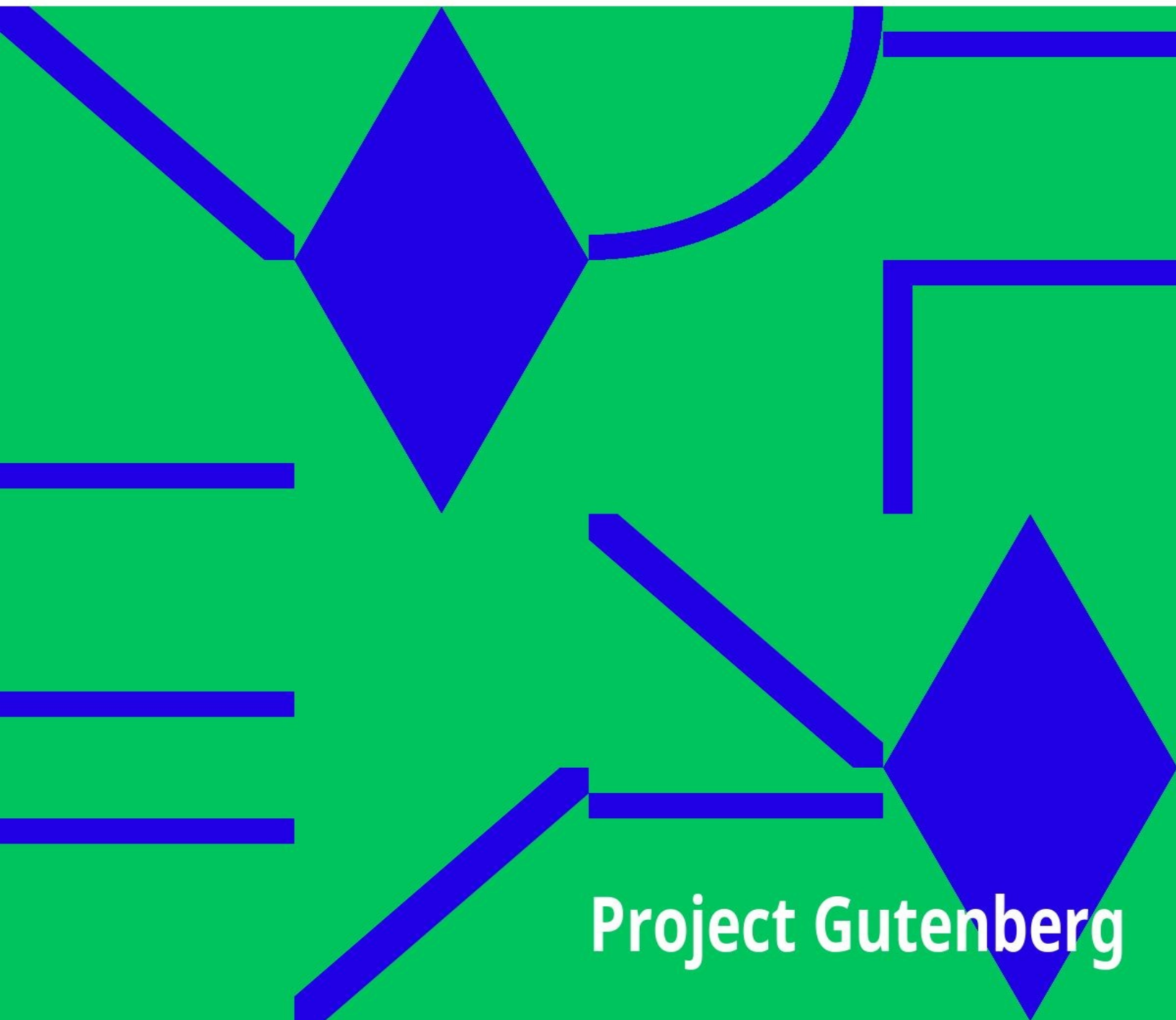


Makers of Madness

A Play in One Act and Three Scenes

Hermann Hagedorn



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Title: Makers of Madness
A Play in One Act and Three Scenes

Author: Hermann Hagedorn

Release Date: September 3, 2005 [EBook #16636]

Language: English

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MAKERS OF MADNESS ***

Produced by Melissa Er-Raqabi and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>.

MAKERS OF MADNESS

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TORONTO

MAKERS OF MADNESS

A PLAY IN ONE ACT AND THREE SCENES

BY

HERMANN HAGEDORN

AUTHOR OF "FACES IN THE DAWN," ETC.

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1914

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Set up and electrotyped. Published November, 1914.

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TO
ADOLF GUNTHER HAGEDORN

*Transcriber's Note: Where obvious, I added missing punctuation, and changed
the typo "psycholology" to "psychology".*

NIGHT! And a black and barren sky
 With a wet wind in from the coast.
And only the kites to make reply
To heaving body and pleading cry—
Here where the lost battalions lie,
 I walked last night with a ghost.

His face was gray, his hands were red,
 And a ghostly mare he rode,
That wearily stepped, with drooping head,
Over the shadowy lines of dead,
And rolled her eyes, and shook with dread
 Under her foam-white load.

The ghost turned not to left or right.
 But mutely he beckoned me,
And moved like a pillar of livid light
Through the humid dark of the foggy night,
With eyes deep-sunken and greenly bright
 As phosphor on the sea.

He led me where in ghostly files
 The dead slept with their toys.
Miles, miles, and never-ending miles,
Along the valley's mournful aisles,
The voiceless, vague, misshapen piles

Of men and golden boys!

He led me up the gory hill
By wood and sodden heath.
Ravage! And faces, lone and chill,
In the murmuring wash of the willow-rill!
Slaughter! And voices, begging shrill
The merciful grace of death.

A waning moon broke, sickly pale,
Through the muddy fog's disguising;
And over the breadth of the ghastly vale
The battle-wake like a steamer's trail,
And a heaving as of waves in a gale,
Rising and falling and rising!

And out of the air, and up from the plain,
The ancient battle-story!—
Of stricken love and laughter slain,
And hearts beneath the hoofs of pain—
But not a breath of human gain,
And not a word of glory.

MAKERS OF MADNESS



CHARACTERS

In the Capital of Iberia:

THE KING
THE PRIME MINISTER
THE MINISTER OF WAR
THE CHIEF OF STAFF
A SECRETARY
OFFICERS

In the Capital of the Republic:

GROSVENOR, a contractor
CONROY, a manufacturer of guns
POLLEN, owner of a chain of newspapers
SENATOR TANEY
SENATOR HARRADAN
REPRESENTATIVE MAYNARD
A GENERAL IN THE ARMY
A CAPTAIN
CROWD
PAGE

In costuming this play, it is essential that the uniforms of the Iberian officers in the first scene should not be conspicuously copied after those of any of the armies of Europe. A compromise, grotesque to the expert, would be better here than a misleading realism.



MAKERS OF MADNESS



SCENE I

A room in the Ministry of War in the capital of Iberia.

Evening.

The MINISTER OF WAR, a tall, stern, bearded man with deep-set eyes and many furrows, is sitting at a large, mahogany desk-table, Left.

