the Japanese jetty, as had been done before. It being Sunday, the discharging did not commence at once, and the captain and crew, with the exception of a couple of men, spent the evening in the fort, retailing the latest news. Suddenly, in the dead of night, an alarm was raised. The jetty was enveloped in flames, so that it was impossible to get to the vessel from the land side. The few hands aboard tried their utmost to push the steamer out into the stream away from the wooden structure, which burned fiercely as if it had been soaked with some inflammable stuff. But wind and current seemed to drive her against it. In the end they had to jump into the water to swim ashore. Jetty and steamer became a total loss.

The Japanese Elders insisted that the disaster was due to the carelessness of the whites and claimed heavy damages for the destruction of their property. Colonel Ireton repudiated responsibility on the ground that the fire had broken out on the jetty. He refrained from hurling accusations which he could not prove. But every Australian was convinced that the disaster was due to incendiarism. The spirits of the little force, isolated from all the world, had never been very cheerful. A deeper gloom now crept into the brave hearts, when it was realized that the enemy was not afraid to strike in the dark, from the back, and did not hesitate to sacrifice his own work if he could gratify his hatred by doing so.

Still it might have been worse. The Federals congratulated each other on the fact that the first attempt had not been directed against the fort, which was entirely built of timber. Every reasonable precaution was taken immediately. Several sheds not used permanently were demolished and the material covered with earth. The guards were strengthened and received orders to fire on any nightly prowler who should ignore their challenge. Colonel Ireton informed the Elders of the new rules under the pretext of preventing misunderstandings; they did not deign to acknowledge the communication.

The Federal Commander was very much disquieted. His instructions enjoined mainly the ceaseless assertion of Commonwealth sovereignty. How that was to be done against an enemy who had all the advantage of possession and real power, he was left to find out for himself. He began to fear that the Japanese would not recoil from the use of violence, if they should think that they had a good case. It became necessary, in the interests of the many lives under his care, to enlighten the Federal Government with regard to the precarious position of its garrison and to ask for more detailed orders. Though he was in wireless connexion with headquarters, this service was most roundabout and altogether too much dependent on go-betweens for his needs. He could never be sure that his messages were rightly interpreted in Port Darwin and transmitted in full to their destination. Therefore he decided to proceed to Port Darwin, where he could place himself in direct communication with Melbourne by the overland telegraph. Moreover, there were several local matters he wished to attend to personally. Since the bad feeling between the two races had become more pronounced, the Japanese had gradually stopped the sale of foodstuffs from their cultivations to the garrison, which consequently had to rely more and more on imports from its base. So far these had not been too well regulated, and the Colonel desired to make better arrangements.

Colonel Ireton never hesitated once he had made up his mind. He entrusted his command to the oldest captain, a man whose coolness and courage had been tested thoroughly in the civil war, and boarded the fast

steamer which served as his floating wireless telegraph station, bound for Port Darwin (December 4). He did not forget to issue a final warning to his men not to provoke the enemy during his absence, which, he promised, would not extend over more than a week.

## Chapter VIII: Bleeding White

FOR a man who, like Colonel Ireton, had sojourned for a month in the silent bush, surrounded by a silent enemy, Port Darwin presented a scene of dazzling activity. The township was very full. Several well-known Federal officials were there in connexion with the railway construction to the south. This great work had been taken in hand from both ends, and the line from South Australia advanced rapidly. Though nearly everything had to be imported, the combined efforts from the north and south added about a mile every two days. But even if this rate of progress could be maintained throughout, years would elapse before the completion of the transcontinental link, without the possession of which the Commonwealth could not strike at the invaders. Many people doubted whether the enormous task could be finished at all. Some wagered that the work would soon stop through want of funds. Wild rumours were circulating of the extreme measures to which the Federal Government was driven in a hopeless attempt to avoid bankruptcy, and wilder prophecies foreshadowing the worst complications.

Colonel Ireton loathed listening to the idle talk. Nevertheless he could not but perceive that the interests of his garrison did not seem to receive much attention at headquarters. In vain did he demand stricter orders. The Federal authorities confined themselves to an assurance of their continued unlimited confidence in his ability; beyond this they merely repeated that details would have to be left to his discretion; that he should decide each case on its merit, always bearing in mind, however, that the invaders should never be given the slightest advantage on which a title to any possession in the Northern Territory could be based; and that he should never cease to assert the supremacy of the Commonwealth. The Colonel was bewildered by this strange indifference. He looked, so to speak, through the wrong end of the telescope, placed, as he was, 2,000 miles away from Australia's nerve-centres, at the terminus of the overland telegraph. It was as well for him. For if he could have seen things in their true proportions, he would have despaired.

Alas, Australia has entered the phase of passive suffering. Its determination to keep the whole Continent white remains as yet unbroken. That is still the tacit presupposition of all national development, but the enthusiasm with which the establishment of the

Federal garrison was greeted only six weeks ago has died out. What influence can a handful of white soldiers, buried in the boundless North, have upon the vital issue? They cannot reconquer the Territory, they cannot hunt the enemy out. Fools those who expected great things from them! Both official and popular interest in their doings are at a low ebb. In one quarter of the world, it is true, there is no sign of weariness with regard to the garrison. Every now and then the Japanese Press speaks of it with increasing bitterness. Just at present, while Colonel Ireton is in Port Darwin, a heated discussion is carried on about his exaggerated claims — so called — of ownership. The Tokio journalists take their cue from the British Press, which, of course, is denouncing wildly the financial measures of the Commonwealth, and make invidious comparisons that the same censured tendencies are being indulged in even against the poor refugees.

