

# "An Englishman's Home" Awakes Britain's Military Ardor: Sensational ...

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## "An Englishman's Home" Awakes Britain's Military Ardor

### Sensational Results Brought About by Guy Du Maurier's Play--An Epidemic of Army Enlistments--A Drama That Arouses Fears of Invasion.

LONDON, Feb. 13.—Guy Du Maurier's sensational patriotic play, "An Englishman's Home," is the one topic of the day. Every home in the length and breadth of the kingdom has been stirred as not before in years. It is difficult to reflect the depth of this popular excitement which has swept over England unstayed, the impelling force nothing more serious than mere mummery on a London stage.

Even the apparently friendly visit of King Edward to his nephew, the Kaiser, has in no degree abated the popular uprising. The royal exchange of diplomatic platitudes in fact has had rather the opposite effect. Never before has there been such a warlike spirit in the kingdom. The panic of fear that the country is in dire peril of invasion by a foe will not be allayed. To add to the frenzy is the openly avowed conviction that an invading enemy would be able to land a large force in the present state of the British Army and Navy.

As an evidence of the state of mind prevailing throughout the land it may be said that the rush to enlist in the army continues unabated day after day. In a single night more than one thousand recruits were enlisted, scores of them rushing straight from Windham's Theatre to the recruiting offices. It all may be described as a storm of patriotism—a popular uprising to repel the foe one might suppose to be bearing down upon the British coast.

\* \* \*

That the wave is not merely evanescent is more than obvious to the cool observer. Every day, every night sees it gaining new impetus. Nothing seems likely to stay it and restore the usual English calm and self-complaisance until the army has been put on a genuine war footing and the navy prepared to meet the combined fleets of Europe.

What Charles Dibden's "Sea Songs" did for the navy one hundred years ago, "An Englishman's Home" is fast doing for the army. Thousands of patriotic Englishmen have already enlisted and other thousands are pouring in, all filled with zeal to meet the fancied foe. Everywhere is the martial spirit uppermost, and before the end it seems not unlikely that every able-bodied Englishman will have taken up arms.

Scenes from the nation-stirring play will be found in the accompanying Pictorial Section of THE TIMES.

"An Englishman's Home" is not much of a play, as a play. No great expectations were entertained regarding it, and no boom was prepared for it in advance. It is in the hands of players comparatively unknown, and

the name of the author was not divulged until after the third performance. And yet it has aroused London and the whole country as has no other dramatic stage performance for years.

The principal characters of the play are Mr. Brown, a domestic middle-class Englishman of the complacent type, ready with the commonplace assertions that no foe would dream of attacking England; that the nation would rise as one man, and so forth. He has an abiding conviction that Providence watches over the island, and that the

lifted hand of the British policeman would stay the oncoming of invading hordes as easily as it checks the stream of traffic on the Strand. He has no conception of any set of circumstances in which "law and order" do not prevail, and is constitutionally incapable of imagining that things may be tomorrow any different from what they are to-day.

When the curtain rises on this Englishman's home we see Brown in the bosom of his family. To be particular, Brown is engaged in the artless and

simple pastime of "diabbling," surrounded—just out of the danger zone—by his daughters and some friends. His son Reggie is concocting limericks.

Among these friends is a diverting character, Geoffrey Smith, a cockney clerk and a bounder in his way, who regards himself as a wit and a sportsman, his mental sustenance being mainly drawn from football reports.

Another character, and a contrasting one, is Paul Robinson, a volunteer who doesn't play diablo nor care for reading about football, but makes himself obnoxious by proclaiming the idea that every Englishman ought to learn how to shoot. A conversation takes place on the subject of volunteering. Smith describes it as a "mug's game." Brown remarks:

"There are other ways of showing patriotism."

GEOFFREY—I should think there was, indeed! You should have seen me on Mafeking night. I sang "Rule, Britannia" on top of the fountain in Trafalgar Square—then fell into the water, and kissed the policeman who pulled me out.

AMY—And the Magistrate gave him five pounds from the poor box next morning.

PAUL—Who—Geoff?

AMY—No, the policeman.

ADA—My brother smashed a new hat Mafeking night, and he didn't mind a bit.

\* \* \*

Mr. Brown enters into the argument with a lofty air and comforting platitudes:

BROWN—I am thankful to say there is no lack of patriotism. The heart of the nation is sound, as any foreign power will find to its cost who ventures to doubt it. As to defending the country—the country is in no danger of attack. The British fleet we are assured is strong enough to render invasion impossible except from a raid, and if the raiders—well, er—raided, they would, I am sure, meet with a most uncomfortable reception.

PAUL—Who from, Mr. Brown?

BROWN—From every man in the country, Paul. There is not an Englishman who wouldn't at once fly to arms, and not a man would escape to—er—

GEOFFREY—To tell the tale.

The vivacious Maggie, a daughter, joins in the conversation and her father replies sententiously.

MAGGIE—How does one fly to arms, dad?

BROWN—That, Maggie, is merely a figure of speech, meaning that every man would immediately seize a weapon and stand on the defensive.

MAGGIE—What weapon would you seize, dad?

BROWN—That is a detail.

GEOFFREY—I always sleep with a brickbat under my pillow.

ADA—My brother has got one of those air pistols—that fire darts into a target.

PAUL—Well, I think every one ought to learn discipline and how to use a rifle, and then he might be some good if he were wanted. Don't you agree with me, Maggie?

MAGGIE—I don't know, Paul, I'm

afraid I've never thought of it. It is a pity that the uniform isn't more becoming.

PAUL—That's a woman all over!

Robinson is pretty severely chaffed, and presently leaves the room. Shortly after soldiers appear on the lawn outside the house. Mr. Brown thinks them English volunteers and orders them away. But they are not volunteers; they are part of an advance guard of foreign invaders—the army of "the Empress of the North." Brown is indignant at this "disgraceful intrusion" and threatens to call a policeman.

