

***HERBERT GEORGE
JENKINS***



***JOHN
DENE
OF TORONTO***

Herbert George Jenkins

John Dene of Toronto

A Comedy of Whitehall

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CHAPTER I

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THE COMING OF JOHN DENE

"Straight along, down the steps, bear to the left and you'll find the Admiralty on the opposite side of the way."

John Dene thanked the policeman, gave the cigar in his mouth a twist with his tongue, and walked along Lower Regent Street towards Waterloo Place.

At the bottom of the Duke of York's steps, he crossed the road, turned to the left and paused. Nowhere could he see an entrance sufficiently impressive to suggest the Admiralty. Just ahead was a dingy and unpretentious doorway with a policeman standing outside; but that he decided could not be the entrance to the Admiralty. As he gazed at it, a fair-haired girl came out of the doorway and walked towards him.

"Excuse me," said John Dene, lifting his hat, "but is that the Admiralty you've just come out of?"

There was an almost imperceptible stiffening in the girl's demeanour; but a glance at the homely figure of John Dene, with its ill-made clothes, reassured her.

"Yes, that is the Admiralty," she replied gravely in a voice that caused John Dene momentarily to forget the Admiralty and all its works.

"Much obliged," he said, again lifting his hat as she walked away; but instead of continuing on his way, John Dene stood watching the girl until she disappeared up the Duke of York's steps. Then once more twirling his cigar in his

mouth and hunching his shoulders, he walked towards the doorway she had indicated.

"This the Admiralty?" he enquired of the policeman.

"Yes, sir," was the reply. "Did you want to see any one?"

John Dene looked at the man in surprise.

"Why should I be here if I didn't?" he asked. "I want to see the First Lord."

The man's manner underwent a change. "If you'll step inside, sir, you'll see an attendant."

John Dene stepped inside and repeated his request, this time to a frock-coated attendant.

"Have you an appointment?" enquired the man.

"No," responded John Dene indifferently.

The attendant hesitated. It was not customary for unknown callers to demand to see the First Lord without an appointment. After a momentary pause the man indicated a desk on which lay some printed slips.

"Will you please fill in your name, sir, and state your business."

"State my business," exclaimed John Dene, "not on your life."

"I'm afraid——" began the man.

"Never mind what you're afraid of," said John Dene, "just you take my name up to the First Lord. Here, I'll write it down." Seizing a pen he wrote his name, "John Dene of Toronto," and then underneath, "I've come three thousand miles to tell you something; perhaps it's worth three minutes of your time to listen."

"There, take that up and I'll wait," he said.

The attendant read the message, then beckoning to another frock-coated servitor, he handed him the paper, at the same time whispering some instructions. John Dene looked about him with interest. He was frankly disappointed. He had conceived the administrative buildings of the greatest navy in the world as something grand and impressive; yet here was the British Admiralty with an entrance that would compare unfavourably with a second-rate hotel in Toronto.

He turned suddenly and almost ran into a shifty-eyed little man in a grey tweed suit, who had entered the Admiralty a moment after him. The man apologised profusely as John Dene eyed him grimly. He had become aware of the man's interest in his colloquy with the attendant, and of the way in which he had endeavoured to catch sight of what was written on the slip of paper.

John Dene proceeded to stride up and down with short, jerky steps, twirling his unlit cigar round in his mouth.

"Excuse me, sir," said the attendant, approaching, "but smoking is not permitted."

"That so?" remarked John Dene without interest, as he continued to roll his cigar in his mouth.

"Your cigar, sir," continued the man.

"It's out." John Dene still continued to look about him.

The attendant retired nonplussed. The rule specifically referred to smoking, not to carrying unlit cigars in the mouth.

At the end of five minutes, the attendant who had taken up John Dene's name returned, and whispered to the doorkeeper.

"If you will follow the attendant, sir, he will take you to see Sir Lyster's secretary, Mr. Blair."

"Mr.——" began John Dene, then breaking off he followed the man up the stairs, and along a corridor, at the end of which another frock-coated man appeared from a room with a small glass door. He in turn took charge of the visitor, having received his whispered instructions from the second attendant. John Dene was then shown into a large room with a central table, and requested to take a seat. He was still engaged in gazing about him when a door at the further end of the room opened and there entered a fair man, with an obvious stoop, a monocle, a heavy drooping moustache, and the nose of a duke in a novelette.

