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The Military Invasion Of America

by *P. G. Wodehouse*

A Remarkable Tale Of The German-Japanese Invasion Of 1916

Editor's Note -- It may be thought that in this story Mr. Wodehouse has painted in too lurid colors the horrors of a foreign invasion of the United States. Realism, it may be argued, can be carried too far. We prefer to think that our readers will acquit the author of a desire to rouse America to a sense of peril, and only by setting down without flinching the results of an invasion can this be done. If McClure's and all the other magazines can do it, why shouldn't Vanity Fair have a shot at it? Mr. Wodehouse holds an established position as a military expert, his two most recent articles, "What to do When the Zeppelin Comes," and "Is It Contrary to International Law for Germany to Use Culture as a Weapon of Offense," having caused widespread comment and alarm among military students everywhere.

Part One

Chapter One

The invasion of America was complete. The navy, its morale completely sapped by grape-juice, had offered but slight resistance to the German Armada; and the army, too proud to fight, had stood around while the Japanese established their foothold on the soil of God's Own Country.

Once begun, it had proceeded apace. New York had been bombarded -- but fortunately, as it was summer, nobody of any importance was in town. Philadelphia, though ably defended by military correspondents of the Saturday Evening Post, had fallen at last. America was beneath the heel of the invader, whose only casualties consisted of a detachment of infantry who had been rash enough to travel on the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad -- with the usual results.

Far-seeing patriots took a gloomy view of this state of affairs. For some years the receipts of baseball had been falling off, and it was argued that this counter-attraction must hit the national sport hard. The desire to see the invaders as they marched through the country must inevitably draw away thousands who would otherwise have paid their half-dollars to sit in the bleachers.

By the end of August, a powerful army of Germans under Prince Otto of Saxe-Pfennig had established itself at Kew Gardens, while an equally powerful horde of Japanese under General Owoki was in possession of Yonkers and all points west.

This was a very serious state of things.

Chapter Two

It has been well said that the crisis always produces the man, or necessity is the mother of man or something like that: and never has this admirable truth (of which I cannot remember the exact wording) been better exemplified than in this hour of America's sorest straits.

At a moment when everything seemed blackest, along came Clarence Chugwater.

To-day the name of Clarence Chugwater is familiar to all. Everyone has seen the Chugwater Column in Central Park, the equestrian statue in

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Chugwater Avenue (formerly Broadway) and the Chugwater picture-postcards in the shop windows. But at the time of the great invasion, Clarence was practically unknown except in the newspaper office where he was employed as an office-boy. And even there his name was not known to the staff habitually, address: To-day, it is hard to understand how even a City editor (notoriously one of the least intelligent of human beings) could have failed to detect in the lad's face the promise of future greatness. That bulging forehead, distended with useful information (for Clarence attended night-school); those eyes, gleaming behind their tortoise-shell-rimmed spectacles; that massive chin; that tout ensemble; that je ne sais quoi.

Why, if the City editor had had a grain of sense, he would have flooded New York with electric signs, bearing the legend:

DO YOU KNOW THAT CLARENCE CHUGWATER IS WITH THE SENTINEL?

Instead of which, he called him Bone-head, and often with shocking adjectives prefixed. What a world!

Clarence Chugwater, that many-sided boy, was not only a prop of the Daily Sentinel, he was the Pride of the Boy Scouts. When off duty, he might be seen walking abroad, dressed neatly but not gaudily, in a flat-brimmed hat, a flannel shirt, a bunch of ribbons, a knapsack, knickerbockers, brown shoes, a whistle, and a long stick. He could do everything that the Boy Scout must learn to do. He could low like a bull. He could gurgle like a wood-pigeon. He could imitate the cry of the turnip in order to deceive rabbits. He could spoor, fell trees (unless their owner saw him at it), tell the character by the sole of the shoe, and fling the squaler. He did all these things well, but what he was best at was flinging the squaler.

America's defenders at this time were practically limited to the Boy Scouts and to a large civilian population, prepared at any moment to turn out for their country's sake and wave flags. A certain section of these, too, could sing patriotic songs. It would have been well, then, had the Invaders, before making too sure that America lay beneath their heel, stopped to reckon with Clarence Chugwater.

