

CHAPTER III

WAR IS WAR

GERSON was talking to him. They were in a different place. It might be they were already in the great Barnet dugout which was to be the new seat of government; a huge and monstrous cavern—it was, at any rate; and they were discussing the next step that must be taken if the Empire, now so sorely stressed, so desperately threatened, was still to hack its way through to victory. Overhead there rumbled and drummed an anti-aircraft barrage.

“If we listen to this propaganda of the American President’s,” said Gerson, “we are lost. People must not listen to it. It’s infectious—hallucination. Get on with the war before the rot comes. Get on with the war! It is now or never,” said Gerson.

His grim and desperate energy dominated the Lord Paramount. “Gas L,” he repeated, “Gas L. All Berlin in agony and then no more Berlin. Would they go on fighting after that? For all their new explosives.”

“I call God to witness,” said the Lord Paramount, “that I have no mind for gas war.”

“War is war,” said Gerson.

“This is not the sort of war I want.”

Gerson’s never very respectful manner gave

place to a snarl of irritation. "D'you think this sort of war is the sort of war I want?" he demanded. "Not a bit of it! It's the sort of war these damned chemists and men of science have forced upon us. It's a war made into a monster. Because someone failed to nip science in the bud a hundred years ago. They are doing their best to make war impossible. That's their game. But so long as I live it shan't be impossible whatever they do to it. I'll see this blasted planet blown to bits first. I'll see the last man stifled. What's a world without war? The way to stop this infernal German bombing is to treat Berlin like a nest of wasps and *kill* the place. And that's what I want to set about doing now. But we can't get the stuff in! Camelford and Woodcock procrastinate and obstruct. If you don't deal with those two men in a day or so I shall deal with them myself, in the name of military necessity. I want to arrest them."

"Arrest them," said the Lord Paramount.

"And shoot them if necessary."

"Shoot if necessary," said the Lord Paramount. . . .

Everything seemed to be passing into Gerson's hands. The Lord Paramount had to remind himself more and more frequently that the logic of war demanded this predominance of Gerson. So long as the war lasted. He began where statecraft ceased, and when he had done statecraft would again take up what he had left of the problems entrusted to him.

THE AUTOCRACY OF MR. PARHAM

The Lord Paramount had a persuasion that Camelford and Sir Bussy had been arrested already and had escaped. Some time had elapsed—imperceptibly. Yes, they had been arrested and they had got away. Sir Bussy had shown Camelford how to get away.



“ Something obscured the Lord Paramount’s mind.
one another with a proper



Events were no longer following
amplitude of transition."