

CHAPTER FOUR

Popular imperialism and the image of the army in juvenile literature

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Looking back in 1958 to his Yorkshire boyhood in the 1880s and early 1890s, the writer Captain Frank H. Shaw testified unwittingly to the saturation of that era in heroic military imagery. Impressionistically recalling the memories which had remained with him over more than seventy years, he singled out three in particular. The earliest was the sight of a troop of scarlet-clad hussars viewed from the back garden wall while his sister recited Tennyson's *Charge of the Light Brigade* ('I had a blurred vision of plentiful powder-smoke, of whirling sabres, of panicked Russian gunners defending themselves with ineffectual rammers against British steel'). Then there was a visit to Hamilton's diorama to see a re-enactment of the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882, with Gunner Harding VC appearing at the interval to describe how he had won his medal by hurling a live shell overboard from the deck of HMS *Invincible*. Finally there was his artist father taking the family for long walks over the Yorkshire moors and reciting 'Horatius at the bridge' from Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*. These memories provide a composite picture of spectacle and heroism, battle and bravery, service and sacrifice which epitomizes the popular cultural images of the military in the heyday of the empire.¹

The affirmative attitude towards the heroism, romance and adventure of empire that these memories imply was confirmed by Shaw's boyhood reading. He steeped himself in the juvenile literature of his age. He revered G.A. Henty, but his particular love was sea stories. Captain Marryat, Michael Scott, Clark Russell, the *Boy's Own Paper* and *Chums*, he recalled, 'fostered the adventure-seed, and filled me with a sea-fret that only experience of the real thing could satisfy. That experience took me to sea at an early age.'²

But the wheel came full circle for Shaw. After serving as a merchant seaman, and later a Cunard officer, he discovered a facility for writing and became a regular contributor to the very journal which had inspired

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him as a boy, *Chums*. He continued writing during active service on land, at sea and in the air during World War I and afterwards, eventually producing some seventy books and over 7,000 short stories. Much of his work was in the juvenile field and most of it was patriotic, heroic and militaristic.

Shaw can be regarded as typical in two respects. First, he typifies a particular breed of juvenile writer, one who has seen active service. Conventional cultural history tends to see World War I as a watershed, with the disenchanted war poets and memoirists drawing on their front-line experiences to paint a grimly anti-heroic picture of a futile, wasteful and pointless war, a view which by extension is seen to have been generally accepted. What is forgotten is that their works tended to have a small circulation and to be restricted to the high-culture circles from which they had usually emerged in the first place. It is also the case that the war poets were probably equalled in number by serving officers who drew on their experiences to create a large body of fiction which glorified and mythified World War I, particularly for juvenile readers. Perhaps the most notable was Lieutenant Colonel F. S. Brereton, who in a succession of novels like *With French at the Front* (1915), *With Joffre at Verdun* (1916), *Under Haig in Flanders* (1917) and *With the Allies to the Rhine* (1919) provided instant 'Hentyfication' of the Great War. Among the many officers who turned their experiences in both Boer War and Great War into heroic fiction for youngsters were, for instance, Captain Frank H. Shaw, Captain Oswald Dallas, Major Charles Gilson, Major Lionel Metford, and perhaps the most senior of them, Vice-Admiral E. R. G. Evans DSO, later Admiral Lord Mountevans and a World War I naval hero as 'Evans of the Broke'. All of them were regular contributors to *Chums* in the inter-war years.

The second factor that should be noted is that they were all the product of an age steeped in heroic military imagery. It is now widely recognised that it was saturation in the literature and imagery of militarism over several decades that helped prepare the youth of England for enthusiastic participation in World War I, an enthusiasm that produced 2½ million volunteers in the first sixteen months of the war.³

Enthusiasm for war with France or Germany or Russia or all three was promoted by the genre of invasion fiction, sparked by Colonel Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* (1871). It reached a positive frenzy in the last two decades before 1914 with Max Pemberton's monumental *Pro Patria* (1901), William Le Queux's best-selling *The Great War in England in 1897* (1893) and *The Invasion of 1910* (1906) and Erskine Childers's classic *Riddle of the Sands* (1903).

Military heroism and the martial spirit infused popular poetry. It could be heard in the verses of Kipling and Conan Doyle, Sir Henry Newbolt

and Sir Francis Doyle. W. E. Henley's anthology *Lyra Heroica*, produced in 1891 and reprinted in 1892, 1893, 1896, 1899, 1900, 1903, 1906, 1907 and 1908, had sold 52,000 copies by 1908. Claiming to be the first such anthology, its stated aim was 'to set forth, as only art can, the beauty and the joy of living, the beauty and the blessedness of death, the glory of battle and adventure, the nobility of devotion, the dignity of resistance, the sacred quality of patriotism'. Beginning with Shakespeare and Agincourt, moving through the naval poetry of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it concluded with celebrations of the army, often in an imperial context, with works like Tennyson's *Charge of the Heavy Brigade*, Sir Francis Doyle's *Private of the Buffs* and *The Red Thread of Honour*, Kipling's *Ballad of East and West* and Henley's own *Last Post* and *Pro Rege Nostro*. The binding themes of the collection are service, sacrifice, comradeship, heroism and death: *Casabianca* ('The boy stood on the burning deck whence all but he had fled'), *Horatius at the Bridge* ('And how can man die better than facing fearful odds, for the ashes of his fathers and the temples of his gods?'), *The Wreck of the Birkenhead* ('Thank heaven for those undegenerate sons who sank aboard the Birkenhead in Simon's Bay'), *The Burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna* ('We left him alone in his glory'). There were many such anthologies in the years leading up to 1914.

Increasingly the arena for the attainment of these qualities was the empire. Kipling, with his celebrations of tough and two-fisted Tommy Atkins and of noble young subalterns, of faithful Indian troops and gallant Afghan foes, provided a gallery of archetypes that inspired a whole genre of Indian Empire fiction, in particular the scarlet-and-gold heroics of the North West Frontier. They may also have influenced the reality. Sir George Younghusband recalled that neither he nor his brother officers had ever heard the words or expressions that Kipling's soldiers used but several years later 'the soldiers thought, and talked, and expressed themselves exactly like Rudyard Kipling had taught them in his stories'.⁴

The colourful and dramatic despatches of the war correspondents, who emerged as major public opinion-formers during the Crimean War, fed a growing appetite for military reportage.⁵ But there were close and mutually fecundating links between war journalism and popular fiction. Two of the most celebrated and prolific fictioneers in popular culture began their careers as war correspondents: G. A. Henty, the most popular boys writer of the later nineteenth century, and Edgar Wallace, the king of the thriller writers. G. W. Steevens, the *Daily Mail's* renowned war correspondent, gave his account of the Sudan campaign the Hentyesque title *With Kitchener to Khartum* (1898), leaving Henty to settle for *With Kitchener in the Soudan* (1903). Archibald Forbes, who wrote fiction as well as war reporting, argued that correspondents should reveal 'how

our countrymen, our dear ones, toil and thole, vindicate Britain's manhood and joyously expend their lives for Queen and fatherland'.⁶

The heroic image of the army and of war conjured up by the words of the war correspondents was given visual life by the work of war artists and battle illustrators. Lady Butler earned popular acclaim for her panoramic canvases of charges, engagements and last stands. As Paul Usherwood shows elsewhere in this volume, paintings in the second half of the nineteenth century celebrated the officer as archetypal chivalric gentleman.⁷

Three-dimensional life was given to the heroic image in the popular stage genre of military melodramas, whose peak was the annual Drury Lane spectacle, which often took contemporary imperial war as its context: the Zulu War (*Youth*, 1881), the Sudan campaign (*Human Nature*, 1885), the Burmese War (*A Life of Pleasure*, 1893), the Matabele uprising (*Cheer, Boys, Cheer*, 1895) and the Boer War (*Best of Friends*, 1902).⁸

Throughout all these cultural forms the same affirmative values run: manliness, patriotism, chivalry, service, sacrifice, comradeship and courage. It is therefore not surprising that these were the values that also structured juvenile literature, which invariably took its lead from the prevailing currents in society. For juvenile literature was one of the ways in which society instructed its members in accepted *mores* and ideas, dominant role models and legitimate aspirations. It both reflected popular attitudes, ideas and preconceptions and generated support for them. So it acted both as a form of social control, directing the readership towards the viewpoints and attributes deemed desirable by those controlling the production of popular fiction, and as a mirror of widely held popular views. There was a two-way reciprocal process at work between producers and consumers. The consumers by what they bought told the producers what they wanted. The producers, aiming to maximise profits, dramatised what they perceived to be the dominant ideas and headline topics of the day.