The CHIEF OF STAFF, silent, motionless and watchful, stands beside him with his hands resting on the table-top. He is thin, old and emaciated, clean-shaven, firm-lipped, and looks startlingly like a bird of prey. Right, stands a group of generals and other officers.

MINISTER OF WAR

[Rising and speaking in a sharp, crisp bass voice.]

I can only repeat, gentlemen, what his Excellency, the Chief of Staff, has already made clear to you. Nothing has been decided. You have your orders in your pockets. There may be war and there may not be war. I understand, gentlemen, your natural impatience once more to draw the naked steel for the glory of our country, and you may rest assured that his gracious majesty, the King, will not forget that his fame and the happiness of his people rests ultimately in your hands. Personally, as a man of family and as a Christian, I hope to God that peace may be preserved. But if God wills that our enemy, by his insolence, forces us to draw the sword, I know that you will wield it with honor and will not sheathe it until our enemy is crushed, root and branch, stock and barrel, and brought so low that he will never raise his head again in dishonorable defiance of our holy rights.

[The OFFICERS shout with enthusiasm, lifting their helmets in air. The MINISTER OF WAR sits down again.]

That is all, gentlemen.

[With a grim smile.]

But I recommend that you do not send your service uniforms to the tailor

tonight. You may have need of them.

[There is another cheer. The OFFICERS stand about in groups a minute or so, then file out through the double-door in the centre of the rear wall. One elderly general, only, comes up quickly to the desk.]

GENERAL

[In a rasping voice, to the CHIEF OF STAFF.]

Delay again? Aren't we ever going to get at their throats?

CHIEF OF STAFF

We are ready. But the King!

[He shrugs his shoulders.]

The peace propagandists are after him. Mediation is the magic word. Mediation—by which the neutral nations block our legitimate road to victory for their own benefit, in the name of civilization and progress.

GENERAL

Old women's talk.

[With a swagger.]

Give me a sword in my right hand again, I say! I'll break open a few skulls yet, for all my sixty years. Eh? Mediation! Let those mediate, I say, who are afraid to fight!

CHIEF OF STAFF

[Calmly, dispassionately.]

We are not mediating yet. You may tell that to your friends if they become downhearted.

GENERAL

[Saluting.]

To command, your Excellency! It is good that some one looks out for the honor

of the army.

[Saluting again.

Good night, gentlemen!

*[The MINISTER OF WAR half rises and bows slightly.
The CHIEF OF STAFF nods. Exit the GENERAL.*

CHIEF OF STAFF

[With a flash in his old eyes.

Ha! Once more to have those fellows behind me. Think of it! Each man of them represents fifty thousand. And behind them another million and another! God! What a machine to handle.

[He slaps his forehead.

And the old brain working still!

MINISTER OF WAR

*[Rising and crossing to a window, right forward,
then speaking thoughtfully.*

I don't know, Clement. I am growing old. I think sometimes that war is the most terrible matter in which we erring humans become engaged. I have always thought that—at times.

CHIEF OF STAFF

*[Who has crossed to the Left and stands facing a
map of the world, covering half the wall.*

So you are a sentimentalist, after all?

MINISTER OF WAR

[Looking out of the window.

No. Because there is something stronger in me, conquering the repulsion. My temperament, character, destiny. I am impelled to war. A dozen generations of soldiers in my blood press me on. My whole education presses me on. My sympathies and my religious sense make me tremble before the impending

horror, but—I confess to you—I believe I want this war.

CHIEF OF STAFF

[Without turning.

So do we all. War is the soldier's work. And he does not want to play all his life. Look. We land here and here and here.

[He indicates places on the map with a paper-cutter, speaking with growing excitement.

No defenses, except at this place—a masonry fort built thirty years ago. Bad cement, moreover. Fraudulent contractor. Then—

MINISTER OF WAR

[Returning to his desk, resolutely.

No, you old hawk, we're not going to do it. We'll be content to settle ourselves in peaceful graves, you and I and the old Chief. No war, no war!

CHIEF OF STAFF

[Calmly.

That is sentiment. Here is fact. We land here and here and here. Then march down here and up there, uniting the armies. Rich country. I've never seen it, but I know it better than any letter-carrier in the district. We live on the land, burning and pillaging if the inhabitants don't give us what we want. A little dose will tame them. We'll sweep all before us in six weeks.

MINISTER OF WAR

[In mock protest.

Stop, man, stop! You make me want to try it.

CHIEF OF STAFF

I can't stop. It's a game with me. I play it all day in my thoughts and all night I direct campaigns in my dreams. A great game. Only sometimes I get tired of playing it on paper, and want to hear the real guns and see the real battalions.

[A SECRETARY enters with a message.

SECRETARY

[To Minister of War.

A message from the King sent over from the Foreign Office. The Prime Minister was not there.

MINISTER OF WAR

Let me have it.

[He takes the message and glances at it.

What?

[With a gesture to the Secretary.

That will do.

[Exit SECRETARY.

CHIEF OF STAFF

Well?

MINISTER OF WAR

[Flaring up.

Look at this, look at it! The King is sending our national honor to the dogs. He has secretly resumed communication with the Ambassador of the Republic, instead of doing what was natural and constitutional, sending the man to us. He is going to compromise. Pack up your tin soldiers, old man. Take them home for your grandchildren to play with. Our country evidently has no more use for them.

CHIEF OF STAFF

[With compressed lips.

Show me.

[He takes the paper and reads its contents aloud.

"The King desires to inform the Foreign Office that, in pursuance of his well-

known love of peace, he sent for the Ambassador of the Republic this afternoon and outlined a plan that would satisfy the royal government and at the same time yield certain points to the government of the Republic. The Ambassador was courteous, but, although acknowledging the generosity of the King's offer, regretted that he was unable to consider any compromise before communicating again with his government. The King replied that if his offers were refused he could then have nothing further to say in the matter, but would have to turn it over entirely to his Ministers.

"The King suggests to the Foreign Office that these facts be put before our Ambassadors abroad, and, to pacify the public mind, be given at once to the newspapers."

My God, and you want peace!

MINISTER OF WAR

[Harshly.]

Well, how do you like it?

CHIEF OF STAFF

He's backed down, he's backed down. All the world will be shouting tomorrow how our King has backed down. *Christo!* To accept defeat before you've begun to fight!

[He turns again to the map.]

If this other plan should be frustrated by the enemy's navy, look, we could land here and here and—

[The door opens and the PRIME MINISTER enters. He is a stern, titanic figure in the sixties, sallow-skinned, gray-haired.]

PRIME MINISTER

[Standing in the doorway.]

Good evening, gentlemen. Counting your battalions?

CHIEF OF STAFF

[Absorbed.

And here, joining our armies at—

MINISTER OF WAR

Thank God, you're here. Where in sin have you been?

PRIME MINISTER

Home on my estates, saying good-bye to my family.

[He smiles grimly, and with his cane makes a thrust in carte and tierce.

MINISTER OF WAR

You think you are going to war?

PRIME MINISTER

I know.

MINISTER OF WAR

[Taking up the paper the CHIEF OF STAFF has let fall on the desk.

Read that. It came from your office.

PRIME MINISTER

[Takes it and begins to read.

Eh? The King? Mediation on his own hook?

[With growing anger.

So? So? So?

[He lets the paper flutter to the floor.

Very good. He can find a new Prime Minister. I resign.