So the respectable British Press has continued hostile against Australia. The official relations, however, between London and Melbourne have become less strained, for the Imperial Government, benefiting by the lessons of the immediate past, is refraining tactfully from any further interference with Commonwealth legislation. Since the middle of November several English warships are again stationed in the capital ports. Perhaps this improvement has had something to do with the indefinite attitude of the Federal authorities towards the Colonel. They may be aware that new troubles with London are likely if they associate themselves publicly with a policy of oppression against the Japanese settlers, though they may secretly encourage it. Less directness will leave them free to plead that any particular action of their officer was not ordered by them, and to uphold or disavow him without loss of dignity. Perhaps they, too, have been taught the value of a better understanding with the Mother Country. Poor Colonel Ireton!

If there is any reapproachment to Great Britain, it does not find legislative expression. Parliament still rushes on undaunted — like a steam-roller, crushing through all accepted principles of fiscal policy and crushing vested interests right and left. Needs must when the devil drives. Ruthless action, not regretful sympathy, is the only means of avoiding bankruptcy. Forced loans, embargo on gold exports, absentee taxes, another shilling on the income-tax, which steadily yields less, double land-taxes — all the old nightmares of troubled Moderate consciences have become realities. And, in spite of everything, money is pouring in. If only the transcontinental railway and the armaments, which might have been financed leisurely in the good years gone by, did not swallow up every penny. Call it pounds, shillings, pence! It is nevertheless the very life-blood of the community, drained away in a ruddy, irrecoverable torrent. For all imports have to be paid for in gold. Though the mines produce at high pressure and every ounce finds its way

into the official coffers against due certificate, they can hardly keep up with the demand. For internal uses, there is Commonwealth paper, of a value fixed by statute.

Even so, everything might yet be well, but for another pitiless If! If only the nation would go on creating wealth in accustomed fashion! Unfortunately, Parliament alone seems to be working. How unsettled the people have grown, how restless! The avenues of employment have narrowed. Trade is at a standstill. Military training has thrown the labour supply out of gear. Whatever business is done is transacted on a cash basis — in paper. Who knows how much the paper will be worth at the final reckoning? Who can concentrate his mind on ordinary toil while the terrible uncertainty lasts? Like a black thunder-cloud suspense hangs over Australia.

Spring is far advanced. It has been a glorious season. Soaking rains in many parts have clothed the countryside a rich green. Nature, like mankind, seems to be mocking the doomed Continent. The wheatfields are bending in golden heaviness, harvesting should begin. Wool, the staple product of Australia, should already be choking the ports. Instead, much of it is still on the sheep's backs, shearing is proceeding painfully slow. Everywhere there is an outcry for labour. Political excitement has kept in the cities this year large numbers of men who in ordinary times would have gone up country about mid-winter. Certainly there is no plethora of employment in the towns either, but the general disorganization of business creates many casual jobs. At any rate, in the centres of population one is an active member of the body politic, one knows what is happening and takes part in it — thrills so dear to half-educated democrats. Away in the backblocks, on the contrary, one becomes a mere machine, grinding through hard tasks — not a pleasant change while so much is going on. The young men, moreover, are absorbed in the army, and though the authorities are doing everything to release them for agricultural work, many prefer the easy military life and hold out for increased monetary inducements. On reflection even ardent patriots do not like paper money. It is not a safe investment to toil for. Hard cash or no hands!

Meanwhile the landholders are reduced to despair. Most of them have only touched a few silver or copper coins of late. The harvest will rot on the fields if it is not secured quickly. Already rural associations are forming, at first for the purpose of mutual assistance in harvesting. The large owners are distinguishing themselves in this movement, uniting their permanent hands in gangs and setting them shearing, the drawing of lots deciding the rotation in which the various stations are to be taken. Such firmly knit bodyguards, having been once created, are found useful in more ways than merely shearing or reaping. And quickly the recruiting of forced labour becomes their most important function. To such a pass

have things come in Australia, the Land of the Free!

Liberty or no liberty, the wool must be marketed, the crops must be brought in. If not voluntarily, the necessary work must be done by compulsion. Law and order have been set at naught so often that one more transgression does not count. There is no authority out back to which the victimized bush workers and small selectors can appeal for protection. Those who become reconciled with their lot and show willingness, are treated fairly well, and even persuade friends to join. So the ranks of the dependents swell. In like proportion the mettle of the organizers rises. The insignificant local unions are drawing towards each other and are rapidly being forged together to powerful district leagues. Soon the moving spirits will begin to dream of an all-embracing Rural Association, stretching from Central Queensland through Middle and West New South Wales to North-West Victoria and into the interior of South Australia. And the big proprietors, whose retainers form the backbone of the organization and who naturally control it, may then hope to influence the inevitable land legislation of the Federal Parliament in favour of present holders.

Already the enormous increase of numbers is begetting a consciousness of strength and an impatience of opposition, which has also grown apace. For a large percentage of the western toilers belongs to the Australian Workers' Union, one of the most uncompromising labour bodies in the Commonwealth, and defies the incipient Association. No wonder the latter resents such behaviour, if only by reason of the dangerous example set to the more pliable men. The latent antipathy between the landless and the land monopolists is changing to revengeful fury. Occasional explosions of violence on both sides become more frequent. Soon the illimitable bush, so well adapted to keep its secrets, will be turned into a battleground of the worst human passions. Press gangs will infest it. Boycott and kidnappings will be daily occurrences. In retribution, fires of unaccountable origin will rage and consume many a proud homestead. And not many questions will be asked of any suspected incendiary — his end will be swift and sure whether he be guilty or innocent.