Captain Frank Shaw recalled that on the day that Admiral Peary's discovery of the North Pole was announced to the world, 6 September 1909, Cassell's telegraphed to ask whether he could provide a 70,000 word juvenile book on polar exploration, embodying the Peary story, within a month. Shaw wrote it in a week and it was on sale by 1 November.⁹

G. A. Henty wrote with a purpose – to teach boys how to behave. His contemporary, friend and biographer George Manville Fenn recorded that his books were essentially:

manly, and he used to say that he wanted his boys to be bold, straightforward and ready to play a young man's part, not to be milksops. He had a horror of a lad who displayed any weak emotion and shrank from shedding blood, or winced at any encounter.¹⁰

Fenn was in no doubt about the effect of the books:

The young generation which has read his books and had its imagination fired will contain, of course, only a small percentage of soldiers, but the sense of grit and the dogged indomitable spirit to be derived from such works will stand in good stead to all, whether the battle be faced in the humdrum of daily life or actually with the forces of the king ... He was one of those whose influence makes for the greatness of England, an England which will fight, if duty really calls, at one of those crises in a nation's life which show which is the true worth and which the base.¹¹

Henty himself told an interviewer, 'Officers have repeatedly told me that many had offered themselves for service simply after reading these little stories of mine.'¹² But he paid attention to what they wanted, too. In an interview in *Chums* Henty observed:

I generally find that boys prefer those of my books which deal with modern times than those that embrace ancient history. They seem to like stories dealing with nineteenth-century wars better than tales about battles fought long ago in B.C. something.¹³

So Henty in obedience to his perception of demand concentrated increasingly on dramatizing nineteenth-century British wars.

Manville Fenn, who wrote some 120 juvenile works himself, was aware like Henty both of fulfilling a moral purpose and of supplying a perceived need. He told an interviewer:

In my opinion a book for boys should possess plenty of good, stirring adventures, without any preaching. Boys don't like being preached at. By writing a sound, wholesome adventure story you can alter a boy's character and make him a better lad in spite of himself. You don't want any bosh about love or sentiment in boys' books. Let your hero be upright, manly and brave, but not priggish. If you have a villain, show that he's a villain and don't hold him up as a model of what a man should be. I find that boys are very fond of military stories. They are entranced with bullets and battles.¹⁴

Fenn obliged them with a string of titles like *Charge!*, *Tention!*, *Draw Swords!*, *Shoulder Arms!* and *Fix Bay'nets*.

The dominance of soldier heroes and army subjects in popular culture in the last decades of the nineteenth century represented a distinct change of emphasis and accompanied a change in the nature of imperialism. In mid-century 'free-trade imperialism' was dominant, the concept of a commercial and maritime empire with minimum territorial responsibilities and maximum profit. But by the time Disraeli proclaimed Queen Victoria Empress of India in 1876 the mood was changing. The Disraelian empire with its notions of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority,

territorial expansion and national duty led direct to the idea of a God-given mission to administer the world.¹⁵ Joseph Chamberlain crystallised this view when he said, 'In the first place I believe in the British Empire and in the second place, I believe in the British race. I believe that the British race is the greatest of governing races that the world has ever seen.'¹⁶ The masses responded to such rhetoric, encouraged by the emergent popular press, with the *Daily Mail*, in particular, pledged, in its own words, to be 'the embodiment and mouthpiece of the imperial idea'.

When in the 1880s and 1890s Britain acquired an African empire and with it a whole new area for exercising this mission, a group of serious-minded young imperialists articulated the fully formed imperial creed, a creed compounded of the concepts of destiny, duty and service. These were men like Curzon, Balfour and Milner, who believed with Lord Rosebery that the British Empire was 'the greatest secular agency for good the world has ever seen'. Such men as these founded the Primrose League, pledged to maintain 'the imperial ascendancy of the British Empire' and a generation later the Round Table, an organisation seeking to promote greater imperial unity. With them imperialism transcended party lines and acquired the mystic appeal which is basic to the new imperialism. It was Curzon who declared that in empire we had found 'not merely the key to glory and wealth but the call to duty and the means of service to mankind'. In 1907 he elaborated:

Empire can only be achieved with satisfaction or maintained with advantage, provided it has a moral basis. To the people of the mother state it must be a discipline, an inspiration, a faith. To the people of the circumference, it must be more than a flag or a name, it must give them what they cannot otherwise or elsewhere enjoy: not merely justice or order or material prosperity; but the sense of participating in a great idea, the consecrating influence of a lofty purpose.¹⁷

The idea of moral purpose was continually advanced to justify Britain's empire and it was this too which was used to justify the inevitable growth of that militarism against which the mid-Victorian free-trade imperialists had set their face. Strategically Britain was on the defensive in the second half of the nineteenth century, with Russia, France and Germany all challenging her, and there was a need after the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny and the Jamaica revolt for military preparedness. This need enhanced the role of both war and the military in popular culture.

In the second half of the nineteenth century war came to be seen as a moral force and the profession of soldiering a noble one. Professor J. A. Cramb declared, 'War is the supreme act in the life of the state.'¹⁸ Sir Garnet Wolseley recorded his belief that 'war with all its horrors exercises

a healthy influence on all classes of society'.¹⁹ John Ruskin concluded that 'war is the foundation of all the arts, I mean that it is the foundation of all the high virtues and faculties of men'. Peace was the source only of sensuality, selfishness and death.

All great nations learned their word of truth, and strength of thought, in war; that they were nourished in war, and wasted in peace, taught by war, and deceived by peace; trained by war, and betrayed by peace—in a word, that they were born in war, and expired in peace.

He urged Britain's young soldiers to give to her 'a bright, stainless, perfect life — a knightly life'.²⁰

War became an integral part of Social Darwinist thinking, so that on the eve of World War I *The Nineteenth Century* published an article declaring that:

efficiency in war, or rather efficiency for war, is God's test of a nation's soul ... Victory in war is the method by which, in the economy of God's providence, the sound nation supercedes the unsound, because in our time victory is the direct offspring of a higher efficiency, and the higher efficiency is the logical outcome of the higher morale ... victory is the crown of moral quality, and therefore while nations wage war upon one another the survival of the fittest means the survival of the physically best.²¹

The army, once regarded as 'brutal and licentious soldiery', came under the impact of evangelicalism, like so much of Victorian England. The Evangelicals sought to demonstrate that it was possible to be both a professional soldier and a zealous Christian. Organisations and individuals set out to 'raise the tone of the troops', providing chaplains, chapels and Bibles, and creating role models of Christian soldier heroes. The pre-eminent example was Gordon of Khartoum, depicted in the celebrated painting by G. W. Joy going heroically to his death at the hands of the Mahdi's soldiers, a Christian martyr, a British warrior, the supreme exemplar of chivalry, courage and sacrifice.

The image of the Puritan soldiery of the Civil War became a commonplace of military imagery. Cromwell was rehabilitated and became a major English ikon, celebrated among Carlyle's archetypal heroes. The result was, as Olive Anderson has pointed out, that by the mid-1860s 'The British Army was ... more obtrusively Christian than at it had ever been since the Restoration'.²² The christianisation of the army was paralleled by the militarisation of Christianity. The 1870s and 1880s saw the foundation of the Salvation Army, the Church Army and the Boys' Brigade, complete with uniforms, titles and military ranks, and there was a great vogue for military imagery in hymns: 'Onward, Christian soldiers', 'Fight the good fight' and 'Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross', for instance. The hymns merely repeated and etched

into the popular consciousness the dictum of Thomas Carlyle: 'Man is created to fight; he is perhaps best of all definable as a born soldier.'²³

It was not just Christianity but society as a whole that became pervaded with the military ethos. Public schools had cadet corps; state schools military-style drill as an integral part of the curriculum. In adult life the Volunteers, the Militia and the Yeomanry all flourished. Post Office and railway staff were put into uniform and the railways were run on strictly military lines, often by former army officers. As the Evangelical impulse faltered, the religious thrust became secularised. Many of the feelings of crusading and commitment were transferred to the empire, increasingly depicted as a means of service and self-fulfilment. The army, with its image newly refurbished, became central to the myths and rituals of the empire.

The spirit in which war was to be waged, as Ruskin suggested, was one of chivalry. Interest in matters medieval and chivalric had revived as part of the whole Romantic reaction to the measured, passionless classicism of the eighteenth century. In the wake of the novels and poems of Sir Walter Scott, with their idealised and stylised picture of medieval chivalry, and of the massive revival of interest in the Arthurian legends celebrated in poems, paintings and countless retellings of Malory, a living and meaningful code of life for the nineteenth-century gentleman had been fashioned. The image of the gentleman was reformulated as a latter-day version of the medieval knight, the embodiment of the virtues of bravery, loyalty and courtesy, modesty, purity and honour, and endowed with a sense of *noblesse oblige* towards women, children and social inferiors. This was to form the essence of the nation ideology for over a century. By the middle of the nineteenth century the language and imagery of chivalry had been so far absorbed into the fabric of Victorian life and thought that it was automatic to see the gentleman, the hero and the soldier exclusively in terms of the medieval paladin.²⁴

The chivalric ideal was deliberately promoted by key figures of the age in order to produce a ruling elite for the nation and for the expanding empire who would be inspired by noble and selfless values. Dedicated imperialists invested their empire with chivalry, and chivalric imagery was regularly associated with the empire. Queen Victoria inaugurated orders of knighthood for her imperial servants, the Order of the Indian Empire, the Order of the Star of India, the Royal Victorian Order. In 1917 the Order of the British Empire was founded. The Primrose League used chivalric designations for its various levels of membership. Baden-Powell, whose *Scouting for Boys* is steeped in chivalric imagery, originally planned to call the Scouts 'The Young Knights of the Empire'. Imperial heroes were regularly compared to knights.