CHIEF OF STAFF

[Turning abruptly.

No, you don't!

MINISTER OF WAR

[Hotly.

We stick together in this. You are not going to resign.

PRIME MINISTER

My good friends, I am going to resign.

[He picks up the paper off the floor.

Give me your seat at the desk. On the back of this ignoble parley, my resignation goes to him.

MINISTER OF WAR

You are the support of the army. We go to the dogs, if you leave us.

PRIME MINISTER

[Sitting at the desk.

So? "The King suggests to the Foreign Office that these facts be put before our Ambassadors abroad and, to pacify the public mind, be given at once to the newspapers." He suggests. So do I suggest—something different.

CHIEF OF STAFF

[In front of the map again.

Three hundred thousand men here, turning the flank of a possible army marching north with that ridge of mountains as a cover—If we can only have the chance!

PRIME MINISTER

[Studying the message, suddenly.

By Heaven! If—

MINISTER OF WAR

What is it? You look as if—

PRIME MINISTER

If nothing! Bring me some claret out of that inexhaustible cabinet of yours.

[He draws his pen through a section of the message. The MINISTER OF WAR goes to a cabinet in the rear wall and brings forth a decanter of claret and glasses.]

MINISTER OF WAR

[Pouring a glassful for the PRIME MINISTER.]

Here, dear old Titan.

PRIME MINISTER

[Gulping it down.]

Thanks. More. And cigars.

[The MINISTER OF WAR refills the glass and brings cigars. The PRIME MINISTER wreathes himself in smoke.]

CHIEF OF STAFF

[With his back still turned to the others.]

I planned this campaign first some twenty years ago. But there was no navy then to speak of, and no airships. It is more intricate now, but very much more interesting as an intellectual problem.

PRIME MINISTER

[Indicating his glass.]

Another, good man.

MINISTER OF WAR

You're smelling blood when you drink like that.

PRIME MINISTER

[Turning to the CHIEF OF STAFF.

Here! You old death's head! You are prepared, you say?

CHIEF OF STAFF

[Calmly.

I have been making my plans for twenty years. The present plans have been complete, except for slight revisions, for three years.

PRIME MINISTER

The army and navy are fully equipped?

MINISTER OF WAR

Down to the last shoe-string.

PRIME MINISTER

[To CHIEF OF STAFF.

Would you say it would be better to wait a week or a month or even a year—or to strike at once?

CHIEF OF STAFF

[Firmly and quietly.

Strike at once.

MINISTER OF WAR

You dreamers, you theorists! How about the King's negotiations?

PRIME MINISTER

[Rising, with the message in his hand.

Gentlemen, I have seen fit to abbreviate the King's message. I have not altered a word nor added a word. I have merely omitted all that did not seem to me pertinent or useful. The message reads as follows: "The King sent for the Ambassador of the Republic this afternoon and outlined a plan that would satisfy

the royal government. The Ambassador regretted that he was unable to consider any compromise. The King replied that then he could have nothing more to say in the matter."

MINISTER OF WAR

There's ginger, by Heaven! The other was a dove-peep to a parley. This is a trumpet call of defiance.

CHIEF OF STAFF

[With quiet delight.

The Republic will never swallow that.

PRIME MINISTER

They are not supposed to. They will declare war, and then be the aggressors.

MINISTER OF WAR

[Exultantly.

Our God of old lives yet and will not let us perish in disgrace!

CHIEF OF STAFF

[Looking about.

My helmet. Damn it! Where is my helmet? I am going to dig at the plans once more. If God lets me lead the armies in such a fight, the devil can come when I'm through and fetch away the old carcass.

PRIME MINISTER

[To MINISTER OF WAR.

Where's your Secretary?

MINISTER OF WAR

[Crossing to door.

Secretary, here!

[SECRETARY enters.

PRIME MINISTER

[Handing him the paper.

To the telegraph-operator with this. It is to be sent to every news bureau in the city and to all our embassies abroad.

MINISTER OF WAR

Tomorrow, the mobilization!

CHIEF OF STAFF

Tonight! I need those twelve hours for my plans.

[The SECRETARY holds the door open for the CHIEF OF STAFF who is about to go out when suddenly in the doorway appears a young man of thirty, pale, dark, timid. He hesitates on the threshold.

SECRETARY

[Taken aback, bowing.

Your Majesty!

CHIEF OF STAFF

[Drawing back.

My King!

[PRIME MINISTER and MINISTER OF WAR bow.

KING

[Courteously.

I trust I am not breaking in upon a matter that does not concern me?

PRIME MINISTER

There is nothing that the King's servants may do that does not concern the King.

KING

True. But sometimes the King is kept in ignorance nevertheless.

[To the SECRETARY.

What paper is that you have there, if you please?

SECRETARY

[With an uneasy glance at the others.

Here, your Majesty.

MINISTER OF WAR

[Aside to SECRETARY.

Get out!

[Exit SECRETARY.

PRIME MINISTER

It is the report of your Majesty's interview with the Ambassador.

KING

[Glancing at the paper and speaking in quick, excited tones.

My message has been altered. It was conciliatory. It is a challenge now. Who did this?

PRIME MINISTER

Your Majesty sees the culprit before you.

KING

Are you trying to make war?

PRIME MINISTER

I am trying, your Majesty, to save the country from the results of your Majesty's indiscretion in calling the Ambassador to your palace without consulting your Ministers. If we do not strike now we lose our prestige as a great nation, our national honor is dragged in the dust. We have to fight. We cannot afford to back

down.

KING

[Striding across the room, agitatedly.]

But this is unholy, barbaric—this deliberate concoction of a great, terrible war. I saw clearly this evening as I was talking with the Ambassador how utterly without inner necessity this war-scare is. It is a made thing from beginning to end, and I refuse absolutely to sanction it.

CHIEF OF STAFF

[Deliberately.]

Your Majesty is an idealist. We are practical, and, I may say, far-seeing men. And we are the three men, perhaps, who have given your Majesty the chair you sit on and made your kingdom what it is.

KING

[Drawing himself up.]

I think I have not been ungrateful. But my people come first, and I will not have my people plunged into misery for no valid and inevitable necessity.

PRIME MINISTER

Your Majesty, I have served you for fifteen years and I served your exalted father for twenty. You are right. This war may be avoided. In two days this war-cloud could be so utterly dissipated that men would laugh here and in the great Republic that for a day they had talked so hotly of war. Dissipated. For a year, for two years. For always? No. The war must come sooner or later. It is a matter, in the first place, of prestige, of national honor. But, more emphatically, it is a question of mathematics, birth-rate, death-rate, revenue, taxes, industries, imports, exports.

[Crossing to left.]

There is a map of the world, your Majesty. This stretch of land there we need as a safety-valve. If we get that we are safe. If we fail to get it we explode. Not at once. But sooner or later. Our army and navy have never been in better shape. These two gentlemen can give your Majesty their word for that. But you can

take mine, too. The enemy's army is politically rotten, and enfeebled by sentimental peace propaganda. Their defenses are inadequate and their navy likewise. Those things will change. Strike today—and they never raise their heads again. Wait—and it is you who may be crushed.

KING

[Sharply.]