In the cities the misery is just as intense. Is it not spring, the season when that other dreaded Oriental invasion, the Plague, rears its head? It has been fought bravely in the past, it has been kept in check, but never quite exterminated. Now is its chance. No funds for sanitary improvements. A general enfeeblement of health. Universal listlessness. Famine rampant. Not plague alone, typhoid, low fever, consumption and a host of other diseases find a fertile soil. The death rate is multiplying.

Groan, ye mothers! Wrestle in prayer, fathers! Pray, not for the lives of your dear ones, but that they may have a chance to die in the defence of their country, striking a blow for deliverance — not like drowning rats in a sinking ship! Alas, the Heavens are deaf. Lost opportunities never

come back. Stagnation everywhere! Only a solitary something is felt moving by all, creeping nearer and nearer like a death-reptile with fascinating, paralysing eyes: Public and Private Bankruptcy!

The contemporary historian, to be of any use, must poleaxe his sympathies and bury them at sea, by night, with a heavy weight for ballast, so that they may never trouble him again. Else he becomes unreliable. It is his duty to accumulate hard facts. Hard facts point their own moral. And yet, may not even memories of his dead sympathies visit him in the darkest hour, to lighten his cruel task?

Australia, thou didst not deserve this fate! Numberless were thy mistakes, but generosity was responsible for the most of them. Many hearts full of sorrow, many eyes dimmed with tears, were cheered by thy triumphant march in the van of humanitarian effort. It seemed that under thy congenial blue skies a new Greece was arising, a more perfect Athens, scorning slavery and conferring the sacred rights of citizenship upon its entire manhood and womanhood; and which, even as in Athens of old those deserving citizens had been ostracized who monopolized political favour, would dare to ostracize Old-World monopoly and injustice. And is this to be the result?

Perhaps it is all not true. It may only be a nightmare. Thou wilt awake, Australia! Thou wilt arouse thyself, thou wilt gird thy loins. Thou wilt confound the false coiners of cheap insular phrases who would persuade thee to rely on what thou canst not control! Every one of thy sons shall be a warrior, every one of thy daughters a warrior's helpmate! Not for conquest. But in defence of thy inalienable right of shaping thy own destiny. Then, only then, thou mayest safely continue thy triumphant march. Then thou wilt enter into thy proud Twentieth Century Nationhood, which will be a joy, not an oppression! Thou wilt — What? ... At present thou art staggering through the midnight of thy fate, tired, dead tired!

## Chapter IX: Massacre

UNDER the circumstances, Colonel Ireton did not accomplish much in Port Darwin. Apart from a more satisfactory arrangement of local services in connexion with his mission, his one success was the exaction of a firm promise from headquarters that two more steamers fitted with wireless telegraph would be despatched to the North at once. One of these he intended to station off the secret Japanese base, while the other was to patrol the coast regularly. He did not prolong his stay, and on the evening of December 9 he arrived again in the fort.

The Federal garrison had hardly ventured out of barracks in the meantime. One night a determined attempt had been made by swarms of the enemy to burn down the fort. The free use of firearms had kept them in check. But the prowlers had carried off their dead and wounded under cover of the darkness, leaving no trace by which they might be identified, and no proof of their criminal enterprise. Otherwise, the Japanese continued to ignore the existence of the whites, except in one particular. A new jetty was being constructed in place and on the foundations of the old one which had been destroyed. The invaders worked at it in a great hurry. Large gangs of toilers were employed day and night. Even some of the most substantial buildings were demolished, so that the seasoned timber, of which there was evidently a dearth, might be used for this structure. And a few Australian soldiers, who followed the peaceful occupation of fishing, were warned off its neighbourhood. As they did not seem to take notice, fences were erected on land, and well manned Japanese boats patrolled unceasingly the waters round the jetty.

Colonel Ireton had no sooner heard of the fresh development than he regarded it as a hint of providence. The jetty was all but completed. So next morning he ordered his steamer alongside. As she approached, a Japanese hastened forward and asked the captain for a wharfage fee. He was referred to the Colonel, who, of course, refused to listen to such demands. Nothing more happened until the steamer began to discharge cargo. Then an unarmed party of Japanese advanced boldly and seized the first cases. They held their ground unflinchingly, though the carriers tried to drive them off with blows, and unfolded a Union Jack, thus imparting an official character to their proceedings. Colonel Ireton, on being informed, perceived that he had fallen into the trap of the enemy, who had foreseen what he would do and who had devised a careful plan

to outwit him. It was too late to withdraw with honour. Accepting the situation, he alarmed the garrison and marched down to the jetty fifty men under his personal command. Meanwhile the other side had not remained passive. The Elders were wending their way to the same place, attended by a large escort. Both parties arrived almost at the same moment. The Colonel ordered his men to remove the goods, which consisted of half a dozen cases. But the Elders prevented the execution of this instruction by sitting down, in calm deliberation, on top of the disputed cases. Even the Colonel recoiled from the idea of treating these magistrates with the offhandedness which would have been meted out to the common rabble. There was an awkward silence. Then he asked curtly what they meant by robbing the Commonwealth. "We rob nobody and nothing," their spokesman replied. "We simply place embargo on the goods in lien of payment of the fee due to us for the use of the jetty." "This is Australian soil," said the Colonel; "nothing will be paid for landing cargo in our own territory." "That may be so," was the retort, "but this jetty was built under your eyes by our people for the benefit of the community. We do not wish you to have anything to do with it at all, for fear it might be burned down again. But if you use it, it is only just that you should pay the ordinary fee which we charge against our own steamers, and which would be enforced against the shipping of all nations."