In juvenile literature as elsewhere the army, now the embodiment of

Christian and chivalric values, came to be seen as the pre-eminent vehicle for service and imperial expansion. Hitherto juvenile literature had been dominated by the heroic image of the navy, the force that was an essential element in the mid-Victorian empire, with its commercial and maritime emphasis. Naval heroes and naval heroism had been celebrated in song and story from Drake, Hawkins and the Elizabethan sea dogs through the eighteenth-century admirals like Benbow, Rodney and Hawke, the heroes of the wars with France, to Nelson and his captains, victors in the epic struggle with Napoleon. Popular balladry from Dibdin to Newbolt and nautical melodrama, particularly popular in the first half of the nineteenth century but maintaining its hold even in the second, mythified Jack Tar as a symbol of robust and down-to-earth Englishness. T. P. Cooke, who as a sailor had seen service at the battle of St Vincent, played William, the sailor hero of Douglas Jerrold's *Black-eyed Susan* (1829) no fewer than 765 times and spent his twenty-five-year stage career incarnating similar maritime heroes, Jack Gallant, Jack Stedfast, Bill Bluff and Ben Billows among them. It was Tobias Smollett, himself a naval surgeon, who effectively invented the nautical novel and created the archetypal naval hero, Lieutenant Tom Bowling, in *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748). Bowling was 'a man in whose speech is the salt savour of the sea, in whose personality is the breezy, open disposition of the seaman, all the seaman's courage, all his simplicity, his generous prodigality, his spirit of comradeship, his simple philosophy, his practical sense'.²⁵ This description could be applied to most of the naval heroes across the whole range of popular culture.

Smollett's successor in the genre was Captain Marryat, whose semi-autobiographical novels like *Peter Simple* (1833) and *Mr. Midshipman Easy* (1836) proved as popular with boys as with adults, so much so that Marryat turned to writing specifically juvenile books with *Masterman Ready* in 1841. As the juvenile novel of adventure burgeoned two pre-eminent and prolific figures emerged to dominate the field: W. H. G. Kingston (1814–80) and R. M. Ballantyne (1825–94). Although both were active in the Volunteers, the sea dominated their work as it had Marryat's. It fitted easily into the mid-Victorian imperialism of which both men were exemplars. Their novels hymned evangelicalism, commercial expansion, exploration, emigration and maritime adventure. Kingston's best known works among over 100 books were *Peter the Whaler*, *From Powdermonkey to Admiral* and his series following the careers of three friends through the navy, beginning with *The Three Midshipmen* and ending with *The Three Admirals*. Ballantyne, whose output was almost as prolific, returned regularly to the sea, his most celebrated work being *The Coral Island*.²⁶ The army figured only to a limited extent in their books and Ballantyne in particular was sceptical

about the value of war. His hero in *In the Track of the Troops* (1878) forcefully declares:

There is no romance whatever in war ... All the romance connected with war is in spite of it, and by no means the result of it. The heroism displayed in its wildest sallies is true heroism undoubtedly, but it would be none the less heroism if it were exercised in the rescue of men and women from shipwreck or from fire ... As there is no 'romance', so there is no 'glory' in war. Many a glorious deed may be, and often is, done *in connection with war*. Such a deed is done when a handful of brave men sacrifice their lives at the call of duty ... And such a deed is done, still more gloriously, when a soldier, true to his Queen and country, is true also to his God, and preaches while he practises the principles and gospel of the Prince of Peace, in the presence of those with whom he acts his part in this world's drama. There is indeed much that is glorious in the conduct of many warriors, but there is no glory whatever in war itself. The best that can be said of it, that sometimes it is stern yet sad necessity.²⁷

This negative view of war is in striking contrast to that advanced by the man who succeeded Ballantyne in the affections of boy readers – G. A. Henty (1832–1902). In the preface to *St. George for England* (1885), his tale of Crécy and Poitiers, Henty declared:

It is sometimes said that there is no good to be obtained from tales of fighting and bloodshed – that there is no moral to be drawn from such histories. Believe it not. War has its lessons as well as peace. You will learn from tales like this that determination and enthusiasm can accomplish marvels, that true courage is generally accompanied by magnanimity and gentleness, and that if not itself the very highest of virtues, it is the parent of almost all the others, since but few of them can be practised without it. The courage of our forefathers has created the greatest empire in the world around a small and in itself insignificant island; if this empire is ever lost, it will be by the cowardice of their descendants. At no period of her history did England stand so high in the eyes of Europe as in this time whose events are recorded in this volume. A chivalrous king and an even more chivalrous prince has infected the whole people with their martial spirit and the result was that their armies were for a time invincible, and the most astonishing successes were gained.²⁸

This encapsulates the philosophy underlying the work of the new generation of boys' writers. Fascinatingly, whereas the army figured rarely in the work of Kingston and Ballantyne, the navy figured comparatively rarely in the work of Henty. This is all the more remarkable, given the fact that he was a keen sailor, but it reflects the shift of emphasis in politics and culture.

Henty made clear his admiration for the imperial British army in the preface to *Through Three Campaigns*, which dramatised the relief of Chitral, the Tirah campaign and the relief of Coomassie.

Our little wars attract far less attention among the people of this country than they deserve. They are frequently carried out in circumstances of the most adverse kind. Our enemies, although ignorant of military discipline, are, as a rule, extremely brave, and are thoroughly capable of using the natural advantages of their country. Our men are called upon to bear enormous fatigue and endure extremes in climate; the fighting is incessant, the peril constant. Nevertheless they show a magnificent contempt for danger and difficulty, and fight with a valour and determination worthy of the highest praise.²⁹

This admiration informed Henty's six African novels, which cover the Gordon relief expedition of 1884–85 (*The Dash for Khartoum*, 1892), the Sudan campaign of 1898 (*With Mitchener in the Soudan*, 1903), Wolseley's Ashanti expedition of 1873–74 (*By Sheer Pluck*, 1884), the Zulu War of 1879 and the First Boer War (*The Young Colonists*, 1885) and the Second Boer War (*With Buller in Natal*, 1901; *With Roberts to Pretoria*, 1902).³⁰

But no sequence of novels better illustrates Henty's attitude to imperial wars than his Indian novels. He devoted five novels to British campaigns in India: *In Times of Peril* (1881), covering the Mutiny, *With Clive in India* (1884), *Through the Sikh War* (1894), *The Tiger of Mysore* (1896), covering the war against Tippoo Saib, and *At the Point of the Bayonet* (1902), covering the Mahratta wars. Three of his novels covered expansionism on the borders: *On the Irrawaddy* (1897), covering the First Burmese War, *To Herat and Cabul* (1902), covering the First Afghan War, and *For Name and Fame* (1886), covering the Second Afghan War. The North West Frontier was the setting for two of the campaigns in *Through Three Campaigns* (1904) and the long short story *A Soldier's Daughter* (1906).

Henty wrote to a formula which is followed precisely in his Indian novels. Indeed, the plots of *Through the Sikh War* and *On the Irrawaddy* are more or less interchangeable, with only the details of the wars being different. The Henty hero, the role model for British youth, was a sixteen-year-old boy who at the outset of the book loses his parents or his fortune or his place in society or all three and is thrown out into the wider world upon his own resources. He goes to India to seek his fortune and there his character and morale are tested in a sequence of special missions, adventures, battles, sieges, chases, captures, escapes and rescues. The personal adventures are intercut with straightforward factual accounts of imperial campaigns, complete with troop movements, battles and casualty lists. During the course of these the hero contrives to be present at all the great events, victories and defeats alike, and to encounter all the great iconic heroes of the Indian empire, from Lord Clive through the Mutiny generals, Lawrence, Campbell, Havelock, Outram and Nicholson,

to Lord Roberts. The hero never indulges in self-doubt but always displays fully developed the qualities he has shown from the outset: courage, resourcefulness, intelligence, patriotism, manliness, comradeship, service and sacrifice. Eventually he retires to England, having made his fortune, marries and takes his place in society as a country squire or member of Parliament. It is a potent combination of Smilesian self-help and class destiny. War is seen in this formula as a rite of passage, a passport to manhood. It functions both on a personal level as a force for character-building and character-testing and on a national level as a morally justified means of imperial expansion. Even if, as is sometimes the case, the war is not morally justifiable, it can still fulfil the first function.

Eight of the nine heroes of the Indian stories are the sons of officers, six of them army officers, one merchant navy, one coastguard. The exception is Angus Campbell, the Scottish hero of *To Herat and Cabul*, who is the son of a merchant in Tabriz. Orphaned when his parents die of the plague, he serves as a volunteer with the British army in the First Afghan War and later for twenty years as a political officer. All the others serve in the army either as volunteers or as regular officers. They are effectively caste heroes.

Charlie Marryat in *With Clive in India* typifies the Henty hero:

In all sports requiring activity and endurance rather than weight and strength, he was always conspicuous. Not one in the school could compete with him in long distance running, and when he was one of the hares, there was but little chance for the hounds. He was a capital swimmer and one of the best boxers in the school. He had a reputation for being a leader in every mischievous prank but he was honourable and manly, would scorn to shelter himself under the semblance of a lie and was a prime favourite with his masters as well as his schoolfellows.³¹

He is also typical in his origins. His father, a Yarmouth coastguard officer, dies, leaving a widow, son and two daughters in genteel poverty. They appeal to an uncle, a pompous but goodnatured London merchant, Joshua Tufton, who gets Charlie a clerkship with the East India Company. Once in India, he becomes a volunteer officer serving under Clive, is involved in the siege of Arcot, the Black Hole of Calcutta and the battle of Plassey and eventually retires to England, having made his fortune.