\* \* \*

In the second act the invaders are in possession of the Englishman's home. Prince Yoland, Captain of the Black Hussars of the Northern forces, is seen methodically issuing orders and telegraphing to headquarters. Smith appears angry at having been kept prisoner in the scullery all night.

"I tell you I am quite harmless," he says.

"Where I come from," replies Prince Yoland, "none of the men is harmless."

Having spent the night in Brown's home, Prince Yoland departs with his men. Presently Robinson comes back. To Maggie, one of the girls, he tells of his experiences during the night:

PAUL—And I went on to Brentwood and the fog got thicker—and when I got there it was quite dark. I found they knew it—every one knew it. Not much—not any details, but they knew they'd landed and were coming. Every one was rushing about, talking and shouting, and I rode about to find some one—some one to tell what I had seen—some one who would do something. They were all rushing about talking and shouting—and I couldn't find any one to tell me what to do and where to go, and I went backward and forward—here and there. I was tired, but I couldn't stop! They rode again along the roads to see what was happening, and then back—I went backward and forward—backward and forward.

MAGGIE—Yes, Paul, yes?

PAUL—Then they shouted that all the Volunteers were to go to the Town Hall, and assemble there, and I went and waited—and waited, and more came, but no one to tell us anything, and I couldn't wait any longer and do nothing, and I went away again. And then I went back, and there were more there and more coming, and we waited—oh, for hours, and heaps of people were there singing and shouting and giving us drink.

\* \* \*

Other members of Brown's family enter while Paul is talking. Some of them try to laugh at everything. He breaks out into another indignant speech.

PAUL—Are you mad? Don't any of you understand? How can you stand there and laugh and joke in the same rotten old way? \* \* \* You can all talk and say it's nothing to do with us, that it's not our business, and that you can just stay there and amuse yourselves, and that everything is going on in

the same old way, and all you can think of is that you will get a few more days away from the office! Don't you realize it yet—that the whole country is coming down like a pack of cards, and that you and thousands like you are saying that it is not your business? \* \* \* shouting and singing music-hall songs and thinking they are just going to see some fun.

\* \* \*

Now more volunteers enter the house, and they prepare to defend it against a second attack. They are undisciplined and are commanded by Capt. Finch, a self-important, incompetent officer. They rush aimlessly about. Brown, the owner of the house, is quite as angry at the invasion of his friends as he was over the visit of his enemies.

BROWN—What right have you to come into a private house and destroy it? What right have you to come in at all?

CAPT. FINCH—Those were my orders. BROWN—Orders? You—orders in my house! Is this a madhouse broken loose? Stop all this at once, Sir—put the furniture back in its place and leave the house!

CAPT. F.—But—my orders?

BROWN—Those are my orders—the orders of the only man who has any right to give them in this house.

CAPT. F.—But I must defend the house.

BROWN—Nonsense, Sir! Stop your men at once, do you hear? And put the things back where you found them! If you must play this absurd and foolish game, go outside and do it in the public road! \* \* \* Once for all, I won't have it, and out you go! And if you've come here to find those scoundrels who invaded my privacy last night—

(Paul crosses from top window to bottom.)

talking some incomprehensible language, and not understanding the plain English I gave them—if you're looking for them—in the name of common sense go and look for them where they're likely to be found! I won't have you here! I'm a taxpayer and a citizen, and I will not have this nonsense!

\* \* \*

Capt. Finch issues orders galore and countermands them. One man only, the Color Sergeant, has a rudimentary idea of battle. The furniture is shifted about, the windows are broken, and the house put into what they believe a state of defense. All this time Brown is expostulating in the name of law and order. Then comes a dramatic interruption—the whistle of a bullet, which comes through the window and strikes the wall of the room.

After a moment's surprise the volunteers rush to the open windows, exposing themselves foolishly, and Geoffrey Smith gets on the table so that he can see better over their heads. Another bullet comes through the air and a vase falls behind Geoffrey, who is seen to stagger. The grin on the face of the sporting youngster passes into an expression of pain and he collapses on the table and then rolls to the floor, dead. The curtain falls on the second act.

The third act shows the progress of the attack on Myrtle Villa—Brown's home. The walls are breached; smashed

furniture, plaster, and broken glass litter the floor, while through the windows can be seen neighboring houses in flames. A volunteer is on the sofa dying. A doctor is doing what he can for the wounded. Brown's daughters, Maggie and Amy, are utterly useless, not even knowing how to stanch a wound. The position being impossible, the volunteers prepare to withdraw. Brown curses Capt. Finch and the Adjutant and refuses to leave.

BROWN—And pray, Sir, whose fault is it that the enemy will capture the position? I am not afraid of them—I have no fear of exposing myself. Let them come, I say, as rough as you please, and I will stay here and defend my house and my country, even if those who are paid to do so haven't the pluck.

ADJ.—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 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 employed cursing yourself for not having earned the right to defend your country than cursing and slandering those real patriots who have.

\* \* \*

Brown does remain and in a frenzy of rage endeavors to defend his home with a rifle, which he does not know how to use. After a little he learns the trick, however, and kills two of the enemy. The house is recaptured, however, Brown is caught red handed, and Prince Yoland orders him to be led out and shot because, being a civilian, he has taken up arms. Brown leaves the house in custody, and after a moment a volley is heard, telling that he has been put to death.

As the play was first written by Du Maurier, it ended here, but in deference to the prejudices of the British public another scene has been added, somewhat on the "relief of Lucknow" plan. Prince Yoland is seen standing and listening with startled attention to the sound of bagpipes, and, a moment later, killed troops enter and take him prisoner.



Guy Du Maurier.