It was evident that nothing could be gained by arguing the point. So the Colonel said: "Apply to the courts. But I won't have violence here while I and my comrades can shoot straight." Turning to his men, he called out: "Remove the goods. If any fellow resists, shift him." The Elders exclaimed in chorus: "The British Empire stands for justice. We cannot get justice here." "Go then where you can," mocked the Colonel, and added: "You have no case at all. In every civilized country you have to get a permit before you can start building. I am the Federal officer in authority in this district, and I know you did not apply to me for permission. By the law of the nation, I can command you to remove your jetty altogether. I shall do so if there is any more obstinacy. Forward, men!" The spokesman stepped close to Colonel Ireton: "Take care," he hissed, "Japan is stronger than your Commonwealth."

He was cut short by a scuffle, in which he and his colleagues were brushed aside contemptuously, while the coolies were knocked down in all directions. Next moment the Australians had secured the goods and were continuing the discharging of the steamer regardless of the multitudes of Japanese thronging round, who for once had deserted their ordinary duties and were standing about in thick clusters at short distance, as if they had been invited to witness the hoped-for discomfiture of the whites. Though sadly disappointed, they never stirred. No sign, no order came from the Elders, and in its absence no

Japanese dared to spring to the assistance of his leaders. Discipline held the Asiatics in an iron grasp, which even the sight of acute humiliation could not relax. The Elders exchanged a few words in their own language and retired, followed by all their faithful subjects. Obviously, they considered that, after all, the propitious moment had not yet arrived for a final reckoning with the hated Federals. The steamer left the jetty before nightfall, for Colonel Ireton did not like to court the risk of another conflagration.

After the jetty incident the Japanese did not let a day pass by without some demonstration of their utter dislike of the Australians. They had already exterminated the wild animal life in the district of older settlement to such an extent that hunting trips had to last over several days before sufficient game could be had to vary the monotonous diet of the garrison. Now they began to destroy the fish in the inlet by explosions of dynamite, doubtless for the purpose of putting an end to the angling sport, which formed perhaps the chief recreation of the lonely white exiles. This callous behaviour outraged the clean sporting instincts for which the Australians are famous, and, probably more than anything else, caused the latter to loathe the alien race.

But this was not the worst. Even while Colonel Ireton was still absent on his visit to Port Darwin, curious accidents commenced to happen. Bridges, which had often been crossed in perfect safety, became unstable. Planks shifted. In the log roads over swamps, deep treacherous holes opened, concealed mostly under a cover of branches or grass. Several horses had been hurt at these danger spots and had to be killed. A man broke his leg; another was thrown by his frightened animal on such an occasion, and fractured his collar-bone. At first it was thought that the rainy season, which was now at its height, was responsible for the bad state of the tracks. Colonel Ireton's sub-commander wrote a letter about it to the Elders and received a courteous acknowledgement regretting the mishaps, but pointing out that the roads and bridges had not been designed to withstand the weight of horse traffic. Colonel Ireton himself was inclined on reflection to suspect a new villainy on the part of the cunning Asiatics. There seemed to be so much method about these occurrences. He could not prove anything, however. So he had to hold his peace and to be content with warning his men to be very careful and to travel only in broad daylight.

The Colonel kept his men much in the fort now. His idea was to lie quiet until the promised steamers should arrive, when he intended to boldly plant a detachment at the secret base and to generally overawe the enemy. But this penning-up of a garrison bereft of enjoyments and diversions could not be carried out for long without evil consequences. Although the Commander was well liked, discipline began to suffer. The veterans of the Western campaign grumbled. That affair had been breezy.

Nobody thought much of the heavy losses, which were forgotten in the great patriotic stir. Here, on the contrary, everything stagnated. There was no action to defeat the creeping tactics of the coloured aliens, no hope of a change by which this dead waste of weeks and months might be justified. It was bad enough to break the hearts of heroes. So Colonel Ireton had to give way by consenting to another series of hunting trips. As it had not rained for some days, he decided to lead personally the first party.

He rode out with fifty men on the morning of December 12. About twelve miles to the south he came to the largest bridge of the district, over a creek dry in winter, but through which torrents roared often in summertime. However, there was only a chain of ponds in it now. A gang of coolies were working at the bridge when the whites approached. But these fellows disdainfully turned their backs on the latter, as had been their habit of late, and retired without uttering a word. The Colonel called out a warning. Three men cantered over the structure and signalled that all was safe. They were too hasty. Suddenly, when they were within a few yards of the other side, a crash was heard. Planks broke, and two riders were precipitated into the bottom of the creek. The third just managed to parry his horse and to hurry back. The coolies looked on from some distance, without moving a limb to render assistance. This callous apathy threw the Colonel into a violent rage. Leading his escort through the bed of the creek, he ordered the arrest of the loitering Japanese. While some soldiers pursued and secured them, without meeting with any resistance, others attended to the victims. One was dead, having dislocated his neck in the fall. His comrade was unconscious and suffered from a broken arm. Both horses had to be shot.