The hero of *Through the Sikh War* is Percy Groves, orphaned while at school when his father, a half-pay officer, dies; he is sent to India to live with his uncle, Colonel Roland Groves, until he is ready to take a commission with the East India Company forces. In fact he serves as a volunteer and interpreter with those forces and after the annexation of the Punjab is appointed a deputy commissioner, helps keep the Punjab

steady during the Mutiny and retires to England with a CB and a pension to live at Southsea with his wife and three children.

Harry Lindsay, the hero of *At the Point of the Bayonet*, is the son of an army officer but is raised by his Indian nurse as a Mahratta when both his parents are killed in a massacre. He joins the army of the Peishwa but eventually transfers to the East India Company forces before making his fortune and retiring to Norfolk to marry his cousin and settle as a country squire. Two grandsons eventually help to suppress the Mutiny.

In *Through Three Campaigns* Lisle Bullen is orphaned when his father, Captain Bullen, dies hoping that he will 'make an honest gentleman and a brave soldier'. So anxious is Lisle to serve that he disguises as a sepoy and fights with the native regiments of the Raj, eliciting from the colonel the admiring comment 'Few of us would care to go through this campaign as sepoys – their work is terribly hard, poor fellows – to say nothing of the unpleasantness of having to live amongst the natives.'³² Lisle goes on to get a commission, to win the VC and to serve with the distinction in the Tirah and Coomassie campaigns. Stanley Brooke in *On the Irrawaddy* is the son of an East India Company captain whose death leaves him and his mother impoverished. He therefore joins her brother Tom Pearson in trade in Burma. But he serves as volunteer and interpreter in the First Burmese War before resuming his career in trade.

The fact of orphanhood becomes a major theme of two of the novels. When Dick Holland's father, the captain of an East Indiaman, is shipwrecked in India and presumed dead, Dick continues to believe he may be a captive of Tippoo Sahib, the Tiger of Mysore, and embarks on a search for him which is eventually successful. Along the way he sees service at Tippoo's court and later as an officer in the East India Company army before participating in the siege of Seringapatam, which ends the Tiger's reign. He returns to England, to the shipping business which his parents have set up from his riches, marries and settles on a country estate. In *For Name and Fame* Tom, the infant son of Captain Robert Ripon and his wife, is stolen by a vengeful gypsy, raised as a workhouse orphan under the name of William Gale and ends up in the army in India participating in the Second Afghan War. He rises to the rank of captain and eventually rescues his father, now a colonel, who recognises him from a convenient birthmark. They are reunited and retire to an estate in Somerset.

Henty regularly outlines the kind of education he considers appropriate for an army officer in India. It is practical rather than intellectual. In *Through the Sih War* an old India hand, Mr Fullarton, sums up the view that in one way or another Henty conveys throughout his Indian stories:

Give me a lad with pluck and spirit, and I don't care a snap of the fingers whether he can construe Euripides or solve a problem in higher mathematics. What we want for India are men who can ride and shoot, who are ready at any moment to start on a hundred mile journey on horseback, who will scale a hill fort with a handful of men, or with half a dozen sowars tackle a dacoit and his band. What do the natives care for our learning? It is our pluck and fighting powers that have made us their masters.³³

So Henty heroes invariably become fluent in the indigenous languages, so fluent that they can pass as Indians. Interestingly the illustrated dust jackets frequently depict the hero in native dress. Harry Lindsay and Dick Holland, successfully posing as Indians, spend long periods in the service of Indian rulers. Dick Holland learns to ride and shoot in India but before he goes his mother teaches him her Indian dialects and engages an old soldier to instruct him in swordplay. Lisle Bullen has been trained by his father and is fluent in native languages. Percy Groves learns riding and Hindustani at school in England, Punjabi and pistol-shooting on the voyage out to India. Angus Campbell knows Persian, Pushtu and Arabic. Stanley Brooke learns Burmese. All the heroes keep fit. Harry Lindsay's nurse explains to him that the English are a great people, honourable, brave and above all fit. Their fitness and love of exercise, which the Mahrattas shun, are the key to their strength and success. So besides learning the use of spear, sword, dagger and musket from an old soldier Harry takes regular exercise to train his body.³⁴

Boxing in particular is an activity Henty approves. Dick Holland explains its virtues to Annie Mansfield, the English girl he rescues from slavery in Mysore. Boxing makes you quick, accustoms you to bear pain, teaches you to keep your temper and is one of the reasons the English make such good soldiers.³⁵ But the spirit in which you fight is just as important as the skill you use – and that spirit is chivalric. Mrs Holland tells Dick that fighting and fighting skills are more important than book learning but she qualifies this importantly:

Never quarrel on your own account. Wherever you see a boy bullying a smaller one, take the opportunity of giving him a lesson while learning one yourself. In the days of old, you know, the first duty of a true knight was to succour the oppressed, and I want you to be a true knight; you will get thrashed, sometimes, no doubt, but don't mind that; perhaps next time you will turn the tables.³⁶

It is boys of this stamp who are required for the army overseas. Colonel Groves tells Percy:

In our army life at home an officer is but one bit of a great machine; his life is a routine, and in peacetime as dull as ditchwater. Here a man has, every day and every hour, need of his brains, his courage, his quickness

and spirit ... it is a man's life, Percy, and to a man of spirit worth a hundred existences at home ... It is pluck and endurance that have made us the masters of the greater part of India and will ere long make us the rulers of the whole of it.³⁷

The army is thus seen as an appropriate career when it combines service with adventure. When a Sikh companion asks Percy what people who want to fight or seek adventure do, since Britain is such a peaceful, law-abiding country, he replies: 'Those who want to fight can enter the army and fight the battles of their country abroad, while those fond of adventure can go to sea or can visit wild countries or can go out to the colonies, where it is a hard, rough life, but where an active man can acquire wealth.'³⁸ This formulation neatly links the ideas of fighting and adventure with 'abroad' and wealth creation. The common factor is the displacement of energies overseas where the colonies serve as the arena for energy, spirit and ambition.

While most of Henty's heroes in the Indian stories seek their fulfilment in army service, which incidentally usually results in the acquisition of a fortune, Stanley Brooke uniquely rejects a long-term army career for a life in trade. His stance is endorsed by both Captain Cooke and General Campbell. The latter tells him, 'A good business is a great deal better than better than soldiering. You can retire early, are your own master and can make your money,' and 'while on active service a soldier's life is, indeed, a stirring one, there is nothing more dull and monotonous than garrison life in peace time'.³⁹ Stanley joins the British forces while trade is at a standstill during hostilities but thereafter rejoins his uncle, who has made a fortune supplying the forces. After six years they have acquired a monopoly of the teak trade and Stanley returns to London to establish one of the leading houses in the Eastern trade and to marry the sister of the Earl of Netherley. For Stanley, then, war has a much more limited purpose than for other Henty heroes. It serves both as an individual rite of passage and as the means by which Burma is opened up to commercial exploitation, though individual enterprise and initiative are still required to capitalise on the opportunities.

Henty is careful always to set the imperial wars in the context of moral justification, while disarmingly admitting that this has not always inspired British actions. The clear implication is that it should. His preface to *Through the Sikh War* announces:

Among the many wars by which, province by province, the Empire of India was won, few, if any, were more brilliant and hard fought than those which terminated in the annexation of the Punjaub. It is satisfactory to know that the conquest of the Sikhs – a brave and independent race –

was not brought about by any of the intrigues which marred the brilliancy of some of our early conquests or by greed for additional territory, but was the result of a wanton invasion of the states under our protection, by the turbulent soldiery of the Punjaub, who believed themselves invincible and embarked upon the conflict with a confident belief that they would make themselves masters of Delhi, if not drive us completely out of India.⁴⁰

The Mahratta wars, says Henty in *At the Point of the Bayonet*:

enabled us, although at the cost of much blood, to free a large portion of India from a race that was a scourge – faithless, intriguing and crafty, cruel and reckless of life ... They were a race of freebooters; and even the most sentimental humanitarian can feel no regret at the overthrow of a power that possessed no single claim to our admiration, and weighed like an incubus upon the people it oppressed. The history of the Mahrattas ... is one long record of perfidy, murder and crime of all sorts.⁴¹

The annexation of Burma is justified in *On the Irrawaddy*:

No worse government has ever existed than that of Burma when, with the boast that she intended to drive the British out of India, she began a war; no people were ever kept down by a more grinding tyranny, and the occupation of the country by the British has been an even greater blessing to the population than has that of India.⁴²

In discussing Burmese acts of aggression Uncle Tom puts it more forcefully to Stanley: 'With such ignorant people there is but one argument understood, namely force; and sooner or later we shall have to give them such a hearty thrashing that they will be quiet for some time.'⁴³

Henty goes in detail into the history of the Mahrattas and the Sikhs, revealing a veritable whirligig of assassination, treachery, oppression, instability and revolt in which rival potentates pass in bewildering profusion across the blood-drenched stage. Nana Furnuwees, the Mahratta chief minister, described by Harry Lindsay as 'the only honest man' among the Mahrattas, is popular, patriotic, honest, dedicated and an admirer of Britain. But he is altogether exceptional. Much more typical of Indian rulers in Henty are bloodthirsty tyrants like Surajah Dowlah, Nana Sahib and Tippoo Sahib, described as 'a monster unfitted to live, much less to rule'.

