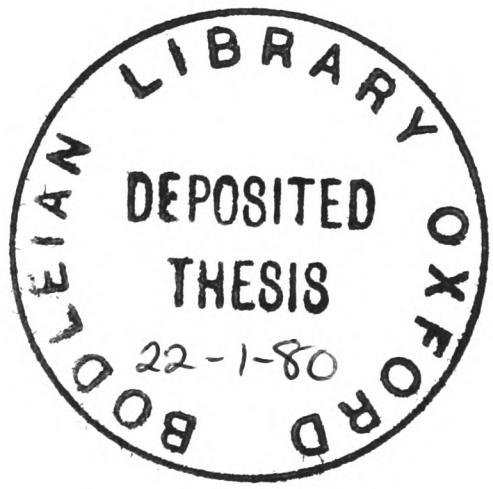
A STUDY

OF

THE RESPONSE OF ENGLISH POETS

TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR OF 1899-1902

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of Oxford



Trinity Term
1979

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Abstract

'A Study of the Response of English Poets to the South African War of 1899-1902'

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This thesis examines the controversial South African War's influence on English poetry, highlighting the individual responses of established poets and drawing on the work of numerous minor verse-writers to define the changing tradition of 'patriotic' and 'war' poetry.

Chapter I sketches the historical and social background, noting how events in South Africa assumed great magnitude for contemporaries whose popular Imperialism was severely tried and who made an unprecedented national 'war-effort'.

In Chapter II the late-nineteenth-century tradition of 'patriotic' poetry is identified, through analysis of verse-anthologies and contemporary critical opinion, and by briefly studying the war's lesser poetry which confirmed this mood of Art-for-Morality's-sake writing.

Chapter III describes Kipling's personal affection for South Africa, and the political aspirations which were related to his dedicated 1890s' verse-lessons. His reactions to the conflict reveal the disillusionment which distanced Kipling from his audience and changed his patriotic and imperialistic teaching.

Inflated by the war, 'Rudyard Kiplingism' became a powerful literary movement. Chapter IV explains the discredit brought by Robert Buchanan's 'Hooligan' criticism, Edgar Wallace's 'barrack-room ballad' imitations, and Kipling's own ill-judged verses 'The Absent-Minded Beggar', but also argues that certain soldier-poets usefully exploited his reputation.

Chapter V evaluates the contributions of four respected and influential patriotic poets: the 'undistinguished adequacy' of Alfred Austin, Poet Laureate; the strident verses of W.E. Henley; Henry Newbolt's strongly idealistic encouragement and consolation; and William Watson's brave but costly anti-war stance.

Chapter VI considers a variety of poets in demonstrating how, while religious sanction for human conflict and empire-building was emphatically re-affirmed, some questioned the principle of War (including Meredith and Hardy) and denounced the sufferings inflicted on the Boers.

The strain imposed on fireside poets' customary responses and rhetoric is outlined in Chapter VII, which also discusses the sentiments of Hardy's discontented 'war-poetry' and The Dynasts, before assessing the impact of personal bereavement on A.E. Housman's loyal poetry.

Acknowledgements

This study has profited from help and encouragement kindly given by many people, and I should like to record my particular gratitude to the following:

Mr. Alex Davids has broadened my knowledge of the literature of his native South Africa, supplying me with materials which were unavailable in this country. Mr. John Pugh, Chairman of The Housman Society, helpfully arranged for me to examine the George Herbert Housman letters; I am also grateful to Mr. Richard Perceval Graves, editor of the Society's Journal, for publishing the article based on my research to which I refer in Chapter VII. The typescript of Drummer Hodge was made available by Mr. Jon Stallworthy at the Oxford University Press for perusal before the book's publication. Professor Malvern van Wyk Smith very generously spared time during a short sabbatical in England to talk over my work, and I am glad that the thesis has been improved by this constructive discussion and by our subsequent correspondence. Miss Penelope Wallace willingly answered questions about her father's early literary career, and commented in detail on my theories about his soldier-poetry. The publishers Messrs. Routledge and Kegan Paul went to the trouble of searching their records to identify the author of the 'Centurion' Boer War verses.

The project could not have been completed without the professional expertise of the staffs of the Bodleian and Rhodes House Libraries; of the British Newspaper Library at Colindale, the National Army Museum at Chelsea; and of Mr. D.H. Simpson and his assistants at the Royal Commonwealth Society Library.

The invaluable task of final proof-reading was shared by my father, Mr. Ernest Gasser, and by Mr. G.-D. Warns, to whom I am extremely grateful: as I am also to Miss Karen Cook, whose typing and design skills have brought such good order out of the untidiness of my manuscript.

Supervision was begun by the late Mr. James Maxwell of Balliol College, who encouraged me to pursue the anthologies now presented in Chapter II. Mr. Dennis Burden of Trinity College guided part of the historical and literary background material, and he has always maintained a friendly interest in the work. But my greatest debt is owed to Mr. Douglas Hewitt of Pembroke College, who first offered to supervise the Kipling sections and has since patiently supported my explorations of many murky literary backwaters, with wise counsel and practical help generously and tactfully given.

Note on Materials

Since so much of the South African War's poetry was written in response to specific events and situations, and often appeared at first in newspapers or periodicals, I have tried to preserve its flavour and chronology by quoting from the original sources of English publication (as far as identification of these has been possible). For this reason the texts and titles of works by better-known writers such as Kipling and Hardy are sometimes presented in unfamiliar guise: however, the fact of textual alteration is noted when poems are assigned to their authors' collected editions - I have generally used the earliest editions rather than those dating long after the war - and alterations are detailed where they seem particularly significant.

References are taken from the copies held in the British Library's Newspaper Library, Colindale.

For convenience of access, the complete texts of 15 poems are contained in the separate Appendix which accompanies this thesis.

Full publication details of printed books are provided in the 'Works Consulted' section: books are elsewhere cited by title and date only, with round brackets indicating the date of first publication where a later edition is used, and square brackets identifying anonymous authors and actual dates of first publication where the publisher's claim is misleading.

Copies of the George Herbert Housman letters (used in Chapters IV and VII) were made available to me by the kindness of The Housman Society, whose copyright property they remain.

Access to the Kipling Papers at Sussex University Library became possible too late for the material to be explored in the present study. But since the biographers Lord Birkenhead, Professor Carrington, and Angus Wilson, who drew upon Mrs. Bambridge's more complete archive, all agree in substance about Kipling's dealings with South Africa, it seems unlikely that the Papers will yield anything of unexpected literary or biographical interest.

Chapter I

The Victorian Great War

Of all the many wars fought by Britain during the nineteenth century, only two were styled 'great' by contemporary observers: the epic struggles against France which occupied the first decades - and the thirty-two month conflict with the Boers which closed the Victorian age. Thus Leopold Amery, writing in 1900, long before the full significance could be perceived, began the premature Times History with this evaluation:

> The South African War has been the greatest political event in the history of the British Empire since the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars. Such a description may at first sight appear exaggerated when applied to the suppression by a great Empire of two small Republics in a remote part of the world. But is is justified by the importance of the political principles involved, by the magnitude and extent of the military operations, and by the profound effect the war has created throughout the whole British Empire, and even among foreign nations. It is no less justified by the far-reaching results that the war is destined to have in the future upon the organisation of the British army, the political and economical development of South Africa, the relations between the various self-governing parts of the British Empire, and the position of that Empire among the nations of the world.[1]

Nowadays, of course, it seems ludicrous to allow even the last of 'Queen Victoria's little wars'[2] to share the title which - for the time being - is reserved for the 1914-1918 World War; but contemporaries of the South African conflict, happily unaware of the much huger sacrifices and upheavals to be suffered later in their generation, were right to recognize the unique importance of the war's immediate costs and lasting consequences.

1 The Times History of The War in South Africa, Vol.I, 1900, p.[1].

2 For a popularizing account of the incessant, mostly petty, campaigns, see Byron Farwell, Queen Victoria's Little Wars 1973.

The 'political principles' which the conflict tested so severely stemmed mainly from late-Victorian Imperialism, and were very dear to the nation. Empire-building had been carried out, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, since the first settlers sailed for the New World in the seventeenth century, but during the period after about 1870 Imperialism was taken up in Britain as a distinctive creed and active policy. The same impulse also affected the major European countries, the United States, Japan, as the century progressed, and while its underlying motives were a complex blend of economic, political, intellectual, and militaristic tendencies (scarcely understood at the time, and still the subject of debate) one of the most readily discerned aspects was the extensive popular support for imperialistic activities. A.P. Thornton has argued that in this country Imperialism 'was a faith and an emotion before it became a political programme', a dynamic principle which remained influential until after the Second World War;[1] other historians have emphasized the importance of its identification with 'patriotism' to produce heightened national self-consciousness and aspiration.[2] Between 1870 and 1899, the popular attitude towards the Empire changed very radically: 'Greater Britons' (to use the contemporary conceit) learned to justify on cultural, historical, religious, even racialist, grounds their country's achievement in 'painting the map red'; the

1 The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies 1959, pp.x-xi.

2 e.g. Heinz Gollwitzer, Europe in the Age of Imperialism 1880-1914 1969, especially Ch.IV.

White colonies ceased to be viewed as havens for felons and adventurers; India and the Black territories ceased to seem like unwilling captives held for the sake of trade and military strategy; a new sense of power and responsibility was stirred, so that far-distant happenings became matters of keenest interest for the loyal citizen at home. To this 'faith and emotion' the unexpected stumbling in South Africa during 1899-1902 brought a check which was genuinely momentous: the fin de siècle national pride was somewhat deflated because its constituent ideals were thrown open to doubt.

If, as Rudyard Kipling complained at the time of the Diamond Jubilee, the nation had become 'drunk with sight of power', the blame partly lay with the heady brew long supplied by Imperialism's teachers. For example, Sir Charles Dilke's seminal book Greater Britain (first published in 1868 and many times reprinted) offered colourful descriptions of life throughout the Empire and America, insisting on the civilizing capacities of the British people and readily criticizing shortcomings in the fulfilment of their high ideals; his central message was that 'the development of the England of Elizabeth is to be found, not in the Britain of Victoria, but in half the habitable globe' -

> If two small islands are by courtesy styled "Great," America, Australia, India, must form a "Greater Britain."[1]

J.A. Froude, in Oceana, or England and Her Colonies 1886 likewise provided a step-by-step travelogue, intending to promote 'a "commonwealth" of Oceana held together by common

1 op. cit., 8th edn., 1885, p.viii.

blood, common interest, and a common pride in the great position which unity can secure'.[1] Questions concerning the Empire's administrative structure - the extent of colonial self-government, the possibility of establishing an imperial federation, and so on - occupied politicians and civil servants, but the constant theme of popular teaching was that strength and security would be guaranteed as long as there remained close sentimental attachment between the 'Mother-Country' and her 'sons' overseas. Thus, in 1883 J.R. Seeley contributed The Expansion of England, arguing that 'Greater Britain is an extension of the English State' and more importantly 'an extension of the English nationality': if 'the family bond', which rested on sentiment rather than commerce, were properly tightened, 'Canada and Australia would be to us as Kent and Cornwall'.[2] Seeley's influential lectures also focussed attention on the different types of empire-building which Britain had undertaken: 'colonization', where White settlement was the chief objective, and the 'imperialism' proper which set up government over other peoples. He claimed that his countrymen's activities in India, though rooted in commercial and military self-interest, were important for philanthropic achievement. Particularly during the 1890s, when most of Britain's empire-building belonged to this second type, emphasis was increasingly laid, notably by churchmen, on the 'civilizing' mission which prompted the taking-up of

1 op. cit., p.12.

2 op. cit., pp.45-6, 63.

'the White Man's burden'. Darwin's work was exploited for various theories about the evolution of 'cheap' and 'dear' races: for instance, in 1894 the sociologist Benjamin Kidd held that the British were specially 'socially efficient'[1] - and were therefore fitted to act as a master-race. The belief that Greater Britain's eminence was pre-ordained was commonly repeated by the end of the century, as when J.A. Cramb, professor of Modern History at Queen's College, London, further cultivated national self-esteem by placing 'Imperial Britain' in 'the universal scheme of things', detecting an 'informing spirit, the unseen force from within the race itself' -

> With the rise of this spirit, this consciousness within the British race of its destiny as an imperial people, no event in recent history can fitly be compared....[2]

Cramb was among those who maintained that Britain's 'destiny' was guided by God, subscribing to the widely-accepted view that human history was progressing into a state of ever-greater perfection.

For politicians, the rising popular Imperialism was more advantageously fostered and channelled than resisted. One of the reasons for the Conservative ascendancy between 1874 and 1905 was the party's commitment to expanding and consolidating

1 Social Evolution.

2 Reflections on the Origins and Destiny of Imperial Britain 1900, p.6.

Britain's overseas territories, a policy linked to a wider interest in foreign affairs. Disraeli set a fast pace, with stirring speeches as well as far-reaching practical decisions -

> The issue is... whether you will be a great country, an Imperial country, a country where your sons, when they rise, rise to paramount positions, and obtain not merely the esteem of their countrymen, but command the respect of the world.[1]

- though more adept in manipulating public sentiment was the arch-imperialist Joseph Chamberlain, who has been credited with carefully luring the nation into welcoming the South African War.[2] The Liberals' considerable disarray during this period was caused largely by their failure to agree on a philosophy of Imperialism. Before the party could re-unite in opposition to a broad spectrum of Conservative policies in 1905, it was the Liberal Imperialist faction, headed by Lord Rosebery and including followers such as Edward Grey, which found more favour with the electorate; the so-called 'Little Englanders', members loyal to the tradition of John Bright and those who shared Gladstone's reluctance for expansionist policies, suffered phases of extreme unpopularity - as after General Gordon's death in Khartoum in 1885, and again during Campbell-Bannerman's campaign against the Boer War.

Thus Imperialism's 'political principles' became diffused as the grandest of ideals (a tendency which, as we shall see, was readily furthered by loyal poets): indeed, the public

1 From Disraeli's celebrated Crystal Palace banquet speech, 24th June 1872: quoted by W.F. Monypenny and G.E. Buckle in The Life of Benjamin Disraeli (1910-20), new edn. Vol.II, 1929, p.536.

2 e.g. Peter Fraser, Joseph Chamberlain: Radicalism and Empire, 1868-1914 1966, pp.175-86.

perhaps required an extravagant interpretation of Britain's 'calling' in order to come to terms with the fact that, by the end of the century, the Empire covered 13 million square miles and embraced probably 345 million inhabitants. The many critics who tried to demonstrate the prevalence of incorrect assumptions and false priorities[1] were working at a psychological disadvantage for as long as the Empire appeared to thrive: men such as J.A. Hobson, attacking Imperialism's economic foundations;[2] and the Radical Liberal J.G. Robertson, with his protest that Britain was failing to 'civilize' backward peoples and needed to concentrate instead on domestic social reforms, and who sided with the numerous observers deploring Jingoism and militarism as manifestations of the popular imperialistic fervour.[3] The anti-imperialist poet Robert Buchanan was among those who complained that the masses were being deluded -

> With bread and pageants we appease
> The home-bred mob...[4]

- and the adventure, novelty, colour, romance, panoply of the Empire undoubtedly served to provide a generally-welcomed distraction from the mounting economic and social problems at home. There were surely paradoxes in the willingness to

1 For general surveys, see Thornton, The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies, and Bernard Porter, Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes to Colonialism in Africa 1895-1914 1968.

2 See especially Imperialism: A Study 1902, revised 1905.

3 e.g. Patriotism and Empire 1899; 'Duties of Empire', in The British Empire Series, Vol.V, 1902, pp.558-83.

4 'Old Rome', in The New Rome: Poems and Ballads of Our Empire [1898] (see Ch.IV (ii) below). cf. Hobson, Imperialism 1902, p.107.

devote so much money and energy to missionary work and imperial administration at the time when appalling deprivation existed in the heart of the imperial capital itself, and in vaunting the benefits of British rule across the globe when there remained unsolved the painfully obvious problems of Ireland, the oldest and closest example of Imperialism turned into a hopeless muddle of conquest and colonization. The remedies for the national pessimism which could be detected from time to time before the First World War included a willingness to admire the public-school and 'muscular Christian' characters of the empire-makers (as conveyed by popular fiction and the Press alike); an acceptance of the visionaries (like Cecil Rhodes, with his conviction that the British were 'the finest race in the world'[1] and schemes for domination in Africa); a disposition to trust the vice-regal administrators - Dufferin, Curzon, Milner - and praise the thousands of 'working sahibs' who conscientiously built up the Empire piece by piece; an anxiety to make heroes of the great generals, officers, and soldiers who fought Imperialism's wars. Much prose fiction was devoted to showing that the burden of Empire was neither easy nor light,[2] but the public remained defensive of the shortsighted, sometimes almost blind, idealism which was so deeply rooted in their self-confident faith in their country's power of civilization and in their national character. Much more seemed to be at stake during

1 For Rhodes's remarkable 'Confession of Faith', see John Flint, Cecil Rhodes (1974), 1976, Appendix.

2 For a study of the contributions of Haggard, Kipling, Conrad, and Buchan, along with the intellectual background to 'the Imperial Idea', see Alan Sandison, The Wheel of Empire 1967.

the South African War than the need to grab and govern two more pieces of land.

In September 1898, Kitchener's Egyptian army gained the spectacular victory at Omdurman which, followed by France's diplomatic retreat after the Fashoda Incident, greatly enhanced Britain's supremacy in North Africa. The battle also gave the public the satisfaction of vengeance for Gordon's death thirteen years before, and as attention turned increasingly to the southern part of the continent (where the threat of further Black uprising had been largely allayed by Rhodes's defeat of the Matabele tribes in 1896) there was not a little glad anticipation of a war which would avenge the Transvaal's convincing victory at Majuba Hill on 27th February 1881.

Friction had existed between the Empire and the Boers - descendants of Dutch, German, and Huguenot emigrants who had begun to settle in South Africa during the seventeenth century - for almost a hundred years. The antipathy motivating the Great Trek of 1833-36, to enable large numbers of the Cape Dutch to escape from British rule, was reinforced during the 1870s and 1880s as Britain attempted unsuccessfully to retain control of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, and matters rose almost to crisis-point in 1895-96 when Rhodes's aide, Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, led his abortive Raid into the Transvaal to assist in overthrowing President Kruger's government.[1] Years after the 1899-1902

1 See Jean van der Poel, The Jameson Raid 1951, and J.S. Marais, The Fall of Kruger's Republic 1961.

conflict (the 'Second War of Independence', as it is now called in South Africa), Alfred Milner, who, as High Commissioner 1897-1905 did much to precipitate the strife and then to re-build the country, identified the friction's two fundamental causes when he summed up the issue as a struggle to the death between 'the modern progressive Empire' and 'the old-world racial oligarchy' for control of a land 'in its nature indivisible...inevitably destined to come under a single government'.[1] The Boers were a jealously independent people, primarily self-sufficient farmers, who were determined to live according to their Calvinist religion and to preserve a national identity: the powerful movement for national unity, the 'Afrikaner Bond', founded in 1879, worried Britain by its influence among the Dutch remaining in the Cape. And secondly, friction arose simply because of the Republics' geographical location in the heart of southern Africa. Not only did they prevent the Empire from achieving complete paramountcy (by the late 1890s they rested in the centre of a circle of British territories: the Cape, Bechuanaland, Swaziland, Zululand, Rhodesia, Natal, Basutoland) and so thwarted the dream for imperial control of Africa 'from Cape to Cairo', but their willingness to turn to other European Powers, particularly Germany, for diplomatic and material assistance had wide implications in the days of 'the scramble for Africa'. It also happened that South Africa's diamond and gold resources were found inside the Republics; and though the Kimberley diamond-fields were prised away

1 Viscount Milner and others, Life of Joseph Chamberlain [1914], p.209.

from the Orange Free State by diplomatic filibustering in 1875, the Rand gold-workings, situated centrally in the Transvaal, by the 1890s had attracted the virtual colony of Johannesburg 'Uitlanders' whose constantly bad relations with their unwilling hosts provided the ostensible cause for the outbreak of war in October 1899.

In Britain, much public sympathy for Jameson and his lieutenants was manifested during their trial - forewarned, The Times had been poised to applaud the Uitlanders' coup -[1] an inclination greatly encouraged by the Kaiser's message of support for Kruger. Indeed, the longstanding frustration of Imperialism's ambition in South Africa found vent in the indignation aroused by the Uitlanders' copiously-retailed 'grievances' concerning taxation, civil liberties, and franchise, so that a great deal was made of Britain's duty to restore Liberty and Justice to oppressed fellow-countrymen and to save the land from the physical and moral dangers represented by the Republics. The war, which at last followed the break-down of negotiations over Uitlander rights held between Milner and the Boer presidents in May 1899, consequently could be seen to occupy a crucial place in late-Victorian Imperialism: it was partly a 'foreign' war fought in defence of noble ideals, it was partly intended to protect and encourage colonization and commerce throughout southern Africa, and yet it remained a war of conquest to re-establish rule over a hostile White population.

1 The History of 'The Times', Vol.III, 1947, Chs.VII, IX.

The conflict's first phase was opened on 11th October 1899 when some 38,000 burghers - the Boer forces consisted almost entirely of farmer-soldiers - invaded north-west Natal and moved south-west across the Orange River into Cape Colony and Bechuanaland.[1] Although the Cape Dutch failed to rise up in large numbers, and no European Power intervened on the Republics' behalf, the Boer advance succeeded in overwhelming Britain's garrison-armies: the Natal field force was driven into Ladysmith, to which siege was laid - as also to the towns of Mafeking and Kimberley in the south-east. Relief armies commanded by General Sir Redvers Buller ('Sir Reverse', as he became known), which had been dispatched from Britain and various colonial stations, were soundly defeated when attempting to raise the sieges on both fronts, the 'Black Week' of disasters at Stormberg, Magersfontein, and Colenso in mid-December 1899 being followed a month later by the costly fiasco on Spion Kop, outside Kimberley.[2] On 17th December 1899, the sixty-seven-year-old Earl Roberts was appointed to supersede Buller. With masterful tactical marches, and relying on the fresh reinforcements hastily raised in England and the White colonies, the Field-Marshal surrounded

1 The war's military, political, and social aspects have provided a lasting source of interest for historians. The seven-volume Times History 1900-09 was matched by the official, eight-volume History of the War in South Africa, 1906-10, edited by Sir Frederick Maurice and M.H. Grant; among the numerous contemporary records was Conan Doyle's The Great Boer War, first published in 1900 and subsequently enlarged several times. More modern general studies include: Edgar Holt, The Boer War 1958; Rayne Kruger, Good-bye Dolly Gray 1959; W. Baring Pemberton, Battles of the Boer War 1964, 2nd edn. 1975; John Selby, The Boer War 1969; Eversley Belfield, The Boer War 1975; Byron Farwell, The Great Boer War (1976), 1977; Denis Judd, The Boer War 1977.

2 See Julian Symons, Buller's Campaign 1963.

the main Boer army at Paardeberg Drift, to the south of Ladysmith, and accepted the surrender of Cronjé and 4,000 men on Majuba Day 1900. The most decisive victory in the war's new, second phase, this was the prelude to conclusive strategic advances. Kimberley had been relieved eventually on 15th February, and now the Boers were driven back into the Republics, their fighting units becoming more and more fragmented: Ladysmith, Bloemfontein, Mafeking, Johannesburg, Pretoria were secured; the Free State was formally annexed in May, followed by the Transvaal in September 1900.

Up to this point, a major war had been fought already - a conflict of immense significance to both sides. However, 'annexation' was not to be achieved merely by raising the Union Jack and outlawing the republican governments, so that two more years of fighting took place before the Boer nations acquiesced in their defeat. In many ways, this third, chiefly guerrilla, phase was the most difficult and bitter. The fighting burghers - 'rebels', officially - were extremely skilful in such extempore warfare, and, supported by a population largely resentful of British rule, they greatly impeded the Army from asserting full control over territories which were equal in size to France. Their struggle aroused sympathy in America and Europe, while their disturbing influence on the northern areas of the Cape provoked much ill-feeling inside the colony. The Army's campaign was put under Kitchener's control at the end of November 1900, and victory was gained only by a painful process of attrition which came to include the use of highly-mobile 'columns' of mounted infantry and the construction of chains of block-houses across the countryside to restrict the movements of

the Boer 'commandos' and raiding parties. But equally effective was Kitchener's policy of eliminating the guerrillas' known and potential supply-bases, by burning farms, destroying crops, and slaughtering livestock. This controversial activity unfortunately aggravated the problem which had arisen as soon as the war was taken inside the Republics, of feeding and sheltering dispossessed Boer civilians; the innocently-named 'concentration camps' first established by Roberts quickly expanded in size and number - and before the end of the conflict some 20,000 inmates, mostly women and children, died in the cramped, often unhealthy, conditions.[1]

In March 1901, Kitchener met the Boer leader Louis Botha under truce at Middelberg, but their attempts to negotiate peace-terms were frustrated by the imperial authorities' determination to obtain nothing short of unconditional surrender. It was not until May of the following year that representatives of the erstwhile Republics, meeting together with the Army's help and hospitality, reluctantly conceded that they had reached the bitter end of their resistance and signed the Peace of Vereeniging: a treaty which, however, was neither ungenerous nor humiliating.[2] During the post-war years, Britain, particularly through Milner's work, tried hard to weld South Africa into a single, loyal, White dominion[3]- the aspirations of the Black population consistently took second

1 For a defence of Britain's actions, see Napier Devitt, The Concentration Camps in South Africa During the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 1941.

2 This interpretation is not shared by W.K. Hancock: see Four Studies of War and Peace in This Century 1961, Ch.I.

3 See G.B. Pyrah, Imperial Policy and South Africa 1902-10 1955.

place - but the old racial division remained. Afrikaner nationalism thrived on spurning the offer to 'forgive and forget',[1] and Britain's pre-eminence was eroded once Campbell-Bannerman's Liberal administration granted the new colonies their promised self-government in 1906 and 1907, then afterwards approved the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. If the land was 'inevitably destined to come under a single government', a 'Boer' victory was not entirely precluded by the war of 1899-1902, as staunch Imperialists said bitterly after 1906; and though the Union remained a willing member of the Empire and Commonwealth for fifty years, its distinctive attitudes progressively distanced it from the 'Mother-Country' in a way which never happened with Australia or even Canada.

The conflict entered more thoroughly into the lives, experience, and imagination of Britain's home public than any foreign war had done before: but what began as a not unwelcome intrusion into national affairs became, especially during the fighting's third phase, a dispiriting background to daily life. The immediate price of victory was unprecedentedly great. Some 450,000 troops had been employed, of whom 256,000 were Regulars, 109,000 were volunteers from Britain, and 84,000 came from the White colonies and South Africa: about 5,750 fell in action, over 16,000 died of disease, and as many as 64,000 were invalided home, wounded

1 'Vergewe en Vergeet' was the subject of a bitter poem on the concentration camps by the nationalist Dutch Reformed Church minister J.D. du Toit, and the war provided a useful rallying-point for the emerging Afrikaans poetry.

or sick. Compared with losses during the World War - 60,000 men fell on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, in July 1916, for instance - these casualty-figures were slight, but they had been previously unknown in Queen Victoria's little wars. In monetary terms, the conflict cost £222 millions: income tax was almost doubled, and duties were raised on beer, spirits, sugar, tea, tobacco, coal, corn, flour;[1] while further sums were required for the reconstruction work. And above all, a unique 'war-effort' was given by the public.

