

## PROPAGANDA AND EMPIRE

- of entertainment, and imperial sentiment migrated into them.
- 47 George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 63-5
- 48 George Orwell, 'My country right or left', *Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell*, London, 1970, 591.
- 49 For example, George Orwell, 'Boys' weeklies', *Collected Essays*, 505-31.
- 50 J. A. Hobson, *The Psychology of fingoism*, London, 1901, 12.
- 51 *The Guardian*, 21 and 22 June 1983.
- 52 J. H. Plumb, *The Death of the Past*, London, 1969, 145.

## — 1 — THE VEHICLES OF IMPERIAL PROPAGANDA



The late nineteenth-century imperial world view was an integral part of the commercial, industrial, and social revolution which took place in Britain between the 1850s and 1914. During that period the population nearly doubled; incomes exhibited a similar growth at a time when prices remained relatively steady; and British society achieved nearly universal literacy.<sup>1</sup> Dramatic changes occurred in patterns of consumption in the last two decades of the century as new sources of supply were opened up, new tastes created, new means of preservation, packaging, and marketing found.<sup>2</sup> There were also unrivalled opportunities for the leisure and entertainment industry, and a voracious new demand for collectible items, which contributed to the taste for bric-a-brac so characteristic of all but the very poorest of homes. All these changes reflected technical developments which lay at the heart of the 'new imperialism', providing its motive power, its justification, and also the instruments through which its propaganda could be disseminated.

It has been customary to see the age of the mass media as arriving with the cinema, the wireless, and television. But before the era of the electrical and electronic media, printed and visual materials became available at prices so low as to place them in almost every home. It is perhaps difficult for us, jaded by the printed word and the omnipresent electronic image, to comprehend fully the impact of these materials. There seems to have been a craving for visual representations of the world, of events, and of the great and famous, which a large number of agencies and commercial companies sought to satisfy in the period from the 1870s to the First World War. New advertising techniques were central to all this activity, and companies creating and supplying the new tastes were concerned to sell not just their own product, but also the world system which produced it. The most aggressive and innovative advertisers of the day were companies dependent on the imperial economic nexus, in tea, chocolate, soaps and oils, tobacco, meat extracts, shipping, and later rubber. They set out not only to illustrate a romantic view of imperial origins, a pride in national possession of what Joseph Chamberlain called the imperial 'estates', but also to identify themselves with royal and military events, and to score from the contemporary cult of personality.

In his classic description of Edwardian Salford, *The Classic Slum*,

Robert Roberts refers to a 'culture of the streets from which the young especially profited'.<sup>3</sup> It consisted of 'information of every kind from posters and advertisements', the 'regular scrutiny of newsagents' windows', which were 'festooned' with hundreds of picture postcards, the new marketing gimmick, cigarette cards crying out to be collected, and a wealth of boys' papers which could be read and swapped. Such ephemera (a term belied by the craze for collecting which they engendered) became a prime source of news, information, and patriotic and militarist propaganda. During the First World War this material inevitably became devoted almost entirely to patriotic ends, and, as we shall see, its imperial and colonial content became even more pronounced. The period from the late 1890s to 1918 has often been seen as the golden age of picture postcards, cigarette cards, juvenile journals, and the like, but in fact they continued to be used for propagandist ends until after the Second World War. Moreover, it was between the wars that marketing and advertising emerged as a separate profession, and they helped to sustain a new range of popular journals and literature in that period. The provision of ephemera and popular literature of all sorts will be an underlying theme in what follows, for many of the agencies described in subsequent chapters made assiduous use of the public interest in such material and the collecting activities associated with it.

It was of course nineteenth-century developments in printing that created this new mass medium of the printed word and the visual image. During the century, conservatism in printing was gradually broken down; wood gave way to iron, and steam power was applied from 1810.<sup>4</sup> But more important was the gradual widening of the range of printing processes. Specialised areas of printing appeared, stimulated by and in turn stimulating mechanical innovations. By the last quarter of the century, rotary presses, mechanised typesetting, and a range of machines for different types of printing were available. The treadle and light jobbing platens made possible large runs of posters, leaflets, and the like. Some aspects of mechanisation, including machine binding, aided the collapse in the unit cost of book production, a vast expansion in the publishing trade, and the first appearance of cheap popular editions available for every home. All this was made possible by associated developments in the paper industry. Hand-made rag paper was the rule until the middle of the century. The invention of the wood-pulp and other natural processes, together with the rapid development of machine manufacture, greatly reduced the cost of paper, assisted by the removal of all paper duties in 1861. Annual production in Britain expanded from 11,000 tons in 1800 to 100,000 tons in 1860, and to 652,000 tons in 1900.<sup>5</sup> Recent research indicates that the growth may

have been even greater.<sup>6</sup> At the beginning of the century, the printed word had still been the preserve of a small social class, and books were expensive even by today's standards. Printers and binders concentrated on the aesthetics of their trades, and were more interested in short runs of high value than in the wider dissemination of their wares. By the last quarter of the century all that had changed.

The new processes rendered large print runs of popular editions highly profitable. Publishing houses like Nelson grew rapidly after the introduction of the rotary press from the 1850s, and began to cater for a fast-expanding juvenile market, as well as for the new taste in books of illustrations and information.<sup>7</sup> All the literary classics were reissued in cheap editions, at prices as low as 6d, 3d, or even 1d.<sup>8</sup> But even more important than the classics were works which enshrined contemporary hero-worship, the cult of personality which was an inseparable part of imperialism. Stories of travel and exploration, missionary writings and biographies, the endless stream of popular lives of General Gordon and other heroes, books celebrating military and naval exploits, the 'romance' of transport, communications and engineering, the excitements of migration and pioneering life, the quaint and exotic among indigenous peoples of the Empire, all these became Christmas and birthday present staples, and above all prizes for school and Sunday school. To them we can add the vast range of children's novels and stories by G. A. Henty, F. S. Brereton and others, surveyed in chapter 8. In some working-class homes a little library of such books would be composed entirely of prizes for regular attendance at the Band of Hope or Sunday school.<sup>9</sup> Publishers provided both propaganda and bribes, dressed up in dust jackets (invented in this marketing age) and board covers which vividly conveyed the message carried within. Even if books were not read, their owners could scarcely miss the stirring titles and equally exciting cover illustrations which depicted an heroic and expansionist age, in which fellow countrymen generally overwhelmed or converted people of 'lesser' cultures.