That is a theory. Not a fact. Ten years may change the aspect of things entirely, particularly if we use those ten years in preparations not for war but for peace, honest at home and abroad, just, open, civil, to our neighbors.

PRIME MINISTER

Your Majesty, I look farther than ten years, farther than ten times ten years. And I have wrought for this moment, prepared for this moment, this moment of our strength and our enemy's weakness. I have a right to insist that I, who have brought your kingdom thus far, shall not have my hands tied when the moment for stern action arrives.

KING

[With a whimsical smile.]

After all, my good Prime Minister, it is *my* kingdom, you know.

PRIME MINISTER

[Moved.]

Your Majesty knows that what I have done I have done for your glory. The liberals have cursed me for a reactionary through the length and breadth of the kingdom; because I served you, and served you in all love and devotion.

KING

I know your devotion. But give me a fresh example of it. Keep my kingdom at peace with the world.

PRIME MINISTER

That I cannot do.

KING

You cannot? You *will* not.

PRIME MINISTER

I could not face my conscience, or make my peace with God, if I weakened now and allowed the golden opportunity to pass by. For your Majesty's sake as well as for our country's.

KING

For mine?

PRIME MINISTER

Your Majesty has forgotten that your throne was built by war and rests on force. Force only, military prestige only, can uphold you. The rebels of labor have crept close to your throne now. Ten more years of peace, and you are cast out overnight, to wander over Europe, a homeless absurdity, a king without a chair to sit on.

KING

[With flashing eyes.]

We shall see!

PRIME MINISTER

[Quietly.]

May I ask your Majesty in all humility and devotion to give me back that slip of paper?

KING

You have thought of our national honor, our prestige, our commercial growth, our dynastic life. Have you given no thought at all to the men you send to death to purchase these?

PRIME MINISTER

A man has no higher privilege than to die for his country. I beg your Majesty—the paper?

KING

[Tearing the paper once across.

And the women?

PRIME MINISTER

[Grimly.

We'll find them new husbands, your Majesty. The paper, if you please.

KING

[Tearing the paper into shreds.

I forbid this war!

PRIME MINISTER

[With controlled anger.

My God, your Majesty! You are letting a sentiment master you. There are worse things than war. There are possibilities in peace infinitely worse than any war, or there would be no war. War may kill a million bodies, but a wicked peace can snuff out unnumbered souls!

KING

I will take my chances with peace.

MINISTER OF WAR

It is for you we are fighting, your Majesty, but not for you only, not for your glory only and the permanence of your House, but for the permanence of the monarchical principle, which we know is better and higher than the principle of democracy, since it is the earthly symbol of God's singleness of rule, and comes direct from God.

CHIEF OF STAFF

[Coolly.

Moreover, your Majesty, it works!

KING

This is a matter of war and peace, not a matter of monarchy or democracy.

PRIME MINISTER

Your Majesty does not see far enough. Give us war, and we keep our monarchy. Give us peace, and we plunge within ten years into the rapids of revolution and democracy.

KING

[Simply.

I will take my chances with peace.

PRIME MINISTER

[Stern and cold.

Very good, your Majesty. Then you may paddle your bark alone. I resign.

MINISTER OF WAR

And I resign!

CHIEF OF STAFF

And I!

KING

[Crossing to the window, where he stands with his back turned to the others. His voice is uncertain.

I did not expect that of you.

PRIME MINISTER

[Moved.

Oh, your Majesty! You know what my love has been—

KING

[Turning.

Half the country will fall from me if you three desert me.

PRIME MINISTER

It is not desertion, your Majesty. It is loyalty to something even higher than the King, the principle that makes him King.

KING

[Perplexed.]

Perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps I am sentimental—

MINISTER OF WAR

[Gently.]

Your Majesty is humane, but perhaps a deeper humanity demands a hardening of the heart sometimes.

KING

[To MINISTER OF WAR.]

But you always detested war. You called yourself my Minister not of War, but of Peace.

MINISTER OF WAR

[Rigidly.]

When the honor of our country is at stake—

KING

[Impatiently.]

But nobody is attacking our honor!

PRIME MINISTER

[Bluntly.]

The case is as I said. We need this war, and we must have it.

KING

[Torn by his conflicting desires.]

I cannot let you resign. There is no one else I can trust as I trust you three. But not war, not war!

PRIME MINISTER

I am a lover of peace, but the time has come when we must have war.

MINISTER OF WAR

It is our sacred duty, your Majesty, to draw our swords for light and justice when God calls!

CHIEF OF STAFF

And God has always been with us. God will be with us now!

KING

[White and tense.]

You are three strong men against me. I want peace, but I am helpless without you three. For I am an anachronism. Not nature but human force, fighting against nature, keeps me on my throne. If you must have war, have it. But I tell you this: God has no part in it. Leave God out of the game!

[He sinks into the chair by the desk.]

PRIME MINISTER

[To MINISTER OF WAR.]

Call your Secretary!

[MINISTER OF WAR goes to the door. The SECRETARY enters. The PRIME MINISTER takes a paper out of his pocket.]

Here. It is a copy of the message I directed you to send to the news bureaus and embassies. Transmit it at once.

[The SECRETARY bows and goes out. The KING falls forward on the desk, sobbing. At his side, straight and stern, the PRIME MINISTER Stands. To MINISTER OF

WAR.

Give orders for immediate mobilization.

[The stage is slowly darkened.]



SCENE II

As the lights rise again they reveal a small, comfortably furnished clubroom, with a wide window opening on a balcony in the back, and doors right and left. It is evening and the electric lamps are lit.

GROSVENOR, *a man of fifty-odd, large, sleek, unctuous, well-groomed, is discovered in an arm-chair, surrounded by newspapers. He glances with feverish interest at one after the other. A cheer is heard outside, then the sound of fifes and drums. He rises excitedly and throws open the French window. The tramp, tramp of a regiment is heard. TWO OFFICERS in uniform, a GENERAL and a CAPTAIN, enter left.*

GENERAL

[A strongly-built man in middle age, with a firm, resolute face.]

Evening, Grosvenor. Not poaching on your rights if we come in here a minute? The other windows were crowded.

GROSVENOR

Not at all, General, not at all. We're all making way for the khaki today, sir. And proud to have the chance.

[With overdone politeness to the Captain, a handsome man of the romantic type.]

Take my place, Captain.

CAPTAIN

Thanks. Great tune that, eh? Stirs up a man's vitals, eh?

GROSVENOR

Yes, indeed; yes, indeed.

CAPTAIN

Wait till we put that into the repertory of the enemy's bandmasters.

[Leaning out of the window.]

Come. They're a fine-looking lot, eh?

GENERAL

Fine! Fine! The pick of the land. Fighters to a finish, every one of 'em.

CAPTAIN

And say, but they're thanking God tonight for the war-scare that's brought 'em back from manœuvres.

GROSVENOR

[Eagerly.]

They are, eh?

CAPTAIN

Manœuvres are too tame. They're crazy to get into a real fight.

GROSVENOR

[In excited, subdued tones.]

Then you think—there'll be war?

GENERAL

[Turning.]

The President expects to hear from our Ambassador any minute about the private interview he wired he was about to have with the King.

GROSVENOR

[Taking up the papers.]

Seen the latest?

GENERAL

[Picking out one paper with a particularly flaring headline.]