For example, the number of civilians dispatched to the theatre of war - almost the entire Army Reserve, part-time soldiers of the Militia and Yeomanry, specially-raised volunteers (including private units), medical and nursing staff -[2] aroused a still keener interest in the events and issues of the imperialistic struggle. Letters from 'the Front' were highly prized, and were frequently published in the Press and printed books. War-funds of many sorts were enthusiastically promoted; massive popular farewells and welcomes were accorded to generals and their soldiers, in particular to the volunteers. Modern technology, too,

1 Sir Robert Ensor, England 1870-1914 (1936), 1968, p.349.

2 See John K. Dunlop, The Development of the British Army 1899-1914 1938, Parts I-III. The historian Richard Price has argued that enthusiastic volunteering was largely confined to the empire-conscious upper and middle classes (one thinks of the patriotic impulses ascribed to the young Forsytes by John Galsworthy in In Chancery 1920), though his definition of 'middle' class seems somewhat unreliable: An Imperial War and the British Working Class 1972.

helped to bring the war closer to the public, as when the camera flourished as the supplier of both still and moving pictures.[1] But technology's blessings were somewhat mixed, so that the news which came insistently across the telegraph lines included lengthy casualty-lists from the battlefields and hospitals, providing a painful new experience for the nation:[2] lists posted at the War Office, columns of names in the daily papers, official telegrams announcing a family's dreaded bereavement - these consequences of a large-scale national war were suffered before the 1914-1918 conflict, and their effect was significant. Among creative writers, Thomas Hardy responded by touching on the 'hourly blazoned sheets of listed slaughter'[3] and Richard Le Gallienne observed the desolating sensation of finding day after day in the newspapers

> ...the straight lists of broken-hearted dead,
> Black narrow lists no tears can wash away.[4]

Indeed, public morale remained an important factor in this war-effort; and much poetry was written from a sense of patriotic duty, as we shall discuss. The potent enthusiasm for Imperialism found expression in music-hall Jingoism and

1 See W.K.-L.Dickson, The Biograph in Battle 1901. Several new pictorial magazines came on to the bookstalls during the war, including War Pictures and The Sphere.

2 cf. Kruger, Good-bye Dolly Gray, pp.144-5.

3 In 'At the War Office': see Ch.VII(ii) below.

4 'Christmas 1899': see Ch.VI(ii) and (iii) below, and Appendix VIII.

flag-waving, in the excitements attendant on the 'Khaki Election' which returned the Conservatives to power in the autumn of 1900, in the loyalist riots which disrupted many anti-war meetings, and in the orgiastic celebrations of victories - notably Mafeking Night in May 1900. The enemy, epitomized by 'Oom Paul' Kruger, became the object of popular, but not universal, slander; an attitude which reversed the admiration formerly expressed for their piety and pioneering qualities. Another reflection of the nation's deep involvement in the conflict could be found in the heightened religious attitudes accompanying each phase (as we shall examine in Chapter VI). The daily and periodical Press, which had long exerted a crucial influence on the public's response to Imperialism, now came into its own as an instrument for engineering morale, partly by bowing to Army censorship but principally by maintaining a firm pro-war tone and giving prominence to the material supplied by its numerous correspondents and artists in South Africa.[1] The sometimes highly-charged newspaper reports were the medium through which the public obtained its best knowledge of the war - they provided much inspiration for hearth-side poets, just as, according to tradition, Tennyson had composed 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' after reading The Times's

1 See Phillip Knightley, The First Casualty 1975, Ch.4; also Brian Gardner's account of the journalists' part in creating the romance around Baden-Powell's siege, in Mafeking: A Victorian Legend 1966, passim. Recent studies of the war's artistry include: Pat Hodgson, The War Illustrators 1977; and Peter Johnson, Front Line Artists 1978, especially Ch.12.

description of the Balaklava action - though there was also a flood of printed books ('the trade in khaki') of every sort coming on to the market throughout and for long after the campaign.

Though the war's outcome was not seriously in doubt, public morale nevertheless flagged before the fighting was over: not on account of the astounding early military set-backs - when Jingoism was intensified - but in reaction to the slow, signally unglorious, guerrilla phase, as, goaded by the vociferous anti-war campaigners,[1] the nation's ideals were badly shaken. It was difficult to witness the Army's continuing incompetence without doubting Britain's true prowess; and what Campbell-Bannerman dubbed the 'methods of barbarism' through which victory was eventually secured jarred with the concept of a 'civilizing' influence, of building an Empire through high moral responsibility. A furious war of words was fought at home, swelling the real conflict's significance; and the Queen's death in January 1901 seemed to symbolize the ending of a self-confident age -

> She had been ours so long
> She seemed a piece of ENGLAND: spirit and blood
> And function ENGLAND'S SELF....[2]

Events in South Africa, then, impressed themselves on the nation to the extent that the war became a 'great' one,

1 See Stephen Koss (ed.), The Pro-Boers: The Anatomy of an Antiwar Movement 1973.

2 W.E. Henley, 'In Memoriam Reginae Dilectissimae Victoria': see Ch.V(ii) below.

and even the cost in lives and money was less significant than the effect on the public's outlook. Many commentators believed that there had been a welcome shaking up, and shaking off, of things which had been enervating and corrupting: Kipling said,

> We have had no end of a lesson: it will do us no end of good[1]

- though we shall see how the Laureate of Empire afterwards sided with those who felt that Britain had in fact proved herself weak and unworthy. One lasting consequence of the war was a perceptible change in attitudes towards Imperialism: loud boasting remained, but more attention was paid to the organization of the Empire instead of to its expansion. The colonies' military contribution served to strengthen imperial ties, and reaffirmed the importance of the solidarity which would have to exist to enable the Mother-Country and her sons to protect one another from foreign aggressors. But in fact, the expressions of world hostility which made Britain feel so vulnerable during the war had the ultimate effect of stimulating national unity, so that self-confidence reasserted itself. Thus, the determination to reform the Army - which had shown itself to be badly prepared, equipped, trained, and commanded - was never carried as far as implementing schemes for national service.[2] 'Tommy Atkins', the hero of

1 'The Lesson': see Ch.III(iv) below.

2 See Dunlop, op. cit.; also Brian Bond,'Recruiting the Victorian Army 1870-1892' in Victorian Studies, Vol.V, June 1962, pp.[331]-338; Correlli Barnett, Britain and Her Army 1509-1970 1970, Chs.14-15; Gwyn Harries-Jenkins, The Army in Victorian Society 1977; Allan Ramsay Skelley, The Victorian Army at Home 1977.

Imperialism's wars and the object of ever-increasing professions of affection towards the end of the nineteenth century, attained a new height of popularity whilst fighting in South Africa; but it was felt that it was enough for him to be made more proficient in his trade, and hold himself ready to rely on patriotic volunteers should a challenge again prove too great.

Chapter II

Poetry of the Love and Pride of England

(i)

In 'The New Gibbon', an essay published a year before his death during the Ladysmith siege, the journalist George Warrington Steevens chaffed contemporary literature for speeding the fall of the British Empire:

> A cloud of critics, of anthologists, and of log-rollers darkened the face of letters, and upon the decline of genius soon followed the corruption of taste....[1]

The sonorous strictures were only half playful; and it is significant that Steevens blamed anthologists for increasing the decay which seemed to be spoiling literature towards the end of the nineteenth century. The late-Victorians, followed by the Edwardians, had an unhealthy fondness for verse-anthologies of all types[2]- one consequence of widening elementary education after the 1870s - and this implied a concern for cheapness (obtaining bargain samples or even snippets - 'extracts', 'gems'- of the supposedly best poetry) while betraying a facile discrimination.[3] Some anthologists were competent judges of

1 Things Seen: Impressions of Men, Cities, and Books 1900, p.35. (The essay first appeared in Blackwood's Magazine, Vol.CLXV, February 1899, pp.241-9.)

2 There are two main types of anthology: the 'repository', largely re-presenting old works, and the 'annual','album','miscellany' type, designed to give recent and original verse. (See Graves's lively account: fn.3 below.) Hundreds of collections were published for the Victorians and Edwardians, ranging from pocket-sized volumes of favourite songs, through 'reciters' and more respectable handy volumes, to monumental 'compendium' collections in the tradition of Samuel Johnson, Robert Anderson, and Alexander Chalmers: e.g. Edward Arber's eight-volume An English Garner 1877-96; A.H. Miles and others, The Poets and Poetry of the Century, 10 volumes, 1891-8, expanded to 12 volumes as The Poets and Poetry of the Nineteenth Century 1905-7.

3 In 'True Anthologies and Popular Anthologies' (1927), Robert Graves insists that the prime aim should be to rescue and textually restore works which would otherwise be lost, and he disparages the compilers - and readers - of collections with creatively artistic pretensions (The Common Asphodel 1949, pp.169-85).

literature: but many thrived who were not, or who were distracted by extra-literary interests, so that second-rate men were influential as the chroniclers, critics, and arbiters of taste.

A period's verse-anthologies offer an interesting guide to its literary concerns, since the collections indicate the mainstream of the most valued writing, more deliberately recognized than by publishers' simple reprinting of whole canons. Anthologies occupy a complex position: their compilers produce a kind of creative writing, but because the volumes represent commercial ventures in much the same way as do simple reprintings, they are partly the servants of public taste; yet the resulting work may not be wholly concerned with artistic achievement - especially when the anthologist aims to produce a handy volume based on a limited theme. An examination of some Victorian and Edwardian verse-collections, therefore, will illuminate their three generations' distinctive concern with poetry written in a particular mood - 'genre' would be too strong a description -, the 'patriotic'.

Editor	Title	First Published
W.C. Bennett	The School Book of Poetry	1870
A.Wyatt-Edgell	A Collection of Soldiers' Songs	1871
A.C. Auchmuty	Poems of English Heroism	1882
W.C. Bennett	The Lark	1883
F. Langbridge	Ballads of the Brave	1890

W.E. Henley	Lyra Heroica	1891[1]
	Patriotic Poetry	1893
J. Farmer	Scarlet and Blue	1896
H.B. George and A. Sidgwick	Poems of England	1896
F. and M. Wedmore	Poems of the Love and Pride of England	1897
J. Macleay	War Songs and Songs and Ballads of Martial Life	1900
	Soldier Songs: A New Military Song Book...added to the collection edited by J.E. Carpenter	1900[2]
	Tit-Bits Monster Book of Patriotic Poems	1900
A. Eagar	Songs of the Sword and the Soldier	1901
	Sailor Songs...added to the collection edited by J.E.Carpenter	1901[2]
A. Stanley	Patriotic Song	1901
	Songs of England's Glory	1902
H.E. Butler	War Songs of Britain	1903
C. Stone	War Songs	1908
L. Godwin Salt	English Patriotic Poetry	1910
J. and J. Lang	Poetry of Empire	1911
E.A. Helps	Songs and Ballads of Greater Britain	1913

1 Although dated '1892', Lyra Heroica first appeared late in 1891: see The Publishers' Circular, 31st October 1891, p.518; also, J. Connell, W.E. Henley 1949, p.229.

2 Carpenter's original collections appeared in 1865.

This selection comprises only a small fraction of the numerous anthologies published during the period,[1] and by no means exhaustively represents the collections influenced by the patriotic mood: but these volumes serve as a guide to the rise of the poetry of the love and pride of England which held an important place at the time of the South African War.

The list contains a wide range of collections. The volumes edited by Auchmuty, Langbridge, Henley, George and Sidgwick, the Wedmores, Stanley, Godwin Salt, the Langs, and Helps, along with Bennett's The Lark and the anonymous Patriotic Poetry, Tit-Bits Monster Book, Songs of England's Glory, are exclusively designed to promote 'patriotic' verse. Bennett's School Book, broader in scope, records an intrusion of the patriotic voice into the class-room.[2] The military anthologies provide works ostensibly produced by soldiers and enjoyed by them (Wyatt-Edgell, Stone); songs which the compilers thought that soldiers should sing and which they knew would appeal to the public (Farmer, and Soldier Songs 1900); and collections of literary verses taking soldiers and soldiering for their subject (Macleay, Eager, Butler). Their significance lies in the extensive overlapping between their contents and those of the 'patriotic' anthologies, a

1 Some of the compilers were more industrious than the list suggests. Palgrave also edited The Children's Treasury of English Song 1875, and The Treasury of Sacred Song 1889; as well as reproducing works culled from individual authors, Henley offered A London Garland Selected from Five Centuries of English Verse 1895, and English Lyrics, Chaucer to Poe 1897.

2 The anthologists' intentions are here discussed, without speculation on the success of their didactic purposes. However, the sheer number of volumes compiled for children, especially in school, suggests that there was an eager market during the period: Patrick Howarth's assertion that school-children were not subjected to patriotic indoctrination seems to be questionable, since loyal anthologies were probably just as influential as the works of prose fiction which he examines (Play Up and Play the Game 1973, pp.73-6).

demonstration of the fact that 'war-poetry' was closely woven into the greater mood at this time. The literary standing of the compilers varies considerably, just as their collections vary in artistic achievement: roughly, they conform to the five types delineated by Robert Graves - the enthusiast, amateur but eager to promote a cause; the minor poet, hoping to improve his reputation through anthology-making; the professional critic, profiting from his easy access to the copyright material belonging to poet and publisher friends; publishers themselves, gauging the desires of the market; and poets of repute, whose names could be exploited.[1]

In 1868, J.E. Carpenter published a manual of advice for budding poets which contained an anthology of some five hundred exemplary 'gems of thought' (specimens of poets' treatment of various themes, given as a sort of reference-library):[2] under the heading 'Patriotism' he included only one piece, canto VI stanza 1 from Scott's The Lay of the Last Minstrel, a reticence which suggests that the theme was not then considered to be, or to have been, prominent in English poetry. But after 1870, the nation's increasing pride and self-satisfaction - 'patriotism' becoming allied with 'imperialism' - were reflected in the anthologies. Bennett's School Book is significant; and Auchmuty's Poems of English Heroism marked a peculiar usage of the verse-collections, as we shall discuss.

1 op. cit., p.183.

2 A Handbook of Poetry.

The patriotic voice grew louder during the 1880s, rising to a swell of unabashed sentiment which reflected the 1890s' infatuation with Greater Britain. During the 1899-1902 war, there came a spate of collections designed to provide encouragement and comfort, a function which exactly parallels the efforts made by living writers and so emphasizes the close relationship between the anthologist and the poet proper. Imperialistic collections continued to appear after the war: that by Helps actually drew mainly upon the verse of Dominions authors; while Godwin Salt's school-anthology, entering late into the tradition of loyal collections, demonstrated the ardour with which the patriotic theme came to be managed.

Through the selection and editing of its texts, an anthology becomes a value-charged volume, and the patriotic anthologists were unashamed of their didactic motives. There is nothing remarkable about poetry being wielded as an educational tool in the class-room and elsewhere: but these compilers repeatedly confessed that their primary concern was not to display artistic excellence, and their readers seem to have granted the truth of the curious premiss that poetry could be 'good' without being well-written. Often, the problem was that the compiler wanted to present material fitting the narrow definition of 'patriotic' with which he encumbered himself. W.E. Henley was a fairly competent judge of other men's poetry and, despite the over-excited tone of his 'Preface' to Lyra Heroica-

> 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 - to a cause, an ideal, a passion even - the dignity of resistance, the sacred quality of patriotism, that is my ambition here.[1]

- he avoided the danger of descending into the trivial by permitting himself 'an occasional indulgence in pure romance; simply because boys like it.'[2] Henley produced a fine collection which continued to be reprinted until 1933. In Poems of the Love and Pride of England, the Wedmores interpreted 'patriotic' broadly, and presented much verse written in praise of the country's natural beauty, turning to Pope's 'Windsor Forest' and Clough's evocation of 'the green fields of England'; they also included works such as Palgrave's lyric 'London Bridge', with its condemnation of sixteenth-century religious persecution, to which they added the foot-note:

> Included in accordance with Mr Palgrave's suggestion, "that one poem might very well express silent and submissive heroism: often as noble and impressive as the active class."[3]

Arthur Stanley, however, went to the several corners of the Empire for verse which adhered strictly to his theme, and he was justly rebuked for his generally poor selection.[4]

1 op. cit., p.[vii].

2 From a letter, written during the early preparation, to Austin Dobson, 25th April 1891; Connell, W.E. Henley, p.212.

3 op. cit., p.170.

4 In The Athenaeum, No.3881, 15th March 1902, pp.331-2.

He managed to trace the imperial note throughout English poetry, finding its origins in the sixteenth-century 'Song of the English Bowmen' before rapidly proceeding to Drayton's ode on 'The Virginian Voyage', whose opening was not inappropriate to the war situation in 1901 -

> You brave heroic minds
> Worthy your country's name,
> That honour still pursue;
> Go and subdue!
> Whilst loitering hinds
> Lurk here at home with shame.

- and Marvell's 'Song of the Emigrants in Bermuda'. In 1913 also, without the excuse of war excitement, E.A. Helps ('formerly one of H.M. Inspectors of Schools') offered a verse selection which he acknowledged to be not of the highest order; his self-justification was that the verse sprang from the as yet youthful cultures of the Dominions[1] - but tacitly, he was asking that apt sentiment should be allowed to supersede good artistry.

The relegation of quality was most strikingly revealed during the South African War; again, here was a parallel between the anthologies and new poetry. Just as versifiers poured out their professions of loyalty and exhortations to fortitude and patience, and enterprising publishers reprinted the works of venerated consolers of the nation (like Archbishop Trench),[2] so the anthologists gathered up the verse

1 Songs and Ballads of Greater Britain, pp.vi-vii.

2 Richard Chenevix Trench (1807-1886), Archbishop of Dublin, a Cambridge friend of Tennyson, produced several well-received collections of somewhat sententious verses, including poems on the Crimean War. In 1900 a selection appeared, entitled In Time of War, introduced by F.W.H. Myers (see Ch.VI(ii) below).

of crisis and loud enthusiasm. The pocket-sized Soldier Songs and Sailor Songs, like the Tit-Bits penny-booklet collection, were typical of the dozens of publications which provided popular, flag-waving pieces, brought together in little order and without apology: their contents were of strangely mixed literary merit, blending works from the respectable patriotic store with the latest music-hall utterances. John Macleay's War Songs was a more organized attempt to demonstrate the hardship, tears, and glory invariably resulting from war-making. He gave a frank warning in his 'Introductory Note':

> The song of a crisis needs but little artistry. It must be hot and strong, straight from the shoulder, be touched by a broad humour. In the past the street balladist supplied most of our wants; nowadays the Music Hall is an ample purveyor.[1]

This comment on the standard of literary achievement acceptable under the strain of a national conflict was echoed by other critics anxious to account for the general low quality of the South African War's verse. Similarly, in honour of Edward VII's coronation, Isbister and Company issued the ornate little volume Songs of England's Glory, a sort of national panegyric comprising favourite anthology-pieces and verse inspired by the late conflict: the collection's tone was confident in praise of England, but artistic merit was not the chief characteristic.

1 op. cit., pp.xxiii-iv.

The method employed by some anthologists of arranging their material betrayed didactic motives. In addition to praising Britain's latter-day achievements, living poets were extremely fond of going back to glorify the high points of the nation's history, a trend which received critical sanction in 1882 when the patriotic mood was gaining prominence:

> The poet's choice is free; but for an age which is like our own, in love with its own indefiniteness, and many of whose children find no study so interesting as their own complex beings, nothing could be more salutary than that its poets should "memorise anew the ancestry" of the heroes and the heroism of a great nation like our own.[1]

Macaulay had perhaps indicated the significance of the ballad for this purpose, in Lays of Ancient Rome 1842; but it was the tireless song-writer and Liberal patriot William Cox Bennett[2] who had the idea of establishing a whole 'ballad history' so that 'the People' should not remain ignorant of their country's magnificent past.[3] His own contributions to this abortive scheme consisted of poor verse - including an attempt to complete Macaulay's 'The Armada'- but the People were spared any

1 A.W. Ward, 'Patriotic Poetry', in Macmillan's Magazine, Vol.XLVI, October 1882, p.426.

2 Bennett (1820-95) achieved note for his verse-satires on Tennyson (Anti-Maud 1855, and 'Locksley Hall' 1886). A prolific minor poet, his work included War Songs 1855, Our Glory-Roll, and Other National Poems [1867], and Songs for Soldiers [1879] (inspired by the Zulu War: some were written in a patois which feebly anticipated Kipling).

3 Shall We Have a National Ballad History for the English People? An Appeal to the Poets of England and America 1866; this essay prefaced Bennett's 1868 verse-collection, Proposals for and Contributions to A Ballad History of England and the States Sprung from Her (reprinted 1880).

organized writing-up of history. Nevertheless, Bennett's project reveals the trend in English poetry:[1] a better writer, Palgrave, produced the lyrical interpretation of chosen historical events, The Visions of England,[2] which the critic praised; and the individual efforts of numerous other poets gradually produced a comprehensive review of English heroes and heroism. Bennett typified the anthology-maker whose labours formed part of a wider contribution to patriotic verse: not only did he collect together the work of others which he believed to be especially instructive (as with his School Book), but he also produced his own verse on contemporary and historical events. In the short-lived monthly verse-sheet The Lark he mixed these personal efforts with poems culled from more competent authors - Milton, Wordsworth, Macaulay - for the sake of offering patriotic instruction to his readers. However, it was not necessary for an anthologist to be an original poet: the 1882 critic considered that The Visions of England was ably complemented by Arthur Compton Auchmuty's Poems of English Heroism, which collected together poems of various ages and in various forms, arranged by subject to produce a poetic chronology of national achievement.

1 In The Victorian Popular Ballad 1975, Ch.3, J.S. Bratton discusses the ballad's role in the writing-up of history: she accurately indicates also how 'reciters' were designed to provide easily-read, easily-memorised texts, but her account fails to stress that their poems were culled from a wide span of literary history and that the 'ballad' was by no means the only form taken by the 'lays'.

2 Privately printed, 1880-1; published in 1881 and revised 1889.

Auchmuty began with Tennyson's 'Brunanburh', added his own 'The Fight of Maldon',[1] and continued to depict the heights of England's history as celebrated by her poets through to the dedication from Idylls of the King (which the anthologist entitled 'Albert the Good'). Didactic purpose, however, was not allowed to mar artistic judgement: the enthusiastic patriotic spirit Auchmuty himself supplied, in the notes appended to the poems. In 1890 Frederick Langbridge produced Ballads of the Brave in similar fashion, designing the collection as a classroom aid:

> Its chronological arrangement will, I trust, render it of some service as a companion to, and a commentary on, an ordinary book of history.[2]

- but his desire to offer poems displaying 'the courage of the Quaker as well as that of the Crusader'[3] rarely led him to good verse. National history was also retailed in due order by the anonymous editor of Patriotic Poetry 1893; and in 1911, John and Jean Lang conceived Poetry of Empire as a chronicle of the growth of England and her overseas possessions.[4] In War Songs of Britain,

1 To illustrate the interest of these anthologies to the literary historian, it could be noted that Auchmuty's rendering (despite its inclusion in other collections, such as those of Langbridge and Butler) anticipates the earliest Victorian verse-translation of the poem recorded by Dobbie in The Anglo Saxon Poetic Records, Vol.VI, 1942, p.clvi.

2 op. cit., p.viii. The volume was dedicated to W.C. Bennett.

3 ibid., p.[vii].

4 op. cit., pp.v-vi.

H.E. Butler[1] restricted himself to an exposition of the country's history as told in battle-poems, though conceding that he was building on a theme to which English poets had not really done justice:[2] however, he secured some recent works of note, including A.E. Housman's '1887', Kipling's 'Hymn Before Action', Maclean Watt's 'The Grey Mother', Henry Newbolt's Boer War contribution 'Waggon Hill', and W.G. Hole's lament 'The Road to Ladysmith'. 'A record of the wars of Britain as sung by her poets'[3] was thus produced which brought the history together in one place and, by including new war pieces, brought it fully up to date: the ancestry was not only memorised anew, but the latest experience was assimilated into the story, so that the anthologist served a more important function than that of the war poets themselves - he became as it were the guardian of the tribal lays.

Other compilers, meanwhile, attempted an ostensibly more literary chronological study. These wished to demonstrate the continuity of the patriotic voice; but they served literary history in much the same way as their colleagues served national history.[4] They employed the arrangement which Henley called

1 Harold Edgworth Butler (1878-1951) was the Newdigate Prize winner in 1899, and became a Fellow of New College; in 1911 he succeeded A.E. Housman in the chair of Latin at University College, London.

2 op. cit., p.5.

3 ibid.

4 'A rigidly chronological sequence, however, rather fits a collection aiming at instruction than at pleasure, and the Wisdom which comes through Pleasure...': Palgrave, 'Preface' to The Golden Treasury 1861, p.[vii].

'the birth-day order' of the contributors: this was used by compilers such as Henley himself, George and Sidgwick, the Wedmores, Stanley, and Godwin Salt. Most notably, the latter supplied a lengthy 'Introduction' which diligently outlined 'the patriotic note' from its crude medieval utterance to the strident expression in modern verse, urging the moral value of the sentiment and arguing that it had been manifested in the work of all great poets - particularly Shakespeare and Tennyson. In the 'Preface' to Poems of the Love and Pride of England, Frederick Wedmore complained that English poets had provided only a small quantity of creditable patriotic works:[1] we have already noted that by applying a broad interpretation to their theme the compilers avoided compromising on artistic quality, but the observation highlighted the problem which worried the 'birth-day order' anthologists perhaps even more than the historical reviewers. When the collections are compared, it can be seen that the stock of pre-1800 poems was limited, and was drawn upon by the anthologists with much duplication; the bulk of patriotic poetry was produced during the nineteenth century, and even this profusion offered so few works of merit that old favourites appeared in the verse-collections.

Shakespeare's patriotic voice was detected in the choruses and battle-speeches of Henry V (eschewing the disturbing 'But if the cause be not good...'), Gaunt's 'This royal throne of kings' apostrophe in Richard II, and Faulconbridge's

1 op. cit., pp.vii-viii.