Even more influential was the burgeoning popularity of journals for boys and, later, girls. A tremendous expansion in the publication of juvenile literature occurred in the 1870s and 1880s. At first, adult middle-class opinion saw this growth as untrained, rank with murder, crime, and sensation. A considerable controversy raged about the nature and quality of the material, and the provision of satisfactory periodicals for adolescents became part of the search for 'rational recreation', so much a feature of the age. Journals acceptable to adults' conception of appropriate juvenile interests, mainly enshrining adventurous and militaristic patriotism, began to appear from the late 1870s.

Dozens of different titles appeared, many sold for only a penny, and some of them reached enormous sales. They were exceptionally sensitive to developments in national concerns and contemporary events, as is illustrated by the new range of journals which mushroomed in the jingoistically dank conditions of the Boer War.<sup>10</sup>

The growth of 'jobbing' printing led to a great increase in the publication of leaflets, pamphlets, booklets, programmes, and other small ephemeral items which could be distributed free as advertising and propaganda or sold for a few pence each. Such material was used by all forms of entertainment, by the exhibitions, the armed forces, and missionary societies. Much of it must indeed have been ephemeral, but some was sufficiently attractive to be collected, and contemporary agencies and advertisers certainly saw these cheap pieces of printed paper as an effective way of purveying their ideas or their wares. Posters could be run off at the rate of 10,000 an hour at extraordinarily low cost from the 1860s, and 'poster art' emerged as a new art form which was to reach a great peak in production and quality in the inter-war years of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup>

As this 'veritable revolution' in printing was taking place, another, visual, revolution was under way.<sup>12</sup> Whereas printing advances represented dramatic change in an old technology, photography represented an entirely new one. Photography perfectly demonstrated the rapidity of technical and scientific discovery of the period, and at the same time literally captured the world on glass and paper. It has been described as offering a new lining to the human brain,<sup>13</sup> it captivated contemporaries, not just by transmitting and revealing the 'realities' of a newly opened world (like Felice Beato's photographs of Japan in the 1860s), but by offering them the opportunity to illustrate their achievements to their successors.<sup>14</sup> Through photography Europe could provide itself with a visual representation of the remodelling of the world through economic and political control. From the 1850s travelling photographers set out for North Africa, Egypt, India, Burma, and China to create and satisfy both a new taste for exotica and a fascination with the technology, the ships, railways, post offices, troops and arms, which facilitated Western intrusion in far-flung parts of the globe.<sup>15</sup> As Ian Jeffrey has put it, the camera became a coloniser, a preparer of the route to European expansion in the late nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

Above all, the camera was a source of entertainment, creating as much pleasure, as Jane Carlyle asserted, as any other development of the century.<sup>17</sup> But it was to take some time for photography to democratise itself. Until the 1890s it remained largely an aristocratic and upper middle-class preserve. The first books of photographs were all

very expensive. By the last quarter of the century, photographers were selling 'shilling' views, and, judging by surviving albums, members of the middle class began to collect the small *cartes de visite* photographs of royalty, famous statesmen, soldiers, and theatrical personalities as part of a developing personality cult, a careful manipulation of publicity by public figures ranging from the royal family (whose photographic popularity was engineered by the Queen herself) to music hall celebrities. Large framed photographs, instead of paintings, appeared on the walls of middle-class homes.

The main photographic craze of the period before the 1890s probably did not penetrate far into the working-class home either. This was the stereoscope, which was invented in time for the Great Exhibition of 1851, and no fewer than one million were sold within three months. It experienced a great growth of popularity from the 1860s, and the leading stereoscope company made 'One in every home' its marketing ambition.<sup>18</sup> The principle of the stereoscope was that two photographic images viewed through lenses in a simple hand-held or table-top device provided a three-dimensional effect. Vast numbers of stereoscope cards in sets were produced, and many of these represented other places, other climes, offering visual imperial propaganda for colonisation and migration. Some remain important photographic sources for the period, but the relative lateness of the popular exposure to photography is reflected in the actual growth rather than decline in wood-block engraving before 1890. Not until the invention of photographic film made possible the appearance of the cheap Eastman Kodak camera from 1888 could the magic circle of practitioners wrestling with complicated equipment and chemicals be extended. But more important than the practice of photography was the printing of the results. Processes for rapid and cheap printing of large runs appeared in the 1890s, and only then could the shilling view become the penny postcard view.

Until that time all but the most expensive books continued to be illustrated by woodcuts, and woodcuts (often themselves copies of photographs) continued to reign supreme in the illustrated journals like the *Illustrated London News*. Although there had been attempts to introduce the photographic half-tone in popular newspapers in the 1880s and 1890s, it was not until 1904 that they began to appear regularly. The photographic journals in existence by 1899 could not be produced cheaply enough to secure a mass circulation. Earlier in the century, Charles Knight's *Penny Magazine* and *Penny Cyclopaedia*, both using woodcuts, had sold as many as 200,000 and 75,000 copies respectively. But they had collapsed when production costs pushed

their price up from the original basic penny. The *Illustrated London News*, founded in 1842, became a prime conveyor of the dominant attitudes of the late nineteenth-century, but its circulation was never large enough to be described as truly popular. Its engravings, however, provided some of the most striking imperial and militarist icons of the age, and large numbers of servants (at a time when domestic service remained the largest single employer) must have seen copies when their masters and mistresses were finished with them. The difficulties of producing popular visual journals at the right price were well illustrated by George Newnes's *Ideal Magazine* of 1903. It attempted to use coloured photogravure, but the costs were too high, and only one issue appeared.