"Mr. John Dene?" he asked, looking at the slip of paper in his hand.

"Sure," was the response, as John Dene continued to twirl the cigar in his mouth, with him always a sign either of thought or of irritation.

"You wish to see the First Lord?" continued the fair man. "I am his secretary. Will you give me some idea of your business?"

"No, I won't," was the blunt response.

Mr. Blair was momentarily disconcerted by the uncompromising nature of the retort, but quickly recovered himself.

"I am afraid Sir Lyster is very busy this morning," he said, diplomatically. "If you——"

"Look here," interrupted John Dene, "I've come three thousand miles to tell him something; if he hasn't time to listen, then I'll not waste my time; but before you decide to

send me about my business, you just ring up the Agent-General for Can'da and ask who John Dene of T'ronto is; maybe you'll learn something."

"But will you not give me some idea——" began the secretary.

"No, I won't," was the obstinate reply. "Here," he cried with sudden inspiration, "give me some paper and a pen, and I'll write a note."

Mr. Blair sighed his relief; he was a man of peace. He quickly supplied the caller's demands. Slowly he indited his letter; then, taking a case from his pocket, he extracted an envelope which he enclosed with the letter in another envelope, and finally addressed it to "The First Lord of the Admiralty."

"Give him this," he said, turning to Mr. Blair, "and say I'm in a hurry."

Nothing but a long line of ancestors prevented Mr. Blair from gasping. Instead he took the note with a diplomatic smile.

"You wouldn't do for T'ronto," muttered John Dene as the First Lord's private secretary left the room. Two minutes later he returned.

"Sir Lyster will see you, Mr. Dene," he said with a smile. "Will you come this way? I'm sorry if——"

"Don't be sorry," said John Dene patiently; "you're just doing your job as best you can."

Whilst John Dene was being led by Mr. Blair to the First Lord's private room, Sir Lyster was re-reading the astonishing note that had been sent in to him, which ran:

"DEAR SIR,—

"I am John Dene of Toronto, I have come three thousand miles to tell you how to stop the German U-boats. If I do not succeed, you can give the enclosed £50,000 to the Red Cross.

"Yours faithfully,
"JOHN DENE."

Sir Lyster Grayne was a man for whom tradition had its uses; but he never allowed it to dictate to him. The letter that had just been brought in was, he decided, written by a man of strong individuality, and the amazing offer it contained, to forfeit fifty thousand pounds, impressed him. These were strange and strenuous days, when every suggestion or invention must be examined and deliberated upon. Sir Lyster Grayne prided himself upon his open-mindedness; incidentally he had a wholesome fear of questions being asked in the House.

As the door opened he rose and held out his hand. Sir Lyster always assumed a democratic air as a matter of political expediency.

"Mr. Dene," he murmured, as he motioned his visitor to a seat.

"Pleased to meet you," said John Dene as he shook hands, and then took the seat indicated. "Sorry to blow in on you like this," he continued, "but my business is important, and I've come three thousand miles about it."

"So I understand," said Sir Lyster quietly.

John Dene looked at him, and in that look summed him up as he had previously summed up his secretary. "You wouldn't do for T'ronto," was his unuttered verdict. John

Dene "placed" a man irrevocably by determining whether or no he would do for Toronto.

"First of all," said Sir Lyster, "I think I will return this," handing to John Dene the envelope containing the cheque for fifty thousand pounds.

"I thought it would tickle you some," he remarked grimly as he replaced the cheque in his pocket-book; "but I'll cash in if I don't make good," he added. "You know anything about submarines?" he demanded; directness was John Dene's outstanding characteristic.

"Er——" began the First Lord.

"You don't," announced John Dene with conviction.

"I'm afraid——" began Sir Lyster.

"Then you'd better send for someone who does," was the uncompromising rejoinder.

Sir Lyster looked at his visitor in surprise, hesitated a moment, then pressing a button said, as Mr. Blair appeared:

"Will you ask Admiral Heyworth to come here immediately?" Mr. Blair retired. "Admiral Heyworth," explained Sir Lyster, "is the Admiralty authority on submarines."

John Dene nodded. There was a pause.