But did they? Not by a jug-full. They had never even heard of Clarence.

What was to be the result of this over-confidence?

Ah!

Chapter Three

It was inevitable that at a time like August, when there is never anything very much going on, such a topic as the simultaneous invasion of America by Germany and Japan, should be seized upon by the press. Few of the papers failed to give the matter several columns of space, and the public found the fascination of staring at the invading troops a pleasant change from the garish attractions of South Beach and Coney Island. When you consider that a crowd of five hundred New Yorkers will assemble in the space of two minutes, abandoning entirely all its other business, to watch a man putting a new tire on his automobile, it is not surprising that the interest taken in the invaders was somewhat general.

A piquancy was added to the situation by the fact that the Germans and Japanese were not acting in any way as allies. What had happened was a curious outcome of the modern custom of striking a deadly blow before actually declaring war. By a mere chance it had occurred independently to both the Kaiser and the Mikado that it would not be half a bad idea to invade America -- and they had done it. The position of the Prince of Saxe-Pfennig and General Owoki was consequently delicate in the extreme.

All Prince Otto's early training and education had implanted in him the fixed idea that, if he ever invaded America, he would do it either alone or with the sympathetic cooperation of allies. He had never faced the problem of what he should do if there were rivals in the field. He could not very well ask the Japanese to withdraw, and, if he withdrew himself, that meant a mauvais quart d'heure with the Kaiser when he got back to Germany.

"It all comes of this 'Swoop of the Vulture' business," he grumbled to General von Poppenheim, his chief of staff, "this silly business of invading a country before you declare war on it. I suppose there's nothing for it," said the Prince, "but to have a talk with Owoki. Get him on the 'phone, Pop, and ask him to lunch with us at the Ritz to-morrow, to talk things over."

The momentous conversation took place, accordingly on the following day. It was conducted in the language of diplomacy, which, as anyone who has seen this year's crop of war plays is aware, stands in a class by itself. It is a language specifically designed to deceive the chance listener.

Thus, when the Prince, turning to Owoki, as the latter consumed his portion of buckwheat cakes and maple syrup, said "I hear the crops are coming on nicely down Tokio way," none of the waiters perceived anything remarkable in the words. But Owoki, nursed from the cradle in an atmosphere of diplomatic subtlety, understood at once that what the Prince meant was "Now, about this business of America. What do you propose to do about it?"

Owoki hesitated for a moment, then replied blandly: "The food here is good, but I am not sure that I do not prefer the Honble Childs."

The Prince frowned at this typical piece of shifty Oriental diplomacy.

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"How are you getting along with your far tactics?" he inquired, somewhat
"Poorly," he said, "poorly. The last time I tried it, I thought somebody had thrown a bomb at me."
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Prince Otto flushed. He was a plain, blunt man, and he hated this beating about the bush.

But what could he do? His Imperial Master would not wish him, save in the direst extremity, to fight the Japanese. Perhaps he had better yield the point. It was with a conciliatory smile, then, that, having ordered a second cup of coffee, he observed: "Speaking of Mrs. Vernon Castle, I hear that she's in again."

And then the two shook hands.

And so it was settled, the Japanese general having, as we have seen, waived his claim to bombard New York in his turn, and the Prince having withdrawn his demand for a season pass to the Polo Grounds. There was now no obstacle in the way of an alliance.

Prince Otto went to bed that night conscious of good work well done. He now saw his way clear before him.

But he had made one miscalculation, He had omitted to reckon with Clarence Breamworthy Chugwater, the Boy Scout.

Chapter Four

Night!

Night in Gramercy Park!

In the center of that vast tract of unreclaimed park there shone feebly, seeming almost to emphasize the darkness and desolation of the scene, a single light.

It was the camp-fire of the Boy Scouts.

The night was raw and windy. A fine rain had been falling for some hours. The date was October the First. In the camp of the Boy Scouts a vast activity prevailed.

Few of Manhattan's teeming millions realize how tremendous and far-reaching an organization the Boy Scouts are. With the possible exception of the Black Hand and the war-correspondents of the Saturday Evening Post, the Scouts are perhaps the most carefully organized secret society in the world.

