

George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking*:  
A Study of Its Context and Results

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*The Battle of Dorking*, a propagandistic novella, written by George Chesney in 1871 is said to be the most widely discussed S. F. story ever published. The purpose of this thesis is to form an overall estimate of *The Battle of Dorking*. In order to achieve this goal, it might be useful to employ the works of some experts in the field of propaganda studies. Systematic methods of analysis suggested by Victoria O'Donnell in her book *Propaganda and Persuasion* in 1986 (revised in 2012) are applied to do the task.

In the first chapter, the context and contemporary mood that are supposedly related to the introduction of the story are discussed; The setting up of Sunday schools coincided with the Invention of more efficient printing devices, the abolition of the tax on knowledge and also economic prosperity, and all of these contributed to the influx of information experienced by the masses. At the same time, the masses become the majority of the voters. More and more political issues, including the colonial policy and army reforms, also needed to be presented to the mass. In the middle of the battle between anti-imperialism and imperialism, there was an actual war between France and Prussia. The winning country, Prussia, became the German Empire and started to advertise its glorious images to the world, and a huge cloud of anxiety hung over many of the British and many of them were called alarmists.

In the second chapter, possible purposes of writing the story, mainly based on studies of the author and intended readers are examined; Chesney's main purpose in the story was to bolster national defence, probably through increasing the budget for the military. He also may be thought to have been an advocate of anti-imperialism, for his story describes how the over-extended English territories allow the Germans to land in England. His statement that "with incredible folly, we continued to retain possessions which we could not possibly defend" is purely anti-imperialistic; however, mostly the story focuses on inland security and therefore the main theme of the story is unlikely to be anti-imperialism, but rather the means of defending the homeland.

In the final chapter, the story's effects on the public are analysed; probably the only thing that the alarmists shared before *The Battle of Dorking* appeared was they were alarmed or scared of foreign threats; however, it can be thought that they were not united, they had various ideas about eliminating the possible danger, some thought the Russians were going to invade their soil and some thought reorganisation of national defence was necessary but not the Volunteers. Chesney gave the Volunteer Forces the crucial role of national defence and described the Germans as the likeliest enemy, and Chesney's way of thinking was somewhat standardised. He managed to lead the public in a specific direction in a timely manner by his story.

If *The Battle of Dorking* had not been published and so had no followers, the public would have thought the homeland was secured solely by the mightiest Navy and been indifferent to the efficiency of the army; therefore, the voice of the necessity of reorganisation of the Military would not have been heard until the Government or the public saw that an actual danger was imminent or a war broke out. The achievement of a relatively earlier modernisation of the Military was possibly brought about by the series of stories of invasion started by Chesney.