"Iberia planning secret attack," eh? That man Pollen knows more things that aren't so than a college graduate.

CAPTAIN

[Taking another paper.]

He's entertaining enough, though. I daresay he has some influence.

GROSVENOR

I pray to God that we may keep peace, but we must not let ourselves be walked over—we must not—

CAPTAIN

[Laughing.]

Exactly. The nation is at last to see what it spends its army and navy appropriations for. Eh?

GENERAL

No sane man wants war, but if—

CAPTAIN

I'm sane. And I want war. I want to go out and help lambaste those infernally cocksure armies of that jelly-and-cream King. We've parleyed long enough. Now we'll fight. Force is the only convincing argument after all.

GROSVENOR

As our Master said, "I bring a sword"—

GENERAL

[At the window again.]

Fine fellows those. Look at that boy there, third from the end. And that lieutenant. Strapping, wonderful fellows—with brains! That's the great thing. Give me five hundred thousand of those and I'll hold off all comers.

GROSVENOR

[With nervous acuteness.]

How long d'ye think it'll last?

GENERAL

Six months. Maybe a year.

GROSVENOR

[Tentatively.]

You couldn't, I suppose—say—more exactly?

GENERAL

[With a glance of suspicion.]

How should I—before it's even begun?

GROSVENOR

[Hastily.]

Oh—er—just a matter of curiosity.

CAPTAIN

[Laughing.]

At any rate, we'll be back in time for the next presidential election. We're coming back with the General on our shoulders, and when we drop him it'll be through the skylight of the President's house.

GENERAL

[Self-consciously.]

Don't talk nonsense.

CAPTAIN

There's nothing like a war to make a man President.

[*At window.*

More and more and more of 'em. Bully lines. Not natty enough to be a joke, just straight and trim. Those fellows'll carry you into the presidency, General, if anyone can. A few of 'em'll have to choke first, but that's fisherman's luck.

GENERAL

[*Turning.*

That'll do, Dave.

[*A PAGE enters Right.*

PAGE

[*Crossing the room.*

Mr. Grosvenor? Mr. Grosvenor?

GROSVENOR

[*Eagerly.*

Here.

PAGE

[*Handing him a telegram.*

Any answer?

GROSVENOR

Wait.

CAPTAIN

[*Still watching the soldiers.*

They *are* happy.

[*Pause.*

I wonder which of 'em'll come back, and which won't.

GROSVENOR

[Who has torn open the yellow envelope, sinks back in his chair. To PAGE.]

No answer.

[He mops his brow in utter dejection. The officers by the window do not see him as he studies the telegram and studies it again as though he could not believe his eyes.]

CAPTAIN

[Turning.]

Any news, Mr. Grosvenor?

GROSVENOR

[Thickly.]

A plot, a damned Stock Exchange plot.

[He hands the CAPTAIN the message.]

CAPTAIN

[After a glance at the message.]

Hello! Say, General, look at this.

GENERAL

[Turning.]

What's up?

CAPTAIN

The State Department has just had news from our Ambassador to Iberia. Delightful interview with the King. Evident willingness to meet us half way.

GENERAL

[Coolly.]

Is this straight? It sounds fishy.

CAPTAIN

They're trying to gain time. I don't believe it.

GROSVENOR

It's a damned plot.

GENERAL

Looks to me like a blind to stop our preparations. I'm going over to the War Department. Coming, Captain?

CAPTAIN

It's that crafty Prime Minister over there playing us tricks, eh?

GROSVENOR

[Hotly.

It's a plot!

GENERAL

Something's queer! Good night, Grosvenor!

GROSVENOR

[Effusively.

Good night, General, good night. God be with us all in these dark days, I say!

GENERAL

[Solemnly.

Amen to that!

CAPTAIN

[Saluting carelessly.

Good night.

GROSVENOR

Good night, good night.

[The OFFICERS go out. GROSVENOR strides excitedly up and down.]

It's a plot, it's a damned plot—

[He goes toward the rear and picks up a telephone instrument on a desk by the window.]

Can you get me the House? Mr. Maynard. Yes. Making a speech? Never mind.

[He hangs up the receiver and presses a button on the wall. Then he quickly writes a message on the back of the telegram and encloses it in an envelope. The PAGE enters.]

PAGE

Ring, sir?

GROSVENOR

Yes. Take this to the House at once. To Mr. Maynard. See that he gets it himself. Here's a dollar.

PAGE

[Touching his cap.]

Thank you, sir.

[Exit.]

GROSVENOR

[Taking up the telephone again.]

Give me the Senate. Mr. Taney. Saw him go out?

[He hangs up the receiver impatiently.]

Isn't anyone on the job?

[He strides up and down.]

A damned plot!—

[Enter, right, hurriedly, SENATOR TANEY, a stout, red-haired man, clean-shaven.]

TANEY

[Puffing.]

Hello, Grosvenor.

GROSVENOR

Thank God, you're here.

TANEY

Only got a minute. Hell's loose in the Senate.

GROSVENOR

I've been nearly crazy waiting for news.

TANEY

God, man. Perhaps you think I ain't been busy rounding up a lot of on-the-fence-men? It seems to me pretty nearly everybody was on the fence. No decided opinions at all. But they're coming, they're coming.

GROSVENOR

How 'bout that report about the King over there wanting peace?

TANEY

That's what the row's about. The highbrows an' the peace people are shouting hurrahs all over the place, an' the rest of us has to do what we can to drown 'em out.

GROSVENOR

[Restlessly moving about the room.]

If it's true about the King, can you—work it—anyway?

TANEY

How do I know?

GROSVENOR

Got any figures? For or against?

TANEY

Yes. It's about an even go.

GROSVENOR

[Disappointed.]

You can't give me anything more definite?

TANEY

What's up, anyway? You look nervous.

GROSVENOR

I am. This business is cutting into my sleep. My last cent is tied up, and I've got a good many other people's last cents as well. Damn it, Taney, this is worse than Monte Carlo. You're dealing with cold-blooded chance there, but here you're dealing with sentiments, emotions. It's exhausting. War is a terrible thing, Taney. It worries me day and night. Think of the lives! And yet we need this war, we need it for the good of the nation. And now that we're ready, it would be a calamity if—

TANEY

[Turning to go.]

Don't you worry about that.

GROSVENOR

[Nervously.]

How's the House going?

TANEY

Don't know anything about the House. But I guess your man Maynard is doing his job. I'm off to see Cottrell. Another man that wants news. Be back in ten minutes.

GROSVENOR

Keep me posted, for God's sake. You know—I'm not ungrateful. You shan't lose by your efforts, Taney. You know I'm a liberal man.

TANEY

[Quietly, but with emphasis.]

Look here. You're not Conroy and you're not Pollen. They're the whales in this pond. You're only a nervous minnow. I'm working with bigger men than you. And perhaps I've got some convictions of my own, had 'em for years. If I hadn't, no money of yours would buy me. I believe the people want this war to settle once and for all whether that wishy-washy King or us is going to direct the universe, and if the people want it, it's my business to see that they get it. If that means any money in your pocket, it's none of my business. But I'm not your slave, Grosvenor. And don't you forget it.

GROSVENOR

You'll keep me posted? If anything goes wrong, I've got to have time to get from under. You'll surely keep me posted?

