CHAPTER XXIII.

RUMOURS OF WAR.

Six years had passed since the wedding of Duke Dreman; six happy, prosperous, uneventful years. Zara had steadily progressed, but no change was apparent. Six years are but as six days to an established city, under ordinary circumstances. Pentona was busy and prosperous, through the number of persons sent from Ura. Children had come to bless our union, prosperity to reward my efforts, and I and mine were established and happy. My wife had changed only as all things mortal change, ripening, developing, becoming more beautiful. So it is with flower, fruit, animal or man, till they reach perfection.

As she entered the period of woman's greatest beauty, mind and body became rounder, stronger, more harmonious and happy. Diso Rota and I had been instructed to inspect and report on the prison arrangements of Ura and Zimera with a view to the adoption of certain of his arrangements in drainage, and the treatment of all refuse.

On reaching Ura, we went to Duke Dreman's house, where we were to stay during our sojourn at that city. The duchess received us. She, like Mary, had developed, more than changed. On her bridal day she was beautiful as a girl could be, but now she was more, for she was beautiful as a woman could be at the meridian of life. The six years' homage of a man whom she regarded as a hero, had given her a mellow dignity that is not a thing to be acquired in a day.

The fortunes of the president duke had progressed in leaps and bounds. In some land he owned on the banks of the Tanga large deposits of coal and iron had been found, which enabled him to establish a town, which he called Novel, after his wife, on a perfect plan of his own. He had also invented a windmill, which gathered immense power from the forces of the atmosphere.

He came in just before supper. The scar on his forehead had very much decreased, and he showed signs of frontal baldness, but otherwise in person he had changed very little. In manner he was much merrier, and more ready to laugh. The soothing society of his wife and children had released the tension of his nerves by forcing him frequently to rest his brain.
"How is your system progressing at Novel?" I inquired.

"Wonderfully well," replied the duke, animatedly. "I was always certain that four hours' work was necessary to keep a man in perfect health, and sufficient to do all the work of the world. My system is that every man must work four hours for the community, and receive in return the necessaries of life, the rest of his time he devotes according to his inclinations."

"Do you restrict a man's hours of labour to four?" I asked.

"No. He works eight if he likes, but not more. Every man must work four hours till he becomes sixty years of age, or pay daily the price of four hours' work to the State. Four hours' work obtains him board and lodgings. What he earns besides that he spends as he likes."

"Have you professional men in your community?"

"Yes. They, as a rule, work the required time, and practise their profession afterwards, though since we repress disease, instead of continuing it, and reasons for crime of all sorts have disappeared, there is very little for either lawyers or doctors to do."

"Do your women work also?"

"Single women work the same hours as the men, only at different occupations. They do sewing, housework, gardening, and all light work."

"Let him describe all the ways of Novel to you, Frank," said the duchess. "He has given all his sympathies to his new community."

Vernon laughed and said,—

"It has been the wish of my life to establish a community on as perfect a plan as is consistent with human nature as it is, and at last the opportunity came with the discovery of coal on my land. We have free education for all, and every man or woman chooses the occupation for which each feels most fitted, but every man must be a soldier and work, as must also the unmarried women, four hours a day, in exchange for which, they are provided with board and lodgings. We have only two sources of revenue, a progressive income-tax, and a law that all a person has at their death goes to their wife or husband for life, after which it goes to the State, who give the interest of it equally to the children of the parties for life, the shares lapsing one by one with the death of those interested, when the State receives the principal. In all other respects we are the same as the people of Zara."

"Do your married women do no work?" I asked.

"Not of necessity," replied the duke. "As a rule they continue their work for their own pleasure and profit. The State supplies a man, his wife, and three children with board and lodgings for four hours of his work per day. We consider that marriage and maternity are for the general good. As at Zara, extra children
RUMOURS OF WAR.

are only allowed on payment of a fee of twenty crowns to the State."

"Do you think your scheme will succeed?"

"I am certain of it now. Everything is managed by the married man, widowers and widows, and every person in the community, or born in it, has an equal share. Outside people are allowed into it, but must either pay or work till they earn for the commonwealth a fixed sum."

"It is," said the Duchess Cora, "the pleasantest community possible. It has already all manner of amusements, though only established four years. And no one has been punished yet."

"Have you a court of law?" I asked.

"Yes," said the duke, "but it has very little to do. The three judges decide all the disputes, and sit in the council of legislators."