'If England to itself do rest but true...' at the close of King John. Drayton's 'Ballad of Agincourt' was seldom excluded: in 1900, Macleay hailed it as the best of all battle-narratives-

> ...splendid in movement and inspiring in theme, this magnificent ballad seems to accord with the high imperial views and the imposing dreams which at this day fill the minds of Britons. In such measure and in language similarly ennobling might the mood of the present find a most fitting expression.[1]

Milton provided sonnets on public affairs: 'To Sir Henry Vane, the Younger', 'On the Lord General Fairfax', 'To the Lord General Cromwell', and 'On the Late Massacre in Piedmont'.[2] From Marvell came the 'Horatian Ode on Cromwell's Return from Ireland'. The eighteenth century gave Thomson's 'Rule, Britannia', Garrick's 'Hearts of Oak', Collins's 'Ode Written in the Year 1746', and Cowper's 'Boadicea', 'The Loss of the Royal George' - a strange selection whereby to present this writer to posterity. The French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars inspired many patriots, and converted some radicals to loyalty: patriotic poems were produced, although often on topics unrelated to the conflicts, by Scott, Burns, Charles Wolfe, Southey (whose 'Battle of Blenheim' was curiously popular), Campbell, Mrs Hemans, Prince Hoare, S.J. Arnold, and of course Coleridge and Wordsworth. Tennyson was the mainstay of the Victorian period, with laureate pieces from the 'Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington' to his 1887 Jubilee verses; also valued were the poems written during

1 War Songs, p.xxiii.

2 In Lyra Heroica, Henley displayed good judgement by including Lycidas; also, 'On His Blindness' and excerpts from Samson Agonistes - these arguing the 'heroism' in becoming reconciled to affliction.

the 1850s in response to the threat of a French invasion ('Britons, Guard Your Own', '3rd February 1852', 'Hands All Round', 'Riflemen Form!'), his military and naval pieces ('The Charge of the Light Brigade', the retrospective 'Charge of the Heavy Brigade' 1882, and 'The Revenge'), and his imperialistic verses such as 'Havelok' and 'The Relief of Lucknow'. Occasionally, anthologists borrowed extracts from Tennyson's history plays; but the reflections on War in Maud were usually ignored.[1] From the diverse host of nineteenth-century writers who were drawn into the collections the most popular were: Thomas and Charles Dibdin, Macaulay, 'Barry Cornwall', Frederick Marryat, Kingsley, Charles Lever, Eliza Cook, Alexander Smith, Francis Hastings Doyle,[2] Trench, Franklin and Henry Lushington, Sidney Dobell, Gerald Massey, George Sims, Browning (for 'Home Thoughts, from Abroad' and 'Home Thoughts, from the Sea'), W.E. Aytoun, Henry Yule, Edwin Arnold (for Crimean War verses, and Indian pieces), Lewis Morris, Rennell Rodd, Austin Dobson, Swinburne (for his later, nationalistic verse only!), Watts-Dunton, Alfred Austin, William Watson, Kipling, Henry Newbolt, Henley, Arthur Conan Doyle.

1 It should be noted that anthologists' choice of material was sometimes limited by copyright regulations (in 1844 Thomas Campbell won a court injunction to prevent a publisher from including his work in an anthology, putting into the hands of authors and their agents the right to lease out work - see Augustine Birrell, Seven Lectures on the Law and History of Copyright in Books 1899, pp.179-81). After Tennyson's death, Macmillan and Company were sparing in the loan of copyright works: but when in 1891 the publishers allowed Henley to use 'The Revenge' instead of 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' as he wanted, 'King Alfred himself' intervened and added 'The Charge of the Heavy Brigade' to 'The Revenge' (Connell, op. cit., pp.213-7).

2 Surprisingly, Doyle was singled out for praise by George Saintsbury in 'English War-Songs', Macmillan's Magazine, Vol.LXIV, May 1891, p.36.

Thus, the mood's continuity was demonstrable, even though it was strongest as 'an affair of but a few generations'.[1] Unfortunately, since the verse inspired by national pride and imperialism was not for the most part admirable, the loyal anthologists, despite serving their public with the best of intentions, can be seen as unwitting contributors to the corruption of taste.

Setting aside the patriotic anthologies, it is worth glancing at some general verse-collections in order to see what recognition their compilers accorded to the mood.

Editor	Title	First Published
F.T. Palgrave	The Golden Treasury	1861
M. Morris	Poet's Walk	1882
R. Mulholland	Gems for the Young from Favourite Poets	1884
H.C. Beeching	A Paradise of English Poetry	1893
F.T. Palgrave	The Golden Treasury 2nd Series	1897
M. Morris	Poet's Walk (revised)	1898
A. Quiller-Couch	The Oxford Book of English Verse	1900
A.H. Miles	The Imperial Reciter	1900
A.H. Miles	The Royal Reciter	1901
E. Pertwee	Lyra Britannica	1906

The volumes compiled by Palgrave, Mowbray Morris, Beeching, and Quiller-Couch were genuinely concerned with artistic excellence; their broad scope obviated the need to accept inferior work for the sake of its sentiment. The other collections represent the many minor general anthologies which flourished during the period.

1 Wedmore, op. cit., p.vii.

In the original selection of 'the best songs and lyrical poems in the English language'[1] Palgrave followed principles which necessarily excluded much verse which later anthologists would claim to belong to the patriotic tradition: he imposed a chronological limit which barred living poets and ended with Wordsworth, and restricted his choice to works whose verse-forms satisfied his interpretation of 'lyrical'.[2] Among the pieces which he offered were: Milton's sonnets 'On the Late Massacre in Piedmont' and 'When the Assault was Intended to the City'; Marvell's Cromwell 'Ode'; Thomson's'Rule, Britannia'; Collins's 1746 'Ode'; Cowper's 'The Loss of the Royal George'; Southey's 'Battle of Blenheim'; Campbell's 'Ye Mariners of England', 'The Battle of the Baltic', and 'Hohenlinden'; Wolfe's 'The Burial of Sir John Moore'; Wordsworth's 'Ode to Duty' and sonnet 'Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour'. However, Palgrave's quest for 'the most poetically-effective order' of the material[3] prevented him from creating any unduly prominent patriotic tone in the collection.

1 For the publisher's tribute to the anthology's huge success, see Charles Morgan, The House of Macmillan (1843-1943) 1943, pp.62-3. See also C.J. Horne, 'Palgrave's Golden Treasury' in Essays and Studies, NS Vol.2, 1949, pp.[54]-63. As Charles Tennyson records in Alfred Tennyson (1949), 1968, pp.329-30, the Laureate played a significant part in advising Palgrave: from his examination of the MS of The Golden Treasury, B.Ifor Evans concludes that Tennyson had doubts about the inclusion of 'Rule, Britannia' but was anxious for the Wordsworth selection to contain the 'Ode to Duty' ('Tennyson and the Origins of the Golden Treasury' in TLS, 8th December 1932, p.941).

2 op. cit., 1861 edn., p.[v].

3 ibid., p.[vii].

The revisions in the 1883, 1890, 1891, and 1896 editions did not significantly alter The Golden Treasury: it was not until the 'Second Series' appeared in 1897, in which Palgrave attempted to trace the lyrical stream from Wordsworth until modern times, that the poet-anthologist revealed his estimation of, amongst other things, the patriotic mood during the Victorian period. His choice was conservative, perhaps reflecting the opinion which he had expressed to the Wedmores.[1] Browning's 'Home Thoughts, from Abroad' was included; among the many contributions from Tennyson were 'The Revenge', 'The Charge of the Light Brigade', and 'The Charge of the Heavy Brigade'; but more significant was the inclusion of three stirring ballads by Sir Francis Hastings Doyle - 'The Loss of the Birkenhead', 'The Private of the Buffs' (which, following his habit of re-titling contributions, Palgrave dubbed 'The British Soldier in China'), and 'The Red Thread of Honour'. This last poem, however, suffered some crafty editing, for the anthologist excised three stanzas from Doyle's text, two narrative in purpose from near the opening of the poem (whose information he relegated to the notes at the end of the anthology), and also the famous moralizing final stanza.[2] This blue-pencilling ostensibly made the poem conform to the kind of 'lyric' which Palgrave wanted,[3] but it also

1 But there were also copyright problems: in his 'Preface', Palgrave mentions that Swinburne refused to allow his work to be used (p. [viii])

2 The poem, which celebrated an episode from the 1842-3 Sindh campaign, was first published in an album edited by Adelaide Anne Procter, The Victoria Regia 1861, and was reprinted in Doyle's The Return of the Guards and Other Poems 1866 (rep. 1883) - the verse-collection which secured Doyle's election as Professor of Poetry in Oxford, 1867-8 (succeeding Matthew Arnold).

3 In his prefaces to both the 1861 and 1897 volumes, Palgrave warned that he had occasionally edited poems to make them 'lyrical'.

considerably quietened the poem's patriotic tone. The second of the omitted stanzas had spread British heroism on rather thickly:

> These missed the glen to which their steps were bent,
> Mistook a mandate, from afar half heard,
> And, in that glorious error, calmly went
> To death without a word.

- and Doyle's closing note was distasteful:

> Then Napier's knightly heart, touched to the core,
> Rung, like an echo, to that knightly deed,
> He bade its memory live for evermore,
> That those who run may read.[1]

Palgrave's anthologists'-licence thus made the work more suitable for a verse-collection not chiefly designed to promote poems of the love and pride of England.

Morris's original Poet's Walk was intended to increase the appeal of the anthology as conceived by Palgrave (whose achievement he nevertheless praised)[2] and his selection seldom reproduced his predecessor's choices. Working in 1882, he gave greater recognition to the patriotic voice, so that he offered works such as Drayton's 'Agincourt', Cowper's 'Boadicea', and Doyle's Crimean War poem 'The Return of the Guards'. In 1898, however, Morris significantly revised his collection, and without upsetting the overall balance of tone, he strengthened the 'patriotic' contribution. For example, the book's first section discarded its extracts from The Faerie Queene and

1 From Doyle's 1866 edition.

2 op. cit., p.xiv.

gained works such as Lovelace's 'To Lucasta, on Going to the Wars' and the ballad 'Brave Lord Willoughby'; the Shakespeare pieces were changed, to include from Henry V part of the opening chorus of Act II, Harry's 'Crispin Day' peroration from IV iii, and what Morris called 'The King's Prayer' ('O God of Battles...') from IV i. Other new introductions were Gray's 'The Bard', Campbell's 'Hohenlinden', Tennyson's Wellington 'Ode', Macaulay's 'The Armada', and Doyle's 'The Red Thread of Honour' - with all its stanzas intact. In A Paradise of English Poetry, Beeching actually recognized the existence of a distinct patriotic mood, since in the first of his two volumes he placed a section on 'Patriotism' between others on 'Men' and 'Art': a far advance from Carpenter's 1868 assessment of English poetry's main concerns. Beeching's selection was especially interesting,because while excluding work by living poets or still in copyright he nevertheless ensured that he presented nothing not of high quality.[1] As for the compendious Oxford Book of English Verse, Quiller-Couch's interest was far above the didactic: scattered through its pages were many contributions which other anthologists designated 'patriotic', but each piece was selected to represent its author's artistic achievement rather than his nationalistic outlook.

1 op. cit., Vol.I, pp.[v]-vi. Beeching's essay 'English Patriotic Poetry' is discussed in section (ii) below.

In the lesser anthologies, by contrast, accomplished poets were placed in unseemly company with hack-writers: some poems lent themselves to easy recitation, for instance 'The Battle of the Baltic', 'The Battle of Blenheim', 'The Burial of Sir John Moore', 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'. For his war-time collections, Miles judged that the public mood was amenable to 'Rule, Britannia', Macaulay's 'The Armada', Doyle's 'Birkenhead', 'Private of the Buffs', and 'The Red Thread of Honour', with Tennyson's 'Light Brigade'; these poems he offered in addition to various pieces inspired by the conflict itself, such as Clement Scott's 'Sound the Assembly!' (from Punch), Kipling's fund-raising 'The Absent-Minded Beggar', and newspaper verses on the relief of Mafeking.[1] For Lyra Britannica in 1906, Pertwee preferred to choose old favourites from the patriotic store, trusting that the poems would contribute

> ...to the building-up of character and the inculcation of those qualities of Life which are noble and inspiring, and to the realization of the responsibility of every boy and girl born to the heritage of the Glory of Britain.[2]

But like so many of the narrowly 'patriotic' anthologists, Pertwee did little to demonstrate to his readers that their 'heritage' consisted in artistic achievement as much as in heroic deeds and salutary aspirations. The poetry of the love and pride of England was employed to feed and to flatter a public taste which cannot but seem strange to later generations.

1 In the prefaces to both volumes, Miles lectured his readers on the nature of true 'patriotism' and 'imperialism'.

2 op. cit., Vol.I, p.iv.

(ii)

The patriotic verse-anthologies were part of the great flow of literature which satisfied the Victorian and Edwardian taste for edifying 'matter' over and above artistic 'manner'. They were thus firmly in the tradition of Art-for-Morality's-sake, supplying a middle-and low-brow readership with a public kind of verse, rhetorical and staid, which demonstrated irrefutable Truth. And patriotic poetry was held to have a very special educational value:

> English literature is the finest manual of patriotism in the world, and many a boy who is insensible to literary beauty is not insensible to the practical lessons at the heart of it....[1]

The poetry of the love and pride of England, as discovered by anthologists and newly produced by creative writers, contributed unashamedly to this conservative literary activity which displeased the period's avant-garde poets. In 1890, Yeats distinguished between 'the poets who rouse and trouble' and 'the poets who hush and console';[2] he saw that the verse which traded in Morality was widely influential for that very reason - 'accepted into the social order and become a part of life and not things of the study and the exhibition' -[3] and he was not entirely disrespectful towards it. But the intolerant reaction steadily grew, among the Aesthetes, Decadents, Georgians, and later the Imagists, Pound, Eliot, until a modern-day critic like C.K. Stead, rejoicing in 'the new poetic' which he

1 'The Teaching of Patriotism', in The Spectator, Vol.XCVII, 7th July 1906,p.10.

2 'A Scholar Poet' (1890), reprinted by Horace Reynolds (ed.), Letters to the New Island 1934, p.205.

3 'Estrangement', in Autobiographies 1966 edn., p.490.

identifies, spurns 'imperialist' verse as a sort of literary dinosaur deservedly extinct.[1]

Obsessed with 'the practical lessons at the heart of it' rather than emphasizing 'literary beauty', patriotic poetry indeed seems to have produced an unattractive verse mood. But before denouncing the loyal 'rhetorician, surrounded by the crowd, asserting hard abstractions which the sinuous complexity of experience failed to ratify',[2] it is worth considering that if the contemporary audience found Truth in such poetic utterances, were satisfied with the Beauty associated with this, and, above all, believed that therein was a reflection of the Reality which they perceived, then even patriotic poetry possessed some virtue. The critic, wise with the wisdom of two more generations, should not expect the work to display a classical quality: it evolved to meet a peculiar audience sensibility, and the 'sinuous complexity of experience' is reducible simply to the adage that 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder'. Contemporary poets and commentators were not insensitive to the mood's shortcomings; and their attempts to create a creditable art are interesting at any rate to the literary historian.

In a review of Newbolt's Admirals All, And Other Verses 1897, The Athenaeum argued that 'Patriotism, an excellent virtue in a citizen, is to a poet a somewhat dangerous master';[3] and during the South African War, perhaps exasperated by the bad loyal verse being generally uttered, the periodical roundly censured Stanley's Patriotic Song collection:

1 The New Poetic (1964), 1977.

2 Stead, op. cit., p.13.

3 op. cit., No.3665, 22nd January 1898, p.111.

> The compiler of this anthology has yet to learn that noble sentiments or the relation of noble deeds do not by themselves, without the gift of splendid expression, make great poetry.[1]

The remarks illustrate that there was some unease among critics, quite apart from the avant-garde poets, about the special licence expected by the disciples of the patriotic mood - indeed, about the possibility of good 'patriotic' poetry being written at all. The reviewer's contention in 1898 was that unavoidable partisan affection spoilt the work;[2] and the division between 'politics' and 'patriotism' was something which continually worried poets and critics, especially during a controversial national adventure like the Boer War. However, the upsurge of patriotic poetry was largely tolerated and encouraged. During the period 1870-1914 so many other forces were tending towards national self-satisfaction and pride that poetry could not remain aloof; the desire of anthologists and poets to celebrate their country's history and to inspire patriotism was not then unique among European cultures,[3] and their loyal sentiments, extravagant as these now seem, were matched by the utterances of politicians, historians, churchmen, sociologists. During the 1890s, the point was earnestly made that Britain's imperialistic achievements demanded to be treated in any poetry which claimed to reflect the age's interests and aspirations; in fact, that literature would be regenerated in a new Elizabethan renaissance.[4] The task

1 ibid., No.3881, 15th March 1902, p.331.

2 Newbolt's response is discussed in Chapter V (iii) below.

3 See Heinz Gollwitzer, Europe in the Age of Imperialism 1880-1914, 1969, Chs. IV,XI.

4 e.g. W.H. Mallock, 'The Conditions of Great Poetry', in The Quarterly Review, Vol. CXCII, July 1900, pp.156-82; J.A.R. Marriott, 'The Imperial Note in Victorian Poetry', in The Nineteenth Century, Vol.XLVIII, August 1900, pp.236-48.

of commentators was to shape the irrestible impulse in poetry: unfortunately for posterity, critical theory tried to constrict the patriotic voice until it became too grandiloquent, while, at the opposite extreme, too much favour was accorded to the didactic utility of simple doggerel.

From the outset, critics were prepared to entomb patriotic verse in the Art-for-Morality's-sake movement. Ward, commenting on Palgrave and Auchmuty in 1882, was just a little ambivalent about poetry's role in promoting 'the duties and aspirations of patriotism': he weighed the considerations that

> To make the highest of all human arts subservient to any ends but its own, would indeed be to misunderstand, and thereby to degrade, poetry itself. And even were this not so, patriotism is neither the very noblest of all the emotions that wing the soul of man, nor one of those which appeal with the same force to every human heart.[1]

against the possibility of establishing a claim 'upon all in whose moral and imaginative world the history of their country has a share'; he felt that patriotic poetry would inspire a generation which required 'invigorating as well as refining'[2] - roused and consoled, to upset Yeats's division. However, other commentators sometimes lost sight of the mood's adventurous, 'invigorating' potential: specifically, they considered that the poetry was continuing the mainstream of English letters much more wholesomely than were 'aesthetic' and 'decadent' verse.

1 'Patriotic Poetry', in Macmillan's Magazine, Vol.XLVI, October 1882, p.426.

2 ibid.

As early as 1866 - the year of Swinburne's first Poems and Ballads collection - Francis Hastings Doyle poked fun at Matthew Arnold's views on the 'philistine' attitude towards art, and proclaimed his adherence to that attitude;[1] in 1891, Austin dedicated his Narrative Poems to Sir John Millais partly for upholding 'the indestructible manliness of our race' against the feminine traits of the Renaissance Revival and the Aesthetic Movement.[2] Patriotic poetry was supposed to represent the period's solid, official literature, perhaps in an over-reaction against Art-for-Art's-sake: Doyle and Palgrave were both Oxford professors of poetry, Tennyson and Austin provided the national laureate pieces, while loyal verse-makers of all degrees, from Henley[3] to Kipling to William Watson, were opposed to what, sadly for them, has become known as 'the poetry of the '90s'.[4] Between the Boer War and the World War, patriotic poetry was still used as a defence against progressive writing:

1 'Preface' to The Return of the Guards, p.ix.

2 op. cit., p.vi.

3 See Jerome Hamilton Buckley, William Ernest Henley: A Study in the "Counter-Decadence" of the 'Nineties 1945; also Ch.V(ii) below.

4 But A.E. Rodway suggests that the ultimate difference between the schools of Kipling and Wilde in the '90s may not have been great ('The Last Phase', in Boris Ford (ed.), The Pelican Guide to English Literature, Vol.6, (1958), rev.1960, pp.385-405).

in 1908, for example, The Quarterly Review valued Austin's work as 'essentially the poetry of common-sense and healthy directness', rejoicing in its lack of 'moral originality' - and this cherishing of his 'matter' survived the acknowledgement of some serious defects in his 'manner'.[1] In effect, such emphasis on impeccable Morality stifled the quest for rousing qualities; one can understand why the dinosaur lumbered towards natural extinction.

Critics claimed that patriotic poets represented 'the right English strain': provided that they followed proprieties of tone and subject. Austin's advocates urged that he was 'essentially...primarily English';[2] and when trying to restore Watson's popularity following his opposition to the Boer War, the greatest compliment which G.K. Chesterton could pay was that

> In Mr.Watson's political poems may be found what can be found nowhere else in modern England - the old and authentic voice of Milton and Wordsworth.[3]

- just as he quarrelled with Kipling's politics by saying:

> He admires England, but he does not love her; for we admire things with reasons, but love them without reasons. He admires England because she is strong, not because she is English.[4]

In order to place himself irreproachably in the 'English' strain, the poet had to show that his affections were rooted in the very soil and countryside; patriotism could thus be seen to transcend

1 'The Poetry of Mr Alfred Austin', op. cit., Vol.CCVIII, January 1908, pp.173-202. (cf. Stead, op. cit., pp.71-3.)

2 William Sharp, 'Introductory Note' to Days of the Year 1886, p.vii; cf. Watson, 'Preface' to English Lyrics 1890.

3 'The Political Poetry of Mr.William Watson', in The Fortnightly Review, NS Vol.LXXX, 2nd November 1903, p.768.

4 Heretics 1905, p.47; cf. also the article cited in fn. 3.

partisan allegiances or mechanical ideological commitments. The loyal sentiment was thought to be displayed most purely when the poet celebrated his homeland. We have already noted that anthologists such as the Wedmores presented Nature poetry in their selections; when appreciating Austin's verse, both William Sharp and Watson based their claim for his Englishness on his success in displaying

> A nobly filial love of Country, and a tenderly passionate love of the country...[1]

Watson maintained that Shakespeare had set down the tenets of good patriotic poetry:

> These were his two Englands - one to be sung in tender and caressing phrases, the other to be solemnised in pomp of sonorous numbers that surge and swell with exultation and pride.[2]

The 'love-of-the-country' argument neatly provides retrospective legislation for a great host of English poets - without carefully distinguishing between the different conceptions of Nature poetry which had prevailed throughout literary history. However, it could be turned against a writer quite devastatingly: Chesterton had only to observe that 'Mr. Kipling's is an alien landscape' to put him well beyond the pale of respectable writers.[3]

This allowance that the patriotic poet best expressed his love of Country through a passive but passionate devotion to the countryside was sometimes the salvation of those whose true

1 Watson, 1890 'Preface', p.viii.

2 ibid., p.ix.

3 'The Political Poetry of Mr. William Watson', loc. cit., p.766.

'Englishness' had been coloured by partisan allegiance: a tradition well represented by some of the poetry produced by Coleridge and Wordsworth while taking refuge in the loyalist fold after the Reign of Terror and Napoleon's eventual seizure of power.[1] Indeed, the production of Nature poetry was held to be especially appropriate when the homeland was threatened: in two lectures on 'patriotism in English Literature' delivered during World War One, Quiller-Couch argued that true 'patriotism' consisted in loving and so defending one's home, and that its best literary expression was neither rhetorical nor loud in pride of power - he elevated Horace's Odes above Virgil's Aeneid.[2] The love-of-the-country theme prevailed throughout nineteenth-century patriotic verse, contributing to the sense of 'insularity' which was distinctive of British nationalism, and quietly providing a not unworthy artistic achievement. But despite the attempts to demonstrate that the far-flung Empire constituted a unity - 'Greater Britain' - it became evident that imperialistic verse was diverging from the parent plant. Except in the few instances where poets benefited from personal experience overseas, it was difficult for a loyal work to convey passionate sentiment: for example, Lewis Morris's 1887 Jubilee 'A Song of Empire' -

> Nor shall thy Western Isles
> Be wanting, where the high green breakers fall
> Upon the torrid shore, and nature smiles;
> And yet sometimes broods over all,
> Thick woods and hot lagunes with steaming breath,
> A nameless presence with a face of death.
> Fair balmly Isles, where never wintry air
> Ruffles the scentless tropic blossoms fair,
> Upon whose sun-warmed fruitful soil
> Our father's dusky freedmen toil....[3]

1 See Jon Silkin, Out of Battle 1972, Ch.I. The best example is perhaps Coleridge's 1798 'Fears in Solitude', 'written during the alarm of an Invasion'.

2 Studies in Literature 1918, pp.[290]-322.

3 From The Works of Sir Lewis Morris 1898.

This sort of imperialistic pastoral, uncomfortable even among Morris's Nature poems, scarcely amounted to singing in tender and caressing phrases: it may have been sentimental and spatial remoteness which led other poets to celebrate Greater Britain with undue boasting about the material achievement of empire-building, encomiums of the virtues sustaining that achievement, and salutary demonstrations that the citizens of Empire shared the Mother-Country's traditions and values. The effect was that 'practical lessons' received a thinner coating of 'literary beauty' than was demanded by Art-for-Morality's-sake.

Although critics such as Watson allowed the patriotic poet to express a tenderly passionate love of Country, amounting to 'a lover's fervour' (Sharp granted Austin 'a passionate devotion to nature and a not less ardent love of country'),[1] there was a feeling that considerable self-restraint was also necessary for a poem to be didactically successful. In its review of Newbolt's volume, The Athenaeum favoured a treatment 'in the grand manner and with sufficient intellectual remoteness':[2] a difficult recipe, except in the second ingredient. More objectionable than grandiloquence was the gushing emotional expression which entered the patriotic mood: this was considered not only 'unEnglish', but dangerous to Morality.

During the Boer War, H.C. Beeching, who had already shown himself to be a discriminating anthologist, was appalled by the nature of the early verse inspired by the conflict. In a

1 1890 'Preface', p.xvi; 1886 'Introductory Note', p.vii.

2 op. cit., p.111.

Quarterly Review article of October 1900, based on an assortment of nine patriotic anthologies and collected editions published during the preceding decade,[1] he traced the rise of the mood from the Elizabethan age, deploring its latter-day standard. Beeching's evaluation was largely influenced by his disapproval of the contemporary war verse, as was betrayed by his comment on the nature of Shakespeare's expression:

> The influence upon the spectator's mind is a reflected influence; the speeches cannot be shouted across the footlights; they must be uttered within the limits of the stage to the dramatis personae. In so conditioning his appeals - for it hardly needs insistence that the appeal is really to the audience - Shakespeare's instinct proved itself infallible as ever. ...In the first place patriotism is so delicate a plant that it needs always the support of this or that great triumph or sorrow, if it is to flourish at all. Except in regard to some such special circumstances we should be as little disposed to love our country as to love the air we breathe. A second reason is that the temperament of Englishmen is -or was- so shamefaced and undemonstrative that it will hardly tolerate appeals to patriotism except at a crisis, and it will not tolerate them even then if the note is pitched high.[2]

But Beeching's wishful thinking ignores the examples of Shakespeare's art which appealed to the anthologists - Faulconbridge's closing address to the audience, Henry V's battle-speeches - and which certainly could be indelicately 'shouted across the footlights'. The critic was upset by the war's profusion of loud 'patriotic' songs, particularly the music-hall pieces lauding the Army and boasting fantastically about Empire; he feared for the social consequences of such blatant and facile appeals. Beeching identified the problem:

1 Including Lyra Heroica, Poems of England, Trench's republished Poems Written During the Russian War, and volumes by Newbolt, Kipling, and Henley.

2 'English Patriotic Poetry', loc. cit., p.521. (The article was reprinted in Beeching's Provincial Letters and Other Papers 1906.)

> The vulgarity and ignorance that disfigure so many of these patriotic effusions must, we fear, be attributed to the elementary education of the last thirty years, which has given to crowds of people a certain capacity for self-expression without ideas to express, and an interest in reading without the taste to discriminate good from bad.[1]

- and he recommended that proper instruction ought to be provided by Board schools ('some simple training in the meaning of citizenship, both national and imperial') with the aid of good anthologies such as those of Henley, George and Sidgwick, to improve literary discrimination and political understanding.

This call for a refinement of the quality of patriotic sentiment was matched by a conservative account of its ideal verse-form. Beeching suggested that the patriotic lyric- the frank, demonstrative expression of love and pride of country - was symptomatic of the corruption of taste: Shakespeare had avoided this form, he claimed; Tennyson had come close to success only when exploiting the persona in Maud; but the best patriotic utterances had taken for their vehicles dramatic verse, grand odes, ballads, sonnets in 'the heroic style' as used by Milton, Wordsworth, and Trench. He doubted whether 'the sentiment of patriotism has in these last days reached a passionate and self-conscious stage at which Englishmen must express it by "the lyrical cry"',[2] and censured the verses in Henley's war-collection For England's Sake - especially 'Pro Rege Nostro', with its refrain 'England, my England'.