"Wouldn't you like to ring up the Agent-General for Can'da and find out who I am?" suggested John Dene.

"I don't think that is necessary, Mr. Dene," was the reply. "We will hear what you have to say first. Ha, Heyworth!" as the Admiral entered, "this is Mr. John Dene of Toronto, who has come to tell us something about a discovery of his."

Admiral Heyworth, a little bald-headed man with beetling brows and a humorous mouth, took the hand held out to

him.

"Pleased to meet you," said John Dene, then without a pause he continued: "I want your promise that this is all between us three, that you won't go and breeze it about." He looked from Sir Lyster to Admiral Heyworth. Sir Lyster bowed, Admiral Heyworth said, "Certainly."

"Now," said John Dene, turning to the Admiral, "what's the greatest difficulty you're up against in submarine warfare?"

"Well," began Admiral Heyworth, "there are several. For instance——"

"There's only one that matters," broke in John Dene; "your boats are blind when submerged beyond the depth of their periscopes. That so?"

The Admiral nodded.

"Well," continued John Dene, "I want you to understand I'm not asking a red cent from anybody, and I won't accept one. What I'm going to tell you about has already cost me well over a million dollars, and if you look at me you'll see I'm not the man to put a million dollars into patent fly-catchers, or boots guaranteed to button themselves."

Sir Lyster and the Admiral exchanged puzzled glances, but said nothing.

"Suppose the Germans were able to sink a ship without even showing their periscopes?" John Dene looked directly at the Admiral.

"It would place us in a very precarious position," was the grave reply.

"Oh, shucks!" cried John Dene in disgust. "It would queer the whole outfit. You soldiers and sailors can never see

beyond your own particular backyards. It would mighty soon finish the war." He almost shouted the words in the emphasis he gave them. "It would mean that troops couldn't be brought from America; it would mean that supplies couldn't be brought over here. It would mean good-bye to the whole sunflower-patch. Do you get me?" He looked from Sir Lyster to the Admiral.

"I think," said Sir Lyster, "that perhaps you exaggerate a lit——"

"I don't," said John Dene. "I know what I'm talking about. Now, why is the submarine blind? Because," he answered his own question, "no one has ever overcome the difficulty of the density of water. I have."

Admiral Heyworth started visibly, and Sir Lyster bent forward eagerly.

"You have!" cried Admiral Heyworth.

"Sure," was the self-complacent reply. "I've got a boat fitted with an apparatus that'll sink any ship that comes along, and she needn't show her periscope to do it either. What's more, she can see under water. If I don't deliver the goods"—John Dene rummaged in his pocket once more and produced the envelope containing the cheque—"here's fifty thousand pounds you can give to the Red Cross."

Sir Lyster and Admiral Heyworth gazed at each other wordless. John Dene sat back in his chair and chewed the end of his cigar. Sir Lyster fumbled for his eye-glass, and when he had found it, stuck it in his eye and gazed at John Dene as if he had been some marvellous being from another world. The Admiral said nothing and did nothing. He was visualising the possibilities arising out of such a discovery.

It was John Dene who broke in upon their thoughts.

"The Huns have got it coming," he remarked grimly.

"But——" began Admiral Heyworth.

"Listen," said John Dene. "I'm an electrical engineer. I'm worth more millions than you've got toes. I saw that under water the submarine is only a blind fish with a sting in its tail. Give it eyes and it becomes a real factor—*under water*." He paused, revolving his cigar in his mouth. His listeners nodded eagerly.

"Well," he continued, "I set to work to give her eyes. On the St. Lawrence River, just below Quebec, I've got a submarine that can see. Her search-lights——"

"But how have you done it?" broke in the Admiral.

"That," remarked John Dene drily, "is my funeral."

"We must put this before the Inventions Board," said Sir Lyster. "Let me see, this is Friday. Can you be here on Tuesday, Mr. Dene?"

"No!"

Sir Lyster started at the decision in John Dene's tone.

"Would Wednesday——"

"Look here," broke in John Dene, "I come from T'ronto, and in Can'da when we've got a good thing we freeze on to it. You've got to decide this thing within twenty-four hours, yes or no. Unless I cable to my agent in Washin'ton by noon to-morrow, he'll make the same offer I've made you to the States, and they'll be that eager to say 'Yep,' that they'll swallow their gum."