The influence of cheap photography, its sharpness of definition, its immediacy, even attempts at colour, were to be conveyed primarily through the sales of photographic ephemera. The democratisation of the visual image was undertaken by the postcard, and it must be seen as a central element in the ephemera boom of the period. The height of the picture postcard's popularity is generally regarded as lying between 1898 and 1918, a period in which it represented something of a mass craze in Europe, the United States, and the British Dominions.<sup>19</sup> The expansion of companies producing them, the millions purchased and posted each year, and the mania for preserving and collecting them, were a phenomenon of the age, meriting much comment at the time. The postcard represented a set of technical achievements — in photography, printing and mass production, not to mention the extension and speed of the postal service — which together symbolised several of the great achievements of the Victorian age. The Queen herself was fascinated by photography all her life, both as a source of entertainment to herself and as a means of influencing her subjects.

The postcard's antecedents reflected the possibilities of visual propaganda. Engravings at the head of notepaper and above all on envelopes did much more than simply offer pretty pictures: they were propagators of news and propagandisers for issues of the day, from Chartism to Sabbath observance, from temperance to imperial policies (for example, the issues associated with the Gordon crisis in the Sudan in 1884-85).<sup>20</sup> By the end of the century the picture postcard, astonishingly cheap to purchase and to post, was becoming the supreme vehicle for these various purposes, the dissemination of news and views in images which heightened the actions of the age, pictures that encapsulated the world, and brought it into even the humblest living room, the supreme expression of control through a particular type of slanted visual understanding. There was nothing objective about photography so used, and,

far from tending to 'deflate prevailing romantic rhetoric', it helped to inflate it.<sup>21</sup> Both sentiment and romance were never far from nineteenth-century photography, and it was a short step to propagandist manipulation, as Dr Barnardo's fake photographs of indigent children and the carefully posed 'before' and 'after' transformations illustrated.<sup>22</sup>

The postcard canalised photographic developments, and offered cheap visual reminders of other aspects of popular culture. It took over the role of the stereoscope, visual notepaper and envelopes, and gave wider circulation in yet cheaper form to songs and ballads, music hall turns, and sentimental poetry about emigration and the armed forces. Above all, the postcard contributed massively to the royal, political, military, and missionary personality cult of the period.<sup>23</sup> Issues on regiments, armaments, naval ships and navy life contributed greatly to the militarism of the age and aided recruitment. In the very earliest edition of *Scouting for Boys* Baden-Powell advised Scouts to collect postcards of naval vessels, so that they could understand the important defence issues of the day.<sup>24</sup> Both the Boer War and the First World War gave a massive fillip to the use of the postcard for propaganda purposes. The Dominion governments used them to encourage emigration, while companies like Lever Brothers, Lipton's, Fry's, and Cadbury's issued them not only to advertise their wares, but also to present an imperial economic and social ethos, reflecting a chain of activity from the colonial tropical product to the contented workers of Port Sunlight or Bournville.<sup>25</sup> Even those without an overtly propagandist purpose helped to reinforce contemporary attitudes, illustrating architecture, public occasions, transport, and the whole range of economic enterprises of the age. Indeed, postcard production was one of the most notable areas of commercial expansion. One source lists over three hundred postcard companies which appeared at this time, and there were many more local photographers, printers, stationers, and chemists, all producing cards of both local and national interest.<sup>26</sup>

The postcard was influential as news disseminator and educator. As Robert Roberts put it:

English traders soon realised that a new craze had arrived.... Clubs sprang up in every town and people collected and exchanged specimens. A family album filled with a varied selection was not the least item of entertainment in an evening spent at home. To a child avid for experience a newsagent's shop with a good display provided pleasure free and delightful. The picture postcard became a new aid to self-education as effective as any of his school lessons. Every great event of the day was reflected in illustration and explained in simple text.<sup>27</sup>

The power of the postcard was recognised early. Sir Evelyn Wrench, later founder of the English-speaking Union, founded a postcard

company in 1900 when he was only eighteen, with the twofold intention of matching German success in postcard production, and commemorating contemporary events.<sup>28</sup> Wrench formed a connection with W. T. Stead, editor of the *Review of Reviews*, through Stead's son Henry, and Stead soon became involved in using postcards to further imperial ends, notably tariff reform and imperial preference. Several companies formed close links with the armed forces and issued sets of cards to aid recruitment and secure public favour.<sup>29</sup> The missionary societies all issued large numbers of cards to secure both financial and moral support for their work. Inevitably, they heightened the heroism of missionary endeavour and the 'primitiveness' and 'superstitions' of the peoples of the missionary fields.

Vast numbers of cards were produced of the Empire itself, recording new buildings, transport and engineering achievements, colonial products, visits of governors and royalty, colonial forces and frontier warfare, labour migration, 'ethnics' showing the whole range of indigenous peoples under imperial rule, pioneering farmers, prospectors and miners, together with romantic (and sometimes fictional) deeds of imperial heroism. Not only were these cards sent through the post by people who had emigrated or by members of the armed forces, they were also available – since most of them were produced by British companies – at the corner shop. The important companies, like Tuck's, Valentine's, Rotary Photographic and others, marketed their wares everywhere. Sales of cards were not limited to the areas they represented, as today's garish counterparts tend to be. Shops maintained a full range, and people collected them just like stamps. Picture postcards were a great deal more than a means of communicating a quick message.

