

The Germans are Coming!

British Fiction of a German Invasion 1871-1913

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FROM THE CREATION OF THE Second Reich to the outbreak of the Great War, Great Britain produced a body of fiction that described the threat or the event of a German invasion. Influencing as well as reacting to foreign and domestic policies, these fictions both reflected and fueled popular fears and political debates in Britain. From a straightforward premise, the genre developed many diverse forms. Yet, while the aims and methods of individual authors differed, similar themes and issues unify their works.

The works themselves, and to some extent the genre, have been treated in other studies. In *Operation Sea Lion* (1957), Peter Fleming writes of "the four pre-1914 [British] works dealing with [a German] invasion" (28) as background to his examination of Hitler's plans to invade Britain in 1940. I. F. Clarke's *Voices Prophesying War 1763-1984* (1966) deals with some of the invasion fictions discussed below, but places them under the more general rubric of speculative war fiction; indeed, he sees the first of them as the modern progenitor of this larger genre. The present study attempts to explore the range (far more extensive than Fleming's four works), the characteristics, and the conventions of British fiction of a German invasion within its pre-1914 historical context and as a genre unto itself. Taken as historically relevant literature, invasion fiction reveals not

only contemporary questions and fears, but also the way the British perceived the world around them and their own place in it.

Aggressive and victorious, with the mightiest industrial economy on the Continent and the most formidable army in Europe, Germany was transformed into an Empire on January 18, 1871, in the Hall of Mirrors, Versailles. Germany's defeat of France, Britain's enemy and rival of centuries, marked a new balance of power in Europe. In an era of Darwinism, the Franco-Prussian War was seen as an analog of the rise and decline of species. Evolutionary theory lent a pseudo-biological justification, in terms of struggle and survival, to Germany's technological, social, political, economic, and military achievements.

By the late nineteenth century, faith in progress was a fixture in the European consciousness. The telegraph and rapidly growing literacy greatly expanded both the scope and the role of the press as it disseminated ideas of progress and international Darwinism. In political life, increasingly enfranchised populations were increasingly courted and manipulated. Prospective changes came to be couched in terms of the dramatic improvements those changes would facilitate. The obverse, a forecast of disaster, was equally potent. Politically charged popular notions of competitive progress whose dark shadow was the fear of Darwinian disaster stimulated the emergence of speculative fiction as a major literary form. With the radical shift in the European power structure effected by the creation of Germany through a series of wars, a ready theme was the prediction of future war and its consequences for the world order.

In Great Britain, fictions of war brought to British soil became a national preoccupation. Perhaps this development occurred because Britain, unlike its Continental neighbors, had remained proof against invasion by virtue of the

Channel and good fortune (the notable threats having been the Armada and Napoleon). Many countries and alliances would invade or threaten to invade Britain in fiction. Yet, the Second Reich did, in fact, emerge as the evident and often self-proclaimed threat to Britain's interests and security, and hence it became *the* threat in fiction.

Days after the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War, Lieutenant Colonel George Tomkyns Chesney of the Royal Engineers sent John Blackwood of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* the outline of a short story he hoped would be "a useful way of bringing home to the country the necessity of a thorough reorganization" of the British Military (qtd. in Clarke 47).¹ "The Battle of Dorking" appeared anonymously in the May 1871 number of *Blackwood's*. Before 1871, there had been occasional pamphlets, prints, and satires depicting future wars. But at best, these works had attracted only passing interest—nothing comparable to the success and reputation throughout Europe secured by "The Battle of Dorking." The story describes a successful invasion of Britain by unmistakably German troops and the inability of the British to repel them. With "The Battle of Dorking," Chesney recast the nature of speculative war fiction into something new, powerful, and lasting. Within the year, and long afterwards, responses appeared from many quarters to support or deny the possibility of a German invasion as Chesney had described it.

"The Battle of Dorking" owed its success to the force of both its realism and its fantasy, as well as to its timing. The story forecasts a grim fate for the British nation-species in the international struggle for survival against an enemy whose power had just been so well demonstrated against the once-superior French. The persona of the tale's subtitle, "Reminiscences of a Volunteer," provides a narrative frame that details the prosperous state of Britain before the fall, the events that led to disaster, and finally the ruin of

the defeated nation. Within this frame is the Volunteer's personal experience in the futile struggle to reverse the German onslaught. Full of bitter hindsight and regret, his tale is a compelling study in the psychology of the defeated.

Chesney's parable, as told by the Volunteer, is firmly rooted in the lessons of the Franco-Prussian War and their implications for Britain:

Well do I remember the great review held at Paris by the Emperor Napoleon [III] during the great Exhibition, and how proud he looked showing off his splendid Guards to the assembled kings and princes. Yet, three years afterwards, the force so long deemed the first in Europe was ignominiously beaten, and the whole army taken prisoners. Such a defeat had never happened before in the world's history; and with this proof before us of the folly of disbelieving in the possibility of disaster merely because it had never happened before, it might have been supposed that we should have the sense to take the lesson to heart The nation, although uneasy, was misled by the false security its leaders professed to feel; the warning given by the disasters that overtook France was allowed to pass by unheeded. The French trusted in their army and its great reputation, we in our fleet; and in each case the result of this blind confidence was disaster, such as our forefathers in their hardest struggles could not have even imagined. (540-41)

The disaster, however, is not an isolated blow; rather, it is the climax of many challenges to British power. Despite the tale's bleak vision, Chesney's patriotism is clear. The nation's ultimate struggle is an unfair fight. The fatal blow

comes when Britain is already on the ropes: both the small regular army and the Royal Navy are spread thinly over the globe protecting British interests. Germany chooses this moment to annex Holland and Belgium. Out of indignation, Britain declares war. "We had always got out of scrapes before," the Volunteer recalls, "and we believed our old luck and pluck would somehow pull us through"(542).

Germany severs all communications between Britain and the Continent and prepares to invade. By the time the Fleet is assembled for a defense, "the enemy's preparations were too far advanced to be stopped by a *coup de main*" (543). Nevertheless, halting the Germans at sea is Britain's only hope. With its small army gone, there are no means by which Britain can meet invading troops on land. "The Battle of Dorking" presciently establishes the twin pillars of the invasion debate that captivated Britain on and off for decades: What if the navy cannot shield Britain from invasion; and how can the army meet an invasion force once landed? Chesney's other themes, the government's false security and the incompetence of the military bureaucracy, were further explored in subsequent fiction and public debate.

That the Admiralty issues disastrous orders, however, becomes moot; the whole fleet is sunk by "fatal engines" placed in the water by the enemy. Contemporary readers took issue with this convenient disposal of the world's foremost naval force. Yet, if these super mines or torpedoes seem to detract from Chesney's point of complacency and military unpreparedness, in 1871 it must have been difficult to imagine anyone besting the Royal Navy in a fair fight except under extraordinary circumstances (certainly not the Germans, who would not begin their massive program of naval expansion until the end of the century). If Chesney's purpose was to show the need for an adequate land defense in the event enemy troops *could* be successfully landed,

such “fatal engines” are not a flaw in the narrative, but an integral part of his illustration.