"But, Mr. Dene——" began Sir Lyster.

"I've been in this country fourteen hours," proceeded John Dene calmly, "and I can see that you all want

gingering-up. Why the hell can't you decide on a thing at once, when you've got everything before you? If a man offers you a pedigree-pup for nothing, and you want a pedigree-pup, wouldn't you just hold out your hand?"

John Dene looked from one to the other.

"But this is not exactly a matter of a pedigree-pup," suggested Admiral Heyworth diplomatically. "It's a matter of —er—"

"I see you haven't got me," said John Dene with the air of a patient schoolmaster with a stupid pupil. "You," he addressed himself in particular to Sir Lyster, "have said in public that the most difficult spot in connexion with the submarine trouble is between the Shetlands and the Norwegian coast. You can't help the U-boats slipping through submerged. Suppose the *Destroyer*—that's the name of my boat—is sort of hanging around there, *with eyes* and some other little things she's got, what then?"

"Both Sir Lyster and I appreciate all you say," said the Admiral; "but, well, we are a little old fashioned perhaps in our methods here." He smiled deprecatingly.

"Well," said John Dene, rising, "you lose the odd trick, that's all; and," he added significantly as he took a step towards the door, "when it all comes out, you'll lose your jobs too."

"Really, Mr. Dene," protested Sir Lyster, flushing slightly.

John Dene swung round on his heel. "If you'd spent three years of your life and over a million dollars on a boat, and come three thousand miles to offer it to someone for nothing, and were told to wait till God knows which day what week, well, you'd be rattled too. In T'ronto we size up a

man before he's had time to say he's pleased to meet us, and we'd buy a mountain quicker than you'd ask your neighbour to pass the marmalade at breakfast."

Whilst John Dene was speaking, Sir Lyster had been revolving the matter swiftly in his mind. He was impressed by his visitor's fearlessness. A self-made man himself, he admired independence and freedom of speech in others. He was not oblivious to the truth of John Dene's hint of what would happen if another nation, even an allied nation, were to acquire a valuable invention that had been declined by Great Britain. He remembered the Fokker scandal. He decided to temporise.

"If," continued John Dene, "I was asking for money, I'd understand; but I won't take a red cent, and more than that I go bail to the tune of a quarter of a million dollars that I deliver the goods."

He strode up and down the room, twirling his cigar, and flinging his short, sharp sentences at the two men, who, to his mind, stood as barriers to an Allied triumph.

"If you will sit down, Mr. Dene," said Sir Lyster suavely, "I'll explain."

John Dene hesitated for a moment, then humped himself into a chair, gazing moodily before him.

"We quite appreciate your—er—patriotism and public-spiritedness in——"

"Here, cut it out," broke in John Dene. "Do you want the *Destroyer* or don't you?"

Sir Lyster recoiled as if he had been struck. He had been First Lord too short a time for the gilt to be worn off his dignity. Seeing his Chief about to reply in a way that he

suspected might end the interview, Admiral Heyworth interposed.

"May I suggest that under the circumstances we consult Mr. Llewellyn John?"

"That's bully," broke in John Dene without giving Sir Lyster a chance of replying. "They say he's got pep."

Bowing to the inevitable, Sir Lyster picked up the telephone-receiver.

"Get me through to the Prime Minister," he said.

The three men waited in silence for the response. As the bell rang, Sir Lyster swiftly raised the receiver to his ear.

"Yes, the Prime Minister. Sir Lyster Grayne speaking." There was a pause. "Grayne speaking, yes. Can I come round with Admiral Heyworth and an—er—inventor? It's very important." He listened for a moment, then added, "Yes, we'll come at once."

"Now, Mr. Dene," said Sir Lyster, as he rose and picked up his hat, "I hope we shall be able to—er——" He did not finish the sentence; but led the way to the door.

The three men walked across the Horse Guards Quadrangle towards Downing Street. The only words uttered were when Sir Lyster asked John Dene if he had seen the pelicans.

John Dene looked at him in amazement. He had heard that in British official circles it was considered bad taste to discuss the war except officially, and he decided that he was now discovering what was really the matter with the British Empire.