1 ibid., p.540.

2 ibid., p.529.

> There are probably few Englishmen who on reading this poem would not feel uncomfortable...[1]

Pursuing his argument, Beeching added:

> The patriotic lyric...will not be written in this generation, for it is foreign to the genius of Englishmen, which requires a more reflective note. The nearest that Englishmen care to go to lyrical expression about national affairs is such a sonnet as Wordsworth's 'Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour'...[2]

Nor was Beeching alone in somewhat desperately affirming that true 'Englishness' required patriotic expression through the 'reflective note' and indirect appeal rather than frankly-stated emotion: after the war, a TLS critic similarly deplored the tendency of modern patriotic verse, likewise faulting Henley for offering the lyrical utterance avoided by Shakespeare and Tennyson -

> Englishmen are shamefaced and will not tolerate direct appeals to patriotism, even at a crisis, if the note is pitched high. ...no Englishman ever went so far as to say "my England," and Mr. Henley, by attempting to put such words into his mouth, has shown himself not of the right English strain.[3]

Of course, it was impossible to define by verse-form so disparate a mood as the 'patriotic'. The critics were merely confusing their terminology, since there is no formal distinction between a patriotic 'lyric' and a loyal 'song': yet the latter, along with Austin's 'passionate' verses, was admitted into the tradition. Their real objection lay not in the vehicle of expression, but in the quality of the sentiment which influenced the audience. Recalling the mounting over-enthusiasm of the

1 ibid., p.531.

2 ibid., p.532.

3 'English Patriotic Poetry', loc. cit., 25th June 1902, front page.

1890s ('Pro Rege Nostro' had first appeared in 1892) and the frantic utterances during the war, the critics were anxious to dissociate genuine 'patriotism' from Jingoism: hence, Beeching's desire that poetry would promote 'the heroic style and what underlies heroic style - dignity of thought, passion of conviction, self-restraint'.[1] In short, the proper tone was needed, sincere but thoughtful rather than fulsome. Back in 1882, Ward had said that the poets were free to choose a verse-form, but hinted that he would prefer to see an epic or history-play revival in order to do justice to the subject;[2] Watson aimed to achieve a 'sonorous swell' in his own work; and even in 1909, Newbolt was regretting that modern patriotic poets adopted the lyrical form instead of building 'the loftier towers of rhyme'.[3] This attempt by the critics to direct the poetry of the love and pride of England into an 'heroic' mould amounted to a rearguard action: there is much of the 'my England' attitude in Brooke's 'The Soldier', for instance. But loyal poets did constantly try to meet the high expectations; and all too frequently failed. In an unkind generalization about Watson's poetry, Kipling once said that it was 'wordy rot',[4] and the label could fairly be applied to much

1 op. cit., p.526.

2 'Patriotic Poetry', loc. cit., p.425.

3 'A New Departure in English Poetry', in The Quarterly Review, Vol.CCX, January 1909, pp.199-200 (a review of Hardy's finally completed The Dynasts). Newbolt recognized, however, that modern patriotic poems represented 'songs of a new pride and a new loyalty which were too distinctive, too personal to this age, to be satisfied by the language of another' (p.198).

4 From a letter of 1896; quoted by Charles Carrington, Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work (1955), 2nd edn. 1970, p.303.

of the patriotic verse of the later tradition. Constantly there was a tension between the writer's great aspirations and his straining to transform these into high poetry: even the patience of an audience seeking 'practical lessons' couched in a proper tone was exhausted by minor poets. In its notice of one of the 'epics' inspired by the Boer War, the TLS said wearily:

> Mr. Docking's metrical history is so loyal and enthusiastic that one really cannot make fun of it.[1]

However, avoidance of intimate and reasoned self-analysis - the sort of investigation which Ward had predicted as vital to the mood - tended to deprive patriotic poetry of the depth of insight into personal and national concerns which might actually have better served the cause of Morality: like Bennett's proposed 'ballad history', the work settled at too facile a level.

A national crisis like the 1899-1902 war naturally encouraged innumerable patriots to express their sentiments in verse - the many newspapers and periodicals offered excellent platforms for both spontaneous and long-calculated utterances - and much of this contribution was ephemeral in character. It was small wonder that between the loud Jingoism, the mawkish laments, and the verbose asseverations of duty, loyalty, and resolution, the critics were dismayed by the poetic response.[2] Their observations ranged from head-shaking over the general state of English letters, to reassuring contention that wars

1 op. cit., 24th October 1902, p.319. The work was The Great War 1899-1900, by A. Shipway Docking.

2 The reaction to Kipling and his imitators is discussed in detail in Ch.IV below.

never inspire great contemporary writing (a position which seemed to do injustice to Wordsworth, Tennyson, Trench, and others). Beeching reflected that since periods of 'storm and stress' are sometimes beneficial to literature, the South African conflict might eventually uplift poetry; but his encounter with the war's early work left him pessimistic.[1] In July 1902, The Bookman estimated that the 'literary harvest' had been disappointing, and judged that verse had made a less valuable contribution than soldiers' published letters and journalists' war-correspondence - a sign, perhaps, of the growing desire to learn the truth about War.[2] Bernard Holland at the same time suggested in The Edinburgh Review that practically no enduring poetry had resulted because English writers, accustomed to sympathize with small nations, had found themselves incapable of trumpeting the cause against the Boers.[3] But from those commentators who tried more fully to account for the lack of good work came an interesting interpretation of the nature and function of patriotic verse - especially 'war-poetry' - which partly explains the verse-makers' intentions and their readers' tolerance of the supposition that 'doggerel can express the heart'.[4]

1 'English Patriotic Poetry', loc. cit., p.520.

2 'Y.Y.', 'The Literary Harvest of the War', op. cit., Vol.XXII, pp.131-3.

3 'War and Poetry', op. cit., Vol.CXCVI, July 1902, pp.42-3. cf.Chesterton's dismissal of Henley's bellicose patriotism with the argument that 'The strong old literature is all in praise of the weak' (Heretics, pp.89-91); also, George Orwell's observation that English heroic poetry is full of tales about 'disasters and retreats' ('England Your England' (1941), in England Your England and Other Essays 1953, p.199).

4 A soldier-poet's phrase; quoted by Professor van Wyk Smith in Drummer Hodge, p.[ix].

After the first year, Lady Mabel Birchenough divined that 'the strange and violent epidemic of doggrel [sic] verse-writing' produced spontaneously in response to the crisis - the work ridiculed by Professor C.A. Bodelsen[1] - formed part of the same civilian desire to help the national cause which was responsible for 'the manifold and sometimes eccentric collections of objects despatched for the kit of our fighting men'.[2] Though deploring the poor quality of the verse, she recognized that it had provided 'our best solace', adding:

> [it] deserves a respectful tribute, since practically all of it is forgotten while the immense relief and satisfaction which it gave at the time to a certain number of people, and mainly of course the writers themselves, was quite incalculable.[3]

Her complaint, however, was that poets of talent, notably Kipling, had failed to rise above the crisis verse by producing work of enduring merit, following the great Crimean War writers. Another critic, Arthur Waugh, argued for the peculiar relevance of war-poetry: in being perfectly suited to the needs of the hour which inspired it, the verse fulfilled a function lying 'somewhat outside the obligations of its art'. Waugh claimed - here we find a parallel with patriotic writing in general - that there had to be a two-part standard of judgement: war-poetry's literary qualities should not be criticized without also making allowances

1 'The Red White and Blue. A Footnote to English Literary History', in English Studies, Vol.19, 1937, pp.158-64.

2 'Wanted - A New War Poet. A Handful of Crimean War Poems', in The Nineteenth Century, Vol.XLVIII, October 1900, p.640.

3 ibid.

for its attempt to respond to the crisis. Art's duty was principally to the inactive audience, promoting 'a manly and enduring spirit throughout a warring nation' and 'the establishment of a true ideal for the uses of ultimate victory'.[1] Again, we come to the belief that when there is urgent requirement for didactic verse, (to use the anthologist Macleay's words) 'the song of a crisis needs but little artistry'; nor does it pretend to be 'classic'. Thus we are reminded of the radically different interpretation of 'war-poetry' which was current - though not unchallenged - before the time of the World War's trench-poets:[2] the loyal bard's purpose was to rouse, hush, console his audience - anything but to 'trouble'. Waugh's explanation for the poor artistic achievement of the Boer War writers was that the conflict itself, unlike the Crimean War, had provided an experience of insufficient magnitude to inspire great literature: a noteworthy argument to apply to civilian-orientated art, since later critics have always insisted that the trench-poets' success resulted from the powerful stimulus of personal war-experiences. Where verse on public affairs is concerned, the bulk is likely to answer comfortably the audience's expectations; and despite the upsets in South Africa, the popular mood in 1902 was not ready to outlaw War.

1 'The Poetry of the South African Campaign', in The Anglo-Saxon Review, Vol.VII, December 1900, pp.42-4.

2 See Drummer Hodge, Ch.I.

Bernard Holland, however, was not indulgent towards the Boer War poets, even saying that civilized nations simply could not produce verse which celebrated contemporary wars.[1] This was partly conceded by Newbolt when apologetically introducing the motley collection of poems included in his historical study The Year of Trafalgar 1905; but, being a purveyor of retrospective and topical war-poems himself, he extended the position optimistically:

> ...it is not so clear that this war or that can be the immediate subject of great verse. To its own generation it is too near, too intertwined with glaring realities and confused with disturbing detail. The emotions of the fight, the sacrifice, the triumph, must be remembered in tranquillity -or at least in peace- if they are to be harmonized into anything deserving of the name and the immortality of music.[2]

Thus the spontaneous 'song of a crisis', with its practical and limited function, could be superseded by a carefully-reflected poetry catching up the deeper significance of the past events; the war-poet would be not unlike the patriotic anthologist in 'memorising anew' his country's heroes and heroism. Both Birchenough and Waugh recognized that their evaluations were being made too soon - the true poetry might come afterwards. And this hope was to some extent fulfilled, for most of the Boer War poems of A.E. Housman, which were part of the best art inspired by the conflict because they were not dominated by it, appeared only in 1922. But the interim had produced a huge upheaval of

1 'War and Poetry', loc. cit., pp.51-2. Holland also said that the poetry of 'reserve and idealisation' came closer to the truth about War than did realistic writing (pp.49-50).

2 op. cit., p.186.

social and literary values: the First World War, a greater conflict than that which the former age had experienced in the Boer War, radically changed the needs and interests of public poets and their audience. Having outlived its usefulness, the old-fashioned 'patriotic' and 'imperialistic' poetry inevitably became extinct after 1918.

(iii)

Although the patriotic voice was thus made a distinct poetic mood, there emerged no 'school' of loyal poets. Established literary figures had a greater or lesser fondness for expressing love and pride of England; while smaller bards - from the prolific species of 'minor poets' and 'mere versifiers' classified by H.D. Traill -[1] were regularly inspired by matters of national concern. Indeed, during the three decades preceding the war, some unlikely candidates became 'patriotic' poets. The diffident quatrain

> What shall I do for the land that bred me,
> Her homes and fields that folded and fed me?-
> Be under her banner and live for her honour:
> Under her banner I'll live for her honour

opened a song written by Gerard Manley Hopkins in August 1885:[2] the author was somewhat ashamed of this effort,[3] but meditations on shipwrecks and soldiers elsewhere revealed him manipulating, in his unique fashion, the conventional stuff of the patriotic

1 'Our Minor Poets' and 'Minor Poets - And Others', in The Nineteenth Century, Vol.XXXI, January 1892, pp.61-72 and March 1892, pp.410-8.

2 From W.H. Gardner (ed.), Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins (1918), 3rd edn.1960.

3 Hopkins wrote to Robert Bridges: 'This is not final of course. Perhaps the name of England is too exclusive.' (ibid.,p.261).

mood. In 1881, a young poet, who had travelled in Greece and Italy and professed himself enthusiastic about Freedom, published some vigorous sonnets, recalling Milton's milieu rather than artistry -

> There was a time in Europe long ago
> When no man died for freedom anywhere,
> But England's lion leaping from its lair
> Laid hands on the oppressor! it was so
> While England could a great Republic show.
> Witness the men of Piedmont, chiefest care
> Of Cromwell...

- and copying Wordsworth's invocation:

> Milton! I think thy spirit hath passed away
> From these white cliffs, and high-embattled towers...

He was also moved to celebrate the might and price of Empire:

> Set in this stormy Northern sea,
> Queen of these restless fields of tide,
> England! what shall men say of thee,
> Before whose feet the worlds divide?...

The patriot was Oscar Wilde:[1] and twelve years afterwards, when his better-remembered downfall was approaching, A.H. Miles maintained that such poems represented 'his strongest appeal to the robust and healthy mind'.[2] As these quotations suggest, loyal verse flowed easily from the pens of poets very diverse in talent - and also that to a considerable degree, its subject-matter amounted to an old wine which could be poured into new vessels without excessive change of flavour.

1 Quotations from 'Quantum Mutata', 'To Milton', 'Ave Imperatrix', in Poems 1881.

2 The Poets and the Poetry of the Century, Vol.VIII, [1893] , p.511.

Wilde managed to convey - as with 'England's lion leaping from its lair' - a glib facility which inevitably casts suspicion on his sincerity. But most patriotic bards, as urged by anthologists and literary critics, were conscious of their work's high and serious purpose: Austin and Newbolt, as we shall discuss in Chapter V, imagined themselves to be fulfilling a quasi-priestly function; Kipling played the prophet-cum-teacher;[1] and as Birchenough discerned during the war, many wrote in order to contribute to their country's cause. A striking example of an all-round Art-for-Country's-sake author was Arthur Conan Doyle, who produced newspaper verses and articles, compiled an anti-propaganda volume (for which service he was knighted) and detailed history of the war, invented a ballistic device, and laboured nobly in the Langman Field Hospital for three months during the Bloemfontein fever epidemic.[2] Professor Stead has berated the loyal poets for 'grotesquely' assuming 'the mannerisms considered appropriate to the position of public bard':[3] yet since they were allowed to occupy just such a position, perhaps they were entitled to the 'mannerisms'. Contributors like Massey were by no means to be turned out of office:

1 C.K. Stead censures Kipling's stance as decadently Romantic, '"degenerate" because he would teach nothing the people did not know, certainly nothing they did not want to know' (The New Poetic, p.13): this view, however, ignores the facts that Kipling's contemporaries often praised the novelty of his early work - and resented his hectoring during and after the Boer War.

2 See John Dickson Carr, The Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle 1949, Chs. X-XIII; also, Charles Higham, The Adventures of Conan Doyle 1976, Ch.6. Adrian Conan Doyle recalled his father as an energetic, chivalrous British gentleman: The True Conan Doyle 1945.

3 op. cit., p.49.

> Some...are more properly historic photographs, rather than Poems in the Esthetic sense. But they are national; and such things may have their place as illustrations in historic records. Whatsoever the matter might be, I have always written <u>for</u> the subject with all my heart.[1]

A drawback to the poet's awareness of his 'public' stance, however, was uncomfortable self-consciousness. Sometimes patriotic writers addressed their audience as 'you', more often they cajoled with 'we', occasionally they demonstrated with 'I': and, standing in awe of their subject, they well answered Beeching's call for the proper <u>tone</u>. Declamation was an unfortunate characteristic - Hopkins's song begins with a rhetorical question, Wilde's pieces all with exclamations. Swinburne (whom Godwin Salt described as 'pre-eminent among modern poets as the poet of patriotism')[2] was spurred by the war to harangue his audience in this vein:

> And now the living breath
> Whose life puts death to death,
> Freedom, whose name is England, stirs and thrills
> The burning darkness through
> Whence fraud and slavery grew,
> We scarce may mourn our dead whose fame fulfils
> The record where her foes have read
> That earth shall see none like her born ere earth be dead.[3]

- the breathless bombast of this premature victory-ode turns it into a pulpit, or soap-box, peroration. Swinburne provides an extreme illustration of the fault: but the lofty style

1 <u>My Lyrical Life</u>, First Series, 1889, p.xx.

2 <u>English Patriotic Poetry</u>, p.lviii.

3 'Astraea Victrix', in <u>The Saturday Review</u>, Vol.LXXXIX, 9th June 1900, pp.704-5; with all Swinburne's Boer War poems, reprinted in <u>A Channel Passage and Other Poems</u> 1904. (Professor van Wyk Smith mistakenly states that Swinburne's contributions 'were published in <u>The Times</u> at regular intervals during the war' - <u>op. cit.</u>, p.53.)

generally attempted by moderate patriotic writers remained analogous to that in which letters are written for newspaper publication. For every one of the Boer War soldier-poets who employed a Kiplingesque, 'cockney' manner, at least three others preferred the firm-footed, straight-backed stance; perhaps, because this was easier to imitate. Another characteristic was an unnaturally formal diction. Verse-makers tried, for instance, to reproduce the grand expression achieved by Wordsworth in his much-admired ode 'To Duty':

> Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!
> O Duty! if that name thou love
> Who art a light to guide, a rod
> To check the erring and reprove...

- during the war, B. Paul Neuman held that the soldier's 'claim to glory' lay not in blood-lust,

> But this; within his secret soul to hear
> The voice of Duty, solemn and austere,
> And on her altar, with a sigh, to lay
> The heavy price obedience needs must pay.
>
> Wherefore I deem them happiest who fall,
> With hands unstained by blood, at England's call.
> Proudly unto their nameless graves they go,
> Vanquished by Death, but by no meaner foe.[1]

- thus catching haughtiness, not grandeur. And throughout the war, verse had an almost formulaic quality, as poets borrowed apt phrases from one another.

1 'The Fever-Graves', from Pro Patria and Other Poems 1905.

Patriotic poetry also became filled with conventional imagery. Most notable were the larger-than-life embodiments of important subjects and virtues - 'England', 'Mother-England', 'Britannia', 'the Lion', 'the Flag', 'Duty', 'Freedom', 'Justice', 'Peace' - , whose repetition tended to discourage imaginative interpretation since the poets could build as it were with wooden blocks of set shape. (The effective but unsubtle mode of expression was used in another art-form: the age's cartoons, as offered in Punch, would sum up a situation in a pictorial tableau, wherein the pose of a figure like 'Britannia' symbolized a complex attitude.)

The Boer War was in fact responsible for the artistic modification of one of these images. Influenced by an awareness of Britain's long traditions and the sober implications of Empire, and perhaps having regard to the physical condition of the ageing, widowed Queen-Empress, poets frequently characterized their country as an Old Mother, wise and strong yet gradually being bowed down by her labours.[1] Massey, in his popular verses 'England' warned the nation's enemies that, though venerably old, she was still strong enough to wage a righteous war:

> There she sits in her Island-home,
> Peerless among her Peers!
> And Liberty oft to her arms doth come,
> To ease its poor heart of tears.
> Old England still throbs with the muffled fire
> Of a Past she can never forget...[2]

1 Professor van Wyk Smith surmises that the image 'may have derived from a speech made in the Canadian parliament in 1896' (op. cit., p.81): but it surely belonged to political and sentimental imperialistic dialogue long before then.

2 From My Lyrical Life, First Series.

As well as the personifications of 'England' and 'Liberty', it is worth noticing the poet's sense of insular security and of the stability of the Past. In Massey's view - later repeated by Kipling - the Old Mother would be supported, perhaps even rejuvenated, by her stalwart 'sons': the White colonies, whose citizens hastened to stand by their distant but no less close countrymen: a poetic interpretation of the political arguments for consolidating Greater Britain. In the verses composed in response to Australians volunteering for Sudan service in 1885, Massey crowed:

> They talked of England growing old:
> They said she spoke with feeble voice;
> But hear the virile answer rolled
> Across the world! Behold her Boys
> Come back to her full-statured Men,
> To make four-square her fighting ranks.
> She feels her youth renewed again...[1]

In 1899, when the colonies offered troops to fight in South Africa, writers like Conan Doyle largely repeated such sentiments, in a very loud chorus:

> Who's that calling?
> The old sea-mother calls
> In her pride at the children that she bore:
> "Oh noble hearts and true,
> There is work for us to do..."[2]

As it became evident that the conflict was taxing the country's strength, the personification developed so that England became

1 'An Imperial Reply', from ibid., Second Series, 1889.

2 'Who's That Calling?', in The Daily News, 18th October 1899, p.7.

an 'Old Grey Mother', tired and sorrowing for her dying children. This image was most successfully employed during the early dark days by a Scottish clergyman, Lauchlan Maclean Watt:

> East and South my children scatter,
> North and West the world they wander,
>
> Yet they come back to me,
> Come with their brave hearts beating,
> Longing to die for me,
>
> Me, the grey, old, weary mother,
> Throned amid the Northern waters...[1]

This proud, sad dirge was ostensibly based on 'an old Gaelic air'. Similarly, when treating 'The Graves of Magersfontein', Neuman characterized his country:

> The grey-haired mother of the mist
> Looks forth across her wintry sea,
> "My lads have gone to keep their tryst,
> O, when will they come back to me?"[2]

- a figure sensitively reflecting the people's grief, just as in a 'Britannia' guise she could reflect their heroic aspirations.

In his discussion of this Old Mother image, Professor van Wyk Smith complains that it was 'hardly an accurate reflection of the truth' as revealed by the remarks of one or

1 For full text and details see Appendix I. Watt (1867-1957) won further regard as the winner of the Good Words competition for a coronation ode in 1902 (see the issue of July 1902, pp.xi-xviii); he had a distinguished career in the Church of Scotland, serving as Minister of Glasgow Cathedral 1923-34 and Moderator of the Church 1933-4.

2 In Literature, Vol.VI, 3rd February 1900, p.105; reprinted, slightly revised, in Pro Patria and Other Poems.

two colonials and statistics of colonial contingents during the conflict; elsewhere, he arraigns Swinburne's stance as 'symptomatic of a profound insecurity and lack of focus in the imperial dream itself'.[1] Professor Stead is pursuing a similar argument when he describes patriotic poetry in general of being - worse than uncritical - wilfully facile:

> ...forced more and more to treat complex problems as though their solutions were simple to all but the dull-witted.[2]

It is true that many loyal poems, including those examining the Boer War's significance, failed to tackle complex and crucial issues; a lofty style often seemed to be the consequence of myopia, shallowness, or blinding political bias. Yet - as with Massey's 'historic photographs' - the poets sincerely believed that they dealt in Reality, with legitimate idealisation, optimism, romance. Bearing in mind the 'public' role and duty which they undertook, perhaps an analogy should be drawn between their work and hymn-writing: in both cases, the fundamental premisses are unquestionable - however ill-focused - and the audience expects a poetic rendering which magnifies without distortion.[3] To the faithful, complex problems can have simple

1 Drummer Hodge, pp.81, 54.

2 The New Poetic, p.69.

3 In response to criticism of his 1977 Jubilee poem - such as that 'It is absolutely pathetic... the most banal, ninth-rate piece of child's verse... none of the mystery of poetry about it' - Sir John Betjeman took refuge in a defence that the piece was designed as a 'hymn', technically 'meant for singing, not reading' (see The Times, 7th February 1977, pp.1-2, and 8th February, p.2, et seq.). The Laureate's modern-day audience is inevitably ungrateful: but his offering was bad, even as 'patriotic' verse.

solutions; and the beauty in 'hymns' is peculiar:

> Still, it is possible that if we have no sympathy with the subject-matter, be it political, patriotic, domestic, or spiritualistic, we are more or less incapable of justly appraising the poetry.[1]

These were preachers to the converted: hence their complacent patriotism, generating an art very different from, for example, the passionate Irish nationalistic writing of the time.

The stress of the South African War generally failed to shake the loyal poets from their high pulpits; we have discussed how critics such as Beeching urged them to retain their proper places. Consequently, much of their artistry was descended directly from the old tradition. In some instances, like the Old Mother image, the material was re-shaped by the pressure of the crisis; but often, the poets found comfort in retailing the old wares unchanged. The theme of 'insular security', for example, went back to Shakespeare's much-anthologised 'This royal throne of kings' eulogy and, as we have said, passed from the Romantics at the Napoleonic Wars to Tennyson in the 1850s, until, at the height of Empire, poets like Massey and Austin were obsessed with a sense of Britain's need to protect herself from foreign invasion. The mood was perhaps best conveyed by Tennyson in his 1887 Jubilee Ode's closing vision of Britain as the single comfortable, secure island in a gloomy and troubled cosmos:

1 Massey, My Lyrical Life, First Series, p.xx.

> Are there thunders moaning in the distance?
> Are there spectres moving in the darkness?
> Trust the Hand of Light will lead her people,
> Till the thunders pass, the spectres vanish,
> And the Light is Victor, and the darkness
> Dawns into the Jubilee of the Ages.[1]

The self-comforting insularity was increased during the Boer War, provoked by the world's hostility towards Britain's cause; the struggle was genuinely seen in terms of protecting Mother-England herself.[2] Professor van Wyk Smith discovered a petty poem, 'Arm! Arm! against the Invader':

> The foeman's foot is on England's soil
> Our homes to pillage, our lands to spoil

- and puzzled, he comments that the anonymous author 'apparently confused Kruger with William the Conqueror'.[3] But really, the agitated verse-writer is clutching at material from the traditional patriotic bag - a response akin to that of the minor anthologists. Swinburne was especially conscious of insular defensiveness: he set aside the initial defeats by recalling that

> England's iron-tempered oak
> Shrank not when Europe's might against her grew
> Full...[4]

1 From Poetical Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson (1899), 1904. In his biography, Charles Tennyson claims that this stanza was added 'with Victoria's approval - possibly, indeed, on her suggestion' (Alfred Tennyson, p.497).

2 So many troops were sent to South Africa that, in reaction to the world hostility, two special home defence forces were raised (see John K.Dunlop, The Development of the British Army 1899-1914 1938, pp.80-4).

3 Drummer Hodge, p.71.

4 'Reverse', in The Times, 7th November 1899, p.6.

- and spurned the world's enmity with his June 1900 ode. More shrilly, the sonnet 'The Death of Colonel Benson' later borrowed Wilde's name-dropping trick:

> Alone as Milton and as Wordsworth found
> And hailed their England, when from all around
> Howled all the recreant hate of envious knaves,
> Sublime she stands: while, stifled in the sound,
> Each lie that falls from German boors and slaves
> Falls but as filth dropt in the wandering waves.[1]

- England's enemies remained but 'dogs' (a favourite comparison), and the trusted seas would always protect the Island-home. In the sonnet hailing the real peace, the poet finally recorded:

> One divine day saw her foemen scattered on the sea
> Far and fast as storm could speed: the same strong day
> of days
> Sees the imperial commonweal set friends and foemen free...[2]

- only patriotic poetry's well-established ideal of 'insularity' explains this comparison between the defeat of the Spanish Armada and Britain's conquest of the Republics.