Chesney’s narrator puts aside general history to relate his experience as a Volunteer. As the invasion progresses relentlessly toward London, the Volunteers try to overcome crippling logistical problems and a sorry lack of armaments. The British military isn’t prepared to fight an old-style war against the devastatingly new-style foe.

Every man’s face reflected the general feeling that we had neglected the warnings given us, and that now the danger so long derided as impossible and absurd had really come and found us unprepared. But the soldiers, if grave, looked determined, like men who meant to do their duty whatever might happen. (547)

Chesney does not choose to imagine that if luck ran out, pluck would follow suit.

The narrator and his fellow Volunteers reach the site chosen to check the enemy advance, the suburb of Dorking, where they are reviewed by the commanding general who, the narrator notes, wears a uniform little different from those of the Napoleonic era. In contrast to the modernized German army still fresh in the minds of Chesney’s readers, the commanding general is a distilled metaphor for failure to absorb the lessons of the Franco-Prussian War.

British defenses crumble amid vivid descriptions of the confusion and human cost of battle. The German advance brings scenes of death, tragedy, and national impotence. Britain must sue for peace. As was the case with France, the victorious Germans impose a harsh indemnity and taxes are increased to cover it. As France had to accept Germany’s military supremacy, Britain must now accept the victor’s naval supremacy. In retrospect, the old Volunteer insists

that the British analog is far worse than the French original because “war could not take away [France’s] rich soil; they had no colonies to lose; their broad lands, which made their wealth, remained to them” (571). Ultimately, the Volunteer reflects that a Britain “too selfish to defend its liberty could not have been fit to retain it” (572). The British were not willing to practice a little self-denial and take to the discipline of arms. The political courage to take the proper measures vanished as power passed from the classes that brought the nation to greatness into the hands of the uneducated lower classes swayed by demagogues and socialism. A few saw the warning signs from across the Channel but the multitude chose not to.

Happy those whose bones whitened the fields of Surrey; they at least were spared the disgrace we lived to endure. . . . [T]hink, then, what those endured who had been citizens of the proudest nation on earth, which had never known disgrace or defeat, and whose boast it used to be that they bore a flag on which the sun never set! (570)

The success of Chesney’s story can be measured in part by the attacks on it. Gladstone, most likely seeing the phenomenon created by Chesney as a threat to his budget of military retrenchment and domestic reform, spoke out against the piece and the folly of alarmism. Articles and short stories appeared in papers like the *Times* and the *St. James’s Gazette* (Clarke 40) and were soon followed by pamphlets and books.² The authors either attempted to refute Chesney’s ideas directly or, using Chesney’s methods against him, wrote of a redemption by British forces returning from overseas. Merely reacting to Chesney’s truly evocative tale, however, these tracts were vastly inferior to

the original. Abroad, "The Battle of Dorking" was both translated and imitated. The issues Chesney raised had struck a collective nerve.

Although "The Battle of Dorking" spawned detractors, imitators, and ultimately, a whole fictional genre, it did not at the time of its publication significantly alter the national mood in Britain with regard to Germany. Chesney's pitting of Britain's small forces against the foremost army of the day was a worst-case scenario—a critical self-assessment in response to the power shifts on the Continent. Whatever the notoriety of Chesney's piece, the 1870s were not distinguished by antagonism or real friction between Britain and Germany. Indeed, there was a certain amount of feeling that an Anglo-German alliance was in some way "natural." If there was little reason to imagine that the new Empire was satiated, its ambitions and aspirations were seen as Continental. But in the decades that followed, for many reasons, Germany began to pursue an actively anti-British national course that challenged the bases of Britain's prestige: its Empire and its Navy.

Britain was near the zenith of its power and prosperity in the 1880s; yet, even in the highest offices, fear of Britain's vulnerability to attack grew. Britain's continuing suspicion of France, fueled by international and other, purely British factors, produced a series of invasion scares before the turn of the century. In 1884, using information secretly supplied by Admiralty sources, the *Pall Mall Gazette* claimed the Navy was barely capable of defending the Empire, and the ensuing public outcry forced the Gladstone government to pledge extra millions for warships. In 1888, advocates of a larger army and the fortification of London produced an erosion of confidence that erupted in public as a major invasion scare. By this time, a retired Admiral, Philip Colomb, and his brother, Captain Sir

Charles, had begun to put forward the notion that only absolute naval supremacy could effectively guarantee Britain against invasion. The Naval Defence Act of 1889 answered the Colomb's call for a two-power standard and was a signal victory for their navalist cause. The army, unused to dealing with strategic issues of such magnitude, had no counter-thesis with which to wage a rival campaign for increased allocations.³ The so-called "Blue Water School" of strategic thought founded by the brothers Colomb dominated the defense debate in Britain into the twentieth century.⁴

To the British public in the late 1880s and early 1890s, the extra-European aspect of Anglo-German relations became increasingly significant (Kennedy 198). After bowing to domestic political pressure for a colonial program, Bismarck had gone on to use that colonial program against both the English-style liberal political opposition at home and against Britain itself in the debacle over the Congo that precipitated the 1885 Congress of Berlin and the subsequent acrimony as European nations divided Africa's untaken tracts. By 1897, the threat of conflict with Britain over South Africa and the unstable foreign policy under the new Kaiser, William II, fueled the advocacy of radical naval expansion in Germany. The naval policy inspired by the vehemently anti-British Admiral von Tirpitz

. . . gave a new dimension to the old colonial policy of the 1880s and early 1890s and transformed it into the *Weltpolitik* that entranced so many Germans as the new century dawned. And it was his policy, also, that contributed more than anything else to the total deterioration of Anglo-German relations. (Craig 303)

Colonial rivalry did much to fix Germany as the enemy in British minds; naval rivalry both challenged Britain's defensive capability and seemingly provided the means of invasion that would cause many British earnestly to fear its possibility. Increasing sensitivities and fears would be reflected in public debate, and in an increasing volume of fiction of a German invasion.

Germany's construction of naval facilities and plans for more warships proceeded apace. German service writers supported naval development as a means to open up new possibilities for the army (like invading Britain). Although it had not produced much speculative war fiction, Germany in 1900 contributed to the genre with *Wehrlos zur See* by Gustav Adolf Erdmann and *Die Abrechnung mit England* by Dr. Karl Eisenhart. Both advocate naval construction: the former by describing the coming defeat of Germany; the latter, the defeat of Britain (Clarke 139). The same year saw the publication in Britain of T. W. Offin's *How the Germans Took London*.