Postcards experienced only a slow decline after the First World War. The larger companies were still in business; the armed forces continued to make effective use of them until after the Second World War, as did the missionary societies. The Imperial Institute began to use them extensively in the 1920s and 1930s to convey its propaganda on the economic benefits of empire. The Empire Marketing Board produced several sets during its period of operation between 1926 and 1933. A fresh wave of patriotic, militarist material appeared with the Second World War, and if the imperial content was now rather more muted, it was nonetheless still present.

Cigarette cards, the other most influential form of ephemera, experienced a similar development. Despite their name, cigarette cards were issued not just by tobacco companies, but by a whole range of other concerns, including most notably tea, confectionery, and magazines. One source lists almost two hundred tobacco companies that

issued cards, and another catalogues more than three hundred companies of all sorts which used cards as a marketing technique.<sup>30</sup> Cigarette cards seem to have had their origins in the 1880s, but it was not until the end of the following decade that they began to experience a boom, helped along, like so many propagandist and marketing techniques, by the Boer War. Robert Roberts was even more unequivocal about the power of the cigarette card:

'Programmed' learning and visual aids, too, came to the child in the shape of cigarette card series. The value of the 'fag' card from 1900 onwards, as a conveyor of up-to-date information was enormous. First used in plain board to stiffen the paper packet holding cigarettes, it developed into offering a panorama of the world at large. The Ogden tobacco company alone, with its original 'Guinea Gold' brand, issued no fewer than eight thousand pictures, from nature series of all kinds through patriotic sets to 'Statues and Monuments'. In the end, all the great tobacco companies took up the gimmick and no field of popular human knowledge seems to have been left unexplored. Before 1914 it would have been hard indeed to have found a boy in the working class without at least a few dog-eared cards about his person, dreaming of making up, by swap and gambling games, that complete set of fifty.<sup>31</sup>

Speaking of the 1930s, a film critic, Philip French, has asserted that he learned as much about the world from cigarette cards as he did from the cinema,<sup>32</sup> while John Julius Norwich has written of the same period that Empire 'was all around us, celebrated on our biscuit tins, chronicled on our cigarette cards, part of the fabric of our lives. We were all imperialists then.'<sup>33</sup>

Analysing cigarette cards is rather easier than analysing postcards, for it is a more restricted and better recorded medium. Almost all the sets issued are known, and all their titles have been listed. But if the subjects of cigarette cards are more circumscribed than those of postcards, their circulation almost certainly was not. It is impossible to secure figures, but the sets of the larger companies, like W. D. & H. O. Wills, John Player, Churchman, and the like must have been distributed in large numbers. Five subjects predominate: sports, music hall performers and later, film stars, the armed forces, the Empire, and transport. Every company, almost without exception, issued sets on the armed forces, and sets of colonial troops and Indian regiments are common. Empire flags and coats of arms, Dominions, builders of Empire, British Empire series and scenes, picturesque peoples of Empire, products and industries of Empire, are all frequently found, as are Boer War sets, deeds of the Great War, and many others. Many featured the Royal Navy, merchant shipping, and railways, all celebrating

technological achievements which seemed to lay the world open to British commerce and British people. Boy Scouts and Girl Guides prompted a number of sets soon after their founding, and many more appeared through the First World War and to the 1930s. The cult of personality was developed in cigarette cards even more notably than postcards, for many sets featured royalty, generals, admirals, war heroes, and medal winners.

Because of a shortage of paper, production was suspended between 1917 and 1922, but they soon recovered their popularity and continued to be issued in large numbers up to the Second World War and beyond.<sup>34</sup> Empire and military subjects remained popular throughout. If John Player had a 'British Empire' series in 1904, they also had a 'Military Uniforms of the British Empire Overseas' set in 1938. W. D. & H. O. Wills had 'Builders of the British Empire' in 1898, 'Indian Regiments' in 1907, 'Arms of the British Empire' in 1910, 'Governors General of India' in 1911, several series of 'Overseas Dominions' in 1915, 'Picturesque People of the Empire' in 1926, and 'Flags of the Empire' in 1926 and again in 1929. Gallaher's had a South African series in 1901, their first Boy Scouts set in 1911, and 'Scenes from the Empire' in 1939, while Churchman produced a set of the British Empire in 1934. Lambert & Butler had a set advertising Rhodesia as a destination for emigration in 1938, no doubt because they bought their tobacco from that colony.

These are only a few of the series relating to Empire from the largest companies. Hundreds of similar sets were issued by smaller concerns. Military and naval sets emphasised imperial unity in defence and the benefits to Britain of colonial forces, white and native. Transport series, which continued into the 1960s long after other imperial themes had disappeared, emphasised an alleged British maritime supremacy. Air transport sets, most common in the 1930s, were invariably presented in the context of 'Empire Air Routes'. In 1928 there was even an anonymous Empire shipping series that may have been connected with the Empire Marketing Board. Imperial and military themes, their popularity heightened by the periodic stimulation of warfare, continued to be much in evidence to the Second World War and beyond.