Colonel Ireton immediately returned to the fort with his eleven prisoners. He was determined to bring matters to a head. In his capacity as Chief Federal Magistrate and Commander-in-Chief, he proclaimed martial law over the Japanese settlement the same afternoon and informed the Elders that he would try all offenders, and in the first place the arrested coolies, before a summary court of justice consisting of Commonwealth officers appointed by him. He further stated that the trial would commence on the following day at 10 a.m. in front of the fort, and that an alleged ignorance of the English language on the part of the accused would not be allowed to interfere with the course of the justice in Imperial territory, before an Imperial court; if, however, an interpreter should be furnished by the Japanese community, his appearance would not be objected to. Notices to this effect were also nailed to the outsides of the principal buildings in the four quarters of the capital, and a further supply was handed to the Elders by an orderly of the Commandant, with the peremptory demand that they should be published in every outlying village.

The Board of Five solemnly protested against the introduction of martial law, on the ground that it had not been proved that properly constituted civil courts would be unable to deal with any matters arising among the settlers. For this reason they refused to help the court without a guarantee that such action would not be taken as an acknowledgement of its powers. The Colonel refused to listen to any conditions. Nevertheless, a Japanese offered his services privately. But he would accept no payment from the whites. He said that he would rather rely on the prisoners for his reward. All this, of course, was a farce originating in the desire of the Elders to get into touch with the captives. The Asiatic mind ever prefers to move in curves rather than in a straight line.

Proceedings opened punctually at 10 a.m. on December 13. Deal benches formed the seat of justice, surmounted by a tent roof supported by bare poles, so that sun or rain were kept out and yet the view of the audience was not obstructed.

The court consisted of twelve officers under the presidency of Colonel Ireton, The two other officers acted as Crown Prosecutor and Counsel for the Defence. Fifty men, with fixed bayonets, kept guard. The remainder of the garrison was held ready for instant action within the fort No Japanese were visible, with the exception of the interpreter, who begun by doubting, on behalf of his clients, the competency of the court and subsided only when he was told that he did not represent counsel. The ordinary routine of courts was observed. The Prosecutor outlined his case and called witnesses — the members of the hunting party — who were then cross-examined by the other side. Their evidence brought out the facts clearly, the collapse of the bridge, the presence of the accused, who had uttered no warning and had rendered no help. As for the defence, the interpreter was irrepressible in spite of the previous snub and soon ran it himself. He maintained that it had not been proved that the prisoners had been on or near the scene of the disaster. The witnesses, in reply, stated that all the accused belonged to the gang which had worked on the bridge. So the interpreter was thrown back on the old assertion that the occurrence was an accident and that any possible blame must attach to the whites, because they had carelessly subjected the structure to an overweight.

The court found that the prisoners worked on the bridge when the hunting party approached, and that it was their duty to warn travellers of its unsafeness. This had not been done, either from gross neglect or from malice, and loss of life had been the direct consequence of the omission. Furthermore, no help had been rendered, either by them or by their mates, which callousness aggravated the offence. The prisoners, therefore, were found guilty and were sentenced to a public flogging of twenty-five lashes each.

During the afternoon Colonel Ireton received a communication from

the Elders intimating that they were unable to vouch for the maintenance of peace if the feelings of the Japanese community should be outraged by the public execution of the sentence. But he resolved to persist without mercy. His men were enthusiastic and looked forward eagerly to the moment when brown malefactors should writhe under the whiplash of the whites in revenge for so many silent insults. Some of the officers were more anxious, but even the most cautious man had to admit that it was time to take risks. That the Elders, so imperturbable and cool hitherto, should have become so frantic that they condescended to a threatening message, was considered a good sign. The Australians were still convinced that the enemy would not dare to employ open violence; though the Empire might tolerate the outwitting of one of its units by diplomacy, it was inconceivable that its rulers would look on calmly if arms were raised against men who wore its uniform. These soldiers, a mere handful, felt that the whole striking force of the Empire was at their back and conducted themselves accordingly.

Early on December 14 the tent was set up again. Twenty-five yards away four flogging stocks were constructed of broad deal benches fitted with stout leather straps. While these preparations were under way, the Elders requested an interview, but the Colonel postponed it until after demands of justice should be satisfied, as he could not permit criticism of the findings of the court or interference with their proper performance. At 10 a.m. fifty Australians, fully armed, marched out and surrounded the tent where the court was already assembled. A few minutes later the prisoners were brought down, escorted by another detachment of soldiers. An officer read the judgement and then showed the signatures to the oldest captain, whose duty it was to see it carried out. Eleven floggers, who had been selected by ballot from the ranks, one for each culprit, stepped forward and seized their charges. A military surgeon hurriedly examined the prisoners to ascertain whether they were physically fit to undergo the punishment. Then the oldest captain called out in a loud voice: "Now let justice be done!"

Opposite, in a wide half-circle, groups of Japanese clustered in deep silence, nearly without motion, in attitudes of panting suspense. So they remained until they heard the slashing noise of the first blow, and the shriek which followed. A hundred voices took up, repeated, intensified the cry. It was like the wail of a wounded monster. With the suddenness of lightning, the groups dissolved into a whirling sea of humanity, surging forward with stretched arms. They carried no weapons — their mission was a last peaceful appeal of a warlike race. A short command — a white file formed to meet them, dividing, breaking, pushing back the brown flood. Behind, the flogging went on as if nothing was happening. For a moment the Japanese wavered. But the fourfold screams of the victims spurred them to fresh exertions. On they came

again, and now they closed with the soldiers, who were forced to use their rifle butts, even their bayonets, to repulse the ju-jitsuing fiends. Suddenly an alert mob outflanked them and rushed swiftly towards the flogging stocks. Before, however, the rioters could interrupt the execution of the sentence, the Colonel had sprung forward and ordered his men to fire; they did so at point blank range, with terrible effect. The rapidly advancing crowd fell back in indescribable disorder. Many of the survivors threw themselves flat on the ground. Their bodies, and those of the slain, remained after a minute the only visible sign of the formidable onset and its fatal end.