To resolve the bitter British conflict that had developed between army and navy over the invasion issue, a new coordinating body, the Committee on Imperial Defence, was formed to advise then Prime Minister Balfour. The possibility of invasion remained the CID's principal preoccupation; between 1902 and 1914, the Committee reviewed the issue five times (Moon 2). In its first inquiry, despite the wide-spread and growing fear that the Kaiser "might really intend to live up to his new title of Admiral of the Atlantic" (Clarke 142) to say nothing of the genuine potential threat, the CID chose only to examine the possibility of an action by France. The Committee's report, which was not immediately released, concluded with Balfour that it would be too difficult for France to mount a successful invasion, even if the Royal Navy was temporarily absent. This suited both a complacent Admiralty and a

newly established War Office wanting to plan overseas actions without being required to retain many troops for home defense (Gooch 279).

The Riddle of the Sands was published in 1903. The author, Robert Erskine Childers, was then a clerk in the House of Commons, a veteran of volunteer service in the Boer War, and a skilled yachtsman. A well-educated, upper middle class Englishman of Irish descent, Childers would be executed in 1922 by an Irish Free State firing squad for his Irish nationalist activities. Dispassionate logician and zealous adventurer, the quixotic nature of the author is reflected in the novel he crafted.

A quantum leap beyond “The Battle of Dorking” in style, quality, and purpose, *The Riddle of the Sands* is an adventure rooted in the anxieties of the times—a tale in which luck and pluck, combined with expert yachtmanship, foil German invasion plans. Childers based his novel on his own experiences in a tiny yacht navigating the German coastline. He begins with a premise opposite to that with which Chesney ended. In contrast to the Volunteer’s tirade against the political power of the masses, Childers speaks of “the commonsense of the country at large . . . which all thoughtful observers know to be growing while statesmanship is declining” (viii). The basic message, nevertheless, remains the same: those who can read the writing on the wall are not the ones creating policy.

The novel’s two protagonists each embody a facet of the author’s double life. Carruthers, who narrates, is bored and to a degree disillusioned with the routine of office, club, and chambers; Davies, a yachtsman, is an amateur (in the positive, British sense) and hates affectation. At Oxford together, they were not part of the same set. Out of the blue, Davies invites Carruthers, who speaks German like a native, to come duck shooting in the Baltic. Carruthers accepts out

of ennui, but is quite put out when Davies' yacht bears no resemblance to the smart vessels he is familiar with. The *Dulcibella* is a businesslike, solid piece of work; flat-bottomed, but with a center-board, it can sail almost anywhere. Carruthers sulks, but not for long; Childers wastes little time getting the ship asail and the plot afoot.

Davies probes Carruthers for his knowledge of Germany, showing keen interest as Carruthers speaks of the 1864 war between Prussia and Denmark. Davies exclaims: "Germany's a thundering great nation . . . I wonder if we shall ever fight her" (36). These two thoughts express the parallel underlying themes of *The Riddle of the Sands*: the admiration of German achievement, and the prospect of conflict.

He [Davies] snatched down a pocket map from the shelf and unfolded it. "Here's this huge empire, stretching half over central Europe—an empire growing like wildfire, I believe, in people, and wealth, and everything. They've licked the French and the Austrians, and are the greatest military power in Europe. I wish I knew more about all that, but what I'm concerned with is their sea power. It's a new thing with them, but it's going strong, and that Emperor of theirs is running it for all it's worth. He's a splendid chap, and anyone can see he's right. They've got no colonies to speak of, and *must* have them, like us. They can't get them and keep them, and they can't protect their huge commerce without naval strength. The command of the sea is *the* thing nowadays, isn't it? I say, don't think these are my ideas," he added naively. "It's all out of Mahan and those fellows." (65-66)⁵

Davies is obsessed with the naval potential of the German coast, especially the stretch which lies west of Denmark. Not only does it possess Germany's greatest ports and richest commerce, but it also fronts France and Britain. "In the event of war . . . every inch of it would be important, *sand and all*" (67). The Admiralty isn't waking up to the danger, in Davies's opinion. The people of Britain, safe so long and grown so rich, are not to blame for their apathy and forgetting what they owe to command of the sea; it is the Admiralty and the like that have neglected their responsibility for vigilance and foresight. (In the Boer War, Childers had seen first-hand the tragic effects of mismanagement by politicians and generals.) Davies's frustration is as national in scope as his racist cliché was conventional for the times: "By Jove, we want a man like this Kaiser, who doesn't want to be kicked, but works like a nigger for his country and sees ahead" (81).

Carruthers recognizes that the dream of colonial empire is the force that is molding modern Europe and determining Germany's transformation from a land to a sea power. The trade rival of the past is becoming the naval rival of the future. While its own resources on the Continent are unassailable, Germany's naval expansion threatens the delicate lines that tie Britain's Home Islands, dependent on commerce and free passage of the seas, to its far-flung Empire. Davies hopes that the German threat will, in the spirit of healthy competition, strengthen the British nation.

Suspecting secret activity in the sands off Friesland, perhaps the construction of secret bases for commerce raiders or torpedo boats, Davies "was aiming for a little secret service on the high seas" (73). As a youth, he failed the Navy examination but could not reconcile himself to a life apart from the sea, physical exertion, and patriotic duty. Davies suspects that the mysterious Herr Dollmann, who

attempted to mislead the *Dulcibella* to its doom in a storm, is actually English and feels it is his and Carruthers's duty, as Englishmen, to expose the traitor.⁶ Davies, "smarting under a personal discontent, athirst for means, however tortuous, of contributing his effort to the great cause, the maritime supremacy of Britain" (83), believes Dollmann is protecting something in the Frisian Islands and means to find it out.

After much adventure, Carruthers and Davies learn that the secret of the Frisian Islands is the development of a system of troop transport destined for an invasion of Britain. Hidden on a barge making a secret test run, Carruthers at last understands.

I was assisting at an experimental rehearsal of a great scene to be enacted, perhaps, in the near future—a scene when multitudes of sea-going lighters, carrying full loads of soldiers . . . should issue simultaneously . . . and, under escort of the Imperial Navy, traverse the North sea and throw themselves bodily upon English shores. (240)

Childers's vision is compelling because he was an expert and adventurous yachtsman. The imaginative part of his invasion plan, "to draw on the obscure resources of an obscure strip of coast" (240), is backed by the kind of knowledge and detail that gives it credibility and feasibility, although not probability. The Naval Intelligence Department was directed to examine the possibility of Childers's invasion scheme (Kennedy 252). The quality of the novel, its wealth of technical description, adventure, and suspense, made *The Riddle of the Sands* an instant success and an enduring classic.

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In the decade preceding the Great War, fear of a German invasion was the common catalyst for a wide range of partisan publicity in Britain. The Boer War demonstrated the urgent need for army reform and the challenge of German naval construction led to concerns regarding the senior service. While Britain's defense system was being overhauled (including the defensive concentration of the navy around the Home Islands), many interests nurtured public fears—often for opposite ends. To many, the issue was no longer if Germany would invade, but when.