Afterwards Vernon showed me how the plans of a large city had been laid out, and a community started on the principle of the commonwealth, owning houses and lands, institutions and factories, while allowing the people to benefit by their own industry or ability, so that the fruit of individual effort, without which no community can be really successful, was maintained and encouraged.

After supper, the children—two boys and a baby girl—were brought in. The boys, sturdy blue-eyed children, were very like their father, on either side of whom they sat. When they had shaken hands with us, and the baby had disappeared, Vernon, the elder of the two, got up, and brought his mother a footstool for her feet.

"My boys," said the duke, "look after their mother and sister, and intend to make us all proud of them."

"I can," said Novel, the younger, "carry baby already."

"And I," said Vernon, "can write my own name, and teach Novel his letters."

They spoke with a conscious pride, each holding a hand of their father, to whom, even more than their mother, they went for companionship; her they looked on as the loveliest and most delicate of beings, and even when they went to sleep in her arms, dreamt of protecting her from unknown dangers, and bringing her gifts of wild flowers, and other things dear to children's hearts, while they regarded their father as an all-powerful being, at once their playmate and protector.

"The President," said Cora, with a proud smile, "intends our boys to bring all Fregida under the wise and happy laws of Undara. Had they been girls, their father's ambition would possibly have extended to sons-in-law."

The duke laughed, and replied,—

"Sons-in-law are chosen to make daughters happy, and not to carry out projects; even if they were, they would be poor substi-
tutes for the sons that have grown up under their father's guidance to finish his ambitions.”

The man had but one aim, which, realizing that his life would of necessity be too short to bring to completion, he trained up, and looked to his sons to fulfil. All his life had been subservient to his ambition. The pride of success had been the one joy of his life till the love of his existence had beautified it and made it happy to the full. Even it soon became a means to the end, and in the prattle of his boys he heard the voices that would guide men to continue, as his efforts and eloquence had directed them. The six years which had made no noticeable change at Zara, had transformed Ura from an uneven city—for all cities where plethoric wealth and suffering destitution are within hail of each other, which have the awkward and dirty horse traffic in their streets, begging starvelings on their curbing, and all sorts and conditions of men on their foot-paths, are uneven—into an even city, with an electric tram, and electric or compressed-air traffic, clean streets, no beggars, loafers, costermongers' carts, horse carriages, or any other of the objectionable extremes that had previously hampered it. The new Parliament House, which was finished and almost ready to be opened, stood close to the walled banks of the Yanga. In a garden, its three tower-topped walls rose above the city roofs; the centre tower, reaching high above all, was yet to be topped with a statue of Duke Dreman, of heroic size. The grey granite of which it was constructed gave it a sombre tone, only relieved by its many windows and pointed turrets. From the top of the centre tower we looked on the surrounding city. The streets had been nearly all brought to accord with the plan invented when the improvements were commenced. The new river way had been walled in, and now carried the water which operated wheels similar to those worked by the Voa, and already gave sufficient electricity and compressed air to light the town, and supplied about one-half of the motive power. All the new buildings were like those of Zara, and the small and ill-built houses had been pulled down. The stream of vehicles which used frequently to block the thoroughfares, and which always gave them an appearance of business which they ill deserved, had nearly all disappeared, and in their stead were the trams, which, coming on the same rails, prevented the possibility of a block, and made travelling about the city much more expeditious.

The new laws and improvements had received very little opposition, all of which, except the grumbling of the never satisfied, had long ago disappeared.

At Zimera we found a splendid city had sprung into existence, with reserves, drainage, power, and light, to support a city of over three millions of inhabitants.

The river had been walled in, as was the Voa at Zara, but
with many small improvements, that enabled a larger percentage of the water power to be saved.

On our arrival we found that extra attention was devoted to the drill of the soldiers, and that the volunteer and army arrangements were attracting unusual attention on account of the news that the Rodas and Gurlas were massing large bodies of troops.

Several delegates had been sent from time to time by King Edward to President Dreman, but though their mission had not transpired, a general feeling had gained ground that they were of sinister significance, which had been strengthened by the fact that the president duke had devoted a great deal of attention to military matters, and given large prizes, both from his private purse and the public treasury, to encourage volunteer manoeuvring and military competitions.

So deeply had this feeling taken root, that all through Undara offensive and defensive operations were prosecuted with such vigour that the whole State was in a fit state for a protracted campaign.