As the trio crossed the road to mount the steps leading to Downing Street, the girl passed of whom John Dene had

asked the way. Her eyes widened slightly as she recognised John Dene's two companions; they widened still more when John Dene lifted his hat, followed a second later by Sir Lyster, whilst Admiral Heyworth saluted. In her surprise she nearly ran into a little shifty-eyed man, in a grey suit, who, with an elaborate flourish of his hat, hastened to apologise for her carelessness.

"That's the girl who showed me the way to your back-door," John Dene announced nonchalantly. Sir Lyster exchanged a rapid glance with the Admiral. "If I was running this show," continued John Dene, "I'd get that door enlarged a bit and splash some paint about;" and for the first time since they had met John Dene smiled up at Sir Lyster, a smile that entirely changed the sombre cast of his features.

On arriving at no. 10, Downing Street, the three callers were conducted straight into Mr. Llewellyn John's room. As they entered, he rose quickly from his table littered with papers, and with a smile greeted his colleagues. Sir Lyster then introduced John Dene.

Mr. Llewellyn John grasped John Dene's hand, and turned on him that bewilderingly sunny smile which Mr. Chappeldale had once said ought in itself to win the war.

"Sit down, Mr. Dene," said Mr. Llewellyn John, indicating a chair; "it's always a pleasure to meet any one from Canada. What should we have done without you Canadians?" he murmured half to himself.

"Mr. Dene tells us that he has solved the submarine problem," said Sir Lyster, as he and Admiral Heyworth seated themselves.

Instantly Mr. Llewellyn John became alert. The social smile vanished from his features, giving place to the look of a keen-witted Celt, eager to pounce upon something that would further his schemes. He turned to John Dene interrogatingly.

"Perhaps Mr. Dene will explain," suggested Sir Lyster.

"Sure," said John Dene, "your submarine isn't a submarine at all, it's a submersible. Under water it's useless, because it can't see. As well call a seal a fish. A submarine must be able to fight under water, and until it can it won't be any more a submarine than I'm a tunny fish."

Mr. Llewellyn John nodded in eager acquiescence.

"I've spent over a million dollars, and now I've got a boat that can see under water and fight under water and do a lot of other fancy tricks."

Mr. Llewellyn John sprang to his feet.

"You have. Tell me, where is it? This is wonderful, wonderful! It takes us a year forward."

"It's on the St. Lawrence River, just below Quebec," explained John Dene.

"And how long will it take to construct say a hundred?" asked Mr. Llewellyn John eagerly, dropping back into his chair.

"Longer than any of us are going to live," replied John Dene grimly.

Mr. Llewellyn John looked at his visitor in surprise. Sir Lyster and the Admiral exchanged meaning glances. The Prime Minister was experiencing what in Toronto were known as "John's snags."

"But if you've made one——" began Mr. Llewellyn John.

"There's only going to be one," announced John Dene grimly.

"But——"

"You can but like a he-goat," announced John Dene, "still there'll be only our *Destroyer*."

Sir Lyster smiled inwardly. His bruised dignity was recovering at the sight of the surprised look on the face of the Prime Minister at John Dene's comparison.

"Perhaps Mr. Dene will explain to us the difficulties," insinuated Sir Lyster.

"Sure," said John Dene; then turning to Admiral Heyworth, "What would happen if Germany got a submarine that could see and do fancy stunts?" he demanded.

"It might embarrass——" began the Admiral.

"Shucks!" cried John Dene, "it would bust us up. What about the American transports, food-ships, munitions and the rest of it. They'd be attacked all along the three thousand miles route, and would go down like neck-oil on a permit night. You get me?"

Suddenly Mr. Llewellyn John struck the table with his fist.

"You're right, Mr. Dene," he cried; "they might capture one and copy it. You remember the Gothas," he added, turning to Sir Lyster.

"Sure," was John Dene's laconic reply.

"But how can we be sure they will not capture the *Destroyer*?" enquired Sir Lyster.

"Because there'll be John Dene and a hundred-weight of high-explosive on board," said John Dene drily as he chewed at the end of his cigar.

"Then you propose——" began Admiral Heyworth.