The superiority of the British is due partly to the moral values they espouse and partly to their system and practice of government. The English are seen to oppose torture, which Colonel Groves in *Through the Sikh War* rejects, 'having an Englishman's abhorrence of such means'; to oppose summary execution (Charlie Marryat: 'I would rather let ten guilty men escape than run the risk of putting one innocent one to death'), to oppose killing in cold blood (Angus Campbell: 'It is not an Englishman's way').⁴⁴ When Stanley Brooke saves the life of the Burmese bandit

Meinik, Stanley explains, 'It seems to us natural that if we see another in danger of his life, we should try to save it, whether it is a man or a woman.' Meinik replies, 'You must be a strange people.'⁴⁵

The nurse Soyera explains to Harry Lindsay the qualities of his race:

They are very kind and considerate to nurses, and although they get angry when the gorrawallah or other men neglect their duty, they do not punish them as a Mahratta master would do. They are not double faced; when they say a thing they mean it and their word can always be trusted. As a people, no doubt they are anxious to extend their dominions, but they do not wish to do so for personal gain. They are not like the princes here, who go to war to gain territory and revenue.

She goes on to criticise the Mahrattas for internecine strife, injustice and harsh taxes, as opposed to the British, who believe in justice, fairness and order.⁴⁶

The British and the Indian systems are continually compared, to the detriment of the latter. The Rajah of Tripataly tells his two sons:

England is a great island, and as they have many ships of war, no enemy can land there. There is one king over the whole country, and there are written laws by which every one, high and low alike, are governed. So you see no one has to carry arms: all disputes are settled by the law, and there is peace everywhere; for as nothing would be settled by fighting, and the law would punish anyone, however much in the right he might be, who fought, there is no occasion at all for weapons. It is a good plan, for you see no one, however rich, can tyrannize over others, and were the greatest noble to kill the poorest peasant, the law would hang him just the same as it would hang a peasant who killed a lord.⁴⁷

When Harry Lindsay explains the British system to Nana Furnuwees he concludes that it is superior to the Mahratta tradition:

The changes there are not made by force but by the will of the representatives of the people in their assembly. A minister defeated there retires at once and his chief opponent succeeds him. The army has no determining voice in the conduct of affairs, but it is wholly under the orders of the minister who may happen to be in power. All this seems strange to us, but undoubtedly the system is far better for the population. There is no bloodshed, no burning of villages, no plundering, no confiscation of estates.⁴⁸

Had he been younger he would have visited England, studied institutions and sought to introduce them in India. But he is too old and the people are too set in their ways to change. Britain's superiority is thus seen to reside in parliamentary democracy, the rule of law and the maintenance of domestic peace – all unknown in India.

The virtues of this system are apparently evident to the Indians,

however, as Henty regularly puts into the mouth of his native characters a fervent desire for British rule. Typically Percy Groves's servant Akram Chunder in *Through the Sikh War* canvasses the virtues of British rule:

The government is bad and has been so for long. The people should be rich and contented indeed under such a rule as that by the English, firm and just ... The English hate oppression ... A generation or two at the outside and the English will be rulers in Serinagur, I think, sahib. What a blessing it would be to the country! In the first place there would be neither over-taxation nor oppression. All would live and till their lands and work their loom, secure of enjoying their earnings in peace. Money would flow into the country, for the sahibs would come in great numbers from the plains, for health and for sport, and would spend their money freely and would buy our manufactures.⁴⁹

The recurrent refrain in the native demands for British rule is the fact that the British bring peace, prosperity, law, order and fair taxation. It was in his earliest novel of India, *In Times of Peril*, that Henty dramatised the great heroic myth of the Indian empire, the Mutiny, which encapsulated most potently the distinction between the Indians and the British. He exploited it to the full as a source both of moral indignation at the treachery, savagery and inconstancy of the sepoys and of moral lessons in the endurance, fortitude and dedication of the British.

For all his firm belief in imperial expansion and British rule, Henty was far from uncritical of British actions. For instance in *To Herat and Cabul* he roundly condemned the whole enterprise of the First Afghan War:

Of all the wars in which our troops have taken part never was one entered upon so recklessly or unjustifiably. The ruler of Afghanistan, Dost Mohamed, was sincerely anxious for our friendship. He was alarmed at the menacing attitude of Russia which ... was threatening his dominions... Our commissioner in Cabul was convinced of the Ameer's honesty of intention and protested most strongly against the course taken by the Indian government, who determined upon setting up a discredited prince, who had for many years been a fugitive in India, in Place of Dost Mohamed. In spite of his remonstrances, the war was undertaken. Nothing could have been worse than the arrangements for it, and the troops suffered terribly from thirst and want of transport.

Once in Afghanistan, under an elderly, infirm and indecisive general, British forces are demoralised by inactivity, so that:

when the unworthy order to retreat before their exulting enemy was given they had lost all confidence in themselves or their officers, and, weakened by hunger and hampered by an enormous train of camp-followers, they went as sheep to the slaughter in the trap the Afghans had prepared for

them. It would almost seem that their fate was a punishment for the injustice of the war. Misfortunes have befallen our arms, but never one so dark and disgraceful as this.⁵⁰

Similarly the conduct of the First Burmese War, although morally justified, was castigated for its total lack of understanding of the 'difficulties to be encountered from the effects of the climate and the deficiency of transport'.⁵¹

Throughout the books the conduct of the East India Company, seen of course from the perspective of direct rule after the Mutiny, is criticised for incompetence, indecision and bad faith. When an East India Company clerk briefs Charlie Marryat on the history of British India to date, he describes it 'as a history of defeat, loss of prestige and position. We have been outfought and outdiplomated and have made a mess of everything, we put out hands to'. Marryat protests at the dishonourable nature of the company's dealing. It is all redeemed by a hero, by the genius of Robert Clive, but Clive himself is not immune from criticism. When Clive and others forge documents, swindle Indian allies and amass fortunes for themselves Henty comments, 'A more disgraceful transaction was never entered into by a body of English gentlemen.'⁵² Implicitly they have reduced themselves to the treacherous and dishonest level of the Indians, so often castigated by Henty. When Governor Drake and Captain Minchin abandon Calcutta to its fate, Henty is outraged: 'The name of these cowards should be held infamous as long as the English nation exists.' Charlie has the satisfaction of delivering a sizzling uppercut to the jaw of the cowardly Governor and denouncing him and his cohorts: 'You will be doomed to infamy by the contempt and loathing which Englishmen will feel when this deed is known. Cowards, base, infamous cowards.'⁵³

In his attitude to the indigenous peoples of India, Henty faithfully reflected the attitudes of his age. He is inclined to characterise whole races dismissively. The Malays are 'well known for their treacherous nature' and 'the disgrace of a broken promise is not one which weighs heavily on the Afghan's mind'.⁵⁴ As for the Indians, they are best suited to the role of faithful servants ('There are no better nor more pleasant waiters in the world than the natives of Hindostan') or sepoy.⁵⁵ Almost all the British heroes have faithful native servants, who often rescue their master and whose most conspicuous feature is their loyalty: Azim in *To Herat and Cabul*, Youssouf in *Name and Fame*, Ibrahim in *The Tiger of Mysore*, Minik in *On the Irrawaddy*, Abdool in *At the Point of the Bayonet*, Akram Chunder and Bhop Lal in *Through the Sikh War*. An interesting racial sidelight in the equation in *With Clive in India* of the Irish private soldier Tim Kelly, whose life is saved by Charlie and who speaks in a tiresome stage 'Oirish' dialect, and the native servant Hossein. Both

serve Charlie faithfully, become firm friends and end up as butler and valet of their master in England.

The counterpart of the British affection for faithful servants is the British respect for fighting races. In his final book, *A Soldier's Daughter* (1906), Henty endorsed the prevailing Social Darwinism when he has Lieutenant Carter declare:

All savage races love fighting, and certainly our own people do. If there were a great war, hundreds and thousands of men would volunteer at once. I am afraid this instinct brings us very near the savage. I think no other nation possesses it to anything like the same extent as the British race.

The nearest he can think of are Sikhs, Punjabis and Ghurkas ('no finer fighters in the world') and Haussas in Africa – all of whom serve under the British ('All these peoples go into a fray as if they were going to a feast'). The Germans, French and Russians are fine soldiers but fight only because they are ordered and have to obey – the Turk fights out of religious fanaticism. But in the British it is a racial instinct. Carter hopes that this instinct will not be knocked out of the British by:

school boards and other contrivances of that sort. The school boards train up the boys to despise their fathers' callings. I am afraid they all want to go into shops, or get some small clerkship and to struggle, in fact, for anything where they can wear black clothes instead of fustian. Still, I hope they won't lose the courage that our race has always possessed.