In the midst of our work, Diso and I were startled by rumours of war, and a report that Cula Dero had arrested for treasonable conspiracy, and thrown into prison, a body of delegates and their attendants, who had been sent by King Edward of Gurla to deliver a message to him.

Vast treasures, we heard, had been seized by General Dero, who had made communications to President Dreman which had induced him to call Parliament together.

As Diso and I were both members of the Senate, we received by telegraph a message to attend a sitting of Parliament, for which purpose we hurried back to Zara, where Parliament was in this year being held.

At Ura, on our way to Zara, we heard that King Edward had tried by his ambassadors to entice Cula Dero to betray the republic of Undara, and that Cula had got documentary evidence to prove their treachery.

Duchess Dreman was pale and anxious.

"The President," she said, "has foreseen this for some time, and is fully prepared. The monarchy of Gurla must either give way to a republic like ours, and king and hereditary titles disappear, or a war must take place, and dispose of the progressive spirits of Gurla, and change the government of Undara."

"Do you really think that no less extreme means will suffice?" I asked, knowing her expressed opinions were those the President thought ripe for utterance.

"I am sure no other means will suffice," she answered, gravely. "No people will live without full freedom and their rights, who have the happy example of a wise people beside them."

As we journeyed to Zara, Diso said,—
“It seems probable that the treasonable offer made to General Cula Dero was the subject of the former State Embassies to the President.”

“Probably,” I replied; “but he, cautious and far-seeing, has evidently contented himself with quietly rejecting them, and meanwhile preparing for the inevitable struggle between Gurla and Undara, or Oppression and Wisdom.”

Arriving at Zara, we found the city in a state of great excitement. Military preparations were being effected, and it was rumoured that a great effort would be made to bring about the subjugation of the Rodas, whose depredations had hitherto been overlooked on account of the great industrial movement, and absorption of public interest in the federation of Zara and Ura under the Commonwealth of Undara.

The city blazed with light, and was busy with martial music and military preparations. The great hall for the meeting of the two legislative bodies had never been so animated since it assembled to meet the Federation Delegation from Ura. Only two legislators were absent, both of whom were prevented from attending by illness. As on all meetings of the two legislating bodies, President Dreman presided.

Impatiently the legislators and crowded audience waited the transaction of formal business, after which the real business commenced.

General Dero, who was the Minister for Defence, rose, but was met by loud and continued cries for the president duke. These only subsided on Cula resuming his seat, and the President rising, which was the signal for tremendous applause.

Duke Dreman commenced by saying that it was evidently the general desire that he should reveal the purpose of the two embassies from King Edward to himself, and the details of what transpired on his meeting them. This, he could assure them, was a matter that would in no way affect their present feelings and future movements; further, he did not feel at liberty to inform them, as the interview had been with him in his private capacity only, and had been so stated and implicitly agreed on. He pointed out that he was informed by the heads of the various departments—who might not, in the press of the momentous event that had called them together, have a chance of making a statement—that the Commonwealth of Undara, though wishing for peace, were prepared for war, and, for the information of the people, he would say that the condition of affairs at Roda and Gurla had not been overlooked, but careful preparations had been made to meet any eventuality.

The applause that greeted this statement was long and continued. The President’s efforts to increase the power of the offensive and defensive force, which had been regarded hitherto as a fad, were now properly appreciated, and his reasons were recog-
nized, as well as his reasons for postponing a rupture with the
neighbouring countries till Undara was in the most fit condition
to meet it.

General Cula was now well received. On rising he commenced
by saying,—

"Sometimes, as in the present instance, we have been unable at
the time to recognize the reason of President Dreman's actions,
though we have never doubted their wisdom."

Loud applause greeted this statement.

"After I have had the honour of informing you what tran-
spired between the delegates from King Edward of Gurla and
myself, you will have no difficulty in guessing the message that
the delegates brought to President Dreman, and his reason for
promising them secrecy. In the custody of the War Office are
the splendid presents that King Edward sent to me, and a sealed
parchment bearing the king's signature, empowering the dele-
gates to act for and in his name in all negotiations, no matter
how weighty.

"The delegates presented the gifts, obtained a solemn vow of
secrecy from me, produced the authority I have mentioned, and,
after a long conference, in which they pointed out to me that the
only way to ensure the wealth and happiness of a man's descend-
ants was by means of hereditary titles and the enforced ignor-
ance of the working community, so that these titles might be
continued and allowed, informed me of an alliance between the
Radas and the Gurlas, and offered, by the aid of their armies, to
enable me to become the king of Undara, on conditions of my
helping to maintain King Edward on the throne of Gurla, and
King Wyao as monarch of all the Rodas.