The flogging had been done with: the culprits were set free; orders were given to succour the wounded, when, all at once, a new commotion in the Japanese quarters attracted the attention of the Australians. There rose, from behind the low ramparts, a well-armed host. Thin lines dashed forth, curling around the flanks of the handful of Federals. These were now retreating leisurely, as if unconscious of the singular manoeuvre. At a bugle call, the Asiatics threw themselves down. Instinctively, the whites did the same. A volley rang out, followed by terrific sectional fire. The enemy, at last, had come into the open. A large force tried to intercept the retreat to the fort. Colonel Ireton's efforts were all in the direction of defeating this purpose. With the help of the reserves, who had been left within, he succeeded. The majority of his men regained the sheltering barracks. He himself had to be carried in, shot through the hip. Five officers and forty-two men lay outside, dead or wounded.

As quickly as the battle fury had broken loose it died away. The Japanese army withdrew out of the firing zone and assumed a waiting attitude at a safe distance. From the central offices the Board of Five approached under a Union Jack surmounted by a white towel. They came to dictate the terms of surrender. For that was what it amounted to. Only about two hundred and fifty unwounded defenders were left to oppose the invaders. The provisions in store would hardly last a fortnight and, of course, no relief could be expected. Indeed, the Elders did not look forward to a siege. Apologizing for the painful necessity which had brought them there, they announced that in case of a renewal of hostilities the fort would be a mass of flames within an hour. On the other hand, if peaceful counsels prevailed, they promised that the wounded would receive immediate care. Under the circumstances, the conditions were soon formulated and accepted. Colonel Ireton agreed to ship his whole garrison to Port Darwin as rapidly as the Federal steamer, which served as floating wireless station, could be got alongside the jetty. Only the badly wounded men were to remain behind in charge of the military surgeons, and the Japanese bound themselves to do everything in their power to assist the latter and to supply proper food. The whites retained their arms. As there was not enough space in the

vessel for the horses, it was determined that the Japanese should take care of them for three weeks, and should deliver them to any authorized person who might demand them within that period. After that they should become the property of the settlers.

The garrison embarked early on December 16. It must be admitted that the conquerors behaved modestly after their triumph. There was no jeering, no ironical cheering. Colonel Ireton, who should have remained with the other wounded men, insisted on being removed at once. He died at sea, less from his wound than from a broken heart, as his faithful soldiers are fond of asserting. According to his last wish he was buried in the placid waters which lave the shores of the Northern Territory, wastes which he had battled for so bravely, and died for in the bitter end.

## **Chapter X: Black Christmas — Peace on Earth, but No Great Joy for Australia**

IN the afternoon of December 16, London time — two days after the massacre of the Federal garrison therefore — the Japanese Ambassador to the Court of St. James informed the British Government of the unfortunate occurrence. This was perhaps the most remarkable proof of the wonderful organization which enabled the invaders to flash wireless messages to Tokio within a few hours. That this method of communication existed was no longer a secret, because the quick response of the Japanese Press to the alleged oppression of the settlers by the Commonwealth Commander could only be explained in this way. The Ambassador was very suave on this occasion, as usual. He said that the dreaded clash between the tyrannical Federal garrison and the harassed refugees had at last come to pass. As far as he knew the blame rested with the Australians, who had presumed to maltreat several of his former compatriots under the pretext of a crime which without any doubt was no crime, but an accident, and any connexion with which, moreover, had not been proved against the hapless victims. Nevertheless, he was charged to express the sincere regrets of the Mikado and his advisers for the lamentable affair, which had resulted in the death of about a score of white soldiers, while the losses of the settlers were even larger. His Government must reserve the right to lodge reasonable claims against the Commonwealth on behalf of the refugees, since the latter, to the sorrow of every one of them, had not yet been admitted to British citizenship. At the same time he could assure the allied nation that Japan felt no resentment against individuals who, of course, had to obey orders, and was willing to consider favourably any suggestion of a compensation to the wounded and to the near relations of the dead, provided guarantees were given that the conditions, which had led up to the climax and were the cause of the proposed monetary sacrifice, could not recur.

But what the diplomat left unmentioned the Tokio Press boldly spoke out. The papers, which had already made furious comments about the jetty quarrel, now called distinctly for war against Australia, even against the Empire. With regard to the latter case, they indulged in some exquisite contortions for the purpose of conveying the impression that they could not contemplate or even talk about such a possibility without pangs of acute suffering. “Every one in this country is proud of our