The power of the Scouts is enormous. Let us suppose that you are a business-man, and, arriving at the office one morning in a bad temper, you cure yourself by taking it out of the office-boy. He says nothing; he apparently does nothing. But that evening, as you enter your train for Forest Hills, a burly artisan treads on your gouty toe. Reaching home, you find that the chickens have been at your early peas, the cat has stolen the fish, and the cook has jumped her job. You do not connect these things, but they are all alike the results of your unjust behavior to Little Scoutmaster Cyril in the morning.

Or, meeting a ragged newsboy, you pat his head, give him a dime, and ask him if he means to be President when he grows up. Next day an anonymous present of champagne arrives at your address.

Terrible in their wrath, the Boy Scouts never forget a kindness.

A whistle sounded softly in the darkness. The sentry, pacing to and fro before the camp fire, halted and peered into the night.

"Who goes there?"

"A friend."

"Advance, friend: give the countersign."

"Death to Germany and Japan."

"Pass, friend! All's well."

An indistinct figure walked into the firelight. The sentry started, then stood at attention, The newcomer was Clarence Chugwater.

"Your name?" said Clarence, eyeing the sturdy young warrior.

"Private William Buggins."

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"Yes, sir."

"Enumerate them."

Standing in an attitude of deep thought, with his feet apart, his hands clasped behind him, and his chin sunk upon his breast, Clarence made a strangely impressive picture. The Scouts hearing of his arrival were charging desperately in all directions, at last they assembled, and were soon standing, alert and attentive. Clarence returned their salute moodily. He raised his hand.

"Men," he said, in his clear, penetrating alto, "you are all aware by this time that our country has been invaded. It is for us to crush the invader. (Cheers, and a voice 'You said it!') I would call on you here and now to seize your sticks and rush upon the alien intruders, but at present their forces are too strong. We must wait. And something tells me that we shall not have to wait long. (Applause.) Soon jealousy must inevitably spring up between the Germans and the Japanese. It will be our task to aggravate that feeling. Sooner or later this smouldering jealousy will burst into flames, and then will come our time, See that it finds you ready. I have finished."

"Chugwater, Chugwater, Rah! Rah! Rah!" shouted the now thoroughly aroused troops.

It was the voice of Young America -- of Young America alert, desperate, and at its post!

Part Two

Synopsis of what has already happened: Germany and Japan have simultaneously invaded the United States. Japan has reached Yonkers and Germany has established her army at Kew Gardens. Germany is commanded by Prince Otto of Saxe-Pfennig. Japan is commanded by General Owoki. Our country lies helpless beneath the feet of the cruel invaders. Her sole hope is in Clarence Chugwater, the fearless leader of the boy scouts. What will Clarence do? Ah, we cannot tell you that. You must read this story and see!

Chapter One

Historians, when they come to deal with the opening years of the Twentieth Century, will probably call this the Vaudeville Age. At this time the vaudeville-halls dominate America. At the time of our story, the public appetite for sight-seeing had to be satisfied somehow, and the vaudeville-house provided the best solution. If, for example, an impulsive gentleman slew his wife and children with the ice-pick, only a small portion of the public could gaze upon his pleasing features during the trial. But when he had been acquitted under the Unwritten Law, it was necessary, to enable the great public to enjoy this intellectual treat, to engage him, at enormous expense, to appear in Vaudeville.

It was not till the middle of October, 1916, that anyone conceived what one would have thought the obvious idea of offering vaudeville engagements to the invading generals, Prince Otto, and General Owoki.

The first man to think of it was Solly Quhayne, the rising young vaudeville agent. Solly was the son of Abraham Cohen, an eminent agent of the later nineteenth century. His brothers, Abe Kern, Benjamin Colquhoun, Jack Coyne, and Barney Cowan, had gravitated to the curb market, but Solly had carried on his father's vaudeville business, and was making a big name for himself.

The idea of securing Prince Otto and General Owoki for his theatres came to him in a flash!

Solly was a man of action. Within a minute he was talking to the managing director of the Keith circuit, on the telephone. In five minutes the managing director had agreed to pay Prince Otto of Saxe-Pfennig twenty-five hundred dollars a week. In ten minutes the Japanese general had been engaged by the Orpheum Circuit at a weekly salary of two thousand dollars. And in a quarter of an hour Solly Quhayne, having pushed his way through the crowd in his ante-room, was bowling off in a taxi to the Japanese lines, at Yonkers.