"All this they said we could, if we combined, effect. They
then informed me that all preparations were made for the united
forces of Roda and Gurla to attack Undara, with a certainty of
success, after which, all Fregida would be divided into three
monarchies, over one of which I was to reign.

"I delayed my reply, and, on consideration, arrested the dele-
gates with all their attendants, for treasonably conspiring against
the discipline and the constitution of Undara.

"Directly this had been done, I communicated with the Presi-
dent of Undara, who instructed me to make to-night a full state-
ment of all the facts. Meanwhile the delegates await their trial
before the judges in due course."

After considerable debate—in which General Dero's actions were
approved of, and the subjugation of the Rodas favourably dis-
cussed, on the ground that it would be for their good to suppress
the barbarous customs in force amongst them, and enforce, in
their place, the wise laws of Undara, and also on the grounds
that it was necessary to suppress their periodical raids to steal
stock—the Parliament adjourned for one week.
Meanwhile, all through Undara, preparations for a war were being completed, as it was universally recognized that even if Undara were not attacked by the forces of Gurla and Roda, it would be necessary to subjugate the latter country for the general welfare.

Two days after the adjournment, General Ance came to Zara to demand the immediate release of the ambassadors, and to state that their detention would be regarded by King Edward as an act of war, and would necessitate his invading Undara.

General Ance was courteous, but resolute. It was pointed out to him that the laws of Undara being violated, it was necessary to have the whole case submitted to a proper tribunal. The general replied that he did not come to discuss, but to offer an ultimatum, and at the end of the third day after his arrival left; and so war was declared.

Again the two Houses of Parliament met, and this time President Dreman addressed the legislators in a speech the wisdom and eloquence of which is quoted to this day as the most brilliant effort of oratorical genius ever delivered, and as such will be forever regarded by posterity.

Commencing with a quiet gravity unusual to him, he pointed out the similarity between the rights of the individual and his duty to his neighbour, to the rights of a community and its duties to its neighbour. That it was no more wise for an individual to allow another to actively attempt to corrupt his manners, than it was wise for one community, such as Undara, to allow neighbouring communities, such as the Gurlas and the Rodas, to persistently attempt to exercise a sinister and corrupting influence on them. That it was their duty to themselves to put an end to this state of things for ever; and further, as a large section of the Gurlas who wished to adopt a system of government similar to that of Undara, were suppressed and oppressed by the reigning party, it was their duty to their neighbours to go to the aid of this oppressed section who were trying for the right, and assist them to triumph, and so gain their friendship and co-operation for ever. Much more he said in this strain, and as he proceeded his manner changed, his voice rose and fell, his gestures became eloquent, and in the fervour of his earnestness his audience were drawn, so that his words reached their emotions and convinced their understanding.

He then vividly described the horror of war, and pointed out to the men how unflinching bravery meant the greatest possible safety and success. How it was a struggle between a free, wise, and contented nation on the one hand, and on the other two nations divided against themselves by opposing factions, and weakened by unjust laws, which kept one section down and another up, irrespective of individual fitness.

All these things were pointed out with force, and illustrated
vividly, so that when the speech was ended, the partly suppressed enthusiasm burst forth in an oft renewed thunder of applause.

One after another, speakers rose and asserted the extreme fitness of the nation for the coming struggle; and praises in favour of the exertions that had commenced and continued since King Edward's secret mission to President Dreman to render the whole of Undara ready for the coming war were loud and unanimous, more especially as the policy had not hitherto been popular.

In the evening my wife and I, with several legislators, gathered at the chambers of General Cula Dero, where the coming war was eagerly discussed.

"We do not," she said, "propose to interfere with the cruel and barbarous government of the Rodas, without having the power to substitute a government in its place, which is wise and happy in its effects."

"Nor do we," said Cula, "propose an indiscriminate slaughter for the purpose of gaining possession of the territory of these people. For many years we have shown them the example of a wise and happy government which they have rejected, and in return for our efforts in their behalf, have raided our territory, and frequently murdered our people when their thefts were opposed. They crown their ingratitude by now joining the forces of the Gurlas, that they may have a chance of pillaging our pastures, plundering the country, and exercising their blood-thirsty instincts by indiscriminate slaughter. When they come to bring death and devastation they shall be received with explosive, bullet, and sword. When they are subdued we will be godlike in our retaliation, and enable the well-disposed to properly govern the country, while in Gurla we will enable the progressive party to bring wisdom and happiness."