J. A. Hobson commented on the power of advertising to convey dominant ideas of the age in *The Psychology of Jingoism*.<sup>35</sup> In the last two decades of the nineteenth-century the growth of newspapers and popular journals had led to a tremendous growth in the advertising industry.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, an extraordinarily high proportion of such journals was devoted to advertising in the effort to keep unit costs down to achieve a mass circulation. Much of this advertising in newspapers, on

hoardings, postcards and cigarette cards sought to convey the romantic and adventurous connotations of the companies' products, to associate them with the leading figures, stirring events, or royal occasions of the age. Liebig's Extract of Meat Company seized upon the Emin Pasha expedition of 1887, issuing posters and adverts of members of the relief party revived by its product.<sup>37</sup> A famous Bovril advertisement during the Boer War purported to demonstrate that Lord Roberts's route had spelt out the word Bovril across the Orange Free State.<sup>38</sup> Bovril produced many other advertisements describing its role as a comforter of the troops. Army and Navy Stores, founded in 1871, inevitably used patriotic images of the two services and their flags as its trade mark. Tobacco companies adopted patriotic names for their products at an early date. Cigarettes were of course particularly identified with the armed forces, with names like 'First Lord', 'Flagship', 'Invader', 'Royal Navy', 'Silent Force', 'Target', 'HMS', 'Soldiers of the Queen', 'Admiral', 'Grand Fleet', 'Fighter', 'Victory', 'Welldone', and 'British Pluck' (the latter a tobacco tin showing Boers being put to the sword).<sup>39</sup> One company issued the 'Havelock' brand, with a picture of Havelock before Lucknow, while another continent's lore was invoked in 'Cape to Cairo'.<sup>40</sup> In the 1920s the Prince of Wales appeared on the cover of the 'Prince Charming' brand.

Tea, biscuit, and tobacco companies were able to package their products in tins and boxes, which could be adorned with pictures of members of the royal family, famous generals and other heroes, and royal or military occasions.<sup>41</sup> Lipton's emphasised their vertical control of the tea industry, 'from the tea gardens to the tea pot', and illustrated their advertisements with elephants bearing tea chests from Ceylon to the home retailer. Horniman's, Mazawattee, the C.W.S., and other tea companies used similar images and sentiments in their advertising. Camp coffee associated itself with the army in India, while Fry's, Cadbury's and Lever Brothers all sought to illustrate their imperial connections together with their social concern for both their domestic labour force and their colonial suppliers. The popular art on imperial, royal, and military subjects by artists like Lady Butler, Harry Payne, George Havant, Fred Evans, Cress Woollett, and R. Caton Woodville appeared on postcards, in advertisements, and as marketing attractions. *Cassell's Magazine* Christmas number in 1900 offered 'Good-bye', the 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards Leaving Waterloo Station for the Front, by George Havant, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1900, as a free gift.<sup>42</sup> *Welldon's Illustrated Dressmaker* offered a whole range of souvenirs of the coronation of 1902 which included pictures of the Proclamation at Calcutta, at Ottawa, and at Sydney. 'A Chip of the old

Block' a watercolour by Fred Evans (portraying an old soldier in uniform drilling a young lad) was one of four coloured plates given with *Pears' Annual* of 1907. Harry Payne's 'Defenders of the Empire' was used in the '20s to advertise Claymore Scotch whisky. There is evidence to suggest that these sentimental and patriotic free gifts were framed and hung on school walls by teachers. These examples could be multiplied many times.

Some companies, particularly tea, biscuit, and tobacco concerns, exploited the commemorative market with special packaging at times of jubilees and coronations, and securing contracts from cities and municipalities throughout the country to supply chocolates and biscuits to schoolchildren and others. Less durable items included commemorative table and tea cloths bearing flags and arms of imperial territories as well as royal and military images. Commemorative plates, mugs, and cups have a longer history, from the eighteenth century, but it was in this period that they became readily available to the entire population. The jubilees of Queen Victoria in 1887 and 1897 produced a plethora of such material, and all subsequent coronations and jubilees became significant commercial events. The distribution of mugs, as with chocolate and biscuit tins, became one of the prime means by which school boards encouraged patriotism in schoolchildren. They were given out to commemorate royal visits, the opening of public buildings, and other occasions, as well as the great national royal events.<sup>43</sup> Much of this material was overtly imperial in tone, bearing impressions of the flags of the Dominions and the like. Some of the commemorative plates contained surprising quantities of information. One, issued for the 1887 Jubilee, bore a world map of the Empire, the arms of Australia, Canada, Cape Colony, and India, a scene of Australian troops on march in the Sudan, a clock showing G.M.T. and the time around the Empire, figures of population, total area, imports and exports, as well as images of Britannia flanked by colonial 'types', the Prince of Wales, and of course the Queen herself.<sup>44</sup> The mottoes included 'Ubi virtus, ibi Victoria' and inevitably, 'The Empire on which the Sun never Sets'. The Boer War produced a fresh spate of commemorative pottery and china. One plate was adorned with pictures of 'highlander' and 'Colonial' troops, marines with artillery, flags and flowers, and the legends 'War Declared in South Africa by President Kruger, October 11th, 1899, Lord Roberts, Commander-in-Chief, Cape Colony, General Buller, Commander-in-Chief Natal', 'Ready Aye Ready 1900', and 'England Expects Every Man to Do His Duty'. A baby's plate from the same period contained pictures of Generals Kitchener and French and the legend 'Conquer or Die'.

Politicians and generals, together with heroes like Livingstone and Gordon, were commemorated on plates and in a great range of Staffordshire pottery busts to adorn mantelpiece and dresser. Particular events produced 'novelties' of many sorts. The martyrdom of General Gordon stimulated the production of anti-Gladstone, pro-Gordon materials ranging from medals to bookmarks, jugs to scraps for children's albums.<sup>45</sup> The 1897 Jubilee was celebrated in the 'filoscope', a collection of photographs of the processions, which, when flicked through rapidly, produced an impression of movement. These are but a few examples of the bric-a-brac which, treasured in many homes, continued to radiate imperial and patriotic images long after the events they commemorated. In all these ways the imperial myths were exploited for commercial ends.