Swinburne's concluding allusion was quite in keeping with the loyal poets' practice of exploiting England's Past for present ends, according to A.W. Ward's recommendation. The Armada's actual tercentenary had inspired batches of didactic verses; as did the Trafalgar anniversary in 1905. The poets

1 In The Saturday Review, Vol.XCII, 9th November 1901, p.584.

2 'The First of June', in ibid., 7th June 1902, p.724. (The Armada's defeat and the Boer surrender both happened on a Saturday.)

moulded their country's history into the shape of a grand edifice, ineffaceable and reliable, the accumulation of many individual bricks of good faith and good courage; and carefully-chosen features were made to explain much about Britain's present achievement and to justify more. Swinburne himself - who throughout his career offered topical poems on national and international events - as well as being attracted to the Armada period[1] was happy to celebrate other military anniversaries, like Trafalgar Day in 1895 and Nelson's Battle of the Nile centenary in 1899; several such historical-patriotic poems were reprinted in his 1904 verse-collection along with the Boer War pieces. He was, however, 'patriotic' without being 'royalist' - a rare partisan attitude -, having a particular fondness for Cromwell's Commonwealth:

> What needs our Cromwell stone or bronze to say
> His was the light that lit on England's way
> The sundawn of her time-compelling power,
> The noontide of her most imperial day?[2]

When the war was declared, Swinburne immediately reaffirmed his interest in that period when military prowess supposedly served a godly cause, producing the thunderous sonnet which The Times published in the same issue recording the Transvaal's provocative ultimatum:

1 'The Armada. 1588-1888' appeared in The Fortnightly Review, NS Vol.XLIV, 1st August 1888, pp.[157]-178.

2 'Cromwell's Statue', in The Nineteenth Century, Vol.XXXVIII, July 1895, pp.[1]-2. (Written after the Commons' refusal to erect a statue to the Protector.)

> Patience, too long sick to death, is dead. Too long
> Have sloth and doubt and treason bidden us be
> What Cromwell's England was not, when the sea
> To him bore witness given of Blake how strong
> She stood, a commonweal that brooked no wrong
> From foes less vile than men like wolves set free...[1]

- rising to the exhortation 'Strike, England, and strike home!', this work subscribed to the most distasteful brand of anti-Boer sentiment. Thus Swinburne typified the host of patriotic poets who responded to the crisis by re-working their habitual material. At times, however, writers seemed to cling to the Past more in desperation than confidence. Many found comfort in chanting the catalogue of historical military successes - a pathetic Homeric warrior's boast - as though this supposedly unbroken chain guaranteed victory in the latest, sometimes unhopeful, struggle: one said of Tommy Atkins -

> At Crecy, Agincourt, Blenheim, and Badajos,
> And in the trenches of the Euxine's fateful bay,
> Though he might not always triumph, yet he ne'er would own a loss,
> He hath in worst repulse always the power to stay.[2]

The poetry of the love and pride of England had long made an unusual use of the medieval period by stressing the similarities between that age and its own: thereby demonstrating history's continuity and progression. This contradicted the 'medievalizing'

1 'The Transvaal. October 9, 1899', in op. cit., 11th October 1899, p.7. Professor van Wyk Smith observes that the poem's final line 'found its inspiration in Henry Purcell's "Britons, strike home!" of 1695' (Drummer Hodge, p.47).

2 E. Derry, 'Tommy Atkins', in Patriotic Poems 1905.

approach of writers who invested the Middle Ages with a golden simplicity intended to rebuke a degenerate modern age; and in extracting the alternative didactic message from the Past, the patriots certainly stood against the Pre-Raphaelites' colourful idealisations and Beardsley's decadent distortions of the Arthurian legends. The demonstration of historical and spiritual continuity was clearly seen in the prose fiction of, for instance, Newbolt and Conan Doyle;[1] it also found a prominent place in the loyal poetry. Conan Doyle's 'The Song of the Bow', a favourite anthology-piece, while evoking the bowmen of Agincourt and the England which bred them, managed to prophesy latter-day imperial achievement:

> What of the mark?
> Ah, seek it not in England,
> A bold mark, our old mark
> Is waiting over-sea.
> When the strings harp in chorus,
> And the lion flag is o'er us,
> It is there that our mark will be.[2]

In his medievalizing verse, Tennyson deepened such symbolic allusion: his studies of Arthur and the Round Table knights were fiction designed to point a moral for his Victorian readers[3]- yet he was also conscious of handling 'the Matter of Britain', the more-or-less historical Past.[4] Idylls of the King

1 For Newbolt's medievalizing, see Ch.V (iii) below. Conan Doyle's novels The White Company 1891 and Sir Nigel 1906 were heavily charged: cf. Peter Keating, 'Dreaming the Imperial Dream', in TLS, 19th December 1975, p.1503.

2 In Songs of Action 1898.

3 cf. Alice Chandler, A Dream of Order (1970), 1971, p.232.

4 J.S. Bratton, The Victorian Popular Ballad, p.19.

thus occasionally implies a more subtle patriotic review of national history than that offered in the dramas and public poems:

> For many a petty king ere Arthur came
> Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war
> Each upon other, wasted all the land;
> And still from time to time the heathen host
> Swarm'd overseas, and harried what was left.
> And so there grew great tracts of wilderness,
> Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
> But man was less and less, till Arthur came.
> . . . . . .
> And after these King Arthur for a space,
> And thro' the puissance of his Table Round,
> Drew all their petty princedoms under him,
> Their king and head, and made a realm, and reign'd.[1]

Passages such as this, trading on the sense of insular security, reflect the later age's concern for domestic peace and prosperity; and Tennyson is also explaining in parable the empire-building ideals of his countrymen. As for the more 'spiritual' continuity, the late-Victorians insisted that a knightly chivalry underlay their patriotic sentiment. In Songs of the Sword and the Soldier, the anthologist Alexander Eagar ordered his material so as to juxtapose Shakespeare's warriors Hotspur and Prince Hal with Tennyson's Lancelot and Galahad, and these in turn with Spenser's Red Cross Knight; the Wedmores noted that Robert Bridges' thoughtful poem 'The Fair Brass', inspired by a Crusader's church effigy, was included in their anthology

> ...at the suggestion of the author, as he thinks it more "patriotic" than either of his other two poems given here.[2]

1 From 'The Coming of Arthur', in op. cit.

2 op. cit., p.262 fn.

The attraction of 'medieval' chivalrous values was that loyal poets could under-pin with them modern-day patriotic and imperialistic service: once again, raising their teaching into the realm of high ideals. Hence, Bridges' elaboration of the Crusader moral, stressing the continuity and progression:

> Heirs of our antique shrines,
> Sires of our future fame,
> Whose starry honour shines
> In many a noble name...[1]

The frequent representation of the Boer War as a new crusade calling forth knightly qualities, despite the seeming incongruity, was quite inevitable. And without allowing for patriotic verse's customary elevation of mood and method, it would be hard to decide whether Newbolt's summary of the conflict represented mystery or delusion:

> No more to watch by Night's eternal shore,
> With England's chivalry at dawn to ride;
> No more defeat, faith, victory - O! no more
> A cause on earth for which we might have died.[2]

However, despite the predominant optimism of the loyal poets, imperialistic verse aged with surprising swiftness: and sober appraisals of the responsibility and price of Empire sometimes gave way to pessimism, a tendency strengthened by the experiences of the war. The most hopeful writers after the 1870s affirmed that the expanding British Empire was part of the Divine Plan:

1 From Poetical Works of Robert Bridges, Vol.II, 1899.

2 'Peace (1902)', from Collected Poems 1897-1907 [1910] ; originally written for Virginia Stephen (see Newbolt's My World As In My Time 1932, p.250).

for example, Alice Buckton in her grandiloquent 'Greater Britons' -

> Island-nurtured Brood of the ancient Sea,
> Safe-girdled from the primal shocks of race...
> Great through the destiny that gathered here
> The boldest thought of far and many a land,
> Great through your solitude, and great by Prayer,
> God's Matter, lo! is given into your hand,
> Yours, as ye serve His Mind by Whom ye are-
> Maker of Polities in Earth and Star![1]

Less woolly-minded contributors made comparisons between Greater Britain and bygone empires, especially that of Rome, demonstrating that their country's advancement reproduced the merits without the faults.[2] The material greatness of the Victorian Empire unfortunately dazzled some - usually fire-side poets - leaving them complacent that the expansion marked an inevitable step towards the nation's destined greatness: they could not conceive how an edifice so inherently and providentially good would ever become dilapidated. Austin's 1897 Jubilee offering, in contrast with Tennyson's mood a decade earlier, joyfully and typically said:

> And, panoplied alike for War or Peace,
> Victoria's England furroweth still the foam,
> To harvest Empire, wiser than was Greece,
> Wider than Rome![3]

1 From Through Human Eyes 1901.

2 Seeley paused to demonstrate why Greater Britain would be more permanent than other empires, ancient or modern (The Expansion of England 1883, pp.49-51). For a wider discussion, see Raymond F. Betts, 'The Allusion to Rome in British Imperialist Thought of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', in Victorian Studies, Vol.XV, December 1971, pp. [149]-159.

3 'Victoria', in The Times, 21st June 1897, p.12; reprinted in Songs of England 1898.

- sentiments which might have given more reassurance had they been 'wider than Greece, wiser than Rome'. But this blandness could easily be shaken: critics simply had to point to the decay of the Roman Empire, as Steevens did teasingly in 'The New Gibbon' and Robert Buchanan did with savageness in his verses in The New Rome 1898. It was to Kipling's credit that he responded to the Diamond Jubilee celebrations by alluding to the transience of earthly kingdoms.

During the Boer War, there was much boasting of Britain's might and majesty; but also a recognition of the shock to her prestige and confidence, as the 'Old Grey Mother' image suggested. Yet the widespread belief was that the New Rome was not destined to fall so soon. The emphasis on imperial unity was re-doubled: not only did poets wish to show that Mother-England had been strengthened by her sons, but also, remembering her solid Past, that her own exertions had been beneficial, belying national degeneration. In a sonnet professing discontent with his country's failure to champion Freedom, Wilde had spurned 'this mighty empire' which had 'but feet of clay';[1] in an epigram written after the conflict, Conan Doyle refuted the ominous Biblical allusion along with any suggestion that the shadow of decaying Rome was upon Britain:

1 'Theoretikos', from Poems 1881. The allusion is to Daniel II 31-45.

They said that it had feet of clay,
  That its fall was sure and quick.
In the flames of yesterday
  All the clay was burned to brick.
When they carved our epitaph
  And marked us doomed beyond recall,
'We are,' we answered, with a laugh,
  'The Empire that declines to fall.'[1]

The war had troubled imperialistic belief, even patriotism itself: but by clinging to the substance of the verse tradition, the poet seeks to inspire in his audience a loyal faith of the kind which was overturned only by the World War. The poetry of the love and pride of England, didactic, solid, idealistic, had sent down roots too firm for the South African War to destroy.

1 'The Empire, 1902', from Songs of the Road 1911.

Chapter III

Rudyard Kipling and South Africa

At the end of November 1910, Rudyard Kipling wrote from 'Bateman's' - the house in Burwash, Sussex, where he established himself comfortably for the last thirty-four years of his life - to the Cape politician Sir Lewis Michell, praising his biography of their friend Cecil Rhodes.[1] His letter included these remarks:

> You don't know -perhaps when you were in England you realized the feeling -You don't know how homesick we feel for the Cape -for the sight & the smell & the sunshine of the mountain. Don't worry about a little thing like Consols. The whole blessed Constitution is up for sale and seems likely to be bid in by the Irish. It's like being in a private lunatic asylum.[2]

Though he derived great contentment and artistic inspiration from his domain in 'Sussex by the sea', Kipling was nevertheless deeply disturbed by social developments in the country which, after much restlessness, he had decided to adopt as his true home. And in this time of dissatisfaction with England he looked back, 'homesick', to South Africa: to the 'woman wonderful' who held a special place in his affections, but from whom he had already been estranged by bitter disappointment.

Kipling had been sufficiently fond of South Africa, particularly the Cape area, to live there for the periods which he wistfully recalled in his autobiography:[3] 'this Paradise', he said of his home on Rhodes's 'Groote Schuur'

1 viz., The Life of the Rt. Hon. Cecil John Rhodes 1853-1902, 2 volumes, 1910.

2 From the photostat copy in Rhodes House Library, Oxford: MSS Afr. s.8, fol.46.

3 Something of Myself 1937, Ch.VI.

estate. He had watched anxiously the war against the Boers, believing that it would assert an unshakeable British superiority; and he quarrelled with the policies which gradually allowed control of the Union to pass to the Afrikaners, so furiously that after 1908 he could never again bring himself to visit the country which remained much in his thoughts. Unique among English poets in his personal attachment to South Africa, Kipling whole-heartedly supported Britain's ambition to bring her properly into the Empire - Professor Carrington judges that there he found 'the ideal Empire for which he had been seeking' -[1] and through what he saw as the misconduct and wasted achievement of the war his best love and hopes and faith were badly upset. He detected a weakening in the national character of his countrymen, so that his optimistic imperialism of the 1890s gave way to crabbed prophet-in-the-wilderness utterances distancing him from his formerly enthusiastic audience. The post-war verse-collection The Five Nations, for example, despite the reassurance of imperial solidarity intended in its title, included the poem 'The Dykes', which ended despondently:

> Walking along the wreck of the dykes, watching the work of the seas,
> These were the dykes our fathers made to our great profit and ease;
> But the peace is gone and the profit is gone, and the old sure day withdrawn...
> That our own houses show as strange when we come back in the dawn!

- and in the following years Kipling's task became one of trying to come to terms with this strange, often repugnant, new England.

1 Charles Carrington, The British Overseas: Exploits of a Nation of Shopkeepers 1950, p.673.

(i)

Kipling's personal attachment to South Africa and his political aspirations for her future were sealed during the eleven visits which he made to the country.[1]

After his 'seven years' hard' - that is, his service during the 1880s on the newspapers of the Raj, when he confirmed his facility with the pen and stored up in his imagination fifteen years' worth of material for writing about India - Kipling came to London, where he achieved the literary success for which he had hoped. However, he failed to settle down in the city, and in 1891 took the long cruise which enabled him to observe for himself much of the Greater Britain then being vaunted in London: he visited Australia and New Zealand, and also stayed for several weeks at Cape Town, still 'a sleepy, unkempt little place'.[2] His second visit was made in 1898, following the unhappy attempt to establish his home in America. This time, as a literary celebrity, he mixed with the colony's high society: especially, his acquaintance with Cecil Rhodes (whom he had met, with Milner, at the Athenaeum Club the previous year)[3] ripened into friendship, and he toured part of the flourishing Rhodesia settlement - an experience which increased his belief in the opportunities for practical empire-

1 Biographical details chiefly from: Something of Myself, especially Ch.VI; Charles Carrington, Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work (1955), revised edn. 1970, especially Chs. 8, 11, 13, 15; Angus Wilson, The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Works 1977, especially Chs. 4-5; Lord Birkenhead, Rudyard Kipling 1978, especially Chs. XIV-XVI.

2 Something of Myself, p.95.

3 Carrington, op. cit., p.305; also Wilson, op. cit., p.202.

building in South Africa.[1] Kipling noted the political situation - the growing antagonism, inflamed by the Jameson Raid, between British and Dutch both in the Cape and the Transvaal - and, shortly after his return to London, he gave his evaluation in a much-reported public speech. The writer next sailed for the Cape in January 1900, rather because of than despite the outbreak of war. During this stay, he busily dispensed cheer and comforts to the troops, and even travelled north to the fighting areas; most notably, he went to the newly-captured Bloemfontein to assist with the propaganda newspaper authorised by Lord Roberts.[2] Cecil Rhodes now had the house built - 'The Woolsack' - which the Kiplings occupied for several months of each year from 1901 until 1908: the excuse for these pilgrimages was the writer's constitutional aversion to English winters (the legacy of his serious attack of pneumonia in America early in 1899), but the true reason was surely the great happiness which he and his family found there.

For several years before the war, Kipling's voice was prominent in the loud discussions held by patriots, politicians, and poets; and it must be admitted that when he attempted to turn his creative writing into a weapon for propaganda, his artistic achievement was generally slight. Indeed, contemporaries were disappointed at the writer's failure to take inspiration from South Africa to the same extent that had enriched his work

1 cf. Wilson, op.cit., p.212; also V.C. Malherbe, Eminent Victorians in South Africa 1972, pp.181-2.

2 See Julian Ralph, War's Brighter Side 1901.

on India: Kipling's political obsessions undoubtedly tended to smother the artistic expression of his love for the land - just as they perhaps impeded him from knowing it so intimately as India. But the genuine personal affection which lay at the root of his interest did sometimes find expression in verses which were distinctive for being tender as well as earnest. Most notably, Kipling's appreciation of the land's natural beauty could bring a 'pastoral' tone into his work which pleased an audience accustomed to hearing patriotic poets convey their loyal sentiments through 'love-of-the-countryside': South Africa's peaceful grandeur, 'the sight & the smell & the sunshine of the mountain' -

> Under hot Constantia broad the vineyards lie-
> Throned and thorned the aching berg props the speckless sky-
> Slow below the Wynberg firs trails the tilted wain...[1]

- and her exhilarating restlessness:

> To the home of the floods and thunder,
> To her pale dry healing blue-
> To the lift of the great Cape combers,
> And the smell of the baked Karroo.[2]

Both these accounts appeared in poems written several years after Kipling's initial brief visit. When the war was over, he produced the first work called 'South Africa', characterizing the country as an alluring, cruel, pagan beauty who demands and receives considerable sacrifices from her lovers. But as this poem insisted, and as Kipling always maintained, the land was

1 From 'The Flowers', included in The Seven Seas 1896.

2 From 'The Native-Born', in The Times, 14th October 1895, p.8; reprinted in The Seven Seas.

more than superficially attractive; its beauty was symptomatic of a greater, utilitarian quality. Being rich, it offered a reward, albeit hardily-won, to the pioneer, the settler, the builder: to this the writer attached the utmost importance, and so was tempted into the political disputes surrounding South Africa.

In Kipling's vision, the Empire's advancement in South Africa was inevitable and almost romantically desirable. His poetry unashamedly conveyed the Cape's expansionist ambitions: the above-quoted stanza from 'The Native-Born' continued by offering a toast

> To the last and the largest Empire,
> To the map that is half unrolled!

- while Cape Town's address in 'A Song of the English', published in 1893, asserted:

> Hail! Snatched and bartered oft from hand to hand,
> I dream my dream, by rock and heath and pine,
> Of Empire to the northward. Ay, one land
> From Lion's Head to Line![1]

The poet - whose views did not stem from simple jingoism - believed that this advancement, far from involving dastardly territorial annexations from Boer and Black, demanded first a bold 'voortrekker' who, discomforted by the nearness of other men, 'shall go forth till south is north, sullen and dispossessed',[2] then a farmer prepared to wrest a living from

1 First published in The English Illustrated Magazine, Vol.X, May 1893, pp. [533]-538; with revisions, included in The Seven Seas.

2 'The Voortrekker', written in 1892 and included in Songs from Books 1913.

the soil. In 'The Settler' 1903 the poet consequently drew an idyllic picture of Briton and Boer working the land together, their enmity forgotten, for posterity's sake; this naive faith in South Africa's potential and destiny ran throughout his writing - until it became evident that the Afrikaners would dominate her.

Kipling's passionate involvement in the politics of the question, however, did not always stand him in good stead. He enjoyed the friendships of several of the public figures who controlled the country - Milner, Chamberlain, Jameson, Roberts, and, most closely, Rhodes (whom a South African commentator identifies with the Dreamer in Cape Town's address) -[1] and, justifiably or not, his work often seemed merely to give expression to the schemes of the empire-builders. In particular, it is frequently claimed that his 'white man's burden' imperialistic teaching in the later 1890s was inspired by Rhodes's activities in South Africa;[2] Philip Mason extends this into an assertion that Kipling largely accepted his friend's outlooks without question.[3] As we shall presently

1 H.G.Willmott, 'Kipling and South Africa', in The Kipling Journal, Vol.VI, December 1938, p.116. The poet's more famous tributes to Rhodes were 'The Burial' (published in The Times, 9th April 1902, p.9, and reprinted, slightly revised, in The Five Nations 1903); and two quatrains intended for inscription in the Rhodes Memorial (included in a letter to Sir Herbert Baker, 9th February 1905 - Rhodes House Library: MSS Afr.s.8, fol.17v). See Carrington, Life, pp.451-2.

2 e.g. Carrington, op.cit., p.332.

3 Kipling - The Glass, The Shadow and The Fire 1975, pp.145-8, 194.

discuss, the poet formulated ideas of his own which he began to preach to his countrymen long before meeting with Rhodes, and he served as a populariser of Imperialism without necessarily adhering to any particular creed. But although Kipling felt that he gave to Rhodes at least as much as he received -

> Rhodes did talk to me about the things he was keen about; but you know how inarticulat[e] he was, and how much he implied and filled in by gesture.[1]
>
> My use to him was mainly as a purveyor of words; for he was largely inarticulate...[2]

- it seems likely that Rhodes obtained the better bargain by courting the writer for his literary influence. Like other poets of the time, Kipling believed that his talent should be used to make an active, practical patriotic contribution, and far more important than the source of his teaching was its final quality. With his South African work he continued his policy of educating his countrymen in the issues of Imperialism: but too much of it was didactic to an extent which brought it sadly close to resembling political propaganda. 'The Settler', for instance,despite its excellent conciliatory sentiment and the poet's evident faith in the country, ignored the fact that the British contribution to the united South Africa would remain primarily in industry and manufacture, not agriculture: immediately after the war, Kipling's views coincided with the politicians' plans for fresh land settlement, and the poem was

1 From a letter to Baker, 15th December 1932; Rhodes House Library: MSS Afr.s.8, fol.37.

2 Something of Myself, p.173.

the result of deeply-held personal convictions being turned into verse with a wider propagandist intention.

The poet's interest in South Africa, then, was by no means casual. He wanted to see fulfilled the potential of a beautiful, demanding, rich land. He came to think that the task of extending civilization was worth performing for its own sake, anywhere on the globe: but he was increasingly convinced that a strong, unified British Empire was necessary for the present and future security of the member countries. South Africa offered the final challenge to the expansion of England, and he was anxious for the land to be united - if necessary, by the Cape forcibly unrolling the red map northwards over the Republics - and so take her place among the Five Nations. Ironically, however, the war which was supposed to prove and increase the Empire's strength served to demonstrate the Mother-Country's weakness; and this failure to meet the challenge of the South African problem brought about the change in Kipling's attitude towards his country and her Empire which became increasingly obvious in the new century.

(ii)

In a review of Kipling's career prior to the war, William Archer noted how his success and popularity were indebted to the happy chance by which his arrival 'was nicely timed to coincide with the awakening of imperial self-consciousness'.[1]

1 'Rudyard Kipling' in Poets of the Younger Generation 1902, p.227.

Contemporaries frequently said that Kipling was largely carried along on the wave which was not entirely of his own making; and that he had the fortune to say the right thing on certain momentous occasions, as with 'Recessional':

> It is impossible to forget the effect produced when, on that bright June morning, three years ago, amid all the glint and the glamour of the Imperial Jubilee, there fell upon the ears of the nation the solemn and sonorous swell of The Recessional.[1]

On the other side, however, is the consideration that Kipling caught and held the ear of the people because he was determined to do so: teaching about the Empire was his vocation[2]- for his pronouncements in The Times the poet refused to take payment[3]- and he concentrated his skill on producing effective lessons, with a success going beyond the accident of finding a tolerant audience. According to T.S. Eliot's evaluation of the narrow appeal but wide influence of his verse:

> For Kipling the poem is something which is intended to act -and for the most part his poems are intended to elicit the same response from all readers, and only the response which they can make in common.[4]

Peter Keating has rightly drawn attention to a piece of prose written by Kipling soon after his arrival in London,[5] in which

1 J.A.R. Marriott, 'The Imperial Note in Victorian Poetry', in The Nineteenth Century, Vol.XLVIII, August 1900, pp.245-6. (Kipling's poem had appeared in July 1897, however.)

2 cf. Edward Shanks on Kipling regarding himself as 'a man with a mission, with a gospel to preach' (Rudyard Kipling: A Study in Literature and Political Ideas 1940, p.78).

3 Something of Myself, p.148.

4 'Rudyard Kipling', introduction to A Choice of Kipling's Verse (1941), 1963, p.18.

5 The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction 1971, pp.152-3.

the narrator describes his infinite satisfaction at producing a successful music-hall song:

> But it needs a more mighty intellect to write the Songs of the People. Some day a man will rise up from Bermondsey, Battersea or Bow, and he will be coarse, but clearsighted, hard but infinitely and tenderly humorous, speaking the people's tongue, steeped in their lives, and telling them in swinging, urging, dinging verse what it is that their inarticulate lips would express. He will make them songs. Such songs! And all the little poets who pretend to sing to the people will scuttle away like rabbits...[1]

Kipling's own affection for 'the People', as his early journalism betrayed, was not so thorough as that of his narrator - the denunciations of the 1900s were well rooted during the 1890s -, but the passage nevertheless almost amounts to a manifesto for the poet's achievements before the South African War. His skill may be disparaged as 'knowing what his lowest-common-multiple audience will accept as a standard of convincing writing',[2] but he succeeded in putting words on the 'inarticulate lips' of the nation at all social levels: his work was accepted in a music-hall context, it penetrated newspapers of all grades, it was adopted by the Army and the Church, while sufficient copies of his books were printed to be widely distributed among class-rooms, parlours, and drawing-rooms. The poet's wide acquaintance with the Empire and uncommon interpretation of the things he saw were qualities rare among

1 'My Great and Only', from Abaft the Funnel 1909, p.304; the work was first published in India, in the Civil and Military Gazette, 11th and 15th January 1890. See R.L. Green, 'Readers' Guide to "My Great and Only"', in The Kipling Journal, Vol.XXX, March 1963, pp.17-20.

2 Robert Graves, 'Rudyard Kipling' (1928), in The Common Asphodel 1949, p.217.

the loyal poets of the 1890s, and when these were matched with his desire to win his audience, Kipling could with justice modestly claim the title 'Laureate of Empire':

> Hear now a song -a song of broken interludes-
> A song of little cunning; of a singer nothing worth.
> Through the naked words and mean
> May ye see the truth between,
> As the singer knew and touched it in the ends of all the Earth![1]

For a label to describe what Kipling was trying to produce in poetry, it is perhaps best to borrow Archer's 'tribal lay', which he used when speaking in particular of the 'barrack-room ballads', but which also covers the various ballads, songs, and hymns designed to celebrate the prowess and achievements of the Anglo-Saxon race in extending its influence around the globe. During the 1890s, most successfully among the poets, Kipling was trying to purvey the wisdom and guidance which were of immediate use to all his countrymen[2]- according to Professor Bayley, despite being a 'lonely' man he shared the sensibility of 'the tribe' to the extent of embarrassing his followers and alienating his future readers[3]- and when his audience later turned from him, he was mortified. In 1906, he spoke cryptically of the value of the Tribe's poet, lamenting the suspicion and ingratitude which led them to scorn him; and as late as 1923, Kipling was still faintly suggesting that the

1 From the prologue to 'A Song of the English'.

2 cf. Edward Dowden, 'The Poetry of Mr. Kipling', in The New Liberal Review, Vol.I, February 1901, pp.53-4.

3 John Bayley, 'The Puzzles of Kipling', in The Uses of Division: Unity and Disharmony in Literature 1976, p.52.

Tribe had unkindly driven a keensighted prophet out into the wilderness.[1] But before the South African conflict, Kipling's teaching was full of optimism: perhaps an objection could be made against the term 'tribal lay' because his verse - unlike that of most patriotic poets - lacked a sense of historical detail, dealing with the fresh adventures of the British Empire. In Kipling, until he was shaken by the war, the broadcaster and prophet were stronger than the historian - but after all, in the 1890s the Empire seemed young and vital, and there was wisdom in showing that its present and future were more significant even than its past.