General Owoki received his visitor civilly, but at first without enthusiasm. it seemed that he was shy about becoming an artist. Would he have to wear a property bald head and sing rag-time? He didn't think he could. He had only sung once in his life, and that was twenty years ago, at a class reunion at Tokio.

"Why, general," said Solly, "it won't be anything of that sort. You ain't going to be head-lined as a comic. You're a refined lecturer and Society Monolog Artist. 'How I Invaded America,' with lights down and the cinematograph going. Is it a deal?"

Two thousand dollars would come in uncommonly useful.

"Where do I sign?" the general said, extending his hand for the contract.

Five minutes later, Solly Quhayne was exceeding the speed limit in the direction of the German encampment.

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public -- that you should be receiving five hundred dollars each less than Prince Otto of Saxe-Pfennig...
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"It is in this paper," said Clarence, producing the Encore. "Let me read it to you. It is headed 'What the Encore Would Like to Know,' and it runs as follows: 'Whether Prince Otto of Saxe-Pfennig go particularly big at the Colonial last week? And whether it is not a fact that, though they are press-agented at the same figure, his Nibs of the Fatherland is not drawing down five hundred cold iron men more than the Jap? And whether, seeing the way he does, the Prince isn't worth twice that much more than the Japanese lemon?'"

A hoarse cry interrupted him.

"It says that?"

"I have read it verbatim. It strikes me as most unjust. Prince Otto is not worth more than you, general."

"I believe that honble German boob wrote distinguished paragraph himself!"

"Very possibly. Professional jealousy is a sad thing. Though," went on Clarence, "I believe the Prince is going very big. They tell me that last night he took eleven calls."

General Owoki pulled himself together with a supreme effort.

"To-morrow night," he said between his teeth, "he will take more than that. But they will be honble cat-calls!"

* * *

Accounts vary so much as to what exactly did take place at the Colonial Theatre on the following night that it is hard to get at the exact truth. All eye-witnesses, however, are agreed that, just as Prince Otto of Saxe-Pfennig strode upon the stage and said 'Ladeez 'n gemmen, with your kind indulgence --', there arose from every part of the house such a storm of disapproval that he was unable to continue. From floor to roof the building was packed with Japanese soldiers, and shouts of 'Get off honble stage!' 'Procure distinguished hook!' and the like rendered it impossible for the Prince to proceed. Finally the stage-manager dropped the curtain, to the accompaniment of the Japanese National Anthem, thunderously delivered.

It had been the custom of the two generals, since joining the vaudeville profession, to proceed after their act to a neighboring saloon, where they would stand talking about themselves and blocking up the gangway, as etiquette demands that a successful artist shall. The Prince, leaving the Colonial, after his disastrous fiasco, had no doubt that he would find the man responsible for his downfall there.

He was right. The Japanese general was at the bar, chatting affably to the bar-keeper. He nodded at the Prince with well-assumed carelessness.

"Knock 'em to-night?" he enquired casually.

Prince Otto clenched his fists.

"Look here," he said, "did you or did you not send your soldiers to give me the bird tonight? You did! I know you did! Well, I'll give you and your precious soldiers one chance, -- twenty-four hours from midnight to leave this country. If you are still here then -- "

General Owoki slowly drained his high-ball.

"Have you seen my professional advertisement in the Dramatic Mirror, Prince? It says 'Permanent Address, General Delivery, Yonkers.' You get my distinguished meaning, Stephen?"

"You mean -- "

"I mean that I see no occasion to alter that advertisement in any way. I beg to wish you honble goodnight."

Chapter Three

The great battle was over. I have not considered it necessary to describe it, from the first shot to the final capitulation of the practically annihilated Japanese, for that has been done more ably than I can do it by Senator Beveridge, Richard Harding Davis, Corra Harris, Mary Roberts Rinehart, Ernest Poole, Perceval Gibbon, Robert Dunn, John Reed, Irvin Cobb, and every other able-bodied American citizen with the price of a typewriter.

The German victory had not been gained bloodlessly. It was but a shattered wreck of an army that remained after the final charge up the wooden steeps of Yonkers.