The late nineteenth century was a period when board games also became exceptionally popular.<sup>46</sup> There are some excellent geographical and topical examples from earlier in the century, but these were expensive and cannot have had a wide circulation. By the end of the century they were being produced very cheaply, and were used as teaching aids, often reflecting the military and imperial preoccupations of the age. Many used maps as the setting over which the game was played. The Emin Pasha relief expedition inspired such a game, as did some of the wars of the period. There were games on the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, several on the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Boer War (like 'The Siege of Ladysmith') and many others. There was an invasion scare game in 1910, a whole range of Scout games ('Scout Tests', 1911, 'Scout Signaller', 1915, and 'Scout's Outfit', 1915), generally depicting the role of Scouts in war. The First World War produced 'Trencho' in 1917, and George Newnes issued the 'Strand' war game for 1s 3d in 1915. There were many aviation games (like 'Sky Raiders') and naval variants ('Dover Patrol', 'Naval Tactics') in the years between the wars. Even jigsaw puzzles had topical and propagandist content.<sup>47</sup> A set of twelve featured 'Stanley in Africa'; Nelson issued in 1900 a set of 'Soldiers of the Queen' (one portrayed 'The Charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman'); jigsaws of coronations, jubilees and members of the royal family were commonplace.

Toy soldiers were even more significant as recruiters for the forces than board games or jigsaws.<sup>48</sup> The firm of Britain's dominated the market after they had succeeded in casting hollow soldiers, thereby greatly reducing the cost. By the last decades of the century, these were being produced in massive numbers and with great sophistication, representing all British, Indian, and colonial regiments, as well as allies, enemies, and 'ethnic' fighters. The company's catalogue continued

to include much of the same material up to the 1950s. As is well known, Winston Churchill had a large collection of toy soldiers, and seems to have found some emotional satisfaction in drilling them. E. H. Shepard, the illustrator, described in his memoirs his favourite game of lining up black and white soldiers against each other. The biography of a recent Falklands War victim seems to indicate that he was led to the forces by his toy soldier collection.<sup>49</sup> No doubt toy soldiers appealed to children of all ages, but there were also patriotic and military materials, dressed up in educative guise, for very young children. Mr and Mrs Ernest Ames produced an 'A.B.C. for Child Patriots', in which each letter stood for some patriotic or xenophobic slogan, as well as 'The Tremendous Twins' or 'How the Boers were Beaten in Verses and Pictures'.<sup>50</sup>

Commercial companies also attempted to satisfy the craving for information and facts of all sorts which had developed by the end of the century. Local companies produced almanacks and manuals full of the standard images of the age. For example, T. Dawson, a tea dealer, grocer, provision and corn merchant of Bradford published one annually for his customers. The 1898 edition contained over fifty pages of information and advertisements, together with an extended section on the 1897 Jubilee and photographs of processions of colonial troops, including Indian officers, British North Borneo Police and the New South Wales Lancers. There was a feature on the navy, and illustrations of earlier military events like the Crimea and the Napoleonic Wars. The soap firms Pears and Lever Brothers produced famous annuals, which were miniature encyclopaedias, at remarkably low cost. The *Sunlight Annual* began publication in 1894, and over the succeeding years the quantity of imperial, royal, and military information greatly increased. In 1898 a section on the British Empire was included in 'The States of the World'.<sup>51</sup> In 1899 information on the British colonies, dependencies, and possessions consumed no fewer than twenty-three pages, while the States of the world were compressed into nine. From the latter year there were diagrammatic representations of the importance of the Empire to the home population, demonstrating the massive increase in the supply of tea from Ceylon, frozen meat from Australia and New Zealand, cheese from Canada, wool from Australia, and gold from South Africa in the course of the 1890s. Each issue contained a map of the world, showing Port Sunlight's position as an importer of colonial products and as a distribution centre to the Empire and the world. Copies of *Sunlight's Year Book* were sent to all masters and mistresses of the board schools, and other companies soon joined the 'annual' technique of spreading information about themselves dressed

up in encyclopaedic form.<sup>52</sup>

Advertising was given a fresh fillip by the enamel advertising signs, which became one of the most striking aspects of street furniture between the 1880s and the 1950s.<sup>53</sup> Again, it was mainly the imperial companies, tea, cocoa, tobacco, and soap firms, which were the principal users of this technique. G. J. Goschen remarked in a budget speech that the demand for cocoa had been created by such signs.<sup>54</sup>

The climax of the sheet music boom in the same period represented the extension of an older tradition. Street ballads and songs had long been issued in words only at very little cost. Developments in colour lithography from the 1840s led to music hall songs being issued in attractive illustrated covers.<sup>55</sup> The grittier ballads were superseded by more prettified and titillating musical commentaries on social mores. Topicality had always been a feature of such songs, but from the late 1870s topical content took a new twist. The popular song ceased to be a vehicle for dissent and became an instrument of conformity. Its conformity was nationalist and xenophobic, respectful of authority, glorifying military adventures, and revelling in the defeat of 'inferior' peoples. Such patriotic songs represented only one part of the popular music output, but they became a noisy staple of all music hall performances, and they could of course be bought for use at home. The combination of lithographed cover and engraved music made them expensive to produce, and only the middle classes could afford songs selling at 1s or 2s 6d, but pirated editions, at least of the words, continued to be sold very cheaply until the First World War. The music shops, which had proliferated by this time (by 1888 there were a hundred in central London alone), sold songs and sheet music in large quantities, and, like the newsagents described by Robert Roberts, covered their windows with their wares, the lively illustrated covers of the sheet music. At a later date, postcards provided a wider circulation for patriotic songs and poetry. The Bamforth company produced thousands of cards of songs, ballads, and hymns, many of which had a patriotic or military flavour.<sup>56</sup> By 1909 their numbering had reached 4,650. The use of such songs in the music hall and in workingmen's clubs will be considered in a later chapter.

There can be little doubt that the shift in the emphasis in the content of popular songs later in the century was related to the belief of the middle classes that singing constituted an important part of the search for rational recreation. Tonic sol-fah was invented in 1840, and was soon recognised as a vehicle for religious and moral crusades. Sol-fah had the power to bring music to people who could never read formal

notation. It provided the opportunity for the creation of choirs in a period when size was always more important than quality. From the 1870s singing was compulsory in schools, and regarded as an important source of discipline. Choral competitions and choral participation in public ceremonial of all sorts became a characteristic of the period.