The artistry of the 'lays' plentifully employed the common devices of patriotic poetry: though Kipling's 'cunning' was not so little as he claimed. This was demonstrated in his public poems on the unity of Greater Britain, in which he made plain sense of the political relationships between the colonies and the Mother-Country. 'The Native-Born',[2] for example, was designed to promote understanding between Englishmen at home and first-generation colonials by allowing the latter to offer toasts to their respective lands before separating from an imaginary festive board. In easily-remembered aphorisms they affirm their loyalty to Mother—England:

1 'Literature' (speech given at the Royal Academy Dinner, May 1906); reprinted in A Book of Words 1928. Independence: Rectorial Address Delivered at St. Andrews, October 10, 1923 1923.

2 The Times editor, Moberly Bell, remarked: 'It is, I think, the first time we have ever published a poem not written in relation to any one definite event...' (from a letter quoted by Carrington, Life, p.315).

They change their skies above them,
  But not their hearts that roam!
We learned from our wistful mothers
  To call old England "home"...

The key note of the work is the colonials' appeal for fraternity between the sons of the Empire, and to strengthen this Kipling introduced a distinctive strain:

To the hearth of our people's people-
  To her well-ploughed windy sea,
To the hush of our dread high-altars
  Where the Abbey makes us We.

This sense of 'something understood', as conveyed by the grandiose, almost mystical images, is frequently evoked in Kipling's verse, producing a 'sonorous swell' of language as much as of rhythm: he profited more than most poets from the device of defining the subject merely by setting it in capitals - the Law, the Blood, the People, the White Men. Also, Kipling had a talent for translating complex political matters into easily-perceived and edifying drama. 'Our Lady of the Snows', likewise published in The Times,[1] applauded Canada's decision in 1897 to operate a preferential trade tariff: the moral was contained in the opening stanza-

A nation spoke to a nation,
  A Queen sent word to a Throne:-
"Daughter am I in my mother's house,
  But mistress in my own..."

-and the poem continued to personify the respective countries, showing how the decision stemmed from the distinctive character

1 op. cit., 27th April 1897, p.8; reprinted in The Five Nations.

of 'our Lady of the Snows'. Still more striking was 'The Young Queen' 1900, yet another Times piece,[1] which surpasses the tableau-poems popular in patriotic verse. Kipling's work hailed the forthcoming inauguration of the Australian Commonwealth, taking for its epigraph part of an earlier editorial in the newspaper which held that all England 'felt a thrill of pride as the work of her sons was revealed to her, and revealed to her at a time when the ties between her and them had been newly consecrated by common effort and by common sacrifice in a righteous cause'. The stage--and mood-thus set, Kipling imaginatively transformed the political agreement into a medieval pageant in which the Young Queen, heroic in her armour, came to be crowned by the Old Queen in 'the Hall of Our Thousand Years' - once more, the 'something understood' symbolism. The poem drew out the interdependence existing between the wise Old Queen and her strong, free Daughter;[2] the dialogue had an unremittingly didactic note, so that the Old Queen declined to offer 'delight in dominion' as her blessing, saying that peace and power come only from God - instead of 'my sleepless wisdom, or the gift all wisdom above', she offered 'thy people's love'. It is also worth noting how Kipling, responding to the shock of the war in a way similar to other poets of the time, such as Maclean Watt, here characterized England as a venerable, sympathetic monarch whose strength of arm belongs to past days, and who was being superseded by her youthful, vigorous offspring.

1 op. cit., 4th October 1900, p.6; reprinted in The Five Nations.

2 In the verse-collection text, Kipling changed Australia's assertion 'Wherefore We come in power to beg Our crown at thy hands' to read 'to take Our crown...'.

'The Young Queen' also displayed the powerful religious aura which pervaded his imperialistic writings. He sometimes characterized himself as an inspired prophet; and his insistence that the expansion of England was divinely sanctioned, although it offended some readers,[1] was in keeping with the general sentiments of the People (which we shall discuss in Chapter VI).

Perhaps the most important of the common talking points which Kipling received and repeated was the distinction between the types of Imperialism being practised by Britain.[2] His initial experience was of the Raj: but after his departure from India, although he continued to sing the praises of the hard-working, self-sacrificing Anglo-Indians, his preference increased for the pioneering, settlement form of empire-building - 'colonization' - which he saw in the White Empire. This is not to say that he belittled the 'New Imperialism': on the contrary, he joined in the preaching of a philanthropic mission to less advanced peoples with enthusiasm - the difference between his 1887 and 1897 Jubilee poems was precisely the sense that his countrymen's power of dominion, though inevitably temporary, was a God-given, worthwhile trust - and 'The White Man's Burden' 1899 became the classic apologia for that controversial doctrine. But despite his recognition that the rule of administration offered scope for men of action to fulfil their individual Dreams and to impose the Law,[3] Kipling felt -

1 e.g. Dowden, op. cit.; and Richard Le Gallienne, in Rudyard Kipling: A Criticism 1900, pp.129-38.

2 For useful discussions of Kipling's attitudes towards Imperialism, see Alan Sandison, The Wheel of Empire 1967, Ch.4; also Bonamy Dobrée, Rudyard Kipling: Realist and Fabulist 1967, Ch.IV (1).

3 See Sandison, op. cit., Ch.4 (3) on the altruism of the empire-builders; also, Shamsul Islam, Kipling's 'Law': A Study of His Philosophy of Life 1975, Ch.IV; and Mason, Kipling: The Glass, The Shadow and The Fire, pp.147-8, 193-9, etc.

particularly after Britain's handling of the war in South Africa - that there was crucial practical value in the sound establishment of the Five Nations.

The poet saw in Greater Britain - the White Colonies, but, to his regret, not in America - men of action who worked hard to make good homes and livelihoods for themselves, and, more important, for their sons also. Their task, as with building bridges and relieving famines in India, offered a worthy challenge which could well be attempted for its own sake; their reward, however, was more valuable than that of the 'working sahibs', because it guaranteed the future of the Anglo-Saxon tribe. Hence, Kipling's numerous hymns of praise to the colonizing empire-builders, and his pleas for imperial unity. When in 'The Dykes' Kipling berated his countrymen, his complaint was that their negligence was endangering the whole national inheritance:

> Time and again we were warned of the dykes, time and again we delayed:
> Now it may fall, we have slain our sons as our fathers we have betrayed.

We have already mentioned that the result of Kipling's 1891 visit to South Africa was a lingering admiration for the 'voortrekker'; later experiences elsewhere - his 1892 wedding-trip and the subsequent unhappy period of residence in America - combined to inspire his apostrophe 'A Song of the English'. The poem consisted of a series of related lyrics, moving from the prophetic prologue -

> (Humble ye, O people, and be fearful in your mirth)

- through a section on 'The Coastwise Lights' where England was described as the hub of the Empire, to 'The Song of the

Dead' chronicling the endeavours and sacrifice whereby the English expanded across land and sea. The section 'The Deep-Sea Cables' showed how the Empire was physically linked, before 'The Song of the Sons' declared the spiritual ties between all members of the Blood; the great cities of the Empire then added their individual voices to the chorus, until, as the finale, Mother-England acknowledged her children and blessed them. The work was a tremendously high-spirited piece, and, despite the call for humility, its prevailing message is one of pride of achievement. The poet gave an unexplored acceptance to the broad history of empire-building, by sea -

> We have fed our sea for a thousand years
> And she hails us, still unfed...

- and, through colonization, by land:

> We were dreamers, dreaming greatly, in the man-stifled town;
> We yearned beyond the sky line where the strange roads go down.
> Came the Whisper, came the Vision, came the Power with the Need,
> Till the Soul that is not man's soul was lent us to lead.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Follow after -follow after, we have watered the root,
> And the bud has come to blossom that ripens for fruit!
> Follow after, we are waiting, by the trails that we lost
> For the sound of many footsteps, for the tread of a host.
> Follow after -follow after, for the harvest is sown:
> By the bones about the wayside ye shall come to your own!

Here is the theme of the divinely-inspired dreamer translating his impulse into action, so that, despite hardship and sacrifice, he makes a bequest to posterity; also, there is the 'something understood' symbolism of the 'Whisper, Vision, Power, Need, Soul', which is related to the upper-case absolutes put into England's mouth -

> The Law that ye make shall be law and I shall not press my will,
> Because ye are sons of The Blood and call me Mother still.

It cannot be over-emphasized that Kipling surpassed all the imperialistic poets of the 1890s in putting words on to the lips and ideas into the minds of his less articulate countrymen.

Yet within Kipling's teaching there were many cautions against aggressive jingoism. He constantly urged the solemn side of the business, the cost and reponsibility. 'Recessional'[1] was anticipated in some respects by the 1896 poem 'Hymn Before Action', written during the controversy following the Jameson Raid and the Kaiser's telegram to Kruger, and the discord with the United States over British Guiana.[2] The 'soldier's prayer-before-battle' has a considerable literary pedigree, but it was in keeping with Kipling's task of educating the People that he should offer a prayer on their entire behalf - which was directed as much to them as to the Deity. Shortly after the publication of 'The White Man's Burden' appeared the story 'The Flag of Their Country',[3] which derided the kind of false national pride manifested in fatuous speeches and flag-waving: in this, however, Kipling was tacitly recanting the ebullient

1 Kipling later said that he intended the poem to act as 'an averter of the Evil Eye' (Something of Myself, p. [147]); when offering it to The Times, he commented: 'We've been blowing up the Trumpets of the New Moon a little too much for White Men, and it's about time we sobered down.' (from the letter reproduced in Literature, Vol.VIII, 13th April 1901, p. [279]). The newspaper set 'Recessional' most prominently, immediately following Queen Victoria's letter of thanks to her subjects for the Jubilee Celebrations (17th July 1897, p.13).

2 Included in The Seven Seas.

3 First published in America, in McClure's Magazine Vol.XIII, May 1899, pp. [3]-15; included in Stalky and Co. later that year.

sentiment of his own poem 'The English Flag' of 1891.[1] The fact was that patriotic and imperialistic consciousness had been aroused in the nation only too well, and, (as we shall discuss further in Chapter IV) despite his attempts to dissociate himself from jingoism, the 'Laureate of Empire' was often identified with the belligerency. The issue of The African Review which reproduced Kipling's 1898 speech on the South African situation also contained an anonymous poem entitled 'A Humble Tribute': in contrast with the editorial's praise for the peace-keeping tenor of Kipling's sentiments, the poem put into the mouth of a waiter supposed to have overheard the speech these cheerful words -

> An' I said, 'Well, this 'ere Kiplin', 'e's a man, an' no mistake!
> An' I said, 'Oh -- this waitin',chuck it, let's go out an' fight
> I should like to punch some fellow's 'ead for good old England's sake!'[2]

When relations with the Boers began to deteriorate, Kipling was thus looked to as a war-hawk; and the fact that he did enthusiastically condone the war gave ammunition to those who were ready to execrate him as the champion of St.Jingo without giving proper credit to what he had been teaching. Kipling's position was indeed very firm (Lord Birkenhead has criticized the 'rigidity' of his thinking and the 'unyielding nature of his prejudice', regretting that the writer betrayed not 'one qualm as to the rightness of the British action, in what was at least a highly controversial issue')[3] but this is not to say that it

1 First published in The National Observer, NS Vol.V, 4th April 1891, pp. 510-11; reprinted in Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses 1892.

2 op. cit., Vol.XV, 21st May 1898, p.313.

3 Rudyard Kipling. p.215. The biographer later concedes the logical soundness of Kipling's attitude - p.223.

was ill-conceived and shallow, as a latter-day admirer like Philip Mason implies:

> ...Kipling, who seldom sat down and thought out anything except his craftsmanship, did not sit down and think out his attitude to the South African War; he was from the moment war was declared, passionately on the side of his country.[1]

The critic's judgement not only does injustice to Kipling's verse - lessons of the 1890s but also wilfully ignores his long-standing special interest in the 'woman wonderful'.

(iii)

Clear the land of evil, drive the road and bridge
the ford...
('A Song of the English')

It is true that Kipling readily acquiesced in the war, and did everything in his power to promote his country's victory. This 'passionate' support, however, followed from a thoughtful consideration of the question and was not raised simply by the declaration of war in October 1899. Carrington identifies the writer's chief concern:

> His vision of the war, which he shared with Rhodes and Milner, was always cast forward to a future when settlement of new white men on the land would prove the key to recovered prosperity.[2]

Kipling's interpretation of the conflict's issues was not original, nor was the tone of his war writing always admirable; facts which perhaps allowed his position to go under-rated,

1 op. cit., p.147.

2 Life, p.388.

although his anxiety was to see fulfilled in South Africa the imperialistic aims which he had been formulating during the previous decade.

Some of the points made during his speech at the Anglo-African Writers' Club dinner in May 1898 were close to Milner's evaluation of the case; just as his later comments on land settlement matched the High Commissioner's policies. For example, Kipling said that the Transvaal's persecution of the Uitlanders - which, however, was not to be forcibly redressed unless the Boers, with Continental aid, should 'rise and give trouble' - produced 'a festering sore in the heart of the country whose influence for evil would be felt for another ten years':[1] in his celebrated dispatch of May 1899, Milner used the more emotive 'helots' metaphor, but making the same point that to ignore their countrymen's plight

> does steadily undermine the influence and reputation of Great Britain and the respect for the British Government within the Queen's dominions.[2]

Both commentators were of course thinking of the danger to Cape Colony; but under provocation, Kipling drew a general, jingoistic principle from the situation. In the angry story which he published in response to foreign Press allegations that during his Bloemfontein visit he had been involved in

1 The African Review, Vol.XV, 21st May 1898, p.312.

2 From Milner's dispatch of 4th May 1899; reproduced in the much-discussed volume Papers Relating to the Complaints of British Subjects in the South African Republic (Cd.9345), June 1899, p.212.

atrocities supposedly committed at Karree Siding,[1] the writer allowed his Indian soldier-servant narrator to express among many uncompromising viewpoints the opinion that an insult to Englishmen anywhere in the world must be avenged, for the sake of national self-esteem as much as for imperial security:

> ...Ye cannot in one place rule and in another bear service. Either ye must everywhere rule or everywhere obey. God does not make the nations ringstraked.[2]

Similarly, in 1906, at the height of his disgust with the Liberals' South African policy, Kipling raked up Milner's 'helots' dispatch, re-opening the old wound of antagonism against the Boers for the sake of expressing a Tory political opinion.[3]

Kipling's position, when war was imminent, was quite commonplace. He contributed to the call for action by rehearsing all the popular accusations against the Transvaal: his poem 'The Old Issue', published in The Times - in a less elaborate version than that reproduced in The Five Nations -, pivots on the assumption that the Uitlanders can claim the help of the rest of the People to secure the 'Ancient Right' established by 'our fathers' as protection against the tyrannous 'King' - again, an instance of Kipling translating political complexities into stark absolutes. The catalogue of grievances reads somewhat like a lyrical editorial:

1 Carrington, op. cit., pp.371-2.

2 'A Sahibs' War', in The Windsor Magazine, Vol.15, December 1901, p.4; the story was reprinted in Traffics and Discoveries 1904.

3 'South Africa' [II] ; see Appendix II.

He shall mark our goings; question whence we came,
Set his guards about us, all in Freedom's name.

He shall take his tribute; toll of all our ware.
He shall change our gold for arms -arms we may not bear.

He shall break his Judges if they cross his word:
He shall rule above the Law calling on the Lord.

He shall heed our whispers for the night shall bring,
Watchers 'neath our window lest we mock the King-

Hate and all division; hosts of hurrying spies;
Money poured in secret, carrion breeding flies.

Strangers of his council, hirelings of his pay,
These shall deal our Justice: sell-deny-delay....[1]

The poet condemns the personal and national humiliation inflicted by Kruger's régime, noting the 'festering sore' danger that 'Far beyond his borders shall his teaching run': and perhaps most important, the damaging effect of

Laying on a new land evil of the old...

Once the fighting began, Kipling publicly accepted the official view that the objective was to overthrow Kruger rather than to annex the Republics to the Empire. He was invited to speak at a Brighton war-meeting on 13th October 1899, and although he declined, his letter outlining his attitude was read out and reprinted in the Press:

> Their demand [i.e. the Government's], I take it, will be for equal rights for all white men from the Cape to the Zambesi, their aim the establishment of a Republic instead of an oligarchy, and their vindication a new and regenerate Transvaal governed under equal laws, framed in open council by free men, neither corrupted nor coerced, representing every interest in the land.[2]

1 op. cit., 29th September 1899, p.7; this text was revised for inclusion in The Five Nations, and lacked the four introductory quatrains which later reinforced the poet's insistence that Englishmen have rejected tyrants throughout history.

2 Daily Mail, 14th October 1899, p.3. (The phrase 'Equal rights for every white man South of the Zambesi' was a famous utterance made by Rhodes in April 1897.)

This laudable championship of Freedom, however, was soon altered to agree with the Government that the Republics' interests would best be served if they were taken wholly under the Imperial Sceptre. The manifesto published by Kipling and Julian Ralph in The Friend after the fall of Bloemfontein announced unequivocally that in order to lead the inhabitants along the path of 'enlightened and progressive democracy',

> The British have come to stay.[1]

The reason for this change of attitude was that the Imperial authorities, led by Milner, had decided to annex the Republics and, in time, to make a strong, unified, loyal South Africa: the policy precisely answered Kipling's private aspirations, and he was therefore energetic in justifying and promoting it. On occasions, he made love-of-country appeals on behalf of the native-born and Uitlanders, calculated to touch the patriotic instincts of his home audience. He wrote that the injustice of having to watch the Cape's decline struck the loyal Colonist 'as a piece of hideous brutality',

> for he loved his land with passion. You see, she is his own land in agony and great torture, and it cuts him to the soul that her name should be soiled.[2]

- and of the miners who become Railway Volunteers:

> These voluble Johannesburg gipsies made it their dawn-song, their noon chorus, and their midnight chant. It swung girders into place, sent home rivets, and spiked rails. It echoed among the hills at twilight... It greeted every truck of new material, this drawling, nasal "I want to go back to the Rand."[3]

1 op. cit., 6th April 1900, p.[3].

2 The Times, 15th March 1900, p.8; the article was circulated as a pamphlet by the Imperial South African Association in 1901.

3 From 'The Outsider', in the Daily Express, 20th June 1900, p.4; the story appeared in the newspaper 19th-21st June 1900, and was reprinted in Kipling's 'Sussex Edition', Vol.XXX, 1938.

This sentiment is not far removed from that of the first 'South Africa' poem:

> Wherefore, being bought by blood,
> And by blood restorèd
> To the arms that nearly lost,
> She, because of all she cost,
> Stands, a very woman, most
> Perfect and adorèd!

- and we have already said that Kipling himself valued her largely because of the rewards offered to South Africa's keen admirers. After the annexation of the Free State, Milner - who visited Bloemfontein while Kipling was there -[1] began proposing schemes for attracting British and Colonial settlers, partly to balance the political situation by reducing the Boer majority of population, especially in the farming areas, and to improve the country's economic position: and he was determined that the settlers, who would be aided by government loans, should be 'of a superior class', that is, men competent to deal with the difficult climate and soil. At first, he wanted to select them from among soldiers who had served in the war; this he later refined to a preference for Yeomen rather than urban-bred Tommies, and for Colonials, who would be experienced in hard farming.[2] These schemes, which attracted considerable public attention, Kipling was quick to endorse. In his Daily Mail propaganda-piece 'Surgical and Medical', published early in May 1900, he urged that the Colonial volunteers should be

1 Malherbe, op. cit., p.194.

2 Cecil Headlam (ed.), The Milner Papers: South Africa, Vol.II, 1933, pp.134-5, 142-4, 242-3, 279-85, etc. On Kipling's reaction to Milner's policies, see Carrington, Life, pp.387-8, 452-3; also Malherbe, op. cit., pp.206-7.

encouraged to 'stay and inherit' in South Africa; the British Reservists, he acknowledged, must return home to their families and jobs, and the Regulars were tied to their profession; the article ended with a measured blow against the Dutch:

> For the land is a good land. It has been wilfully and wickedly starved -starved by policy and craft through many years lest an incompetent race should be found out before the face of the nations.[1]

Much later, the speaker of the 'Service Song' 'Chant-Pagan' who decides to abandon his home country in favour of South Africa -

> For I know of a sun an' a wind,
> An' some plains and a mountain be'ind,
> An' some graves by a barb-wire fence;
> An' a Dutchman I've fought 'oo might give
> Me a job were I ever inclined,
> To look in an' offsaddle...[2]

- is described as an Irregular soldier; his precise social position is ambiguous, for despite his cockney accent he appears to belong to a squire-dominated rural community - which makes him a suitable candidate for Milner's settlement schemes.

As Professor van Wyk Smith suggests,[3] at the heart of Kipling's acceptance of the war, and, indeed, of his attitude to the whole South African question, was his uneasy

1 op.cit., 2nd May 1900, p.4; the article appeared in the newspaper 1st-2nd May 1900, and was reprinted in Kipling's 'Sussex Edition', Vol.XXX.

2 The Five Nations.

3 Drummer Hodge, pp.103-4.

evaluation of the racial status of the Cape and Republican Dutch.[1] His professional opinions vacillated, the early admiration for their 'voortrekker' qualities gradually giving way to spiteful dismissals made during the war and the harsh comments set down in Something of Myself.

The writer's greatest personal experience was found in Cape Colony, and he emerged from his 1898 visit with small liking for the Dutch population. He called them 'a class whose predominating characteristics were primitive and agricultural simplicity'; they were unprogressive through having 'lived their lives on their own land in a soft and gentle climate, which was apt to make men in the third and fourth generation just a little bit sleek'; they resented the more 'energetic' British, and opposed the new farming technology, educational policies, and business methods; they expressed their resentment by a disgusting political 'squashing'. But Kipling counselled patience:

> ...because the game we were playing was a winning game, and it was that knowledge which lay at the bottom of the bitter feeling towards us. We must try by example and precept to coax them along the road to the material development of the land. It was no use getting angry with the unprogressive settlers. Our people have to live with these people....[2]

Thus he presented the Dutch as a decadent White race, who, with help, could still advance shoulder-to-shoulder with the 'energetic' British:

1 For Kipling and most other writers of this period, the term 'racial' had a narrower meaning than is now usual; this obsolete usage is retained in the present discussion.

2 The African Review, loc. cit., p.312.

There was room in the land for both...

However, the claim for racial 'superiority' is made: and Kipling's words left scope for the view that Britain would be in duty and of necessity bound to administer the interests of such backward Whites in order to protect her holdings in South Africa. The promotion of colonization might have to be achieved through a temporary imperialism - especially where the thoroughly degenerate Republicans posed a threat.

But tolerance was abandoned during the war, when Kipling denounced the Cape disloyalists with all the vigour of a man suffering a personal injury. His visit early in 1900 inspired the anti-rebel newspaper article 'The Sin of Witchcraft', while his next visit produced The Science of Rebellion:[1] both works served as effective propaganda through emanating from 'the man on the spot'. Like Edgar Wallace, Kipling deplored the Cape Government's leniency in punishing the rebels who actively assisted the Boers; and he abused his old enemies, the anti-British politicians who undermined the Colony's morale. The first article ended with the grim promise that after the war justice would be dealt to 'the men who have befouled the Colony', so that the traitors would be made 'the means of saving the Colony';[2] The Science of Rebellion repeated the attack against the Bond party, whom Kipling accused of inciting treason among the northern farmers and of imposing a bigoted view of

1 Circulated as a pamphlet in 1901 by the Imperial South African Association.

2 op. cit., p.8.

the Colony's agricultural potential on the gullible English emigrant - 'more handy with a pen than a plough and does not read Wallace' -[1] who then spoke against Britain's war-aims to the people at home. Kipling also took comfort in the fact that the Bond, remembering the Majuba policy and detecting a lack of enthusiasm in Britain for the war, was miscalculating the situation:

> But the Bond has forgotten that it deals to-day with the Empire which is not altogether England.[2]

His comments on the racialist attitudes of the Dutch were now remarkably sharp; but the parallel which he draws is perhaps less flattering towards his countrymen than he intends:

> Sometimes the Bond adds touching appeals against the danger of waking further race-hatred, ignorant of the fact that had the Empire for three months been actuated with one-tenth of the race-hatred these men have taught their "misguided" constituents for the last twenty years, everything with a Dutch name to it would by now dismount and walk (as it was after the Mutiny) at the far vision of an Englishman. One hears from the more malignant an occasional hint that the Boer may at last be forced into joining with the native to secure his rights.[3]

- one might point out that among 'the more malignant' was Kipling himself, who fuelled anti-Boer sentiment by making his story 'A Burgher of the Free State' turn on the Scotsman-turned-burgher's disgust at the Republic's attempt to encourage the Basuto natives to league with them against the British (an accusation which Kipling apparently based on unproven rumour).[4]

1 op. cit., p.8.

2 ibid., p.6.

3 ibid., p.4.

4 First published in the Daily Express, 26th-29th June and 2nd-4th July 1900; reprinted in Kipling's 'Sussex Edition', Vol.XXX.

Where the Republican Dutch were concerned, Kipling was not at first a Majuba-fanatic, despite his comment about 'scooping' them out if the need arose. The 1890 barrack-room-ballad 'Fuzzy-Wuzzy' had placed on the catalogue of rueful defeats that

> The Boers knocked us silly at a mile[1]

- and, more stridently, 'The English Flag' referred to the 1881 submission by demanding,

> Must we borrow a clout from the Boer -to plaster anew with dirt?

But, bravado put aside, Kipling recognized that a revision of the Majuba settlement was necessary for something more important than the soothing of ruffled national pride:

> We have let things go on too long. We were dealing with a people who have considered themselves our masters and our bosses. We had allowed them to put back the clock throughout the whole of South Africa, and to create a festering sore in the heart of the country...[2]

In his war-story 'The Comprehension of Private Copper', the writer argued that the weakness over Majuba was largely to blame for the derision in which Britain had been held;[3] but when desperate to re-open the old issues in his second 'South Africa' poem, Kipling cited 'the shame of Amajuba Hill' in provocatively jingoistic fashion.

1 The Scots Observer, Vol.III, 8th March 1890, pp.437-8; reprinted in Barrack-Room Ballads.

2 The African Review, loc. cit., p.312.

3 First published in The Strand Magazine, Vol.XXIV, October 1902, pp.[363]-369; with revisions, reprinted in Traffics and Discoveries.

Kipling had even less respect for the Republicans - despite their 'voortrekker' origins - than for their Cape Dutch compatriots, holding that their retrograde political policies (which 'put the clock back' and, according to 'The Old Issue', recalled the deposed history-book tyrants) were evidence of their extreme racial degeneration. At the worst, his intolerance expressed itself in his war-writing through calculated racialist slurs. The poem 'The Faith Cup of the White Men', completed early in 1900,[1] implied that the White Empire's enemy is not to be included under the crucial designation; later, in 'A Sahibs' War', the narrator retailed this extreme insult -

> "...and they will foolishly show mercy to these Boer-log because it is believed that they are white."[2]

- and the story's depiction of the Boers' despicable fighting methods was intended to prove the insinuation. Elsewhere in the work actually published during the conflict, Kipling did his part to defame the Boer people. 'A Burgher of the Free State', for example, showed a cowardly Bloemfontein population which, typical of the nation, was subservient to the more wicked Transvaalers; the story also mentioned the shelling of women and children in Kimberley, and the shooting of a war-

1 Cabled to Canada to secure copyright, 23rd January 1900. Called 'A Song of the White Men', the poem was published in The Friend, 2nd April 1900, p.[2] , but was not collected up by Kipling until he produced his 'Inclusive Edition' of verse in 1919.