* * *

besides that, there had been the heavy work of seeing the interviews, signing autographs-books for school-girls, sitting at the moving-picture camera, and the more burdensome but unavoidable of the table beside him.



As he lay there, the flap of the tent was pulled softly aside. Two figures entered. Each was dressed in the regulation costume of the Boy Scout. One, however, wore tortoise-shell-rimmed spectacles and a quiet superiority which showed that he was the leader.

"Corporal Wagstaff," he said, "wake him."

The boy shook the sleeper's shoulder. The Prince sat up, blinking.

"What -- what -- what is the beadig of this?" he stammered. "I told the sedtry particularly not to let anybody in. If you're frob sub paper, call toborrow. I cadt see you."

The spectacled leader drew himself up.

"I am America," he said with a sublime gesture.

"Aberica? How do you beadig you're Aberica?"

Clarence -- for it was he -- continued, with a frown.

"I say I am America. I am the Chief Scout, and the Boy Scouts are America. Prince Otto, you thought our country lay prone and helpless. You are wrong. The Boy Scouts were watching and waiting. And now their time has come. Corporal Wagstaff, do your duty."

The Prince looked up. Two feet away, Corporal Wagstaff was standing, with a toy sling in hand, ready to shoot.

"Well, what do you want?" he snarled.

"Resistance is useless," said Clarence. "The moment for which I have plotted has arrived. Your troops, worn with fighting, are mere shadows of their former selves. They have fallen an easy prey. An hour ago your camp was silently surrounded by Boy Scouts. One rush and the battle was over. Your entire army -- like yourself -- are prisoners.

"The diggids they are!" said the Prince blankly.

"America, my America!" cried Clarence, his face shining with a holy patriotism. "America, thou art free! Let the nations learn from this that it is when apparently crushed that America is to more than ever be feared!"

"That's bad grabbar," said the Prince critically.

Clarence's eyes flashed fire.

"I don't want you getting fresh with me," he said. "Corporal Wagstaff, remove your prisoner."

"All the sabe," said the Prince, "it is bad grabbar. It's a split infinitive, and it's spoiled your big speech."

Clarence pointed silently to the door.

"Come on, can't you," said Corporal Wagstaff.

"I ab cubbing, aren't I? I was odly sayig -- "

"I'll give you such a whack over the shin in a minute," said Corporal Wagstaff warningly. "Come on!" The Prince went.

The brilliantly lighted auditorium of the Colonial Theatre.

Everywhere a murmur and a stir.

In the seats fair women and brave men converse in excited whispers. One catches sentences here and there.

"Quite a boy, I believe!"

"I've heard he's getting \$10,000 a week!"

"Why, that's more than either of those horrid generals ever got!"

"It's a lot of money. But then, of course, he did save our country."

The orchestra stops. The number 7 is displayed. A burst of applause, swelling into a roar as the curtain rises.

A stout man in crinkled evening-dress walks on the stage.

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"Ladies and gentlemen, I have the honor to present to you to-night one whose name is on the lips of a household word -- is this hero's name? I may say -- *Clarence* -- genius that, indeed, lie upon the only way of removing the exact conquest from our beloved hills and homes. It is a name who, having first performed his feats upon the stage, thereupon firmly and without falter...

...this hero has been engaged exclusively by the Colossal Palace of Varieties at a figure previously undreamed-of in the annals of the vaudeville stage. I have little to add. This hero will first perform a few physical exercises which have made the Boy Scouts what they are. He will low like a bull. He will gurgle like a wood-pigeon. He will spoor, tell the character by the sole of the shoe, and fling the squarer. He will then give imitations of very real living animals. In this connection I have to assure you that he has nothing whatsoever in his mouth, as it has sometimes been suggested. Before uttering the cries, he will gargle in full view of the audience, thus rendering deception impossible. Ladies and gentlemen, it only remains for me to introduce to you America's Darling Son, the Nation's Hero, our champion and proudest possession, -- Clarence Chugwater."

A moment's breathless suspense, a crash from the orchestra, and the audience are standing on their seats, cheering, and shouting.

A small, sturdy, tortoise-shell-spectacled figure is on the stage.

It is Clarence, the Boy of Destiny.

-- End --