This sense of inevitability led to the development of a new school of strategic thought that countered the Blue Water school. If Germany wished to subjugate the Continent and Britain remained unassailed, Britain could, as it had done in the past, finance an opposing coalition and orchestrate the restoration of the old balance of power. But if, as German service writers had been advocating, a momentary lapse of defensive capability at sea could be exploited and Britain taken in a short, intense, combined operation, Germany could pursue its undoubted ambitions with greater ease and fewer long-term fears. To meet this challenge, what came to be called the Bolt from the Blue school advocated a British army of Continental dimensions.

In the absence of compulsory national service, the Bolt from the Blue polemicists advocated rifle shooting and the formation of rifle clubs. This exercise reached its height in 1905 with a national campaign by Field Marshal Lord Roberts, the preeminent soldier of the day and vigorous advocate for conscription as the only true bulwark against invasion. In the same year, to quell the rising tide of alarmism and to revive support for his government, Balfour presented the 1903 findings of the CID that had supported the Blue Water case to Parliament. Bolt from the Blue advocates only became more active in response. In 1905, Anglo-German relations deteriorated further following

Chancellor Bülow's failed attempt, in the Tangier incident, to detach France from its new *entente* with Britain. Admiralty and War Office once again faced the possibility of war with Germany. Inter-service rivalries and competition for funds, combined with the activities of Blue Water and Bolt from the Blue schools in the press, further intensified the invasion debate.

Published in 1906 under the pseudonym "General Staff," *The Writing on the Wall* uses an imaginative 1908 German invasion to make the case for conscription and "call the attention of the public to the absolute unpreparedness of our land forces" (v). The work aims to effect military reform by presenting a compelling portrait—a "sandwich of facts and fiction" (viii)—of the danger to Britain that would appeal to the people and ultimately influence the government.

The invasion is the Bolt from the Blue scenario. If "the navy could be disposed of for a week or ten days," there is nothing to protect Britain. The author allows that

. . . under present conditions it is most improbable that an enemy could obtain supremacy on the sea for even such a short period. But it is the unexpected which happens, and it appears to be a mistaken policy to have only one line of defence when the stake at issue is so great. (v-vi)

From this tone of prudent defensive caution, the author switches to virulent Germanophobia, combined with the kind of admiration that comes from watchful fear of a successful competitor:

Welt politik knows neither ethics nor gratitude, and the rulers of Germany are not philanthropic

cosmopolitans, but far-seeing patriots with a well-defined and unaltering aim. Prussia, which a hundred years ago was at the lowest depths that she had ever reached, has, by adopting a steadfast policy and always seizing a good opportunity for self-aggrandizement, now become the most powerful State in Europe. (vi)

Breaking significantly with the tradition established by Chesney, "General Staff" cites not the lessons of 1870, but rather the lessons of 1808—of Prussia's defeat by Napoleon and its subsequent rise to Continental mastery. The author's theory is that a crushing defeat can regenerate a nation. Other themes, however, are rehearsed without deviation from what had become genre norms. As projected in *The Writing on the Wall*, the immediate cause of Britain's catastrophe in 1908 is the public reluctance to take up the discipline of arms. While the British public-school spirit is admirable, wars are no longer won by "pluck and spirit" (21). Britain has grown "luxurious and vulgar" (14). The degeneracy of affluence is seen as the penultimate sign of decline for nation and race.

A long peace and over-civilization had resulted in an exaggerated value being placed upon human life. This feeling cannot be regarded as having been moral. . . . No nation values life more than does the effeminate and degenerate population of Hindustan, which for centuries has been the prey of more virile peoples. (145-46)

After suffering destruction of the fleet, invasion, military chaos, defeat, London set to the torch, a large indemnity, and the taking of hostages, the British people rise from the catastrophe and ungrudgingly work to reassert their national

virility and regain their place in the world. This stirring renaissance of Britain's power through patriotic selflessness and unity leads, not very cleverly, but nevertheless effectively, to the remedy for the insecurities just inspired—the plan for conscription and military reform enacted after the disaster of 1908. The plan, of course, is one “General Staff” would like to see enacted before the disaster he forecasts.

One indication of how the invasion debate had shifted was that Colonel Charles à Court Repington, the military correspondent for the *Times*—the paper that had once so vigorously supported the Blue Water School—was considered to be the leading Bolt from the Blue proponent in the press. When Balfour's “no invasion” statement seemed to relax tensions and discredit the invasionist case, Repington worked with Lord Roberts to reopen the invasion inquiry and make the case for conscription. They sought to awaken “the government and the public to the hollowness of the Admiralty's claim that it could protect England” (Gooch 284). Nevertheless, new CID hearings in 1906 concluded that a surprise attack was impossible—the force required could never elude the Royal Navy (Gooch 285).

Those who did not read the *Times*, a far larger if less well-informed audience, learned of the dangers of invasion from popular half-penny dailies like Alfred Harmsworth's *Daily Mail* which were not driven by any pretensions to inform and educate opinion, but rather by strictly commercial criteria. Invasion fears suited this journalistic purpose well, especially stories about German spies reconnoitering British soil for the invasion soon to come.

Spies of the Kaiser was but one volume in the prodigious fictional *oeuvre* of the former journalist William Le Quex. He “inhabited his own strange world where fact and fiction, romance and reality were inextricably confused” (Morris

107). Sometime before 1906, Le Quex had purchased a forged German invasion plan and, although he was convinced of its authenticity, the editors to whom he showed it were not interested. He wrote to Lord Roberts and together they approached Harmsworth—after 1905, Lord Northcliffe—who saw commercial potential. The forged invasion plan catalyzed a collaboration that, in 1906, resulted in the serialization in the *Daily Mail* of Le Quex's *The Invasion of 1910*.

With the publicity and wide exposure provided by Harmsworth, this work was widely read and influential. Eventually translated into 27 languages, it sold over a million copies worldwide (Clarke 144, 148). Le Quex had dealt with invasion and related topics in previous books, but this new effort was different. He spent months touring the “battlefields” of the realistic campaign he devised with Roberts. Northcliffe, however, thought the plan bad for business; the strategy was changed so the German army could march through every large town in the region and thereby boost sales (Clarke 145; Morris 108).

Like “General Staff,” Le Quex states his purpose is to show Britain's military unpreparedness and how “under certain conditions which may easily occur, England can be successfully invaded by Germany. . . ” (1). Le Quex, however, does not hold out the prospect of rebirth and renewed national vigor; rather, he depicts “the ruin which must inevitably fall upon us the evening of that not far-distant day” (1). To establish the credentials of his piece and the authenticity of his portrait, Le Quex states that the general scheme of invasion is consistent with the views of the first strategists of the day—in other words, Roberts, who contributed a preface to the book version. Le Quex observes that the reproduced proclamations and notices that supplement the text are barely altered from those used in 1870 France.