"I'll put you wise. This is my offer. I'm willing to send U-boats to merry hell; but only on my own terms. I won't take a cent for my boat or anything else. It's my funeral. The *Destroyer* is now in Canada, with German spies buzzing around like flies over a dead rat. If you agree, I'll cable to my boys to bring the *Destroyer*, and it won't be done without some fancy shooting, I take it! You," turning to Admiral Heyworth, "will appoint an officer, two if you like, to come aboard and count the bag. I'll supply the crew, and you'll give me a commander's commission in the Navy. Now, is it a deal?"

"But——" began Sir Lyster.

"You make me tired," said John Dene wearily. "Is it or is it not a deal?" he enquired of Mr. Llewellyn John.

With an effort the Prime Minister seemed to gather himself together. He found the pace a little breathless, even for him.

"I think it might be arranged, Grayne," he said tactfully. "Mr. Dene knows his own invention and we might enrol his crew in the Navy; what do you think?" Mr. Llewellyn John abounded in tact.

"I take it that you understand navigation, Mr. Dene?" ventured the Admiral.

"Sure," was the reply. "You come a trip with me, and I'll show you navigation that'll make your hair stand on end. Sorry," he added a moment after, observing that Admiral Heyworth was almost aggressively bald.

"That's all right," laughed the Admiral; "they call me the coot."

"Well, is it a deal?" demanded John Dene, rising.

"It is," said Mr. Llewellyn John, "and a splendid deal for the British Empire, Mr. Dene," he added, holding out his hand. "It's a great privilege to meet a patriot such as you. Sir Lyster and Admiral Heyworth will settle all details to your entire satisfaction."

"If they do for me, I want you to give the command to Blake, then to Quinton, and so on, only to my own boys; is that agreed?"

"Do for you?" queried Mr. Llewellyn John.

"Huns, they're after me every hour of the day. There was a little chap even in your own building."

"We really must intern these Germans——" began Mr. Llewellyn John.

"You're barking up the wrong tree, over here," said John Dene with conviction. "You think a German spy's got a square head and says 'Ach himmel' and 'Ja wohl' on street-cars. It's the neutrals mostly, and sometimes the British," he added under his breath.

"In any case you will, I am sure, find that Sir Lyster will do whatever you want," said Mr. Llewellyn John as they walked towards the door.

For the second time that morning John Dene smiled as he left No. 110, Downing Street, with Sir Lyster and Admiral Heyworth, whilst Mr. Llewellyn John rang up the chief of Department Z.

CHAPTER II

JOHN DENE'S WAY

As Sir Lyster entered Mr. Blair's room, accompanied by John Dene and Admiral Heyworth, he was informed that Sir Bridgman North, the First Sea Lord, was anxious to see him.

"Ask him if he can step over now, Blair," said Sir Lyster, and the three men passed into the First Lord's room. Two minutes later Sir Bridgman North entered, and Sir Lyster introduced John Dene.

For a moment the two men eyed one another in mutual appraisal; the big, bluff Sea Lord, with his humorous blue eyes and ready laugh, and the keen, heavy-featured Canadian, as suspicious of a gold band as of a pickpocket.

"Pleased to meet you," said John Dene perfunctorily, as they shook hands. "Now you'd better give me a chance to work off my music;" and with that he seated himself.

Sir Bridgman exchanged an amused glance with Admiral Heyworth, as they too found chairs.

In a few words Sir Lyster explained the reason of John Dene's visit. Sir Bridgman listened with the keen interest of one to whom his profession is everything.

"Now, Mr. Dene," said Sir Lyster when he had finished, "perhaps you will continue."

In short, jerky sentences John Dene outlined his scheme of operations, the others listening intently. From time to time Sir Bridgman or Admiral Heyworth would interpolate a question upon some technical point, which was promptly and satisfactorily answered. John Dene seemed to have forgotten nothing.

For two hours the four sat discussing plans for a campaign that was once and for all to put an end to Germany's submarine hopes.

During those two hours the three Englishmen learned something of the man with whom they had to deal. Sir Bridgman's tact, cheery personality and understanding of how to handle men did much to improve the atmosphere, and gradually John Dene's irritation disappeared.

It was nearly three o'clock before all the arrangements were completed. John Dene was to receive a temporary commission as commander as soon as the King's signature could be obtained. The *Destroyer* was entered on the Navy List as H4, thus taking the place of a submarine that was "missing." John Dene had stipulated that she should be rated in some existing class, so that the secret of her existence might be preserved. In short, sharp sentences he had presented his demands, they were nothing less, and the others had acquiesced. By now they were all convinced that he was right, and that the greatest chance of success lay in "giving him his head," as Sir Bridgman North expressed it in a whisper to Sir Lyster.