He sees some hope in the fact that large numbers of board school graduates are joining the Volunteers. They will be needed in the event of war. As to the enemy, it is unlikely to be France since the Fashoda climbdown, it might be Germany, a commercial and colonial rival, but the most likely candidate is Russia.⁵⁶

Carter's speech almost suggests equality between the British and the martial races of India. But this is regularly discounted in the Indian novels. For all their courage and fighting spirit, the Indian races crucially lack discipline and training. They can function properly only under British officers. Colonel Groves explains to Percy:

It is a standard rule with us out here, Percy, never to count upon the natives unless you are with them yourself. The Sikhs are brave but they want good leaders, and are not to be relied upon unless under the eye of an officer they respect. They may hate us as Europeans, but in the wars of Runjeet Singh they fought like lions under our command. You will see that that will be their weak point if they come to blows with the British. They will fight, and fight pluckily, but without Europeans to lead them they will fall into disorder and there will be no one to rally and control them, to take advantage of any temporary success, or to retrieve a temporary failure. They don't know it themselves, and they will speedily learn it. Given English officers,

the natives of India fight as well as our own men ... but they would be worth very little if deprived of their European officers.⁵⁷

Yet Henty's attitude is not the straight racism of the later nineteenth century. Many of his stories reflect the more ambiguous position before the Mutiny when there was a great deal more racial intermingling than afterwards. The opening of the Suez Canal meant the arrival of English women in large numbers and they maintained a much stricter racial and social segregation than had existed in Company days. Dick Holland's mother Margaret is half Indian, the daughter of the Rajah of Tripataly and his English wife. But Mrs Holland warns Dick not to mention his Indian blood because of the prejudice of British officers and 'still more their wives'.⁵⁸ Colonel Roland Groves, Percy's uncle, is married to an Indian princess Mehtab, known as the Ranee, to whom Percy is devoted. Harry Lindsay is raised as an Indian under the name of Puntjee and trained as a Mahratta warrior. His nurse and adoptive mother Soyera is, however, careful to teach him the English language, the rudiments of Christianity and the virtues of Englishness. He is able to move with comparative ease between Indian and English society. But he tells her that she has always been more than a mother to him and will always be with him. In Harry's case, love transcends race, just as in the case of Mrs Holland and the Ranee royal birth transcends race.

The values and virtues underpinning the work of Henty and his contemporaries also permeated many of the boys' papers that emerged in the 1890s, following the trail blazed by the *Boy's Own Paper*, launched in 1879 as an antidote to 'penny dreadfuls'. No fewer than 149 new papers for boys appeared between 1880 and 1918.⁵⁹ Many did not survive for long but those that did had clearly perfected the blend to give them commercial viability.

There was a close and functional relationship between juvenile novels and the weekly magazines. Many of the great writers for boys contributed to the magazines and increasingly, as in the adult market, their novels appeared first in serial form. Kingston, Ballantyne, Henty, Fenn and Jules Verne all contributed to the *Boy's Own Paper*. Kingston himself founded the short-lived *Union Jack* magazine (1880-83), whose editorship – perhaps symbolically – was taken over by Henty when Kingston died in 1880. The staple fare of these magazines was romance and adventure. In the 1890s it took on a distinct militarist and imperialist tone. John Springhall has shown how strongly imperialist were the raft of half-penny weeklies launched by Alfred Harmsworth in the 1890s: *Pluck*, *Marvel*, *The Boys' Friend*, *The Boys' Herald*, *The Boys' Realm* and *Union Jack* (no relation to the Kingston magazine).⁶⁰ A Harmsworth brochure proclaimed:

The Union Jack contains stories relating to many phases of the British Empire [such as] how we obtained our various colonies and stories of England's prowess on land and sea, and of her great naval and military heroes. It is interesting to learn from recruiting sergeants that these three journals [*Pluck*, *Marvel* and *Union Jack*] do more to provide recruits for our Army and Navy and to keep up the estimation of these two services in the eyes of the people of this country than anything else.⁶¹

Union Jack ran from 1894 to 1933, *Pluck* from 1894 to 1924 and *Marvel* from 1893 to 1922.

Another flagbearer of imperialism was *Chums*, launched by Cassell's in 1892 and edited initially by Max Pemberton, friend and later biographer of Alfred Harmsworth. Captain Shaw, an assiduous reader as a boy, wrote, 'This was the youngster's Bible in the early nineties; it was romance in black and white, stirring vague longings, spurring warm desires.'⁶² After an uncertain start, its future was secured by the success of Pemberton's up-to-date naval serial *The Iron Pirate* and the appearance of Samuel Walkey's pirate stories, which remained a feature of *Chums* throughout its existence. Of *The Iron Pirate* Shaw recalled in 1958, 'Max Pemberton's "Iron Pirate" seemed the be-all and end-all of a boy's existence, who couldn't run fast enough to the local newsagent's to get the next issue, almost hot from the press.'⁶³ Other autobiographers have recalled after a gap of sometimes fifty years the impact on them of Walkey's *Rogues of the Fiery Cross*.⁶⁴

Chums was issued weekly in penny numbers from 1892 to 1932 and thereafter appeared as an annual until 1941, when wartime paper shortages signalled its demise.⁶⁵ It demonstrates a strong commitment to the empire throughout its history. In 1902, for instance, it launched a competition with a first prize of ten guineas and subsidiary prizes of books and certificates. Two maps were issued, one coloured, to be mounted, framed and kept, and the other plain, to be coloured red for the empire, blue for the rest and the oceans left white. The idea was that every map coloured by a British chum would be sent to schools in the colonies and vice versa:

Thus the Chum in our distant colonies will see before him the work of his British Chum and feel his heart touched by the magnetic thrill of partnership in the Empire and the British Chum, looking at the handiwork which painted the Empire on paper, will never forget how the same colonial hands with superb and enduring gallantry helped to keep up the Empire's end in South Africa during the past few years.⁶⁶

Chums maintained its credentials throughout the inter-war years by, for instance, running reprints of two of the most powerful mythic texts of popular imperialism, Edgar Wallace's *Bosambo of the River*, featuring

Commissioner Sanders of the River Territories in West Africa, and Sax Rohmer's *The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu*, charting the struggle between Commissioner Nayland Smith and 'the yellow peril incarnate in one man'.

From 1930 onwards *Chums* bore the introductory logo 'To the boys of the Empire upon whom the sun never sets' and led off with strongly imperialist editorials. The 1938 editorial declared:

Never in its wonderful history has our Empire been more united or alive to its common duty and purpose than now, and in this connection we can proudly feel that one of the chief instruments that links the boys of the Empire together is *Chums* for *Chums* has been faithful to that purpose and intention since its inception in 1892.

The outbreak of the Second World War was seen firmly in an imperial context, the 1940 editorial proclaiming:

One thing has demonstrated itself in no uncertain manner, and that is the solidarity of our Empire, the loyalty of those who speak our language and have been fostered in those traditions that Wolfe, Clive, Nelson, Cook and those other great pioneers set for us ... the annual reaches you this year at a time when a more youthful spirit enthuses itself in everything that is Imperial, a moment when we are beginning to see in effect all the preparations for preparedness that have been going on in recent years.

In its dramatisation of the exploits of the armed forces the navy always had priority in *Chums*, throughout its history, something which in part reflects a recognition of the serials which had achieved its initial success and which also demonstrates the interests and expertise of such long-serving mainstays as Shaw and Walkey. But after World War I naval heroes were joined by air force heroes, who had emerged as the new military role models, 'the cavalry of the clouds ... the knighthood of the war', as Lloyd George called them. The technological excitement of speed, the freedom provided by the air, the chivalric image, all ensured their instant mythification. But this took place in an imperial context with the promotion of Imperial Airways to link up the empire and with air squadrons utilised to suppress unrest in the Middle East and on the North West Frontier. To be 'air-minded' was to be modern, and aeroplanes, like motor bikes and wireless, were heavily featured in most inter-war boys' papers.⁶⁷

A new generation of boys' writers, notably Percy F. Westerman, George E. Rochester and Captain W. E. Johns promoted the air hero in juvenile literature. Frequently their heroes were to be found defending the empire against the activities of native rebels, Bolsheviks and other subversives.⁶⁸ The most celebrated hero to emerge from the inter-war boys' papers was Squadron Leader James 'Biggles' Bigglesworth, who

went on to star in 102 novels between 1932 and 1970. Captain W. E. Johns stated clearly the philosophy that lay behind his stories:

I teach a boy to be a man, for without that essential qualification he will never be anything. I teach sportsmanship according to the British idea ... I teach that decent behaviour wins in the end as a natural order of things. I teach the spirit of team-work, loyalty to the Crown, the Empire and to rightful authority.

He defined the basic principles of decent behaviour as 'courage, loyalty, fair play, knight errantry'.⁶⁹ *Chums* carried serialised air stories by Rochester and Westerman in the inter-war years as well as regular series mythifying the chivalric airmen of the Great War. There were factual articles, too, for instance on the great air pioneers like Sir Charles Kingsford Smith and Charles A. Lindbergh and on 'the air might of Britain' with an appeal to *Chums* readers to join the RAF.