As Cula spoke, the chorus of the war song, sang by a passing party of volunteers, filled the room, and gave his words a sinister tone. The windows were thrown open, and several of our party joined in the chorus—

Woe, woe to the enemy, woe;
To vict'ry or death let us go;
Free let us live, or free we die—
Woe, woe to the enemy, woe.

The streets were thronged, the town swarmed with soldiers. Every band thundered forth the war song, till the air echoed with the words—

Woe, woe to the enemy, woe.

Anon, in the distance, we heard the sound of cheering. Nearer and nearer it came; louder and louder it echoed in our ears, till dimly we saw the grey uniforms of the nurse soldiers, the successors of those who, fierce from the bedside of men who were
lovers of those in their ranks, had slaughtered the fleeing Rodas till not one escaped their remorseless vengeance. Erect in grey uniforms, braided with pink, they came, through ranks of cheering enthusiasts. In hats with looped-up brims, close-fitting coats, knickerbockers, and boots that laced over their ankles, they looked as soldierly a regiment as was ever seen. Their arms were a small repeating compressed gas rifle, a revolver, and short poniard, the whole weighing about thirteen pounds.

They followed in the rear of two ambulance wagons which carried the band. In the hoarse roar of the cheering walls of people through which they passed, the music of the war hymn was drowned till the chorus was reached, when the cheers were hushed, and every voice joined in the words—

Woe, woe to the enemy, woe;
To vict'ry or death let us go;
Free let us live, or free we die—
Woe, woe to the enemy, woe.

"Can it be," I asked Cula, "that those gentle women, pure and good as the angels, and more beautiful than the flowers, go with the soldiers to face death; to kill or, perchance, be killed?"

"They go," he said, "as nurses and commissary attendants; but in case of need they have fought, and will fight again. Gurla or Roda, if fleeing from pursuit, would sooner meet the fiends of hell in their path than those women, who in their homes are gentle as doves, and, while the chief consolers in sorrow, are the sunshine of human happiness.

"War," said Mary, "needs science, not strength. We would be near the men, to comfort and help them, even when they go to kill or be killed in war—the last war that will ever take place in Undara—a war that is only the bloody and cruel birth of a peace and wisdom which will be as lasting as the region of the North Pole. We go to nurse the wounded and soothe the last moments of the dying, but if the men we love—our heroes and pride—have need of us, we will fight as they have fought. We would all go with the soldiers, but only those amongst the unmarried women and young wives who are physically perfect are allowed to join the regiment of nurses."

"We do not want you to fight," said a young soldier, "we want you to be present at our triumph, and to comfort and nurse those amongst us who shall receive wounds in the service of their country, which confer glory, and the blood from which will wash away all misery from Fregida."

As he ceased to speak another soldier stood up and sang the war song, in the chorus of which we all joined till its ominous refrain made our hearts beat, and we became fierce as the gladiators of old,
For freedom, our homes, and our right,  
For justice and wisdom we fight;  
Our face to the foe, on to vict'ry we go:  
Let us march, march on, while we live:  
Our lives we to freedom will give,  
'Gainst oppression we go. Woe, woe to the foe.

Chorus.—Woe, woe to the enemy, woe;  
To vict'ry or death let us go;  
Free let us live, or free we die—  
Woe, woe to the enemy, woe.

To coward and vanquished disdain,  
Our army no such shall contain;  
We conquer or die, from no enemy fly:  
Joy to all our noble brave,  
Death to every poltroon slave,  
Death to invading foe, death, death to the foe.

Chorus.—Woe, woe to the enemy, woe;  
To vict'ry or death let us go;  
Free let us live, or free we die—  
Woe, woe to the enemy, woe.

The heroes who die in the fight,  
Losing life in the cause of the right,  
Progress maintain, by their red life's blood stain:  
To the heroes give all praise,  
To their worth sing tuneful lays,  
Praise to the heroes brave—to the foe, woe, woe.

Chorus.—Woe, woe to the enemy, woe;  
To vict'ry or death let us go;  
Free let us live, or free we die—  
Woe, woe to the enemy, woe.