2 The Windsor Magazine, Vol.15, December 1901, p.6.

correspondent under the white flag. Even after the war, Kipling carried into his creative writing the suggestion that the Boers' political attitudes and ethical conduct were the consequences of racial inferiority, by bestowing on the burgher in 'The Comprehension of Private Copper' a peculiar half-caste status.[1]

However, underlying these somewhat excited war-time allegations, Kipling had a specific reason for his antipathy towards the Boers. The comment made in 'Surgical and Medical' about the race being 'incompetent' in land management was frequently repeated elsewhere: most notably, in 'A Burgher of the Free State' he charged the Republicans with having neglected their farming after discovering that they could live profitably on the taxes imposed on the Uitlander miners. In Something of Myself, Kipling returned to the subject:

> At long last, we were left apologising to a deeply-indignant people, whom we had been nursing and doctoring for a year or two; and who now expected, and received, all manner of free gifts and appliances for the farming they had never practised.[2]

This incapacity to work the land in South Africa was, in Kipling's view, the weakness which explained why the Dutch were the less fit race to manage the country; and he saw the

1 cf. C.A. Bodelsen, 'Kipling and the Helots. An Interpretation of The Comprehension of Private Copper', in English Studies, Vol.42, 1961, pp.351-7; also, Bayley, The Uses of Division, p.59 and van Wyk Smith, op. cit., p.104.

2 op. cit., p.166.

conquest of the Republics as a legitimate method of rescuing South Africa from their retrogressive policies. In a letter to his former American physician, James Conland, he spoke of the overt intentions of the enemy:

> They want to sweep the English into the sea, to lick their own nigger and to govern South Africa with a gun instead of a ballot box. It is only the little Englanders in London who say that the Transvaal is merely fighting for its independence; but out here both sides realize it is a question of which race is to run the country.[1]

It was always his contention that the Dutch, both in the Cape and in the Republics, had a 'primitive lust for racial domination',[2] which was symptomatic of their inferiority, and which led them to try to dominate the British - as 'helots', in Milner's phrase - in the same way that they ruled 'their own nigger'. The purpose of the war was to clear the land of this evil: afterwards, Kipling felt with bitterness that the Dutch had been too promptly reinstated in the Law-making power, without first being 'civilized' by the victors.

In Kipling's view - following Milner's policies -, once South Africa had benefited for a time from being managed on Britain's terms, the 'administration' could give way to self-government, and the country would take its place as the Fifth White Nation. Soon after the peace was signed, therefore, he began to publish work designed to promote harmony and

1 Sent from 'The Woolsack', 20th February 1901; quoted by Carrington, Life, p.379.

2 Something of Myself, p.166.

reconciliation; his purpose was largely to encourage his British and Colonial readers to love South Africa - perhaps to the extent of emigrating there - and so he toned down his prejudices against the Dutch. Two stories were written in the new spirit: 'The Comprehension of Private Copper', where the 'comprehension' amounts to a reciprocal understanding between the Tommy and the burgher (and, on Copper's side, making many allowances for the other's faults); and 'The Captive', in which, as a sub-theme to the study of Britain's management of the fighting, a Boer commandant, Van Zyl, in the American speaker's account is depicted as an agreeable man who, like many of his countrymen, has been greatly misled by politicians and pastors.[1] Kipling had expressed similar sentiment in his epitaph on General Joubert:

> With those that bred; with those that loosed the strife,
> He had no part whose hands were clear of gain;
> But, subtle, strong and stubborn, gave his life,
> To a lost cause and knew the gift was vain.[2]

Chief among his post-war poems of reconciliation was 'The Settler', published in The Times on 27th February - Majuba Day - 1903, introduced by an extract from a conciliatory speech made by Joseph Chamberlain during his visit to South Africa:

1 First published in Collier's Weekly, Vol.39, 29th November 1902, pp. [5], 7-9; with revisions, reprinted in Traffics and Discoveries.

2 The Friend, 30th March 1900, p.[3]; reprinted in The Five Nations.

Where my fresh-turned furrows run and the deep soil glistens red,
I will repair the wrong that was done to the living and the dead:
Here where the senseless bullet fell, and the barren shrapnel burst,
I will plant a tree, I will dig a well against the heat and the thirst.

Here in a large and a sunlit land, where no wrong bites to the bone,
I will lay my hand in my neighbour's hand, and together we will atone...

. . . . . .

Bless then, our God, the new-yoked plough, and the good beasts that draw,
And the bread we eat in the sweat of our brow according to thy law:
After us cometh a multitude - prosper the work of our hands
That we may feed with our land's food the folk of all our lands![1]

This work was cabled to the newspaper from South Africa; and while Kipling's account of the relations between Briton and Dutchman is fondly idealistic, the point is made that, setting aside judgements about 'energetic' and decadent races, the real struggle henceforth should be against the land - for the sake of posterity.

In The Five Nations, Kipling occasionally produced sharp comments about the former enemy -

You can never be sure of your kopje,
But of this be you blooming well sure,
A kopje is always a kopje,
And a Boojer is always a Boer![2]

- but he avoided the slanders of his war-writing proper. The tone of the songs put into the mouths of the war-wise soldiers is one of affection, not hatred, for the foe (whose scouting and shooting talents the poet had enviously admired).

1 op. cit., p.8; reprinted, slightly revised, in The Five Nations.

2 'Two Kopjes'.

> I do not love my Empire's foes,
> Nor call 'em angels; still,
> What is the sense of 'atin' those
> 'Oom you are meant to kill?
> So, barrin' all that foreign lot
> Which only joined for spite,
> Myself, I'd just as soon as not
> Respect the man I fight.

- the speaker then sentimentalized the gallant and competent 'Piet', who, however, is ultimately outmatched.[1] This poem's mood corresponds to that of much popular opinion of the time (though it was not invariably shared by the South African servicemen):[2] but at least one critic felt that Kipling was over-doing things -

> 'E 'ath a notion that the War
> Was a Imperial beano, gave
> By a 'eroic people for
> A people twenty times as brave.[3]

The fact was of course that Kipling now dressed the Dutch for their role as partners in the Fifth White Nation. Perhaps the poem in the 1903 collection which best displays an unobtrusive 'forgive and forget' mood is 'Half-Ballad of Waterval', in which a former prisoner-of-war indicated that his suffering at the hands of the Boers taught him to rise above any desire to inflict misery on his own enemy prisoners. The badness of the Boers is frankly exposed:

1 'Piet'.

2 cf. the fraternal account woven by James Milne in The Epistles of Atkins 1902, Ch.XI; for dissenting soldier-opinion, see Ch.IV (v) below.

3 T.W.H. Crosland: 'The Five Notions', in The Five Notions 1903. See Ch.IV (i) below.

They'll never know the shame that brands-
  Black shame no livin' down makes white,
The mockin' from the sentry-stands,
  The women's laugh, the gaoler's spite.
  We are too bloomin' much polite,
    But that is 'ow I'd 'ave us be...

- but the stress falls on the speaker's desire to turn his knowledge to good:

  I'd give the gold o' twenty Rands
    (If it was mine) to set 'em free...
For I 'ave learned at Waterval
    The meanin' of captivity!

The allusions point in opposite directions - the Boers branded with a 'black' shame: yet the British were fighting for something as unworthy as the goldfields - but while neither party is perfect, the Boers deserve to be helped, not stifled, by their more knowing conquerors.

Since his public comments about the Dutch varied so much during and immediately after the war, one wonders how much private faith Kipling had in their disposition to contribute towards a united South Africa, inside the Empire. His belief in the potential equality of the two races seems to have been genuinely deep-seated: commenting on a design by Sir Herbert Baker for the Kimberley War Memorial, Kipling wrote that he approved of the double pillars of the proposed monument because these symbolized, amongst other things,

> ...the eternal african landscape -of flat & pointed Kopje.
>
> The two races dutch and English rise side by side from a common & solid foundation.[1]

But this optimism was abandoned as political events began to go against his ideals: in 1933, Kipling refused to allow Baker to quote from the letter in a book.[2] His personal correspondence during the years leading up to the Union was full of sour, spiteful observations about the Dutch,[3] revealing the frustration which produced the 1906 'South Africa' poem, and which finally drove him away from 'The Woolsack'.

In allowing the offensive political situation to outweigh his love of South Africa, Kipling was acknowledging a personal defeat and also a setback for his hopes about the Empire. The factor which he believed would have preserved South Africa, extensive land settlement, scarcely came into being:[4] and although he directed his censure against the Liberals and the Afrikaner nationalists, he perhaps also had a sense that the White Empire itself was letting him down. Professor van Wyk Smith claims that Kipling was among the English poets who 'soon lost interest in South Africa' after the war;[5] but as late as 1925 he was writing to Rider Haggard:

1 From a letter sent from Rottingdean, Sussex, on 22nd September 1900; Rhodes House Library: MSS.Afr.s.8, fol.13. (This particular design was later rejected by Rhodes.)

2 Rhodes House Library: MSS.Afr.s.8, fols.11,12. In the book, Cecil Rhodes by His Architect 1934, Baker reproduced the 1905 verses on Rhodes, p.131.

3 H.A.Gwynne, who had been one of the war-correspondents helping with The Friend, was the sympathetic recipient of many of Kipling's letters during this period (Carrington, Life, pp.453-5); he edited the right-wing newspaper The Standard, which published 'South Africa' [II].

4 On the failure of Milner's policies, see G.B.Pyrah, Imperial Policy and South Africa 1902-10 1955, Ch.VI.

5 Drummer Hodge, p.119.

> Things are pretty bad but they're badness on the break -badness that is tired of its own incapacity to make a job of anything. And there is a small but a permanent infiltration of decent English on to the land: If we can only have one or two more big mining centres whence the disappointed can drift into farming, that would at least be another help. It's an expensive -i.e. moneyed- class of emigrant that goes to S.A. now, but, owing to the land's peculiarities, I don't see that 'twill ever be otherwise and I've sat up o' nights giving myself headaches over the possiblities of getting more whites out down there.[1]

Even now, Kipling urges the need to lure true 'Whites' on to the land.

His sense of Britain's failure to profit from the sacrifices made in the war - to 'clear the land of evil, drive the road and bridge the ford' - was apparent in the poem which he published on Milner's departure from office, 'The Pro-Consuls': despite the prefatory extract from a Times editorial praising Milner's success in laying 'firm and strong' foundations which promised a healthy future for South Africa, the verses dwelt on the arduousness and thanklessness of the empire-builder's labours, ending-

> For, so the Ark be borne to Zion, who
> Heeds how they perished or were paid that bore it?
> For so the shrine abide, what shame -what pride-
> If we, the priests, were bound or crowned before it?[2]

The shift into the first person is significant: Kipling's view of himself as a scorned guardian of Empire who will fulfil his duty at all costs resulted from his disappointment over South Africa -a disappointment which became bound up with his discontent with Mother-England herself for the weaknesses betrayed by the war.

1 From a letter of 31st March 1925; reproduced by Morton Cohen in Rudyard Kipling to Rider Haggard: The Record of a Friendship 1965, p.165.

2 The Times, 22nd July 1905, p.8; reprinted in The Years Between 1919. Birkenhead argues that when reconstructing South Africa after the war Milner satisfied Kipling's ideal of 'the strong man ruling alone' (Rudyard Kipling, p.222); the poem's sourness became still more appropriate after the Commons' 1906 debate on censuring the former High Commissioner.

(iv)

When I was a King and a Mason -in the open noon of
my pride,
They sent me a Word from the Darkness -They whispered
and called me aside.
They said -'The end is forbidden.' They said -'Thy use
is fulfilled...'
. . . . . .
Only I cut on the timber, only I carved on the stone:
<u>After me cometh a Builder. Tell him, I too have known</u>!
('The Palace')

Kipling concluded his analysis of Britain's war-aims for the Brighton meeting with the words 'and I recognise that it is the duty of each one of us according to his abilities to work towards their attainment'. Certainly, he himself spent the war-years busy in deed and word, his practical help behind the lines in South Africa being ably supplemented by the articles and poems which were widely published in the English-speaking world: however, this enthusiasm was gradually sapped by his disillusionment with the home public's attitudes. He followed the path trodden by other loyal poets of the time, by becoming a discontented patriot; and the People - resentful of the war's seeming refutation of their 'Laureate's' former confident lessons - felt less inclined to heed him. The change in tone between Kipling's verse-collections <u>The Seven Seas</u> and <u>The Five Nations</u> was remarkable: the assurance of the 1896 volume's 'A Song of the English' was superseded by the cryptic prophecy of the 'Dedication' to <u>The Five Nations</u>, telling that '<u>the imperial task</u>' could be achieved only with supernatural help to strengthen '<u>our littleness</u>' -

<u>Yet instant to fore-shadowed need
The eternal balance swings;
That winged men the Fates may breed
So soon as Fate hath wings.
These shall possess
Our littleness</u>...

Kipling's quarrel with the People began with the top-level inefficiency which impeded the Army, and expanded until he generally censured the nation; his conviction thus grew that the greater struggle for the Empire lay not in South Africa, but at home.

One of the 'Tommy-poets' who accepted The Friend's invitation to contribute verse, B.C. Tucker, welcomed Kipling's arrival in Bloemfontein with a poem which included these words:

> So you've come, Mynheer Kiplin', so you've come,
> Wot a chap you are to foller up the drum,
> Spose yer's gwine to make some verse,
> Well, there's lots wot does it worse,
> You'd 'ave made a better Laurrytte than some.[1]

The point made in the fourth line is well taken. But the bard confirms that Kipling's 'following up the drum', from his Indian days onwards, had earned him a popularity in the Army which - though not universal, as we shall discuss in Chapter IV - was very much evident during the South African War. Fifty years afterwards, Sir Ernest Swinton recalled what had happened when Kipling was delayed at Norval's Pont, on the Free State border, during his journey to Bloemfontein (when his stories 'Folly Bridge' and 'The Outsider' were conceived):

1 'To the Soldiers Poet', op. cit., 19th March 1900, p.[3]. On Kipling's part in encouraging the 'Tommy-poets', see Ch.IV (v) below.

> Practically the whole camp rushed down the deviation to see the man whose songs were on everybody's lips, the author of Recessional, the poet who had put Mr.Thomas Atkins on the map. We found him -a small, bald-headed man, with big horn-rimmed spectacles, trying to read by the light of a guttering candle. Asked if there was anything we could do for him, he answered "Candles!" And within five minutes he was snowed under with ration candles....[1]

Kipling was delighted at being lionized by the troops:

> ...my position among the rank and file came to be unofficially above that of most Generals. ...My telegrams were given priority by sweating R.E. sergeants from all sorts of congested depots. My seat in the train was kept for me by British Bayonets in their shirt-sleeves. My small baggage was fought for and servilely carried by Colonial details, who are not normally meek....[2]

Edmund Wilson has criticized the writer's relationship with the soldiers:

> ...it is obvious that the Kipling who was proud to be questioned in India by Lord Roberts as if he were a colonel has triumphed over the Kipling who answered him as a spokesman for the unfortunate soldiers. To-day he is becoming primarily a man whom a soldier addresses as 'sir'...
> ...by the time of the Boer War the virtue of Kipling's officers and soldiers consists primarily in knowing their stations.[3]

It is true that in 1900 Kipling stood as a middle-aged gentleman, a notable public figure, who enjoyed his position as an influential observer of the Army - a position which he indeed

1 Over My Shoulder 1951, p.104. For other accounts of Kipling's dealings with the soldiers, see 'Victorian', 'Boer War Incidents', in The Kipling Journal, Vol.IX, April 1942, pp.13-14; also Birkenhead, Rudyard Kipling, p.208. While on the hospital-train returning from Paardeberg, Kipling wrote a letter at the dictation of one of the wounded men: to his indignation (but also enhancing his public image), this was published in facsimile in The Strand Magazine, Vol.XIX, June 1900, p.[619].

2 Something of Myself, pp.150, 151,

3 'The Kipling that Nobody Read', in The Wound and the Bow (1941, revised 1952), 1961, pp.128-9, 129.

exploited for the welfare of the latter-day 'unfortunate soldiers' in South Africa. But Wilson is mistaken in detecting a social dislocation: Kipling's regard for the fighting-men was very high.

Despite the criticism which he levelled at their officers and generals, the ordinary soldiers emerged from Kipling's writing in a very sympathetic light. He admired the troops in all their degrees - Regulars, Reservists, Volunteers, and Colonials - sometimes to the extent of idolization. The stance which Private Copper adopts when the burgher taunts his ill-education and the seeming incompetence of his country's war-effort recalls the sentiment of 'The Private of the Buffs':

> "Yes, after eight years my father, cheated by your dog of a country, he found out who was the upper dog in South Africa."
> "That's me," said Copper, valiantly."If it takes another 'alf century, it's me an' the likes of me."[1]

But going beyond this sickly-sweet characterization (which was especially excessive in his Daily Mail 'hospital-train' articles), and adding to his previous achievement in presenting the Regular to the public, Kipling's war writing was sensitive to the change in composition of the Army made necessary by the difficulties encountered in South Africa. A sentence which he inserted in the article 'With Number Three' may have a deeper significance than its evident desire to gratify a Daily Mail audience who counted friends and relatives among the Tommies:

1 The Strand Magazine, Vol.XXIV, October 1902, p.366.

> Remember, it was not the army that you and I know, but the Army of the People, heavily laced with Reservists, family folk, who have kiddies and businesses over the sea. Blacksmiths, gardeners, club-porters, and small shopkeepers were among those represented, and their physique was almost as admirable as their spirit.[1]

Kipling sounded exactly the same note of praise in Something of Myself:

> They were wonderful even in the hour of death - these men and boys - lodge-keepers and ex-butlers of the Reserve and raw town-lads of twenty.[2]

Similarly, the glib, 'let's-all-pull-together' sentiment of 'The Absent-Minded Beggar' -

> Cook's son - Duke's son -son of a belted Earl-
> Son of a Lambeth publican -it's all the same to-day![3]

-marked a retreat from his previous opinion that soldiering ought to be a full-time trade exclusively belonging to Regulars. The fund-raising verses applauded the working-class civilian contribution to the war, and were intended to stir a social conscience to pay for the 'gas and coal and vittles' and the 'house-rent' falling due after the Reservists and Volunteers had hurried to the ranks.[4] Kipling later became indignant at the unnecessarily great suffering endured by these loyal civilian-soldiers:

1 op. cit., 25th April 1900, p.4; the article appeared in the newspaper 21st, 23rd-25th April 1900, and was reprinted in Kipling's 'Sussex Edition', Vol.XXX.

2 op. cit., p.156.

3 Daily Mail, 31st October 1899, p.4 (see p. 131 fn. 2 below). For a further account of the poem's significance, see Ch.IV (iv) below.

4 Keating could profitably have extended his study of Kipling's interest in the working-classes to cover this aspect of the writer's Boer War work (The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction, Ch.6).

Yet ye were saved by a remnant (and your land's long-suffering Star),
When your strong men cheered in their millions while your striplings went to the war.
Sons of the sheltered city -unmade, unhandled, unmeet-
Ye pushed them raw to the battle as ye picked them raw from the street.
And what did ye look they should compass? War-craft learned in a breath?
Knowledge unto occasion at the first far view of Death?[1]

-but now his solicitude for the Army of the People was somewhat obscured by his demands for national service.

Some of the poems in The Five Nations sympathetically observed the civilian-soldier at war. For example, 'The Married Man', whose subject is a 'Reservist of the Line':

The bachelor will miss you clear
  To fight another day;
But the married man, 'e says 'No fear!'
  'E wants you out of the way
Of 'Im an' 'Er an' It
  (An' 'is road to 'is farm or the sea),
'E wants to finish 'is little bit,
  An' 'e wants to go 'ome to 'is tea.

Ortheris had been homesick in Kipling's early Indian stories: but now in his Boer War poetry, the writer investigated the phenomenon produced by the South African conflict, that home, family, and job - a place among the People - wait for the combatant when the war is finished. Kipling also described the yearning for home felt by the Colonial volunteers, and exploited this to illustrate the closer imperial unity encouraged by the war. Sitting round the camp-fire, his 'native-born' inspire their British comrades with an affection for Greater Britain:

1 'The Islanders', in The Times, 4th January 1902, p.9; with revisions, reprinted in The Five Nations.

> We've seen you 'ome by word o' mouth, we've watched your rivers shine,
> We've 'eard your bloomin' forests blow of eucalip' and pine;
> Your young, gay countries north an' south, we feel we own 'em too,[1]
> For they was made by rank an' file. Good-bye -good luck to you!

A better lesson, avoiding the crude appeal to 'rank an' file' class-consciousness, came in the beautiful lyric 'Lichtenberg':

> I have forgotten a hundred fights,
> But one I shall not forget-
> With the raindrops bunging up my sights
> And my eyes bunged up with wet;
> And through the crack and the stink of the cordite
> (Ah Christ! My country again!)
> The smell of the wattle by Lichtenberg,
> Riding in, in the rain!

The fact that their war-experiences would affect the English civilian-soldiers was very important to Kipling. He was delighted that their understanding of the wider Empire had been improved - that they had been 'shook up...to rights', as he expressed it in 'The Parting of the Columns'- and not displeased that their attempts to settle down again at home would be difficult. Significantly, 'Chant-Pagan', with its emigrating Irregular, and 'The Return', with its rehabilitated Tommy, were set as the first and last works in the 'Service Songs' of the 1903 volume.[2] In the former poem, the soldier's thorough dissatisfaction with the physical and social narrowness of England -

1 'The Parting of the Columns': in editions subsequent to the 1903 Five Nations, the stanza's first line was altered to the less satisfactory reading 'We've seen your 'ome...'.

2 The 1914 'Bombay Edition' put 'The Absent-Minded Beggar' (collected up for the first time) at the head of the section.

'Ow can I ever take on
With awful old England again,
An' 'ouses both sides of the street,
And 'edges two sides of the lane,
And the parson an' 'gentry' between...

-is the direct result of the enlarged concepts of space, time, and personal value which he learned in South Africa. Kipling has every sympathy for his inability

To come in an' 'ands up an' be still,
An' honestly work for my bread,
My livin' in that state of life
To which it shall please God to call
Me!

God has nothing to do with forcing him back into his 'proper station'; on the contrary, he calls to him from the better land:

I will arise an' get 'ence-
I will trek South and make sure
If it's only my fancy or not
That the sunshine of England is pale,
And the breezes of England are stale,
An' there's somethin' gone small with the lot;
For I know of a sun an' a wind...

The restless, pioneering spirit which the poet had been used to praise now acquires a disquieting significance: the purpose of the 'voortrekking' is to escape from insufferable Mother-England. In 'The Return', however, Kipling stepped back a little from this position. His ''Ackneystadt' soldier remarks that his experiences are bringing him home 'not the same', the improvement being that the sights and sounds of South Africa, the fighting, the comradeship, have taught him, slowly,

(If such a term may be applied),
The makin's of a bloomin' soul.

He understands that at home he will have to deal 'with little things again', but the poem closes on the promise that the revaluation of his mother-country will not drive him away:

> If England was what England seems,
> An' not the England of our dreams,
> But only putty, brass, an' paint,
> 'Ow quick we'd chuck 'er! But she ain't!

The surface-appearance is admittedly bad: but there is deeper worth to be found beneath, if the enlightened man can still take the trouble to look. As if to commend the Tommy's faith, Kipling set 'Recessional' as the next and final poem in the collection.

Kipling, then, attributes to the returning civilian-soldiers the same power critically to observe the country which he - Anglo-Indian, traveller of Empire, fighter for possession of South Africa - had learned himself. Certainly the poet uses his soldier-creations to promote his own conclusions about England being pale, stale, and narrow: even during the war he was writing to Rhodes that

> England is a stuffy little place, mentally, morally, and physically.[1]

The Army of the People - who proved their worth by paying the price on behalf of the idle 'strong men' who contented themselves with singing and flag-waving - were exonerated from the strictures which the poet now heaped on the rest of the nation; those who remained in England - so Kipling argued for a time - had the power to save the country. 'The Reformers', published in The Times on 12th October 1901, was prefaced by these words, ostensibly extracted from a 'private letter':

1 Quoted (without details of date) by Carrington, Life, p.383.

> "The men who have been through this South African mill will no longer accept the old outworn explanations. They know too much, and it is to them we must look, when they come back, for the real work of reform in every direction."[1]

Yet in the poem itself Kipling predicted that the priceless sacrifice would go unrecognized by a degenerate Nation: although it would not be vain -

> Not in the camp his victory lies-
> The world (unheeding his return)
> Shall see it in his children's eyes
> And from his grandson's lips shall learn!

Sharing the Tommy's conclusion that England does not deserve to be 'chucked', Kipling settled in Burwash and set about his thankless task of re-educating the People.

Because of his gloomy view of the war, the poet failed to infuse his 'Service Songs' with the former 'barrack-room ballad' enthusiasm; indeed, the verses which he now used with such strong didactic intention scarcely deserve to share the designation of the 1890s soldier-poems.[2] The Five Nations did include several sprightly pieces, such as 'M.I.'[3],'Boots', 'Ubique', but for the most part the tone reflected the essentially unglamorous nature of the troops' duties: the discomfort, boredom, lack of satisfaction. The subject-matter was 'realistic' in the style of the earlier poems, but this realism was denied a

1 op. cit., p.9; reprinted, lacking this introduction, in The Five Nations.

2 Carrington perhaps has been undiscriminating in binding together all Kipling's soldier-poems (yet excluding some of his 'war-poems') in The Complete Barrack-Room Ballads of Rudyard Kipling 1973.

3 The only 'Service Song' to have prior publication, in The Windsor Magazine, Vol.14, October 1901, pp.483-[8].

lighthearted treatment. The poet's glimpses into soldier-life became more meditative - for example, as revealed by the difference in tone between 'Wilful Missing', treating the motives for desertion, and the 1895 poem 'That Day', which turned on a similarly disagreeable fact, fleeing from the enemy- and his presentation of 'War' itself was occasionally uncomfortable.[1] Probably his best poem on soldiering in South Africa was 'Bridge-Guard in the Karroo' - excluded from the 'Service Songs' section - in which he skilfully blended into his convincing account of the routine of the lonely 'details guarding the line' an unobtrusive but powerful didactic strain, the justification of their service and the purpose of the war.[2] The soldier-narrator of 'Piet' may promote a facilely diplomatic attitude towards the defeated foe, but at least one of his statements expressed Kipling's heart-felt opinion about the conflict's unheroic aspect:

> But seein' what both parties done
> Before 'e owned defeat,
> I ain't more proud of 'avin' won,
> Than I am pleased with Piet.