The narrative begins with a Chesneyan warning: the Navy is reduced and the Army remains inefficient. Britain is dealt a sudden blow at sea and its shores lie defenseless. Economic chaos ensues while, filled with men and horses, flat-bottomed barges and lighters assembled under cover of the Frisian islands (*à la Childers*) approach. Panic-stricken crowds assemble in Trafalgar Square, a virtual totem of Britain's inviolability. Yet, the lions of Nelson's monument "facing the four points of the compass were now mere mocking emblems of England's departed greatness" (47).

The British waste precious hours mobilizing men and resources while the Germans relentlessly execute their carefully prepared war plans. Mass meetings are held in London to condemn the government and the military for their culpable negligence. Le Quex, however, places the blame elsewhere:

"Who then was responsible?" it may well be asked. The answer is simple. The British public, which, in its apathetic attitude towards military efficiency, aided and abetted by the soothing theories of the extremists of the "Blue Water" school, had, as usual, neglected to provide an Army fitted to cope in numbers and efficiency with those of our Continental neighbours. Had we a sufficiency of troops, more especially of regular troops, there is not the slightest doubt that victory would have been ours. (80)

As their defenses collapse, the British recall Lord Roberts' unheeded warnings of 1906 and his call for universal service that would have prevented such dire catastrophe. Living in a self-satisfied fool's paradise, they believed Britain could never be invaded. "Now, alas! the country had realized the truth when too late" (167).

To break the pride of the British, and in retribution for non-combattant resistance, the Kaiser orders London bombarded and sacked. While the capital is being reduced, the Germans announce their terms: indemnity, occupation, colonial cessions, and Irish independence. Parliament debates. What good is an armed and patriotic mob against the most perfectly equipped and trained force in the world?

There surely is patriotism in the savage negro races of Central Africa, a love of country perhaps as deep as in the white man's heart; yet a little strategy, a few Maxims, and all defence is quickly at an end. (209)

In response to such defeatism, a young M. P., Gerald Graham,⁷ calls on all to "uphold the ancient tradition of the British race, the honor of our forefathers, who have never been conquered" (210). The people rally to Graham and form organized bands of guerrilla Defenders that harry supply lines and cut down German troops in the maze of London streets and alleys. The Germans have underestimated the force necessary to break London's will; their position erodes until they face a full-fledged rout. The Royal Navy returns to the Home Islands laden with colonial troops. The German fleet is destroyed while "dark-faced Indians in turbans are fighting out in Fleet Street and the Strand" (260). The loyalty of the "savage" races to their British conqueror in this desperate hour is not questioned.

Although delivered from the Germans, the end for Britain is far from happy. Le Quex goes beyond the immediate military issues being debated in Britain. In the aftermath of victory, with all the best men dead, socialism replaces pious patriotism as the national creed. When the peace is signed, the British Empire, outwardly intact, is internally weakened beyond hope of regaining its former status. The costs of the

war to Britain are great while Germany emerges with additional European territory ominously fronting the North Sea.

When success did come, it came too late and could not be utilized without a great British army capable of carrying the war into the enemy's country, and thus compelling a satisfactory peace. (270)

Le Quex's "stirring moral harangue" (Morris 108) of the government, the War Office, socialism, and public apathy scores the usual points. *The Invasion of 1910* has little new to offer besides Roberts' arguments for conscription and rifle clubs. The sensation the work caused was Northcliffe's doing. The story was promoted with every commercial and journalistic gimmick at hand. A vivid memory of the pre-war years for one writer was a morning in 1906 when "the startling portent was seen of a long file of veterans in spiked helmets and Prussian-blue uniforms parading morosely down Oxford Street" (Wingfield-Stratford 209; qtd. in Clarke 145). These "soldiers" bore *Daily Mail* sandwich boards advertising Le Quex's invasion story.

By the end of 1907, despite the official findings of the CID, the Admiralty and First Sea Lord Admiral Sir John Fisher were under increasing fire from all directions, including some dedicated Blue Water advocates whose fears had not been allayed by Fisher's naval reorganization of 1904-5. The government and Admiralty responded to the public alarm by staging extensive maneuvers in the Channel and the North Sea in the summer of 1908 to demonstrate the navy's competence to deal with an invasion attempt. Afterwards, the Admiralty tried unsuccessfully to suppress

the fact that a small force managed to elude the defending fleet and land in the north of Scotland (Morris 145).

The tensions generated by the 1908 Bosnian crisis gave the British strong cause to fear German intentions. Even King Edward VII was reported to believe that his cousin, the Kaiser,

. . . as soon as he is ready for it, will throw a *corps d'armée* or two into England, making proclamation that he has come, not as an enemy to the King, but as grandson to Queen Victoria, to deliver him from the socialistic gang that is ruining the country. He will then in conjunction with the King dissolve Parliament, and re-establish the King's autocratic rule as feudatory of the German Empire. Such is the programme, and the King believes in it as true. (qtd. in Morris 135)

In the climate of increasing fear and uncertainty, invasion fiction mushroomed. While the genre multiplied, it also diversified. The year 1909 provides three very different variations. *The Invasion That Did Not Come Off* by an author named Napier Hawke, satirizes the very conventions to which it both adheres and contributes. Hawke sends up the army, navy, government, and press; representative characters are distinguished only by their stupidity, corruption, and contentiousness. This parodied cross-section of participants in the invasion debate is captured by the Germans and sees the preparations for invasion first-hand.

In a surreal episode, these Britons are subjected to a geography lesson by their German captor. They are treated and reprimanded like schoolboys. The basis for the lesson is a distorted Mercator's projection in which Great Britain

is represented as two tiny dots in the North Sea with its overseas possessions looming exaggeratedly over their respective hemispheres. "You see that these small islands, lying at the west end of the great Kiel Canal, own practically one half of the earth, and nearly all the other half is under their influence" (86). Only Germany, Austria, and Russia are excepted. If Britain wishes to be overlord, so be it; but Britain must prove itself worthy in a land war.

According to Hawke, Germany's perception of Britain, as illustrated by the lesson map, is fundamentally distorted. Yet, Hawke acknowledges a degree of legitimacy in Germany's grievances against Britain. Britain, so ill-suited to justify its preeminence and Empire on the battlefield, is stifling the growth of young, vigorous Germany. Reducing the British characters to the level of schoolboys is a jab at the national creed of luck and pluck amateurism; it belittles British attitudes and institutions and mocks the preoccupation with invasion. Hawke's representative sample of British leadership makes it seem all the more unjust that a nation led by such bumbler and fools should hold a position of world leadership. The invasion is prevented, in part, by the willing sacrifice of those geography pupils. Though saved, Britain is the worse for wear, emerging from the ordeal "with half a dozen semi-foundering Dreadnoughts, but still bearing proudly aloft her unconquered trident" (125). In sharp contrast to his satire of pathetic national leadership, Hawke concludes in a tone of schoolboy history.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, 1909 also saw the publication of Charles M. Doughty's *The Cliffs: A Drama of the Time in Five Parts*. A child of Suffolk gentry, Doughty (like the fictional Davies of *The Riddle of the Sands*) failed the naval exam and was left with a resolve to serve his country if only as a private citizen. Fusing his patriotic and literary enthusiasms he wrote tomes to inspire the culture. With the exception of one well-received work,

Travels in Arabia Deserta, his publications failed to excite interest. Doughty's previous poetic fictions had all been set in the ancient or mythical past; in *The Cliffs* Doughty made the perceived contemporary threat of German invasion his theme.