TANEY

Get your man Maynard on the string. I'm hanged if I'll be your office boy.

GROSVENOR

[Beseechingly.

Taney—

[TANEY goes out. GROSVENOR takes a step toward the door, stops, and drawing a cigar from his pocket, begins chewing the end nervously. Then he turns quickly, and crossing to the right, picks up the telephone instrument again.

Office of the "Morning Bulletin," please.

[Pause.

Mr. Pollen, please. Out? This is Mr. Grosvenor. On his way to the Club? Thanks.

[MR. CONROY enters, right. He is a short, stockily-built man with a belligerent chin covered by a close-cropped, grizzled beard.

CONROY

Hello, Grosvenor.

[With a sharp glance and not entirely pleasant smile.

I might have known that I'd find you on the job. What is it this time—canned goods, uniforms, hospital supplies—or just general enthusiasm?

GROSVENOR

A little business, but mainly enthusiasm. A great time to be alive, Conroy! Any news?

CONROY

Maynard's making a rousing speech. Spread eagle. Our honor as a nation. The dearest, sweetest flag that ever waved over a noble, invincible people. Damned rot. But the brethren from the rural districts lap it up like cider in October. He's gaining votes. Protégé of yours, ain't he?

GROSVENOR

Yes. Used to be my office boy. Clever chap. Has a sensible view of things. Realizes that our national honor and our property must be defended at all hazards.

CONROY

*[Sitting down at the desk and beginning to write.
With a cynical laugh.]*

You mean *property*. You don't give a damn about national *honor*. You know you don't. What's the use of trying to fool me?

GROSVENOR

Conroy, do you mean to impugn my patriotic motives?

CONROY

[Without looking up, good-naturedly.]

Grosvenor, we've known each other thirty years. I don't try to bluff you because I know that you know too much about me. You made the beginnings of your pile out of one big war and you've been playing up a lot of little republics against each other ever since, harvesting a neat little fortune every time. Now it's a real world-war you're after. If it comes, you're made, if it don't, you're broke. It's a cinch. Mind you, I'm not throwing stones. Only I don't want you to think you can pull the noble patriotic guff on me.

GROSVENOR

I have certain investments, of course, which might possibly be promoted by a war. But I am not thinking of that. I am thinking of the honor of my country, that honor which has never yet been stained, and shall not be stained if I can do aught by my own efforts and by my prayers to God, to keep it pure.

CONROY

[Rising.]

You carry it off well. I couldn't bluff the way you can. I haven't your religious feeling. I know why I want war. It's because I'm a manufacturer of guns. Everybody knows my business, and they know that if there wasn't war or a fear of war constantly, I and my wife and children would starve. War is my work and

it's been my work most of my life. And I've worked for this war because it was the biggest thing in sight. I've worked for it with all the brains I've got, just as I'd have worked for two-hundred-egg hens if I'd been a chicken farmer. I'm not a sentimentalist. Besides, war's a good thing occasionally. I believe that absolutely. It quiets down your socialists, cuts down your superfluous population, increases the moral stamina of the nation. A lot of this talk of war being hell is mush. A few people get shot up, but no one forced 'em to go. It's their own funeral.

GROSVENOR

No, Conroy, no. I don't agree with you. I may possibly not lose financially by this war, but nevertheless, war is terrible, awful. The Christian sense balks at it. Only, I feel this way, sometimes when the honor of the nation demands—

CONROY

You damn bluff!

GROSVENOR

[Confronting him.]

Conroy! If you please!

[POLLEN, a tall, thin man in the late forties, enters left. He has an impassive, intellectual face, interesting though unsympathetic. His manner is calm and quietly alert, suggestive of reserve power.]

POLLEN

[Without cordiality.]

Hello, Conroy. Hello, Mr. Grosvenor.

GROSVENOR

[Obsequious at once.]

Mr. Pollen!

CONROY

I was just going to send a note round to you, Pollen. Couldn't get you on the

phone. What d'ye think? Yes or no?

POLLEN

[With a faint, ironic smile.

Yes.

GROSVENOR

[Excitedly.

What?

CONROY

[Deliberately.

Are you sure?

GROSVENOR

How can you be sure?

POLLEN

I have two reasons. One, because the biggest banker in the country told me so. That's unimportant. He may have been lying. The other, because—

[He smiles quietly.

my papers tell me so.

[He picks up one of the papers off the floor.

I see you have been honoring me by reading them. Don't my papers tell you that there's going to be war?

CONROY

No one pretends, Pollen, that your papers are wonders of undecorated truth.

POLLEN

Well, this time, trust them. What if they do lie about facts occasionally? I am not interested in facts. Facts are always misleading. But I know something about

psychology—

CONROY

And you're sure?

GROSVENOR

How can you be sure?

POLLEN

[Standing at the window.]

Because the people are smelling blood. That's why. And now they won't let up till they're satisfied. I've watched the war-feeling growing for a year. I tried 'em out on headlines and editorials, first little mild fellows to set them thinking. Then, when their thoughts were set toward trouble, well, we increased the percentage of oxygen.

[Thoughtfully.]

It's been extremely interesting. The psychology of crowds is one of the most satisfying subjects I have ever studied. Say, fifteen, twenty millions, that individually hate you, but as a crowd, a body of readers, unconsciously, perhaps, even against their will, do exactly what you say. We're going to have war, because the people have now got to a state in which they believe that nothing short of war will save them from utter ruin. They want war. I know it. The circulation of my papers has mounted by the hundred thousand daily. And it isn't only because the people want the news. They want the excitement. It's the gambling instinct in them. They've seen the ball rolling, and they can't keep out of the game. The very bigness of the thing lures them on; the bigger the issue, the bigger the fascination. The millions of men and the billions of dollars—that lures them. And the awfulness—the dead, the wounded, the horrors, that lures them like nothing else. There was one thing missing until tonight.

GROSVENOR

[Fascinated.]

What was that?

POLLEN

Fear. They were too cocksure. But I gave them fear in the eight o'clock extra. There was a rumor that the rest of Europe would take part.

GROSVENOR

[With a malicious glance.]

That looks well for your business, Conroy.

CONROY

I'm not complaining.

POLLEN

We're playing the thing up in the late editions all over the country. It'll give the people a queer catch in the throat. They'll see the possibility of a fierce struggle, even of defeat. There'll be a wonderful wave of patriotism. You watch. The people'll rise right up. In twenty-four hours there won't be a man in the country that'll be able to tell black from white. All they'll see will be red.

[Pointing out of the window.]

Look at the people out there, standing round. They can't stay indoors. They're waiting for the extras. They won't believe 'em when they read 'em, but they can't resist the excitement. Well, the bonfire's ready. Nothing lacking now except the match.

GROSVENOR

[Striding up and down.]

That's all very well, Mr. Pollen. But suppose the King over there backs down?

POLLEN

He won't. The people won't let him.

CONROY

His people? They don't want war.

POLLEN

Not *his* people.

[Pointing.

Ours. I tell you, they've smelt blood.

[From a distance, faintly, but growing louder, boys are heard calling, "Extra! Extra!"

GROSVENOR

[Excitedly.

Extra! I wonder—

CONROY

[Going to the balcony, and calling down.