The heyday of army stories was the two decades leading up to World War I. *Chums* tended to assign its stories according to its writers' talents and interests.⁷⁰ Its chief military writer was D. H. Parry, who contributed regularly from 1892 to 1935. Max Pemberton wrote of him in 1936, 'D. H. Parry, who knew every button on every uniform in the British army, brought his drums and fifes and wrote for me *For Glory and Renown*, a soldier's story which many old boys remember to this day.'⁷¹ This serial opened the first issue of *Chums* and Parry wrote at regular intervals serials dramatising and heroising the imperial army. Among them were '*Listed in the Lancers* (1913), charting Jack Robinson's adventures in 'The Yellow Lancers' on the North West Frontier, *Jim of Company C* (1914), featuring the exploits of a gentleman ranker in the First Hussars in the Sudan, and *The Deathless Dynasty* (1924), about a British regiment, 'The Red Admirals', putting down a frontier uprising in India. In 1921 Lieutenant Colonel Brereton's *Scouts of the Baghdad Patrols* was serialised. In this story two young Englishmen organise a scout troop in Iraq which successfully rounds up a troop of bandits. 'They were tried in open court with that fairness which has raised Britain so high in the minds of all natives, and promptly executed.'⁷² The scouts here effectively act as a junior militia.

But if there were proportionately fewer military than naval and aerial serials, there was certainly a strong military emphasis in illustrations and factual articles. *Chums* prided itself on its regular full-colour plates. Robert H. MacDonald has done a systematic analysis of the illustrations in *Chums* between 1892 and 1914 and argues persuasively that 'by repetition and emphasis a vocabulary of patriotic images was developed and exploited, which for a generation of British males dramatized the myth of Empire'.⁷³ The illustrations particularly highlighted heroic set

pieces (charges, rescues, last stands), displays of technological power (naval reviews, full-dress parades, guns) and fights against wild animals, symbolising the need to impose order and civilisation on the untamed wilderness.

The values he sees expressed are manliness, racial superiority and individual heroism. But his analysis of the illustration on the spine of the *Chums* annuals from 1893 to 1908 is misleading. It shows two soldiers, one with a revolver and sabre standing over a fallen comrade who is injured. According to MacDonald they are 'clearly officers'. But this ignores *Chums*' own explanation of the illustration, that it is a wounded private being protected by his officer. 'It was,' says *Chums*, 'a heroic deed, the deed of a man who, though a superior in the duty of life, was yet a chum in those more noble characteristics which are happily to be found amongst true men in every standing of life.'⁷⁴ So it is a celebration not of caste solidarity but of cross-class comradeship within the context of military service.

The visual imagery was supplemented by factual reports. In 1898 *Chums* ran a series on heroes from the public schools. The majority of them were military commanders, their exploits lovingly chronicled. In 1900 a photographic series, *Under the Queen's flag*, showed scenes of military and naval life from around the empire and there were fifty-one portraits of commanders – on both sides – in the Boer War. In 1907 there was a series of pictures of soldiers of different regiments, with captions on their exploits.

Even when the stories in *Chums* were not directly military but were about adventure and romance in foreign lands the values remained the same and reflected a commonly held imperialist perspective. Major Charles Gilson, who wrote a large number of popular adventure serials set in China and Africa, recorded in his autobiography his belief that:

the white man is not in the East on sufferance. Be he British, American or Dutch, he is there in the natural process of evolution of mankind; he is there because he is wanted and the time when he will not be wanted is centuries ahead ... he wants justice for himself and all men, whatever the colour of their skin and moreover he wants to work.

He also wrote of the people he admired in chivalric terms: General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien was a 'chevalier sans peur et sans reproche' and General Fitzroy Hart 'of the knight errant type'.⁷⁵ These attitudes were faithfully reproduced in his fiction.

They were shared by Captain Frank Shaw, who wrote a succession of invasion serials for *Chums*, which amply demonstrate the extent to which juvenile fiction took its cue from current preoccupations and from adult genres. He began in 1910 with *The Great Mutiny of 1911* (written

under the pseudonym of Frank Cleveland). It dramatised the suppression of a new Indian mutiny. He followed it in 1911 with *Terror from the East*, depicting what might happen if India, China and Japan collectively declared war on Britain. Their combined fleet lands an invading army at St Ives which proceeds to wreak havoc until decisively defeated. In 1913 *The Swoop of the Eagle* depicted a German invasion, with an editorial caveat: 'This story is not intended to stir up race hatred but is written as a true picture of what would happen if a great continental nation attacked our country.' *Lion's Teeth and Eagle's Claws*, which ran in the first few months of 1914, was yet another story of 'a struggle to the death between our Empire and her Enemies'.

In this serial the heroes are Gerald and Roy Carrington, twin sons of Colonel Carrington VC:

For centuries past, the Carringtons had borne part and lot in the making of the British Empire, and it was a tradition in the family that all the men served King and Country in some useful fashion, usually in one of the two fighting services.⁷⁶

When in 1914 war breaks out with Germany as a result of a Balkan dispute Roy becomes a midshipman in the navy serving aboard HMS *Empire*. Gerald is prevented by his club foot from serving but dreams of doing 'something for the Motherland – God bless her. With all the heart and soul he possessed he wanted to share such glories, to take his share in his country's work.' Eventually he manages to join the Royal Flying Corps. Their father tells the boys, 'If I heard of you dead in battle, I'd say to myself and to all the world that it was for England and that I was proud to have a son die in her cause.'⁷⁷ When the Germans invade England, north and south, the colonel himself emerges from retirement to take command of a mixed battalion of reservists, Territorials and regulars:

They had been recruited from city slums in the main, out-of-work men who did not like work even when offered. A year before many of them had been slouching outcasts, unable to look their fellow men in the face, round-shouldered, weak-chested, untrained in arms. But now – they gripped their rifles as if they meant it, their eyes shone with eagerness to be at work. They had been taught some of their amazing lesson – they had learned what England meant.⁷⁸

The colonel leads them in the singing of the national anthem before being wounded in a heroic stand, but they are rescued in the nick of time after sustaining heavy losses.

After a sequence of tremendous adventures on land, sea and air, the King gives Gerald command of the British air fleet in the final battle:

King George V of Great Britain and Ireland, Emperor of India and of the Dominions beyond the seas, rose to his feet and clasped the hand of Gerald Carrington. 'You shall lead the air fleet into action, Carrington, and I wish we here in England were all so useful to the Empire as you' ... Men, looking at his shining eyes and erect figure, forgot that he was a newly promoted subaltern and merely a boy; his manhood served to clothe him about as with a garment ... The fine glow of fervid patriotism, the consuming desire to do something for England that had been his ruling passion since early boyhood, filled him to the exclusion of all other emotions.⁷⁹

The British are victorious, the Germans defeated and the Carringtons ride behind the King in the victory procession. 'Oh, well done the Carringtons,' cry the onlookers. Shaw ends, 'Honours would be showered on them later, but it was enough for them to know that they had done their best for England. Boys, it is for you to follow in their path.'⁸⁰

This vivid, fast-moving and tremendously exciting serial combines duty, service and sacrifice, the individual and the community, patriotism and militarism, monarchy and empire in a powerful and seductive image of heroism and glory. It is worth noting that Shaw's attitude remained unaltered by his experiences in the First World War. In 1925 *Chums* ran his serial *The Red Deluge*, in which Russians and Chinese invade Britain and two brothers, one in the navy and the other in the air force, combine to help defeat them. When Shaw writes in 1958 of the death of his son in World War II he uses much the same terms as his fictional Colonel Carrington, speaking in 1914. Wing Commander Grenville Shaw had survived a childhood attack of meningitis to grow up and embark on 'a distinguished career in the Royal Air Force and to die gallantly in 1940, after playing a worthwhile role in the salvation of the country he loved as much as I, his father, did.'⁸¹ Captain Frank H. Shaw was product of, propagandist for and monument to a concept of empire that emerged in the 1880s and 1890s and – contrary to what is often alleged by historians – survived unaltered at least until World War II.⁸²

Notes

- 1 Captain Frank H. Shaw, *Seas of Memory*, 1958, p. 13–16.
- 2 Shaw, *Seas of Memory*, p. 10.
- 3 This view is advanced in, for instance, Peter Parker, *The old Lie*, 1987, Cecil Eby, *The Road to Armageddon*, London and Durham, N.C., 1987, and W. J. Reader, *At Duty's Call*, Manchester, 1988.
- 4 General Sir George Younghusband, *A Soldier's Memories in War and Peace*, 1917, p. 187.
- 5 Roger T. Stearn, 'G. W. Steevens and the message of empire', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 17 (1989), pp. 210–31; and chapter 6 in this volume.
- 6 Edward M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815–1914*, 1980, p. 213.
- 7 Paul Usherwood and Jenny Spencer-Smith, *Lady Butler, Battle Artist, 1846–1933*, Gloucester, 1987; J. W. M. Hichberger, *Images of the Army*, Manchester, 1988; John Springhall, 'Up Guards and at them!' British imperialism and popular art, 1880–1914',