A ponderous fantasy, *The Cliffs* combines the action of British mortals learning of and seeking to ward off a German invasion with a fantastic allegory of gods, fates, muses, and personified nations. Despite these trappings, *The Cliffs* traffics in the basic criteria of British invasion literature: public apathy, military incompetence, and political irresponsibility. Says one member of the German scouting party who arrives, by airship, to Britain's unfortified coast:

A nation thus at variance with herself,
Undisciplined, all to patriot arms untaught;
Can such make any serious defence,
Resistance, to the sudden immense impact
Of our warskilled, well ordered patriot State?
Shall not the vast Persianian phalanx break,
Tread down, confound them? Eachwhere
 will be heard
Then bitter cry of disillusioned hearts,
As Spaniards, out of their Armada ships:
Hath God forsaken us! (45)

A lone and aged shepherd, having overheard their discussion, attempts to stop the Germans' return to the airship and is cut down. Dying, the shepherd slips into an allegorical vision of Britannia personified seated in her own temple, now crumbling and overgrown. Britannia herself is blindfolded and beset by a monstrous serpent. Truth (personified) dispatches elves to investigate the state of Great Britain and discover the reason for Britannia's condition. The elves find the troubles that all invasion

writers knew well. Yet, when the mortals discover the shepherd and some careless evidence of the Germans' nocturnal visit, a widespread effort of patriotism and self-sacrifice to meet the invasion is stirred up. Mystically, the threat dissolves, as if the force of Britain's collective will is sufficient to alter present danger. Britannia's "soul-temple" is re-edified.

The Cliffs is as long as it is dense and obscure. Part of Doughty's scheme to restore British high culture to a golden age, the play was not written with the new literate masses in mind. Considering the tome's inaccessibility, it doubtless had little impact on general attitudes toward invasion. Indeed, so frustrated was Doughty in not getting his message across that three years later, in 1912, he produced *The Clouds*, a dramatic poem depicting an actual invasion rather than the mere threat. The significance of *The Cliffs* is in its application of the pervasive issues surrounding the invasion debate. By 1909, as demonstrated by Doughty and Hawke, invasion fiction was developing into a vehicle for a broad political and social criticism within Britain. Domestic degeneration, not so much the fear of an aggressive Germany, were seen to be virtually *inviting* invasion.

The Cliffs, although technically in dramatic form, is verse rather than drama. It was not written for, nor could it aspire to, the immediacy and impact of staged performance. Yet, invasion fiction did come to the stage in 1909 with the drama *An Englishman's Home*, which opened on January 27th at Wyndham's Theatre. The program stated that the play was "By a Patriot," who was soon known to be Major Guy Du Maurier of the Royal Fusiliers. The message of Du Maurier's play is mainstream invasionist polemic and was designed to be accessible to a mass audience. The play is neither smirking nor abstruse; rather, *An Englishman's Home* is a solid and forthright exposition whose power rests on Du Maurier's command of melodramatic convention in

the context of timely issues. It was excellent propaganda and a great success.

The play is set in the drawing room of the Brown family's suburban home and describes an invasion of Britain by the forces of "the Empress of the North." That these forces are thinly disguised Germans is clear. As one character explains (in reference to a newspaper account of a football match), ". . . you see, when a man's writing a real picturesque account like this he can't be expected to call everything by the correct name—sort of poetic licence, you know" (11). As the play opens, we meet the Browns and their friends who, like the rest of Britain, are living in an information blackout due to telegraphic and postal strikes. Absorbed as they are with commercial or recreational matters, they all think it queer when a friend, Paul, arrives in Volunteer uniform from an afternoon's target practice.

Geoffrey Smith, a weedy youth rife with physical defects, makes fun of Paul. Paul asks Geoff if he has heard the words of Lord Roberts. Geoff prefers to read the sports pages. Mr. Brown is a solid, middle-class Briton and sounds quite a Blue Water man. His excuse is that volunteering will convert Britain to militarism—no better than slavery in his eyes. In the event of an invasion, Mr. Brown says, every man would fly to arms and repel the invader. When his daughter, Maggie, jokingly asks her father what weapon he would seize, Brown grumpily dismisses the issue. Despite his confidence, by the end of Act I, Brown's home is occupied by Captain Yoland and soldiers of the Empress of the North.

In Act II, Geoffrey tells Yoland that he's welcome to fight the British army but he has no right bullying harmless men who just want to "get a good seat for the circus" (56). Yoland replies dryly that where he comes from there are no harmless men. Far from showing any patriotic spirit, Geoff looks forward to a few days off from work. When

Yoland's troops move on, Brown's house is re-occupied, this time by the Volunteers who are as inept as they are eager (the stage directions are specific in this regard). When a skirmish between defenders and invaders occurs, Geoff, attempting to get a good view, is shot dead. As he falls, a small statuette of Britannia falls from the mantelpiece and shatters. A nation-race is only as strong as its weakest link.

Act III reveals the inadequate training of the Volunteers. Paul finds that some have only fired on a miniature range. Du Maurier, in advocating preparedness, does not spare Britain's women: Maggie knows nothing of first aid and cannot help her fallen countrymen. Brown, in his narrow-minded commercial self-absorption, blames everything on the army, claiming the country didn't get its money's worth. Nevertheless, the army does its job, but at the expense of Brown's home. An adjutant brings orders for the Volunteers to fall back and lure the enemy to waiting massed forces. Brown refuses to abandon his property; he will defend his home even if those paid to do so haven't the pluck. The adjutant responds:

Now, look here, sir, you're talking rot! I'm fed up with your pluck—you can stop here and make an ass of yourself for all I care—only I warn you, you'll get into bad trouble if you attempt to do anything to defend your house—or your country as you call it. Let me tell you, you've no right to defend anything—you're a civilian; you've no uniform, and you're not allowed to defend your country. You may consider yourself a perfect mass of patriotism, but you'd be better cursing yourself for not having earned the right to defend your own country rather than cursing and slandering those real patriots who have!
(119-20)

Nevertheless, Brown fires on the advancing enemy and the play ends with Yoland ordering Brown's execution as a civilian combatant while Maggie pleads for her father's life.