Here, boy!

POLLEN

[Laughing softly.

There you go.

[He presses a bell-button on the wall, bends over the writing-desk and writes a line which he encloses in an envelope.

You're easy. And there are a hundred million like you. When it comes to war, reason goes to sleep. You both of you knew perfectly well that I had absolutely no later news than you, but you let yourself be hypnotized like children. I can do anything I want with you.

[Enter PAGE.

PAGE

Ring, sir?

POLLEN

Take this to the news-stand in the hall.

PAGE

Yes, sir.

[Exit.

POLLEN

[At the window again.

The edition is going like hotcakes. It has Maynard's speech in it. Did either of you hear it?

CONROY

Yes. Damned rot, but effective.

POLLEN

He keeps the patriotism hot.

GROSVENOR

[Proudly.

I trained that young man in patriotism.

[Enter REPRESENTATIVE MAYNARD, left; a young man, conceited and with a swagger.

MAYNARD

Good evening, gentlemen.

GROSVENOR

Maynard!

CONROY

Great boy!

[They all clap him on the shoulder and shake his hand.

POLLEN

A wonderful speech, my boy. We're playing you up for Governor of the State in

tonight's late editions.

MAYNARD

I'll sweep the State. It's patriotism, it's the flag, that gets the rubes. You should have seen the whiskers of the rural sections waving in the wind!

[Shouts of newsboys outside: "Bulletin! War! All about the war!"

CONROY

Eh?

MAYNARD

[To Pollen.

Any news I've missed?

GROSVENOR

How's that? They're shouting "War" already.

POLLEN

[Calmly.

I told 'em to. That was the message I sent down. That shout gave you a thrill, didn't it? Well, that was what I was after. If I don't hold you down in your chair you'll rush out to buy a copy, even though I should stand here all night, shouting in your ears that it's a fake.

GROSVENOR

[Shocked.

You are inflaming the people!

POLLEN

Exactly. There have been people unkind enough to assert that that was my business. What's yours, Grosvenor?

GROSVENOR

Eh?

[Hotly.

What d'ye mean?

CONROY

You're livin' in a crystal palace, Grosvenor. Don't you go and forget that.

GROSVENOR

[Indignantly.

I—

MAYNARD

[To Grosvenor.

I've got to get back to the House, Mr. Grosvenor. I just came over to see if you had any—suggestions?

GROSVENOR

[Testily.

No. Only keep me posted. That's all.

[Expanding again.

And remember, our honor as a nation is at stake.

MAYNARD

They're not forgetting our honor while I'm on the floor.

CONROY

[Drawing MAYNARD aside as he is about to go out, and whispering.

Need any—ready money?

MAYNARD

[Grinning.

There were a half dozen brethren on the steps as I came out, who implied they were broke, and wouldn't object to a loan.

CONROY

[Taking a wallet from his pocket and handing it to Maynard, after he has made sure that Grosvenor and Pollen are not looking.

Here. Help the poor devils along.

MAYNARD

Thanks. I will.

[PAGE enters right, with a card on a salver.

PAGE

Senator Taney?

MAYNARD

No.

[Taking up the card.

Who wants him?

[He whistles softly.

Harradan! No, son, Senator Taney is not here.

[Exit PAGE, left.

GROSVENOR

[Excitedly.

Harradan's smelling a rat. He's getting after Taney!

POLLEN

[Quietly.

Don't you worry. I can finish Harradan up in black-faced letters tomorrow morning. He'll think he's reading his own tombstone.

[TANEY *enters, right.*

TANEY

Hello, Pollen. Hello, Conroy. Well, Grosvenor, Cottrell is as jumpy as you are.

GROSVENOR

Have you seen Harradan?

TANEY

Have I seen Harradan? I should say I had! He's leading the peace party in the Senate. Fighting like a fiend.

[*Clearing his throat.*

That man has nearly cost me my vocal chords.

[*Ruefully.*

To see him you wouldn't connect him with the word "peace."

GROSVENOR

He's in the club. He's asked for you.

CONROY

Come on, Grosvenor. This is no place for an honest business-man to be found conversing with a Senator.

GROSVENOR

[*Nervously.*

Quite right.

TANEY

[*With a grin.*

Well, Maynard, they don't seem to think we're safe company for good little boys.

Suppose we get back on the job?

[They move toward the right. POLLEN remains standing, calm and imperturbable, by the window.]

POLLEN

You people act as though you had a bad conscience. I don't think I'd let a mere Senator interfere with the freedom of my movements, if I were you.

[SENATOR HARRADAN enters, left. He is a soldierly-looking man in the seventies.]

HARRADAN

Good evening, gentlemen.

[Pause.]

I seem to have tumbled into headquarters.

TANEY

Hello, Harradan. Looking for me?

HARRADAN

Yes.

TANEY

You know these gentlemen?

HARRADAN

[Coolly.]

Sufficiently.

TANEY

I'm due back at the Senate. I'll talk with you till the cock crows after we adjourn. Will that do?

HARRADAN

I should like to talk to you now.

MAYNARD

In that case, I'll go back to the House.

GROSVENOR

We won't intrude—

CONROY

The Senators have the floor—

[They are about to beat a retreat.]

HARRADAN

I wish you'd stay, gentlemen.

GROSVENOR

[Looking at his watch, nervously.]

I'm sorry I—

HARRADAN

You'll please stay, Mr. Grosvenor. You, too, Mr. Conroy.

CONROY

I'm hanged if I'll be dictated to.

HARRADAN

[Quietly.]

Do as you please. But if you don't stay, I'll have you both under arrest in fifteen minutes.

CONROY

[In disgust.]

Oh, come off!

GROSVENOR

[Indignantly.]

What do you mean, Senator?

HARRADAN

[Fiercely.]

My God, man, don't make me mad. I'm twenty years older than you, but I could wipe the floor up with you yet!

GROSVENOR

[Nervously lights a cigar and during the ensuing scene shifts it with his lips from one corner of his mouth to the other in extreme agitation.]

I don't know what you're talking about.

MAYNARD

Well, you don't need me.

HARRADAN

I do.

[MAYNARD sits down, chewing his lips.]

POLLEN

[With an amused, patronizing smile.]

You haven't expressed yourself about me yet, Senator. Am I invited to the party?

HARRADAN

You may stay or not as you like.

POLLEN

Thanks.

[Deliberately.]

Do you know, if I were you, I don't think I'd detain these other gentlemen just now.

HARRADAN

[Calmly.]

Go to the Devil to whom you belong, Mr. Pollen. I'll do as I see fit.

POLLEN

I merely advise you. It isn't always considered patriotic when the people want war, for a Senator to want peace too hard. I shall strive to point that out to twenty million people or so tomorrow morning. Make your will, Senator. The avalanche is coming. You'll be the loneliest voice that ever came out of the wilderness. I prophesy your swift demise.

HARRADAN

This is wartime. Most of us are ready to die, if necessary. Only some of us would rather die in the service of peace than in the service of war. You're a very powerful man, Mr. Pollen. I don't doubt at all that you can kill me if you put your mind on it. You have poisoned the whole nation. You are at liberty to kill me outright, but I won't let you slow-poison me.

[Turning.]

Taney, I've got information against you, and you've got to listen. You, too, Maynard.