- in J. M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, Manchester, 1986, pp. 49–72; Paul Usherwood, chapter 7, in this volume.
- 8 Michael Booth, *English Melodrama*, 1965.
- 9 Shaw, *Seas of Memory*, p. 143.
- 10 George Manville Fenn, *George Alfred Henty: the Story of an active Life*, 1907, p. 334.
- 11 Fenn, *Henty*, pp. 338–9.
- 12 Robert L. Darrt, G. A. Henty: *a Bibliography*, Altrincham and Cedar Grove, N.J., 1971, p. 76.
- 13 *Chums*, 2 (1894), p. 159.
- 14 *Chums*, 2 (1894), p. 41.
- 15 R. Koebner and H. D. Schmidt, *Imperialism*, Cambridge, 1964.
- 16 Jeffrey Richards, *Visions of Yesterday*, 1973, p. 11.
- 17 Richards, *Visions of Yesteryear*, p. 12.
- 18 Michael Howard, 'Empire, race and war in pre-1914 Britain', in Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Valerie Pearl and Blair Worden (eds.), *History and Imagination*, 1981, p. 350.
- 19 Field Marshal Viscount Wolseley, *The Story of a Soldier's Life I*, 1903, p. 20.
- 20 John Ruskin, *Crown of Wild Olive*, 1909, pp. 122–4, 164.
- 21 H. W. Koch (ed.), *The Origins of the First World War*, 1972, p. 344.
- 22 Olive Anderson, 'The growth of Christian militarism in mid-Victorian Britain', *English Historical Review*, 86 (1971), p. 64.
- 23 Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 1905, pp. 163–4.
- 24 Mark Girouard, *Return to Camelot*, New Haven and London, 1981.
- 25 Commander Charles N. Robinson, *The British Tar in Fact and Fiction*, 1909, p. 270.
- 26 Eric Quayle, *Ballantyne the Brave*, 1967; Rev. Maurice Rooke Kingsford, *The Life, Work and Influence of William Henry Giles Kingston*, Toronto, 1947.
- 27 R. M. Ballantyne, *In the Track of the Troops*, 1878, pp. 184–7.
- 28 G. A. Henty, *St. George for England*, 1924, p. 5.
- 29 G. A. Henty, *Through Three Campaigns*, 1904, p. 5. The orthography of people and places in the British Empire has changed over the years. For convenience I have retained the spellings used by contemporary authors. It also underlines the extent to which they are the people and places of myth rather than history.
- 30 See Jeffrey Richards, 'With Henty to Africa', in J. Richards (ed.), *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, Manchester, 1989, pp. 72–106.
- 31 G. A. Henty, *With Clive in India*, n.d., p. 11.
- 32 Henty, *Through Three Campaigns*, p. 61.
- 33 G. A. Henty, *Through the Sikh War*, 1918, p. 30.
- 34 G. A. Henty, *At the Point of the Bayonet*, n.d., p. 31.
- 35 G. A. Henty, *The Tiger of Mysore*, 1910, pp. 279–80.
- 36 Henty, *Tiger of Mysore*, p. 17.
- 37 Henty, *Through the Sikh War*, pp. 18–19.
- 38 Henty, *Through the Sikh War*, p. 51.
- 39 G. A. Henty, *On the Irrawaddy*, n.d., pp. 120, 333–4.
- 40 Henty, *Through the Sikh War*, p. 5.
- 41 Henty, *At the Point of the Bayonet*, p. 5.
- 42 Henty, *On the Irrawaddy*, p. 6.
- 43 Henty, *On the Irrawaddy*, p. 28.
- 44 Henty, *Through the Sikh War*, p. 362; *With Clive in India*, p. 155; *To Herat and Cabul*, 1902, pp. 102, 181.
- 45 Henty, *On the Irrawaddy*, p. 89.
- 46 Henty, *At the Point of the Bayonet*, p. 21.
- 47 Henty, *Tiger of Mysore*, p. 63. Cf. *Through the Sikh War*, pp. 50–1.
- 48 Henty, *At the Point of the Bayonet*, pp. 126–7.
- 49 Henty, *Through the Sikh War*, pp. 214–15. Cf. *On the Irrawaddy*, pp. 118, 214, and *Through the Sikh War*, p. 196.
- 50 Henty, *To Herat and Cabul*, pp. 5–6.
- 51 Henty, *On the Irrawaddy*, p. 5.
- 52 Henty, *With Clive in India*, p. 74.

- 53 Henty, *With Clive in India*, pp. 223, 229.
 54 Henty, *At the Point of the Bayonet*, p. 204; *For Name and Fame*, n.d., p. 213.
 55 G. A. Henty, *In Times of Peril*, 1922, p. 16.
 56 G. A. Henty, *A Soldier's Daughter*, n.d., pp. 23–7.
 57 Henty, *Through the Sikh War*, pp. 112–13. Cf. *With Clive in India*, pp. 120, 359.
 58 Henty, *Tiger of Mysore*, p. 21.
 59 Kirsten Drotner, *English Children and their Magazines, 1751–1945*, New Haven and London, 1988, p. 123.
 60 John Springhall, '“Healthy papers for manly boys”: imperialism and race in the Harmsworths' halfpenny boys' papers of the 1890s and 1900s', in Richards, *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, pp. 107–25.
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 62 Shaw, *Seas of Memory*, p. 10.
 63 Shaw, *Seas of Memory*, p. 10.
 64 W. MacQueen-Pope, *Back Numbers*, 1954, p. 255; G. R. Samways, *The Road to Greyfriars*, 1984, p. 188.
 65 Kevin Carpenter (ed.), *Penny Dreadfuls and Comics*, 1983, p. 46.
 66 *Chums*, 11 (1903), p. 6.
 67 Dennis Butts, 'Imperialism of the air – flying stories, 1900–50', in Richards, *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, pp. 126–43.
 68 See David Enrico Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control*, Manchester, 1990, and chapter 9 of this volume.
 69 Peter Berresford Ellis and Piers Williams, *By Jove, Biggles: the Life of Captain W. E. Johns*, 1981, pp. 218, 221.
 70 On *Chums* writers see Brian Doyle, *Who's Who of Boys' Writers and Illustrators*, 1964.
 71 Max Pemberton, *Sixty Years Ago and After*, 1936, p. 115.
 72 Lieutenant Colonel F. S. Brereton, *Scouts of the Baghdad Patrol*, n.d., p. 305.
 73 Robert H. MacDonald, 'Signs from the imperial quarter: illustrations in *Chums*, 1892–1914', *Children's Literature*, 16 (1988), p. 31.
 74 *Chums*, 2 (1894), p. 51.
 75 Charles Gilson, *Chances and Mischances*, n.d., pp. 197, 28, 36.
 76 *Chums*, 22 (1914), p. 239.
 77 *Chums*, 22 (1914), pp. 238, 240.
 78 *Chums*, 22 (1914), p. 320.
 79 *Chums*, 22 (1914), p. 598.
 80 *Chums*, p. 598.
 81 Shaw, *Seas of Memory*, p. 19.
 82 Despite the abundant evidence to the contrary, some historians still persist in the claim that the working classes were unmoved by and uninterested in the empire. See, for instance, John Belchem, *Industrialization and the Working Class*, 1990, p. 243.

CHAPTER FIVE

Heroic myths of empire

John M. MacKenzie

In their introduction to *Africa and the Victorians* Robinson and Gallagher acknowledged that 'the lonely end of Livingstone and Gordon's martyrdom on the steps of the palace at Khartoum haunted the imagination of their fellow countrymen'. 'But,' they went on, drawing back from the implications of such a statement, 'these archetypal figures were but the heroes of an hour. Popular attention was never directed towards Africa for long.'¹ If we can include the heroes of empire in other continents, notably those of India, and substitute 'Empire' for 'Africa', this view faithfully represents one aspect of the standard historiography of British imperialism. This chapter will offer an exploration and critique of a contention which is asserted with remarkable self-confidence, yet totally unsupported by evidence. It represents, in short, no more than the intuition of scholars from a pluralist and sceptical age. In fact the evidence strongly points the other way.

The evidence for the construction, development and utilisation of myths is not to be found in official documents or in the products of the 'official mind' of imperialism. It is to be found in the surrounding culture. This cultural environment provides important keys to the understanding of late nineteenth-century empire. The phrase 'the psychology of imperialism' has frequently been used in rather loose and ill-defined ways, but it is surely through the heroic myths of empire that we can approach a more effective psychoanalysis. In order to analyse these heroic myths and the reasons they arose with some power and apparent effectiveness at that particular point in British history, we have to use a variety of different sources and derive insights from other disciplines, notably anthropology, psychology, art history and the study of popular literature.

It is a surprising fact that imperial heroes have never been subjected to the kind of analysis applied to other heroic figures. Some attention has been paid to naval hagiography, particularly the development of the Nelson cult.² In a notable article Olive Anderson dissected the tradition

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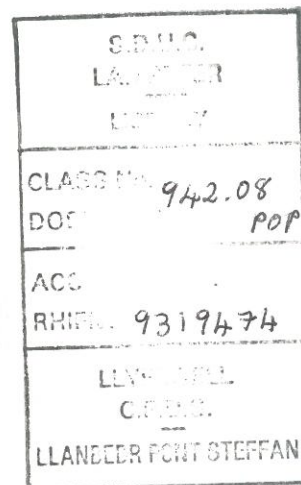
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