A base was to be selected on some island in the North of Scotland, and fitted with wireless with aerials a hundred and fifty feet high, "to pick up all that's going," explained John Dene, conscious of the surprise of his hearers at a request for such a long-range plant. Here the *Destroyer* was to be based, and stores and fuel sufficient for six months accumulated. This was to be proceeded with at once.

"I shall want charts of the minefields," he said, "and full particulars as to patrol flotillas and the like."

Admiral Heyworth nodded comprehendingly.

"By the way," he said, "there's one thing I do not quite understand."

"Put a name to it," said John Dene tersely.

"How do you propose to keep at sea for any length of time without recharging your batteries?"

"We shall be lying doggo most of the time," was the reply.

"Then in all probability the U-boats will pass over you."

"We shan't be lying at the bottom of the sea, either," said John Dene.

"What!" exclaimed Admiral Heyworth, "but if your motor's cut off, you'll sink to the bed of the sea—the law of gravity."

"The *Destroyer* is fitted with buoyancy chambers, and she can generate a gas that will hold her suspended at any depth," he explained. "This gas can be liquefied in a few seconds. Her microphone will tell her when the U-boats are about; it's my own invention."

Sir Lyster looked from one to the other, unable to grasp such technicalities; but conscious that Admiral Heyworth seemed surprised at what he heard.

"It's up to you to see that none of your boys start dropping depth-charges around," said John Dene.

He went on to explain that he proposed a certain restricted area for operations, and that the Admiralty should issue instructions that no depth charges were to be dropped on any submarine within that area until further notice.

"There's one thing I must leave you to supply," said John Dene, as he leaned back in his chair smoking a cigar. John

Dene chewed the end of a cigar during the period of negotiations, and smoked it when the deal was struck.

"And what is that?" asked Sir Bridgman.

"I shall want a 'mother'——"

"A mother!" ejaculated Sir Lyster, looking from John Dene to the First Sea Lord, who laughed loudly. Sir Lyster always felt that Sir Bridgman should have left his laugh on the quarter-deck when he relinquished active command.

"A 'mother,'" he explained, "is a kangaroo-ship, a dry-dock ship for salvage and repair of submarines. Yes, we'll fit you out."

Sir Lyster looked chagrined. He had found some difficulty in mastering naval technicalities. When war broke out he was directing a large dock from which vast numbers of troops were shipped to France. He had shown such administrative genius, that Mr. Llewellyn John had selected him for the post of First Lord of the Admiralty, with results that satisfied every one, even the Sea Lords.

John Dene then proceeded to indicate the nature of the alterations he would require made in the vessel, showing a remarkable knowledge of the British type of mother-ship.

"You ought either to be shot as a spy or made First Sea Lord," said Sir Bridgman, looking up from a diagram that John Dene had produced.

"The Hun'll try to do the shooting; and as for my becoming Sea Lord, I should be sorry for some of the plugs here."

John Dene's thoroughness impressed his three hearers. Everything had been foreseen, even the spot where the *Destroyer* was to be based. The small island of Auchinlech

possessed a natural harbour of sufficient size for the mother-ship to enter, after which the entrance was to be guarded by a defensive boom as a safeguard against U-boats.

John Dene explained that a month or five weeks must elapse before the *Destroyer* would be ready for action. In about three weeks she could be at Auchinlech, crossing the Atlantic under her own power. Another week or ten days would be required for refitting and taking in stores.

"When you've delivered the goods you can quit, and I shall be pleased to see your boys again in four months."

John Dene regarded his listeners with the air of a man who had just thrown a bombshell and is conscious of the fact.

"Four months!" ejaculated Sir Lyster.

"Yep!" He uttered the monosyllable in a tone that convinced at least one of his listeners that expostulation would be useless.

"But," protested Sir Lyster, "how shall we know what is happening?"

"You won't," was the laconic reply.

"But——" began Sir Lyster again.

"If no one knows what is happening," interrupted John Dene, "no one can tell anyone else."