The dispersal of music and songs was greatly aided by the very considerable growth in the sale of pianos. By the Edwardian period a piano was the status symbol most eagerly sought after by all classes seeking upward mobility.<sup>57</sup> Between 1870 and 1910 the production and sale of pianos in Britain multiplied fivefold.<sup>58</sup> In the latter year sales probably reached 100,000 per annum. Contemporary popular composers turned their attention to the production of piano fantasias of varying difficulty to satisfy this market of budding pianists. There were fantasias on the Indian Mutiny, the Abyssinian campaign of 1868, the Ashanti War of 1874, and many other topical events. It was a tradition which continued into the inter-war years, when a piano fantasia appeared entitled 'The Aerial Post'. Music was composed for the British efforts to annex the Transvaal in 1877-81 ('The Cape March', dedicated to Sir Bartle Frere), the Egyptian invasion of 1882, the death of Gordon, the 'rescue' of Emin Pasha, and on countless military and naval topics.<sup>59</sup>

The brass band movement was, perhaps, even more significant in encouraging mass musical involvement than choral music. Like singing in schools, bands were seen as capable of burning up the excess energies of the working class, supplying a disciplined form of self-entertainment. There were works' bands, mechanics' institutes' bands, temperance bands, school and club bands, and of course large numbers of military bands. The formation of bands was an important part of the consciously recreational approach to the Volunteer movement.<sup>60</sup> The journal *Brass Band News* was founded in 1881, and band competitions, based on the centre of the movement at Belle Vue in Manchester, became the main stimulus to constant practice for improved quality. There were no fewer than 40,000 brass bands in 1889, the Salvation Army alone fielding 1,000.<sup>61</sup> The band movement has often been seen as primarily a northern phenomenon, but by the Edwardian period bands were an important feature of the southern musical scene too. Annual festivals at the Crystal Palace saw a steady growth in the numbers of bands participating. Twenty-nine bands took part in 1900, 165 in 1908. Even the navy decided that the army was stealing a propagandist march with its profusion of regimental bands (among which there was considerable rivalry). The first naval bands were founded in 1903 and by 1908 there were fifty-three of them. This seems to be remarkable confirmation of the successful part bands played in recruitment.

Bands had also become a central feature of the activities of youth movements by this time. All these bands were vital in the development of the tradition of public music.

By the late Victorian period, choirs and bands had created, in effect, an al-fresco musical boom. Stages were built in public parks to accommodate choirs and travelling 'concert parties'. Attractive wrought iron bandstands sprouted in public spaces and on promenades throughout the country, and indeed the Empire. There were efforts to popularise light classical music (much of it German, of course), but the staple fare of band concerts consisted of military marches (of which a large number were composed at this time), patriotic numbers and selections from musical hits of the London stage. So prominent were bands in British life that they were taken over by the Japanese. When in 1907-08 *The Mikado* was banned by the Lord Chamberlain lest it caused offence to the visiting Japanese Crown Prince, it was found that the bands of the ships accompanying his party were playing selections from it at ports of call.<sup>62</sup> Bands swept up large numbers of participants into the performance of often nationalist music, creating at the same time the disciplines of rhythmic marching and constant practice. They added to the attraction of ceremonial and outdoor display, and could scarcely be missed by any member of the population.

Two other visual techniques were devoted to topical and imperial events at this time. One was very old, the magic lantern, the other was the newest, moving film, which was to be quickly recognised as a powerful propagandist medium. The magic lantern was invented as early as the seventeenth century, when it seems to have been used largely to satisfy a contemporary taste for magical effects, spectres and monsters.<sup>63</sup> It continued to have a religious use until the nineteenth century, when it was taken over by travelling showmen, who turned it to comic and anecdotal, as well as religious, ends. By the later nineteenth century it had achieved a degree of standardisation, projecting 3¼ in. by 3¼ in. glass slides, often with considerable sophistication. Triple-lens projectors were used, providing opportunities for dissolving views and the like. Colouring was introduced by hand-painting, chromolithography, and transfers. Slides were particularly suited to travel and missionary subjects. Church hall presentations became the rage, and slides were also shown by famous explorers and missionaries in large halls and theatres.

Sets of slides were produced for sale. Several were devoted to the life of David Livingstone. Another was produced by H. M. Stanley after the Emin Pasha relief expedition, some of the slides highly coloured. Various sets on missionary activities, available in the 1890s, included

'Celestials and Barbarians', 'Glimpses of India', 'Heroes and Fanatics of the Sudan'. One collection of slides entitled 'Soldiers of Britain' (including shots of troops bayoneting 'fuzzy-wuzzies' in the Sudan campaign of 1898) was donated to a Lancaster museum by the church where they had once been shown in church hall slide shows.<sup>64</sup> An official of the Imperial British East Africa Company took a series of photographs in East Africa between 1889 and 1891, from which slide series were made.<sup>65</sup> Many others were produced to illustrate Africa, India, and the South Sea Islands. A hand-coloured set of Samoa (sixty slides) featured the hurricane of 1889. The South African war prompted the production of sets with titles like 'Soldiers of the Queen', 'India and the Colonies', 'Departure of Yeomanry to South Africa', 'Britons and Boers'. Some were produced from illustrations by artists of the *Illustrated London News* and the *Sphere*. Ingenious moving slides showed armoured trains with searchlights switching on and off, shellbursts appearing and disappearing, and the like. Slides were also produced to pander to the sentiment of the time ('The Poor and Honest Sodger', illustrating the Burns poem), and to illustrate contemporary hit songs.