An Englishman's Home proved to be a highly effective vehicle for its message. The play's impact led to a sharp rise in recruiting for the newly formed Territorials; a special recruiting office was even set up in Wyndham's Theatre to accommodate the rush of volunteers, their patriotism stirred to action by Du Maurier's drama (Fleming 29; Clarke 154). Nevertheless, following the alarms of 1908 and 1909, Anglo-German tensions relaxed somewhat. Domestic concerns about the forces of social change eclipsed the public debate over invasion. Invasion fiction, however, was now seemingly independent of alarms and panics, and continued to be written.

Widespread public concern about invasion resurfaced shortly before the outbreak of the Great War. Britain was by this point committed to a Continental strategy in support of France—a result of the diplomatic revolution that began in 1904 and resulted in Britain's colonial treaty and political *entente* with France. By 1912, naval challenges in the Mediterranean and the pressure of German construction forced Britain into a naval agreement with France in order to maintain the Royal Navy's lead in the North Sea. Despite these measures, Britain's naval maneuvers of 1912 saw the fleet representing the German navy land 28,000 men on the Yorkshire coast. In the following year's maneuvers, the "German" fleet managed to land 60,000 troops, and might have landed 100,000 had not the exercise been halted prematurely (Morris 336). The embattled Blue Water orthodoxy was completely overthrown as the Admiralty had to admit that the Navy could not guarantee the safety of

Britain from invasion. With the Continental strategy, French borders became Britain's first line of defense.

Such was the context in which the last important work of invasion fiction was produced in Britain before the Great War. *When William Came*, by the novelist and political satirist Saki (H. H. Munro), was published in 1913. Differing from all prior invasion fictions, the novel describes neither a military campaign and its consequences, nor an attempt foiled through heroism or fate; this novel depicts the effects of a firmly entrenched invasion on the generation in power at the time of Britain's fall. There is no military argument: "Rome isn't burning, it's burnt" (154).

Murrey Yeovil is the sleeper waking to a changed Britain. During a long bout with fever in the wilds of Russia, he has barely heard of the invasion. Anticipating his return, Cecily Yeovil knows her husband will be out of step with the prevailing mood of "sullen acquiescence in what can't be helped" (156). Yeovil's friends have either taken off to the colonies or remain in self-imposed exile on their estates. With only political ruin to stare at, Londoners seek to look the other way. "What must be, must be" and "it's a poor heart that never rejoices" are the popular aphorisms of London society (159). The general resignation to defeat is summed up in the common euphemism for the invasion: the *fait accompli*. Yeovil quickly sees how thorough the transformation has been. The crowned eagle monogram is everywhere and London is a bilingual city. Yeovil's friend tells how the *fait accompli* came to pass.

The conflict began with a minor disagreement in East Africa, but tensions quickly spiraled out of control. Britain was defeated quickly, the significant factors in Germany's favor being superior air power and, of course, manpower. The sudden victory, likened to "a snap checkmate early in a game of chess" (169), surprised even the Germans.

Annexation, not previously considered, became the most practical alternative to prevent Britain's recuperation and to tap its vast tax-paying potential. The King moved his court to Delhi where, as Emperor of the East, he rules the former dominions. The Home Islands, meanwhile, are a *Reichsland*—"a sort of Alsace-Lorraine washed by the North Sea instead of the Rhine" (170). Parliament is severely limited. The Liberal Party, in power at the time of the fall, is under a black cloud. Because of its ties to the German Social Democrats, the Labour Party is also in bad odor. The Conservatives are likened to the Jacobites after the Hanoverian accession; the reason for their existence—to uphold Throne and Constitution—is no more. Without the fleet, and thus vulnerable to blockade, Britain has little hope of overthrowing German rule. The conquerors have time on their side. The rallying cry of "the king across the water" will eventually fade as the distant and "half-Asiatic" court at Delhi becomes increasingly exotic.⁸

Yeovil's position is: "It is one thing to face the music, it is another thing to dance to it" (178). This attitude threatens Cecily's work to regenerate London's social life in acceptance of the changed circumstances. Cecily postulates to Yeovil that eventually the British might come to impress British national characteristics on the German Empire and perhaps even dictate its dynastic future. Meanwhile, she contends, it is necessary to make the best of the existing situation, preserve economic and social life, in order to be in a position to play a dominant role in the future. Yeovil will not be reconciled to Cecily's long-term patriotism.

The chief German in Britain, von Kwarl, also wants assimilation, but on German terms. Kwarl thinks especially of Britain's youth and looks forward to the day when

. . . Anglo-Saxon may blend with German, as
the Elbe Saxons and the Bavarians and Swabians

have blended into a loyal united people under the sceptre of the Hohenzollerns. Then we should be doubly strong, Rome and Carthage rolled into one, an Empire of the west greater than Charlemagne ever knew. Then we could look Slav and Latin and Asiatic in the face and keep our place as the central dominant force of the civilized world. (196)

Kwarl's vision is deeply flawed. Beaten, separated from its Empire, and deprived of maritime preeminence, Britain is no Carthage (certainly the Second Reich was no Rome). Without Britain's former status and territories, a united Empire would not be larger than Charlemagne's. Ultimately, if a German-British Empire looked the Asiatic in the face, it would be looking at the Emperor of the East, a Briton. Despite his belief in the alchemy of sports and theatre, Kwarl does little to promote any sense of Anglo-German blending. The last and deepest humiliation of Britain comes when Kwarl announces that the German military will be closed to the British, their share to be made up for in taxes. With the proclamation, Britons become ". . . in actual fact what an enemy had called them in splenitic scorn long years ago—a nation of shopkeepers. Aye, something even below that level, a race of shopkeepers who were no longer a nation" (232).

Yeovil retreats, with Cecily's encouragement, from Germanized London to their country home. He realizes that such rustic listlessness is the escape he desires and curses himself for it. Yet there is no escape; the beginning of Yeovil's assimilation is evident as he encounters German officers—sportsmen like himself despite all. These officers speak with concern about the upheavals in southeastern Europe directed against Germany. Like Kwarl, they

understand the necessity of winning over Britain's young. When the crisis comes, the Germans know they can ill afford a generation of rebellious young Britons in their rear. Nevertheless, this must inevitably be the case. The novel ends with the Kaiser and Kwarl on a reviewing stand in London waiting to review a parade of boy scouts. They wait, but the scouts never come.

Within ten years, the officers predict, a general war will engulf all of Europe. By then, the defiant boy scouts will be old enough to be a serious threat to the German regime. They may not overthrow German rule, but the Germans would be hard pressed to maintain order. Britain could possibly become a German Ireland, in perpetual revolt against the occupier. Saki ends his study of the nature of defeat and collaboration, not with a promise of hope for the future, but with the prospect of a protracted and fratricidal civil war in Britain amidst a larger European conflagration.