alliance with the Mistress of the Seas,” one journal wrote, “and every one desires to be loyal to her. These feelings are reciprocated by the people of Great Britain, as we know. But Britain is merely part of a whole, and if we may believe the clamours of other portions of her Empire she is a part rapidly diminishing in importance. We have to consider those others. The loudest among them at present is Australia. Who are the Australians? They are the men who have owned a Continent for a century and imagine that a handful of them have a better right to it than hundreds of millions of our race. They are the men who could not hold it for an hour against our will by their own strength. Yet they think that they may oppress a small number of our starved compatriots. They defy us daily. They insult us daily. By God, we shall end this shameful thing. If England can be ordered about by such people, she can be our friend no longer. We are all very sorry that our honourable friendship should terminate for such a paltry reason. But it is not our fault. Honour commands us to make war on Australia. Let us do so, and then we shall see. Let us make war against every one who helps Australia. They say England will have to help her. If so, we may be beaten. We are not afraid to face our fate and may admit at once, therefore, that according to all human calculation of probable events we shall be beaten by mighty England. That will not be a dishonour. The sons of Day Nippon do not quarrel with the inevitable. But do not let us drift into war. If Great Britain wants to fight us, not because of her own grievances, which do not exist, but because she has no will apart from the other portions of the Empire, well, let us strike the first blow with all our power, with all our heart.”

Other papers wrote in a similar strain. Moreover, Tokio gave an exhibition of its dreaded public opinion in another form. Crowds gathered in its streets and listened to popular orators denouncing the Commonwealth. Afterwards there were some riotous demonstrations. The Japanese Government did not forget to point to this occurrence as an expression of the will of the people. But another little incident had a far deeper effect on the temper of the British masses. It was reported by cable to the English Press that on December 18 a Japanese squadron, composed of three battleships of the *Dreadnought* type and two enormous cruisers, had paid a friendly visit at Weihawai, the British station at the entrance of the Gulf of Pechili. The same issue of the London morning papers which brought this item contained also a summary of the first Federal statement and protest to the Imperial authorities about the Northern Territory affair, which was described tersely and correctly as a massacre.

And that afternoon (December 19) the Japanese Ambassador demanded boldly an official apology on the part of the Commonwealth for the flogging of the eleven prisoners. He insisted that there was no

justification for the punishment, because the offence of which these men had been accused, even supposing that they had been guilty of it, was not one for which flogging was resorted to in civilized communities. It was an outrage, an incitement to bloodshed, and his nation was proud of the fact that it had been revenged instantly. But that was not enough. Japan, as the representative of the Asiatic races against which this foul insult had been levelled, regretted the necessity of having to ask its ally to exact satisfaction from the latter's dependency. This request was the crowning mercy of the record-breaking Far Eastern diplomacy. It did not only compel the Imperial authorities to take sides at once, but it determined the choice for them. The British people would never tolerate Ministers who shielded floggers. Everybody knows to-day, of course, that Colonel Ireton's method of dealing with cowardly assassins erred rather in the direction of leniency. But if he had shot the male-factors, he would have had a better chance with the well-meaning, but insularly narrow-minded humanitarians who rule the Empire in the last instance and who have an inherited horror of corporeal chastisement.

That very influential section of the English Press which preaches Imperialism from a capitalistic point of view, and which would have smiled at the flogging of Asiatics if it had happened in India or in some other colony with approved conservative principles, had nothing to say to the Commonwealth. It did not even wax furious any more about the legislation passed by the Federal Parliament. Its readers, the wealthy classes of the United Kingdom and their hangers-on, had become resigned to the thought that Communism — as they termed it — must run its full course in Australia. They were no longer alarmed at any particular manifestations of those tendencies. In fact, they took such a hopeless view of Australian affairs that they were surprised at a state of mind which denotes the death of all sympathy. And their papers reflected the apathy and were only strong on one point: that the helpless and demoralized Commonwealth was now less than ever worth the risk of exposing the Heart of the Empire to danger.

The great hope of the Australian people, overwhelmed with so many internal difficulties and stupefied by this new terrible blow, was a resurrection of sentiment in the sister dominions. If anything was able to fan into flame again the hatred of coloured races, it was surely an affront directed against a section of the Imperial defence forces. But the autonomous colonies were as tired of the interminable Northern Territory deadlock as the mother country. Before it was finally settled, London refused to lift colonial securities out of the slough of despondency or to find fresh funds, which were required most urgently. The ordinary citizens of those far-away dependencies did not understand the causes which compelled the Australians to hang back from the enemy, instead of rushing at him in the good old British style. They would have joined

gladly in a willing, closely contested war. This melancholy stagnation, however, proved too much for them.

Already in the evening of December 16 the Imperial authorities had preferred a peremptory demand that the Commonwealth should place the Northern Territory into their hands. The Federal Government, in its turn, asked for guarantees that the principle of the White Continent would be upheld. Its action was applauded by the whole nation. On December 19 Great Britain proclaimed a blockade of the whole Australian coast. Probably this step had been contemplated for some weeks, as the vessels of the Australian squadron, which were usually concentrated at Sydney, had been distributed among the capital ports about a fortnight ago. Now the men-of-war left the harbours and stationed themselves off the heads of the ports of Brisbane, Newcastle, Sydney, Melbourne and Freemantle. Two gunboats cruised off Adelaide. No merchant ships were allowed to pass in or out. Never had a blockade been rendered more easily efficient. There was a subtle irony in it, too: Australia's subsidized navy was employed to coerce Australia.