POLLEN

[At window.]

Am I out in the cold again? I'm listening intently.

[He goes to the telephone and takes up the receiver.]

News-stand, please.

HARRADAN

[Pleadingly.]

Taney—

POLLEN

[At the telephone.]

That you, Burke? Liven up your youngsters outside. They've gone to sleep.

[He hangs up the receiver, and complacently lights a cigarette.]

HARRADAN

We were friends in the past, Taney. I always knew you were a jingo, but I thought there was hope. I came here because I still thought so. I didn't know you had lined up with the buzzards.

TANEY

See here, Harradan. What are you talking about anyway?

HARRADAN

We all know why Grosvenor and Conroy and their kind are here. And a few of us have been wondering who were pulling the wires for them.

GROSVENOR

You've got me mixed up with somebody else. I'm here attending to—to my regular business.

CONROY

[Bluntly.]

And why shouldn't we be down here? I'm in a legitimate business. Guns. And I'm looking after my interests. I'm not declaring war. But if there is a war I don't see any reason why I should get left in the scramble.

HARRADAN

War! God, do you know what the word means? I've been in two wars. I've seen and heard and—smelt battlefields. And I've seen women and children waiting at home—and waiting.

POLLEN

I'll give you a thousand dollars, Senator, for a thousand-word article on the horrors of war. You can't make it strong enough.

MAYNARD

[Laughing.]

That's one on you, Senator.

HARRADAN

Taney, you're a man of sense, and you love your country. Now—

TANEY

Good night, gentlemen, I'm going.

[He turns toward the door.]

MAYNARD

Same here.

HARRADAN

[Turning swiftly.]

No, you're not. I want a list of names. I want a list of all the people who are paying you to shout for war. Understand?

[Fiercely.]

I want that list now.

TANEY

[Coolly.]

Hell may grow buttercups, Harradan. But you don't get any names out o' me.

[Quickly.]

Besides, I ain't got any to give. And I'll have you up for defamation of character for saying that there's anybody can buy me!

HARRADAN

[After a pause, quietly.]

Taney, you've always been a business-man. You look at things just one way. You aren't bothered much by imagination. Perhaps you don't know what you're doing. War, man! Dead men by thousands, wounded men shrieking for some one to put them out of their misery, fire, ruin, starvation! For what good, for what good, ever?

POLLEN

I raise my offer, Senator. Make it two thousand.

TANEY

You ought to go into vaudeville, Senator. Subject, "The Horrors of War."

[The others laugh.]

HARRADAN

God, the country stands on the verge of the greatest calamity in its history and you can't do anything but laugh!

MAYNARD

You're an inspiration, Senator. Just like that dago or Dutchman or whoever he was who tried to smash up the windmills. But you haven't a sense of humor.

HARRADAN

[With quiet dignity.]

No. My sense of humor died during our last war. Will you give me those names that are going to help me kill this satanic craving for war? Are you?

MAYNARD

You're talking through your hat, Senator. I don't know anything about any names.

HARRADAN

Very well.

[Turning to go.]

I have five names. They'll do until to-morrow. God willing, they'll bring Congress back to its senses. I thank my God that I found you buzzards out in time. I'll fling your names across the Senate tonight—yours, Conroy, and yours, Grosvenor, and yours, Taney, and yours, Pollen, and yours, Maynard! By Heaven, the country shall hear them from end to end. And there'll be less talk of war then! You and your kind are stirring up the millions to dream of war, to shout about defending our national honor—What honor is there in murder?—stirring their blood with the fifes and drums of your rhetoric! Through your newspapers, you are turning the thoughts of our children to war, our children who should be to us the symbol of a nobler, purer future rising out of the sordid wreckage of the present—you make them drunk with your cant about national glory—*glory!*—until their innocent faces glow feverishly up to you, hungry for battle. You will not rest until you hear the terrible savage cry from their lips—War, war! You shall not hear it if I can prevent it! I am going to the Senate now. In fifteen minutes your names shall be a byword and a hissing among the nations. The best you can do is to take your vile guns and turn them on yourselves!

[A great shout is heard outside. Then the fifes and drums again. The PAGE enters excitedly.]

PAGE

Message for Senator Taney.

TANEY

Here, quick.

[He takes the paper.]

Gentlemen, listen to this from the Iberian Foreign Office to the Associated Press: "The King sent for the Ambassador of the Republic this afternoon and outlined a plan that would satisfy the royal government. The Ambassador regretted that he was unable to consider any compromise. The King replied that he could have nothing further to say in the matter."

[GROSVENOR and the others jump to their feet with excited exclamations.]

HARRADAN

[*Quickly.*

The thing's not true. There's a mistake somewhere. It doesn't fit in with what went before.

MAYNARD

Fit in? Who cares? It's a challenge! They've insulted us!

GROSVENOR

They've challenged our national honor!

CONROY

Now, by God, they can pay!

HARRADAN

[*Rushing to the telephone.*

Give me the Department of State.

[*There are more shouts outside and more bands. Suddenly the door, left, is burst open by a crowd of men, some in dress clothes, some in uniform, shouting "War!"*

TANEY

For God's sake, what's up?

AN OFFICER

[*Delightedly.*

We're off!

GROSVENOR

What d'ye mean?

A CIVILIAN

They've declared war!

HARRADAN

[Turning.

Who has?

OFFICER

Congress!

TANEY

Senator, you're left.

HARRADAN

[With a sob.

God! You buzzard! You buzzard!

[A band in the distance strikes up the national anthem. GROSVENOR, CONROY, POLLEN, TANEY and MAYNARD stand. HARRADAN sinks into a chair.

MAYNARD

Senator, it's the national anthem. Haven't you got *any* patriotism?

[GROSVENOR opens the windows. The notes of the anthem are drowned out by shouts and cries and the calls of newsboys.

VOICES OF THE CROWD

War! War!

[The anthem sounds loud and clear, but HARRADAN buries his face in his hands. The stage is gradually darkened. The music grows fainter as if the band were marching away; and now and then the shouts of the crowd make themselves heard above it. These subside, too, into a low, muffled roar, sullen and ominous.



SCENE III

[The stage grows light again. In the foreground, a black group of trees may be dimly discerned; beyond are indistinct hills and the last glow of a bloody sunset. Smoke and dust blacken the scene. Even before the cloud breaks to reveal the valley for a moment, the low roar is suddenly broken by the rattle of musketry, followed by the booming of artillery and the drumming sound of the machine guns. A trumpet sounds the charge. The dust cloud breaks. A thickly crowded mass of men is vaguely seen through the twilight charging with cries and curses. The rear ranks press over the fallen, waver, shout and fall back. The rattle of musketry continues. The men return to the charge, are repulsed once more with awful slaughter and again return. The dust cloud passes over the scene. It is night now. The wounded are tossing on the field, shrieking. Ghouls prowl about. A flock of buzzards flies across the moon. In the distance is heard a shout of victory, then the national anthem once more, played by a trumpeter. A thousand voices seem to rise out of the ground, moaning, drowning out the music. Then a woman's voice, clear and distinct.]

VOICE

How long, O Lord? How long?

[Cries and wailings answer the cry. Silence. Again the bugle, drowned out by cries, cries, cries.]



CURTAIN

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