There can be no doubt that missionaries and religious organisations were adept at using these materials. They had the necessary buildings in church halls and chapels, widely dispersed throughout the land; they had subjects which were highly amenable to such treatment, and they required funds to continue their work. Even if the working class in Victorian England were not notable for their religious observance, they were prepared to be thoroughly eclectic in their search for entertainment and indiscriminating in the Christian denominations that offered it. Famous travellers and missionaries could fill the Albert Hall and theatres and concert halls throughout the country. When the Royal Colonial Institute decided to promote imperial propaganda through the use of a professional lecturer in the years just before the First World War, it found that he could fill the largest halls, particularly when his lectures were supplemented by lantern slides, trumpet fanfares, patriotic songs, and recitations.<sup>66</sup> The American, Lowell Thomas, who more than anyone created the Lawrence of Arabia myth, used the same techniques in London, where he filled, in turn, Covent Garden, the Albert Hall, the Philharmonic Hall, and the Queen's Hall, and travelled throughout Britain and the United States.<sup>67</sup> Lowell Thomas, however, used a film, and although slides continued to be used for educational purposes they were quickly rejected as a means of entertainment once they had been supplanted by the excitement of film. The Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee, examined in chapter 6, failed in its efforts at imperial propaganda precisely because it

took up the technique of the lantern slide when it had already become obsolescent.

Brief films began to be shown by travelling showmen and as short excerpts in music hall and theatre programmes from 1896.<sup>68</sup> Once the early film-makers had got over their initial fascination with railway trains, the most dramatic movers of the day, they settled down to concentrate on actuality films and short dramas. They recognised the propaganda potential of their medium at once. In addition to the films of great occasions like the Jubilee of 1897, the coronation of 1902, the Delhi Durbar of 1903, which were perhaps neutral recordings of imperial events, the Boer War gave the screen a great opportunity, as it did so many of the communication techniques of the period. Large numbers of films were made on military and naval topics, encouraging recruiting and patriotic fervour. Anti-Boer propaganda was produced, and many war scenes were faked. Even more explicit propaganda appeared in 1905 with films attacking Jewish immigration and promoting 'Fair Trade'.<sup>69</sup> Films were available for hire from an early date, and distribution lists include stores, Church mission halls, and the Salvation Army. Just as the Imperial British East Africa Company had produced slides of East Africa, so another chartered company, the British North Borneo Company, financed a series of films about Borneo in 1903.<sup>70</sup>

Up to 1914 films of royal events, always featuring colonial pageantry, expedition films, 'scenics' set almost entirely in India, the South Seas and tropical Africa, military and naval films, as well as films of contemporary imperial events like the Moroccan crisis of 1907 and films specifically devoted to imperial expansion continued to be made. Moreover, the newsreel made its appearance. But the British film industry was already beginning to be overtaken by the American, and 'factual' films were declining as a proportion of the whole. As Rachael Low has put it, film did not develop as a popular form of educational entertainment along the lines of the once fashionable lantern lecture; it became much more a form of story-telling.<sup>71</sup> The stories told in cinematic form, however, reflected just as strongly, and probably more potently, the aggressive militarism of juvenile literature, the easy superiority of Europeans and Americans, the triumphs of 'civilisation' over the rest of the world.

Films lie at the crossroads of so many of the other communications techniques of the period. They were shown in the theatre, music halls, chapels and churches. All the favourite subjects of topical and actuality films are the same as those of postcards and cigarette cards. One of the most notable postcard companies, Bamforth, went into film-making.<sup>72</sup> And films were used to supplement lectures just as slides

had been. Film supplanted the lantern slide, and the cinema eventually supplanted the music hall, but the film industry provided new subjects for postcards and cigarette cards, which helped them to survive into a much later period, as well as creating new musical needs. The immense popularity of the cinema damaged many of the reading habits created in the late nineteenth century, but it soon added new dimensions to the continuing popularity of adolescent journals. Moreover, as we shall see in chapter 3, films continued to purvey themes and ideas which were rooted in the late nineteenth century, until the early 1950s.

The period 1870 to 1914 saw the appearance of several new communications techniques and the development of some old ones. All these rapidly became the servants of the dominant ideology of the age, patriotic, militaristic, and imperialistic. They celebrated the excitements of an expansionist age — exploration, colonial campaigns, and missionary endeavour. They allied such activities to entertainment, the mass entertainment of music hall, Band of Hope, and missionary meetings, public lectures, slide and cinema shows, and the new opportunities for home entertainment provided by cheap music, cheap journals, and even cheaper ephemera. Almost all these techniques were also harnessed to the search for improving recreation which was a feature of the later Victorian period. Many exerted their power principally over the young, and it was a power well recognised by the adult world. Even those forms that were rooted in dissent, mass adult entertainment like songs, ballads, and music hall, became respectable in this period.

All these materials lay ready to hand for the great exercise in propaganda which was mounted during the First World War.<sup>73</sup> Music, postcards, cigarette cards, all forms of ephemera and popular texts, lantern slides and film were bent to a war effort which was depicted as righteous moral empire pitted against upstart, undeserved empire. All imperial agencies and all the commercial forces which depended on empire and promoted its extension received a tremendous boost. Although the war was to develop Dominions nationalism, wartime propaganda emphasised that it was a joint imperial effort, sweeping up the white Dominions, India, and the dependent territories into a crusade for freedom.<sup>74</sup> The surprising thing is that the propagandist patterns laid down in this period did not represent the end of nineteenth-century perceptions, as has so often been argued, but the beginning of a propagandist era, utilising all the technical developments described above, which was to last at least until the Second World War. Intellectual and administrative attitudes towards Empire may have changed

dramatically in the course of the inter-war period, but the agencies which influenced, and manipulated, popular opinion continued to run largely in old channels. The chapters which follow will examine these various propagandist techniques in the hands of a wide range of official and unofficial agencies.

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