The blockade created consternation in the ranks of the Extremists. It interrupted completely connexion with Western Australia, Tasmania and Northern Queensland. If it should last for some time, old separatist hopes might be revived. Moreover, the construction of the transcontinental railway to Port Darwin, which was wholly dependent on imports for its materials, would have to be stopped. On the other hand the Imperial statesmen, who had taken this desperate step, were secretly at least as anxious as the Federal politicians to terminate the blockade, which arrested absolutely the circulation of produce and was sure to bring about the entire economic ruin of the Commonwealth within a few weeks. Great Britain feared one thing — the repudiation of the public debt by Australia. There was really little danger of it as long as any other chance remained of restoring the fortunes of the community. For even the most resolute Extremists, while impatient of personal privilege and private monopoly, were too patriotic to contemplate calmly the disgrace which the disavowment of obligations entered into voluntarily would bring upon the nation. But a prolonged blockade might force the Continent into bankruptcy.

Under the circumstances it was natural that cable-grams were exchanged unceasingly between London and Melbourne. About noon on Christmas Eve it became known that a preliminary understanding had been arrived at and that the blockade was ended. That Christmas will never be forgotten in Australia. It was Black Christmas: Christmas of desolation. The open country was in the throes of a silent, merciless struggle. The harvest was in danger of being spoilt. Desperate landholders and farmers stopped short at nothing which would give them labour to prevent further damage. Men were hunted, trapped and, if they

resisted, even killed like vermin. In retribution, many a fine homestead, many a grand wheat paddock blazed to the sky. In the big cities, people were hardly yet realizing the state of the interior. Still a few precursory murmurs made themselves heard already. Soon they were destined to swell into another wild street roar of sympathy with the oppressed toilers, which would drown all excuses, every plea of necessity by the owners of the soil, and would precipitate the whole vexed, vital land problem for settlement by popular fury, suspicion and resentment. Buildings and streets, damaged in the riots, had fallen into disrepair. Many citizens, wealthy or well-to-do a short year ago, were beggared. Others, less unfortunate, did nevertheless feel beggared by comparison with their former standing. The principal financial institutions survived only by reason of protective Parliamentary enactments. The rate of unemployment was frightful. A majority of townspeople seemed to depend on casual jobs for a livelihood. And all over the Continent there remained hardly a family which did not mourn the recent death of some dear member killed in the wars, the riots, by disease, famine, or by some other horror for which the great crisis was responsible.

After the preliminary understanding had been announced, several weeks passed during which negotiations were carried on between London and Tokio, and between London and Melbourne. The final agreement was published on February 26, 1913, and contains the following clauses:

1. The Commonwealth cedes part of the Northern Territory to Great Britain, viz., the district between Alligator River west and the Gulf of Carpentaria east, and between the Roper River south and the sea to the north, including Coburg Peninsula and all the islands within the limit of 50 miles from the main land, but with the exception of all islands in Van Diemen's Gulf and also of Groote Eylandt on condition that Great Britain guarantees never to cede this territory to any Foreign Power.
2. The Commonwealth has no voice in the Government of the ceded territory, but if Great Britain should desire at any time to retire from the possession the Commonwealth is to have first option of requirement, before a separate State or Colony may be formed of it. The retirement of Great Britain shall not be permissible before the year 1940.
3. Great Britain pays to the Commonwealth £10,000,000 in consideration of this cession and will guarantee another Commonwealth loan of £8,000,000 extended over five years. The influence of the Imperial Government will also be used to facilitate the renewal of Australian loans falling due within the next five years.
4. Great Britain recognizes the right of the Commonwealth to exclude coloured races from its own territory.

5. The laws passed by the Federal Parliament, which have not yet received the formal Royal assent, are to be submitted to a referendum of the people, and such as may be accepted by a simple majority will then receive the Royal assent.
6. Great Britain acknowledges the Federal High Court to be in future the last instance in all civil disputes within the Commonwealth.

The White Continent was now a memory of the past. But the White Commonwealth had at last become an acknowledged reality. In spite of its failure the defence of the greater ideal was not without beneficial results. Its very violence had destroyed the causes which underlay the failure and what had been saved had at least been saved on basic conditions which made the recurrence of former mistakes and sins impossible. Above all, a long peace was wanted now. Australia required immigrants, time to recover breath, leisure to work out its destiny along the track blazed in the Terrible Year. Therefore a practically unanimous Parliament accepted the agreement against the chief principle of which it had waged heroic war in vain.

It is impossible to review here the aftermath of the Commonwealth crisis — the prolonged economic convulsions, the agrarian excesses, and the slow, painful recovery. Suffice it to say that few outward traces of the national collapse remain to-day (1922). A rarely interrupted succession of good seasons has brought into full play the marvellous fertility of the soil. Again wealth is increasing, though the financial burdens incurred in consequence of the Japanese invasion are pressing heavily. The transcontinental railway to Port Darwin has been completed and is now being linked up with the Eastern lines.

A great deal depends on successful white settlement in the North. So far little has been achieved; perhaps the time has been too short. But it is the problem which in vital importance overshadows all others. For the alienated extreme Northern corner — Australia Irredenta — is flourishing with a hostile civilization. Under lenient British rule a new Japanese empire is in the making. Already it is said to contain, if the second generation is counted in, an Asiatic population of 200,000 souls. It is constructing railways and ports. A truce has been cried until 1940 A.D. Till then the Commonwealth must get ready for its relentless march to the North to save the purity of the race by sweeping the brown invaders back over the coral sea. The alternative is the irretrievable conquest of tropical Australia by the hordes of the Orient. In this struggle the still larger issue is bound up whether the White or the Yellow Race shall gain final supremacy. Christian civilization cannot afford the loss of this Continent, **FOR AUSTRALIA IS THE PRECIOUS FRONT BUCKLE IN THE WHITE GIRDLE OF POWER AND PROGRESS ENCIRCLING THE GLOBE.**

---