When William Came presents the old arguments about apathy and lack of self-sacrificing spirit, but social factors, rather than political or military realities, determine the actions of Yeovil's generation. These factors create both the rationale for collaboration and the means to achieve it. It is a far more complicated work than its lively plot immediately reveals. Saki's novel is not simply a cautionary tale to prepare against dangers on the horizon. It is a further demonstration of the degree to which invasion fiction as a genre took on a life of its own. It is a fitting culmination of the trend begun by "The Battle of Dorking."⁹

In his call for military reform to bring Britain up to date with the new age of modern warfare, Chesney wrote of an invasion by the force that had so recently defined the nature of modern warfare. *The Riddle of the Sands* incorporated some of Chesney's issues to justify the inventiveness of Childers's conclusion. Although the secret invasion fleet

behind the Frisian islands is secondary to Childers's desire to spin a detailed and exciting yarn, *The Riddle of the Sands* is certainly also a reaction to the challenge on many levels of Germany to Britain that had become clearly apparent by the turn of the century. As Anglo-German tensions continued to rise, *The Invasion of 1910* rather unimaginatively incorporated what Le Quex saw as the best elements of both Chesney and Childers. *The Writing on the Wall* of "General Staff," published the same year, was equally unimaginative, although both works are closely tied to the evident reality of Anglo-German antagonism and the belief in the debate on invasion that had been, in part, fostered by the works of Chesney and Childers.

In fearing the gaping jaws of defeat, invasion fictions reveal a deeply critical self-appraisal of Britain's present condition and an anxiety about its future in the world. Far from placing the blame on the perceived systematic aggressiveness of Germany, if the authors don't express outright admiration for Germany and its achievements, most advocate following the German example of national service and duty to the state. The blame for Britain's defeat, or near-defeat, is always a reflection of what the authors saw as a basic internal weakness of the nation as a whole. The concerns about the external fragility of the Empire follow from this premise. A clear subtext behind much of the racist language of most invasion fictions is a nightmare vision of Britons reduced to the level of their imperial and colonial subjects in Asia and Africa.

In *An Englishman's Home*, Brown, the representative backbone of the nation, is insufficient to bear the burden of invasion. If Britain comes to be saved, it is never by the apathetic populace or unworthy government, but always by exceptions like Paul, the maligned Volunteer. Sometimes, as in *The Invasion of 1910*, even exceptional individuals cannot redeem the nation once fallen. *The Cliffs* looks to

a fanciful paganism to do away mystically with the German threat. There is a sense that Britain is being overtaken by new forces in the world. Germany, even beyond its real-life challenges to Britain, represents these new forces, or, as in *The Invasion That Did Not Come Off*, a new world view.

In its focus on social criticism and projection of national economic emasculation, *When William Came* ties up one of the most striking common threads of invasion fiction—the discomfort the authors express with Britain's power and wealth. In lamenting Britain's military unpreparedness in an increasingly dangerous world, all invasion fictions, in some form, describe their nation as jaded to the point of enervation by its success. If works claim to be warning of Britain's vulnerability, they can also be read as fantasies willing the destruction of the status quo and longing for regeneration. Whether a new, tougher nation is depicted rising from defeat or more often not, invasion fiction indicates a sense that Britain needs to be punished for enjoying the fruits of its achievements. It is the violent shock of invasion that in a tale of defeat metes out just desserts, and in a tale of renewal purges the nation and reconstitutes national character.

In this light, invasion fiction becomes significant for something one might call the national psyche, and the contemporary preoccupation with such fantasy is further explained. But in a Britain where the Reform Bill of 1867 and the Education Act of 1870 had established the conditions for a polity of expanded size and literacy, this imaginative preoccupation was translated into a political force, a political reality. These works came to exert an extraordinary influence on Britain's political culture, and many were quite consciously used to that end. The historical relevance of imaginative fictions is here manifest, in this strange but by no means unique interaction between fiction and policy.

Notes

¹I am heavily indebted to Mr. Clarke's book for background on Chesney and imaginary war fiction in general, as well as for its excellent bibliographies.

²See the bibliography in Clarke for a comprehensive list of books and pamphlets written in response to "The Battle of Dorking." For a fuller discussion of the reaction in the press, see I.F. Clarke, "The Battle of Dorking, 1871-1914," *Victorian Studies* June, 1965: 308-27.

³One of the unhappy consequences for Britain of the preoccupation with invasion and the success of navalist Blue Water advocates in the late 1880s was the basic strategic unpreparedness of the Army at the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899 (Gooch 20).

⁴For a full account of the strategic debate on invasion and the eventual resolution, through Cabinet intervention, of the bitter interservice rivalry that resulted, see Howard Roy Moon's thesis, "The Invasion of the United Kingdom: Public controversy and Official Planning 1888-1918." Admiral Colomb, it is worth noting, eventually authored *The Great War of 189-*, an invasion fiction of sorts designed to spread Blue Water doctrine to a mass audience (Moon 101-2).

⁵Interestingly, Davies expresses Germany's contradictory rationales for naval expansion. In 1898, presenting the First Navy Law to the Reichstag, Chancellor Hohenlohe sought to allay fears of adventurism by speaking of the importance of a naval force to protect German interests. At the same time, Tirpitz was dreaming of the influence sea power would have on German history in plainly aggressive, and anti-British terms.

⁶An illuminating subtext of *The Riddle of the Sands* is the conception of British and German "races." Davies' suspicions about Dollmann's origins are confirmed when Carruthers meets his daughter and knows she is English through a "racial instinct" (133). With all appropriate Darwinistic overtones, the race issue becomes a qualitative comparison. Bonding with Davies, Carruthers describes themselves as "two of our phlegmatic race" (149). Compare this to Carruthers' description of the

most “German” antagonist, Bohme, as “the embodiment of that systematized force which is congenital to the German people” (211).

⁷Gerald Graham was also the name of a General who, in 1889, had challenged the Blue Water arguments put forward in a speech by Admiral Colomb himself at a meeting of the Royal United Service Institution (Moon 710). Knowing the interests of *Le Quex*, it is probable that he knew of General Graham and for what he stood.

⁸While invasion fictions, like the times they were written in, are full of racism and race-consciousness, Saki adds anti-Semitism. The Jews who had assimilated into British culture and stuck by Britain in its hour of need are given their due credit. Other Jews—more Teuton, Polish, or Latin by nature—do not mind the degradation of London from world capital to cosmopolitan city. Greater numbers of Jews arrived with the new regime to benefit from the unprecedented licence and social flexibility. With the Germans in charge, the Jews, Saki points out, may almost consider themselves part of the dominant race.

⁹Although the scope of this examination is limited to works written before the First World War, British fictions of a German invasion are still produced with fair regularity—in film as well as print. Those since World War II are retrospective fantasies that build on Hitler’s genuine, if half-hearted, notion of invading Britain after he had disposed of France. As France’s defeat in 1871 served as the model for the works examined here, France’s defeat in 1940 and subsequent occupation has become the new model.

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