"Surely, Mr. Dene," said Sir Lyster with some asperity in his voice, "you do not suspect the War Cabinet, for instance, of divulging secrets of national importance."

"I don't suspect the War Cabinet of anything," was the dry retort, "not even of trying to win the war." John Dene looked straight into Sir Lyster's eyes.

There was an awkward pause.

"Who's going to guarantee that the War Cabinet doesn't talk in its sleep?" he continued. "I'm not out to take risks. If this country doesn't want my boat on my terms, then I shan't worry, although you may," he added as an afterthought. "No, sir," he banged his fist on the table vehemently. "This is the biggest thing that's come into the war so far, and I'm not going to have anyone monkeying about with my plans. I'm going to have a written document that I've got a free hand, otherwise I don't deal, that's understood."

"But——" began Sir Lyster once more.

"Excuse me, Grayne," broke in Sir Bridgman, "may I suggest that, as we are all keenly interested parties, Mr. Dene might give us his reasons."

"Sure," said John Dene without waiting for Sir Lyster's reply. "In Can'da a man gets a job because he's the man for that job, leastwise if he's not he's fired. Here I'll auction that half the big jobs are held by mutts whose granddad's had a pleasant way of saying how d'ye do to a prince. If any of them came around you'd have me skippin' like a scalded cat, and when I'm like that I'm liable to say things. I'm my own man and my own boss, and I take a man's size in most things. I'm too old to feel meek at the sight of gold bands. I want to feel kind to everybody, and I find I can do that in this country better when everybody keeps out of my way."

John Dene paused, and the others looked at each other, a little nonplussed how to respond to such directness.

"It's been in my head-fillin' quite a while to tell you this;" and John Dene suddenly smiled, one of those rare smiles

that seemed to take the sting out of his words. "I'd be real sorry to hurt anybody's feelings," he added, "but we've got different notions of things in Can'da."

It was Sir Bridgman who eased the situation.

"If ever you want a second in command, I'm your man," he laughed. "Straight talk makes men friends, and if we do wrap things up a bit more here, we aren't so thin-skinned as not to be able to take it from the shoulder. What say you, Grayne?"

"Yes—certainly," said Sir Lyster with unconvincing hesitation.

"You were mentioning spies," said Admiral Heyworth.

"So would you if they'd plagued you as they've plagued me," said John Dene. "They've already stolen three sets of plans."

"Three sets of plans!" cried Sir Lyster, starting up in alarm.

John Dene nodded as he proceeded to relight the stump of his cigar. "One set in T'ronto, one on the steamer and the other from my room at the Ritzton."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Sir Lyster in alarm, "what is to be done?"

"Oh! I've got another three sets," said John Dene calmly.

Sir Lyster looked at him as if doubtful of his sanity.

"Don't you worry," said John Dene imperturbably, "one set of plans was of the U1, the first boat the Germans built, the second set was of the U2, and the third of the U9."

Sir Bridgman's laugh rang out as he thumped the table with his fist.

"Splendid!" he cried. Sir Lyster sank back into his chair with a sigh of relief.

"By the way, Dene," said Sir Bridgman casually, "suppose the *Destroyer* was—er—lost and you with her."

"I've arranged for a set of plans to be delivered to the First Lord, whoever he may be at the time," said John Dene.

"Good!" said Sir Bridgman. "You think of everything. We shall have you commanding the Grand Fleet before the war's over."

Sir Lyster said nothing. He did not quite relish the qualification "whoever he may be at the time."

"About the spies," he said after a pause. "I think it would be advisable to arrange for your protection."

"Not on your life!" cried John Dene with energy. "I don't want any policemen following me around. I've got my own—well," he added, "I've fixed things up all right, and if the worst comes to the worst, well there aren't many men in this country that can beat John Dene with a gun. Now it's up to me to make good on this proposition." He looked from one to the other, as if challenging contradiction. Finding there was none, he continued: "But there are a few things that I want before I can start in, and then you won't see me for dust. You get me?" He looked suddenly at Sir Lyster.

"We'll do everything in our power to help you, Mr. Dene," said Sir Lyster, reaching for a clean sheet of paper from the rack before him.

"Well, I've got it all figured out here," said John Dene, taking a paper from his jacket pocket. "First I want a written undertaking, signed by you," turning to Sir Lyster, "and Mr.