Kipling did not blame the private soldiers - with their 'Three days "to learn equitation"', as 'M.I.' put it - for the Army's poor showing during the war: but he did contribute to the public criticism of the officers and generals. He was impatient with the strangling red-tape procedures which caused hardship in the Army's hospitals - the same inefficient

1 See Ch.VII (i) below.

2 First published in The Times, 5th June 1901, p.8. Professor van Wyk Smith offers an excellent interpretation of the poem, in Drummer Hodge, pp.107-9.

bureaucracy that he had attacked in the Raj. But his wrath also extended to the professional competence of officers commanding in the field: weak generals, obsolete colonels, and subalterns who suppressed common-sense and initiative by clinging to the rule-book as their social background and military training had taught them. In particular, 'The Outsider' censured the system which made a fool into an officer, then allowed him to impede the railway repairing work of the 'unsoldierly' Rand miners.[1] After the war, Kipling loudly satirized the generals - though without mentioning names - when, moving from the indulgent caricature drawn in 'The Captive', he produced increasingly spiteful verse-portraits. In The Five Nations, 'Stellenbosh' presents a commander who is timorous, inefficient, and over-well fed, concerned more with protecting his reputation than with properly pursuing the war: the soldier-speaker comments,

> An' it all went into the laundry,
> But it never came out in the wash.
> We were sugared about by the old men
> (Panicky, perishin' old men)
> That 'amper an' 'inder an' scold men
> For fear o' Stellenbosh![2]

In 'Rimmon', written in response to the official enquiry on the Army's management of the war, the poet took the task of complaining away from the Tommy and delivered a first-person diatribe. He worked out a parable in which the 'general'

1 Also, Kipling censured the tactical sense of Regular officers, in his story 'The Way that He Took', published in the Daily Express, 12th-14th June 1900, and reprinted in Land and Sea Tales 1923.

2 'Now Stellenbosch is not a name to use lightly, for there go the men who - have not done quite so well...' ('Folly Bridge', in the Daily Express, 16th June 1900, p.4). The story appeared in the newspaper 15th-16th June 1900, and was reprinted in Kipling's 'Sussex Edition', Vol.XXX.

is identified with the Assyrian idol (although there is perhaps also an allusion to the fallen angel of Paradise Lost), who betrays his followers in 'a scorched and sinful land',

> Until we entered to hale Him out,
> And found no more than an old
> Uncleanly image girded about
> The loins with scarlet and gold.[1]

The defiled image, however, is cleaned and set up again by the priests, who conceal the truth from 'our fathers afar',

> And hastily set Him afresh on His throne
> Because He had won us the war.

Henceforth, the poet will worship it cynically:

> Wherefore with knees that feign to quake-
> Bent head and shaded brow-
> To this dead dog, for my father's sake,
> In Rimmon's House I bow.

Kipling's attitude towards the Army thus changed radically during the war: gone was his hero-worship of the public-school 'Stalkies' whom he had previously represented as the winners and guardians of the Empire - his theme was now that 'the Proper Sort' were impeding progress.[2] Gone too was his faith in the ability of a standing army of Tommy Atkins Regulars to protect Britain's interests. He decided that short-sighted public opinion was responsible for emasculating the Army; when his demands for reform were rejected, he felt that the nation's entire military outlook betrayed a serious character-flaw.

1 The Five Nations. Lord Elgin's Royal Commission eventually reported in 1904 (Cd. 1789-92).

2 See 'Song of the Old Guard', prefacing 'The Army of a Dream' in Traffics and Discoveries.

During the war, Kipling was appalled that the soldiers - the Regulars as well as the hastily-trained civilians - could neither shoot nor ride efficiently: as a gesture towards practical improvement he was active in setting up a drill hall and rifle club in Rottingdean.[1] But he saw the need for a thorough transformation of the military system, beginning with a radical alteration in the nation's outlook. This was why in The Five Nations he tried to do away with the label 'Tommy Atkins' which he himself had made the Regular's common nickname:

> 'Tommy' you was when it began,
> But now that it is o'er
> You shall be called The Service Man
> 'Enceforward, evermore.[2]

In this, Kipling wanted to get away from the soldier's image of being a lovable, son-of-the-sheltered-city blackguard: although the 'Service Songs' were rendered in cockney speech, we have already seen how the Irregular of 'Chant-Pagan' has a rural background.[3] According to Kipling, the time had come

1 A long, chatty letter by Kipling to promote his 'Village Rifle Club' appeared in The Spectator, Vol.LXXXVI, 22nd June 1901, pp.912-4 (reprinted in the 'Sussex Edition', Vol.XXX). See also Birkenhead, Rudyard Kipling, pp.233-4.

2 Dedicatory poem to the 'Service Songs'.

3 During and after the war, it was a source of concern that so many town-bred volunteers had to be rejected for service as physically unfit. Kipling's friend Rider Haggard, during his campaign for a revival of British agriculture and rural life, was among those who argued that the reverses in South Africa happened because 'town-bred bodies and intelligence' had been matched against a country-bred foe (see Peter Pierce, 'Rider Haggard', Oxford B.Litt. thesis 1975, pp.65-8). Kipling perhaps began to share these conclusions: one of the 'curious features' in 'The Comprehension of Private Copper' which escapes Bodelsen ('Kipling and the Helots', loc. cit.) is the soldier's highly ambiguous background - Copper, son of 'a Southdown shepherd', even allowing for the blunting of his 'pastoral instincts' by his five years' Army service, is cockney by name ('Alf') and in speech, a half-reformed 'Tommy Atkins'.

when the military system should be re-organized to the extent that 'each man born in the Island' was 'broke to the matter of war'; thus the old image became redundant. A decade before, the writer had professed a reactionary attitude towards the Army, standing out against educating the private soldiers,[1] joining the die-hard colonels in criticizing the short-service system on the grounds that it denied the regiments sufficient 'old soldiers',[2] and viewing conscription in time of war as an expediency which would put backbone into flabby civilians.[3] Not only did the South African War reconcile Kipling to Reservists and other civilian-soldiers, but convinced him that there ought to be a general sharing in 'the lordliest life on earth'.

In 'The Captive', Kipling allowed his General to comment that he would be glad for 'this war to last another five years' so that he could thoroughly train half-a-million civilians. But in fact the poet had great difficulty in persuading his countrymen to rehearse their warfare in peace-

1 'Speaking roughly, you must employ either blackguards or gentlemen, or best of all blackguards commanded by gentlemen, to do butcher's work with efficiency and despatch. ('The Drums of the Fore and Aft', in Wee Willie Winkie and Other Child Stories [1888] p.68).

2 In 'The Drums of the Fore and Aft' the regiment's shameful conduct results from the short-service troops lacking the disreputable old-soldier qualities relished by the drummer-boys. The poem 'Back to the Army Again' (published in The Pall Mall Magazine, Vol.III, August 1894, pp.589-94; revised for inclusion in The Seven Seas) argues the Reservist's case against the Cardwell system: six years with the Colours gave a man a love of Army life whilst preventing him from learning the sort of civilian trade which would enable him to obtain employment afterwards.

3 cf. his early London journalism, e.g. 'Letters on Leave:IV', first published in India, in the Pioneer etc. 1st November 1890; reprinted in More Flies in Amber 1924: also, 'A Little Civilization: A Tale of the Future', first published in St.James's Gazette, 11th March 1890; reprinted in More Flies in Amber.

time: nor did the National Service League, which he supported, manage to induce any government to introduce conscription in the years before World War One.[1] His first complaints were made gently. 'The Lesson', published when the Boer War seemed to be practically over, gave a serious lecture about military unpreparedness, from a teacher only moderately angry:

> Not on a single issue, or in one direction or twain,
> But conclusively, comprehensively, and several times and again,
> Were all our most holy illusions knocked higher than Gilderoy's kite.
> We have had a jolly good lesson, and it serves us jolly well right![2]

- the national outlook had been wrong:

> We made an Army in our own image, on an Island nine by seven,
> Which faithfully mirrored its makers' ideals, equipment and mental attitude...

- but the poet thought that the lesson could ultimately produce good:

> For remember (this our children shall know: we are too near for that knowledge)
> Not our mere astonied camps,but Council and Creed and College-
> All the obese,unchallenged old things that stifle and overlie us-
> Have felt the effects of the lesson we got -an advantage no money could buy us.

Here is the spirit of optimism, in which the war's shock is welcomed as a source of national regeneration: the spirit which

1 Founded in 1901, the League came under the presidency of Roberts in 1905; the aged field-marshal promoted various schemes for civilian military training (e.g. in his article 'The Army - As It Was and As It Is', in The Nineteenth Century and After, Vol.LVII, January 1905, pp.[1]-26). See David James, Lord Roberts 1954, Ch.XIV; also W.H. Hannah, 'Bobs': Kipling's General 1972, Ch.XIV.

2 The Times, 29th July 1901, p.6.

Kipling rapidly lost. When 'The Lesson' was reprinted in The Five Nations, the final line -

We have had an Imperial lesson; it will make us an Empire yet!

- was altered to the hesitant 'It may make us...'. As the months went by, with the war becoming tedious and less popular in Britain -Private Copper and his comrades later denigrated 'Old Barbarity an' 'is 'arem' (Campbell-Bannerman and the Pro-Boers), along with the anti-war Press: just as their creator attacked them in his newspaper articles - the poet feared that the lesson was not breaking down the People's rigid 'mental attitude'. Early in 1902, his frustration was vented in 'The Islanders', in which, to use Angus Wilson's phrase, he takes 'each sacred cow of the clubs and senior common rooms and slaughters it messily before its worshippers' eyes'.[1]

Kipling harangued in long, loud, vigorous lines which were well suited to the poetic and personal iconoclasm that he intended. The appellation 'Islanders' was carefully chosen, evoking the complacent patriotic verse tradition of 'sons of the sea-kings' brood, safe in your Island home' which he now wished to upset. The catch-phrase, 'No doubt but ye are the people', recalled Kipling's own earlier flattering of his audience: but he now addressed them from a distance as 'you', and the words were in fact taken from the beginning of Job's peroration on the miseries which God would inflict on the unbelieving - the Biblical line continues, 'and wisdom shall die with you'.[2] The prophet-in-the-

1 The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling, p.239

2 Job XII 2.

wilderness blamed the disasters of the war on the public's opposition towards adequate military training, and conjured up the nightmare - which afflicted many people while Europe clamoured against Britain's subjugation of the Boers - that a weakly-defended Island would fall to an invader:

> But ye say:-"It will mar our comfort." Ye say:-"It will minish
> our trade."
> Do ye wait for the spattered shrapnel ere ye learn how a gun
> is laid?
> For the low red glare to southward when the raided coast-towns
> burn?
> (Light ye shall have on that lesson, but little time to learn.)
> Will ye pitch some white pavilion; and lustily even the odds
> With nets and hoops and mallets, with racquets and bats and rods?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Arid, aloof, incurious, unthinking, unthanking, gelt-
> Will ye loose your schools to flout them till the browbeat
> columns melt?
> Will ye pray them or preach them or print them or ballot
> them back from your shore?
> Will your workmen issue a mandate to bid them strike no more?...

As Philip Mason remarks, there was no original thought here - 'every colonel said the same' -[1] but Kipling had a rare gift for the fire-and-brimstone sermon; and in thus cataloguing the nation's failings, the teacher of Empire dissociated himself from the 'People' whom he had formerly serenaded. 'The Islanders' aroused much indignation, from readers who objected to specific parts of the indictment (the slander against 'flannelled fools at the wicket' and 'muddied oafs at the goals' was especially resented), and from those who felt that he was preaching an excessive militarism. Kipling was upset by the poor reception; in The Five Nations he added a prologue whose sarcasm reflected his increasing disinclination to worship Democracy per se:

1 Kipling: The Glass, The Shadow and The Fire, p.150.

> No doubt but ye are the People -your throne is above the King's.
> Whoso speaks in your presence must say acceptable things:
> Bowing the head in worship, bending the knee in fear-
> Bringing the word well smoothen -such as a King should hear.

On this issue of the radical military reform needed to cure the ills revealed by the South African War, the unofficial Laureate largely lost the People's ear: perhaps not surprisingly, however, after the extremes to which he pushed his views, as in 'The Army of a Dream'.[1]

The nightmare that his countrymen were losing their capacity to defend the Island haunted Kipling at the end of the war; indeed, his desire for victory became rooted in a concern deeper even than that of securing a healthy South Africa, since defeat in the far-distant struggle would cast doubt on Mother-England's own invincibility. 'The Islanders' ended half-encouragingly:

> Whatever your heart has desired ye have not withheld from your eyes.
> On your own heads, in your own hands, the sin and the saving lies!

- but there was still the vision of the 'sin' prevailing:

> When ye go forth at morning and the noon beholds you broke-
> Ere ye lie down at even, your remnant, under the yoke.

The prospect of England threatened by invasion, as we discussed in Chapter II, had long worked on the imaginations of patriotic poets: but whereas writers such as Coleridge, Tennyson, Massey, Austin, had faith in the Islanders' power to repel Continental

1 First published in The Morning Post, 15th-18th June 1904; reprinted in Traffics and Discoveries. Kipling began the writing during his voyage to the Cape in December 1900, and later said that Traffics and Discoveries was assembled in order to carry this story to more readers (Carrington, Life, p.377).

invaders, Kipling's immediate response to the war was to confess such a massive loss of confidence that he despaired of his country's fate. In 'The Dykes', the very seas that were supposed to protect the Island and enrich its inhabitants become the symbol of the terrible forces waiting to swamp the ancient, priceless coast-line defences:

> O'er the marsh where the homesteads cower apart
> the harried sunlight flies,
> Shifts and considers, wanes and recovers, scatters
> and sickens and dies-
> An evil ember bedded in ash -a spark blown west
> by the wind...
> We are surrendered to night and the sea -the gale
> and the tide behind!

These are no longer 'our seas': because his countrymen no longer deserve to possess them. The danger from the outside darkness arises because the People have lost the will and strength to defend themselves; and this internal weakness upset Kipling most of all. The utter ruin which will follow 'the wreck of the dykes', according to the poet, is a crime against all generations: 'it may fall, we have slain our sons as our fathers we have betrayed'.

Kipling's mood immediately after the war thus revealed a great falling-off from his former satisfaction with the English and their capacity to inherit the earth. The passing years soothed him somewhat - to the extent that his worst fears were not realized - but, losing his faith even in the reforming capacities of the demobilized civilian-soldiers, he was always suspicious of the quality of those who manned the dykes: as was demonstrated by his frequent attacks against Socialists, Liberals, anti-Imperialists, anti-Unionists.[1]

1 Wilson offers an interesting discussion of Kipling's attitudes during the years before World War One: op. cit., Ch.5.

(v)

When The Five Nations appeared in 1903, the collection reflected Kipling's complex, now somewhat confused, attitudes. It reproduced works on imperial unity, and on Britain's civilizing mission; there were the poems which justified the war, and those calling for emigration to South Africa; the thoughtful 'Service Songs' stood close to the pieces which attacked the nation's wrong-headed military outlook. Several poems indicated the interest in the Navy which was to increase over the ensuing years, as Kipling recognized that this part of the armed forces possessed the greater power to defend the Island - something which patriotic poets had sung throughout the nineteenth century. Among the works newly published was depicted a depressing array of old men, broken men, disillusioned, unhappy, frustrated men: including the builder of 'The Palace', who perhaps represents Kipling's view of his own position as an artist. In a return to the theme of praising the pioneer, the poet describes how the explorer is driven forth by 'one everlasting Whisper' to suffer hardships in discovering a beautiful new land -

> White man's country past disputing...

- only to see the credit usurped by others who travel 'a dozen men together' and profit from his camps and water-holes.[1] And in 'The Wage-Slaves', recalling his earlier criticism of fire-side patriots, he praised as 'like to Gods' 'the men who simply do the work'.

1 'The Explorer'.

However, the volume's tone was not one of unrelieved gloom. Kipling also offered 'The Feet of the Young Men', describing the vigour, optimism, fulfilment of the strong young braves called by 'the Red Gods'. Though the Explorer may be robbed of his credit, he retains something more valuable: the satisfaction of making his Dream come true - whereby his fellows profit.

> God took care to hide that country till He judged His people ready,
> Then He chose me for His Whisper, and I've found it, and it's yours!

There was still hope for Greater Britain. And England, with all her faults, remained dear to the home-coming Tommy.

Kipling's confidence was badly shaken by the South African War; and afterwards he was to be painfully tried by more issues than his country's handling of the beautiful and promising land which had been won at such cost. But he stayed, fulsomely proclaiming that Sussex was the spot on earth divinely appointed for him:

> That as He watched Creation's birth,
> So we, in godlike mood,
> May of our love create our earth
> And see that it is good.[1]

While continuing to promote the cause of Empire with undiminished zeal,[2] Kipling carefully re-examined the 'England' which he had

1 'Sussex'.

2 Kipling's biographers have claimed that Canada to some extent became a substitute for the lost South Africa: Carrington, Life, pp.464-5; Birkenhead, Rudyard Kipling, pp.247-8. In Son of Empire: The Story of Rudyard Kipling 1945, Nella Braddy draws attention to his interest in the Fairbridge Schools which taught young British orphans the skills necessary for taking up farming in Australia (pp.240-3).

formerly taken so much on trust. His writing became more traditionally 'patriotic'[1] as he produced stories and poems expressing love of the soil and the countryside: in particular, with Puck of Pook's Hill 1906, Rewards and Fairies 1910, and the verses supplied for C.R.L. Fletcher's A History of England 1911, he re-created Britain's Past, searching for her essential spirit. Much of his work was now directed towards the youthful audience who had already welcomed the Jungle Books, Stalky and Co. and the Just So Stories, since through them Kipling intended to influence the coming generations, slowly and pervasively.[2] The South African episode showed that he himself had much to learn, but had also a still greater need to teach for the future.

1 cf. Shanks, Rudyard Kipling: A Study in Literature and Political Ideas, Ch.VI.

2 Robert Escarpit comments on the differences between Kipling's and Joseph Chamberlain's suggestions in 1904 for books in the League of Empire Library: 'Chamberlain s'adresse aux électeurs de demain. Kipling songe aux hommes d'après-demain.' (Rudyard Kipling: Servitudes et Grandeurs Impériales 1955, p.207).

Chapter IV

Rudyard Kiplingism

(i)

As a 'public' poet anxious to educate a wide audience, Kipling adopted a literary position exposed to two dangers: despite its popularity during the 1890s, his poetry (even more than the prose) remained controversial, so that as late as 1902 William Archer felt the need to question 'but is it literature?'[1] The work was literature: but it included an Art-for-Country's-sake which became inextricable from politics, philosophy, sociology, ethics, until, as H.G. Wells said, by the time of the South African War Kipling's writings possessed a more-than-literary significance -

> The prevailing force in my undergraduate days was not Socialism but Kiplingism.[2]

Consequently, Kipling was singled out as a target for ideological dispute by all manner of commentators, often on the basis of a superficial reading of his work. Herbert Spencer, for instance, who disapproved of Imperialism and abhorred Jingoism, simply pointed to Kipling as evidence of the country's retrogression:

1 'Rudyard Kipling', in Poets of the Younger Generation 1902.

2 The New Machiavelli 1911, p.128.

> As indicating most clearly the state of national feeling, we have the immense popularity of Mr. Rudyard Kipling, in whose writings one-tenth of nominal Christianity is joined with nine-tenths of real paganism; who idealizes the soldier and glories in the triumphs of brute force; and who, in depicting school-life, brings to the front the barbarizing activities and feelings and shows little respect for a civilizing culture.[1]

Like 'Imperialism' and 'Jingoism', 'Kiplingism' meant different things to different men: with hindsight, the pattern in his teaching can be detected and the art's particular aims therefore understood, but his contemporaries, deeply involved in the public affairs which the poet was treating, judged his utterances individually, with more-than-literary prejudices about their matter and manner. As Professor van Wyk Smith rightly argues, the conflict in South Africa brought Kipling's teaching to a difficult test;[2] and the writer, succumbing to sudden despair about his countrymen and their empire-building capacities, was discredited by the many attacks then levelled against Kiplingism.

A major reason for the multiformity of 'Kiplingism' was accounted for by the second, equally potent danger experienced by the Laureate of Empire: the work which he handed down from his public platform stimulated a vigorous, loosely-defined literary movement which swelled up around its central figure, sometimes even engulfing him. We have already observed how The African

1 'Re-Barbarization', in Facts and Comments 1902, p.131. (cf. Bernard Holland's judgement that Kipling's war-poetry represented the stage of 'decivilisation' in culture, a stage resembling 'uncivilisation' but 'with an immense moral difference': 'War and Poetry', in The Edinburgh Review, Vol.CXCVI, July 1902, p.49.)

2 Drummer Hodge, Ch.IV. (Previously published as 'Kipling and Kiplingson: Some Poetry of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)', in English Studies in Africa, Vol.19, 1976, pp. [19]-37.)

Review's anonymous bard promoted Kipling as a war-hawk in contradiction to the sentiments of his 1898 speech on the South African situation: this was but one contribution to what Professor van Wyk Smith calls the 'small library of Kiplingesque verse' (which, however, began to grow long before the war),[1] typifying the manner whereby petty writers forced themselves into public notice by clinging to an imprecise yet recognizably Kipling-like style. The imitators and parodists distorted Kipling's sentiments, whether they strove to support or oppose him; worse still, they brought his artistry into general disrepute. We shall discuss how Edgar Wallace exploited the reputation of the Soldiers' Poet during the late 1890s; but it was particularly during the war that Kipling's retinue multiplied, seriously damaging his literary standing. Respected critics condemned the 'bastard school of false Kiplingism' as an unhappily distinctive feature of the war's poetry,[2] a contribution to the debasing of the proper patriotic verse tradition.[3] Not all the imitators, however, brought undeserved scandal upon their model. Some poets, such as the Australian A.B. Paterson, the Canadian Robert Service, and the South African G. Murray Johnstone, produced ballads of a quality at least equal to Kipling's.[4] Amateur voices were raised during the

1 op. cit., p.111.

2 Arthur Waugh, 'The Poetry of the South African Campaign', in The Anglo-Saxon Review, Vol.VII, December 1900, p.49.

3 cf. H.C. Beeching, 'English Patriotic Poetry', in The Quarterly Review Vol.CXCII, October 1900, pp.535-41 (see Ch.II (ii) above). Beeching, however, applauded the 'élan' and 'realism' of Kipling's own 'barrack-room ballads'.

4 e.g. Paterson's Rio Grande's Last Race and Other Verses 1904; Service's Songs of a Sourdough 1st English edn. 1907; Johnstone's The Off-Wheeler: Ballads and Other Verses [1910] (by 'Mome'), and The Avengers and Other Poems From South Africa 1918.

war to say things quite worth hearing: this was particularly true of some soldier-poets who utilized Kipling's art in order to supplement his views, occasionally speaking where he remained conspicuously silent. In 'The Last of the Light Brigade' 1890, Kipling's old Troop-Sergeant had asked Tennyson to produce

> A sort of 'to be continued' and 'see next page' o' the fight

- now, serving soldiers reproached their Poet, becoming audible and articulate by imitating his own voice.

Professor Carrington once described Kipling as 'a journalist of genius',[1] and often during his lifetime the charge stopped at 'journalist' in a way which even the poet's sympathizers found hard to refute. The easy rhythms - especially those associated with the Music Hall -, the cockney diction, the unabashed banjo-strumming, the opportune, super-confident statements about 'the Blood', 'the Five Nations', 'the White Man's Burden', seemed designed to refresh an audience of careless literary sensibility. And when Kipling actually allowed daily newspapers to become the platforms for his popular teaching - as with The Times - critics were not unjustified in labelling his productions 'rhymed editorials'. The associations with journalism contributed to his poetry's influence - and also to its vulnerability. Many serious readers felt that 'journalism' and 'literature' were separate, even mutually-exclusive, spheres of writing: nor was

1 The British Overseas: Exploits of a Nation of Shopkeepers 1950, p.671.

Kipling's reputation improved by the fact that Kiplingism particularly flourished in the daily and periodical Press. His models were easily copied, but they were not easily matched, as was demonstrated by the numerous imitations which followed each new utterance.

When the journalistic imitation became parody, it could undoubtedly advance healthy criticism of Kipling's views. Punch, especially, held up an effective distorting mirror, as it showed during the war by making fun of 'The Old Issue', 'The Absent-Minded Beggar', 'The Lesson', and 'The Islanders'.[1] In October 1903, for instance, its selection of 'Lost Masterpieces' contained a parody of Kipling's hectoring style -

> When the face of the sun is hidden and the stars wax weak and wan,
> When the thunder's voice is upon you, and I keep bellowing on!
> Riddled with all disaster, wrecked past hope shall ye be,
> Ruined beyond redemption - unless ye listen to ME![2]

- a token of the damage to his reputation produced by the desperate strictures of 'The Islanders', and significant as a contemporary evaluation of what the poet stood for. But his work was also taken up by newspaper bards, writers who had no fundamental quarrel with him, or offered no sustained support, so that they sometimes exploited his success and elsewhere scored easy hits against his work. This activity was

1 See, for example, the issues of Vol.CXVII, 11th October 1899, pp.172, 173 and 8th November, p.222; Vol.CXXI, 14th August 1901, p.109 (the article complained of in Something of Myself 1937, pp.223-4); Vol. CXXII, 15th January 1902, p.52.

2 op. cit., Vol.CXXV, 14th October 1903, p.254.

foisted on the public's attention throughout the war - Harold Begbie was one journalist-poet who rose on Kipling's fame -[1] but it had always trailed behind the successful author.

In particular, the London Press became fond of providing 'cockney' editorials and topical verses, usually attributed to The Man in the Street, but occasionally supposed to emanate from 'Tommy Atkins',[2] thus following the same fashion of the period which Kipling had helped to stimulate with his 'barrack-room ballads' (the coster performer was popular in the Music Halls, and novels about lower-class London life were gaining currency).[3] Inevitably, the journalistic productions became entangled with Kiplingism. Thus the minor writer Arthur St. John Adcock[4] responded to the war by offering a string of vernacular poems which roughly resembled Kipling's art yet cast little literary credit on their apparent source of inspiration.

1 Begbie's (1871-1929) most famous contribution was 'The Handy Man' (published as a booklet in 1900); his newspaper pieces were collected in The Handy Man and Other Verses 1900.

2 Newspapers and periodicals offering such 'cockney' writing from the later 1890s included: The Daily Chronicle, The Evening News, The Pall Mall Gazette, The Westminster Gazette, The Outlook, The Spectator. (After Kipling's near-fatal illness, The Times shamelessly published 'To Rudyard Kipling, Esq., From Thos. Atkins': 10th March 1899, p.8.)

3 See Peter Keating, The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction 1971.

4 Adcock (1864-1930) also achieved some note with his Realistic novels and stories about working-class London life, e.g. An Unfinished Martyrdom and Other Stories [1894], East End Idylls 1897, In the Image of God 1898; during the war, he published a bad romance, The Luck of Private Foster 1900, and stories about the conflict's effect on the denizens of the East End - In the Wake of the War 1900. (For a short biographical sketch, see Frank Swinnerton, Background With Chorus 1956, p.153; also the obituary notices in The Bookman (which Adcock edited, 1923-30), Vol.LXXVII, July 1930, pp. 233-8).

Several of these pieces provided street-corner commentary, in this vein:

> Leave our furrin frens tu chatter, let 'em flutter
> roun' an' fuss,
> 'Tain't <u>their</u> cheerin' or their sneerin' thet can help
> or hinder us...[1]

Adcock also ridiculed the nation's established poets:

> There's Kiplin', he shouts till the nation is thrilled,
> An' believes men wus made but to kill an' be killed;
> There's Swinburne, who prints what he seems to ha' penn'd
> With a sword dipped in blood an' his hair up on end.[2]

- voicing the common-man's reasonable complaint that bellicose poets never join in the fighting themselves, but encourage 'the brute' in their hearers. More significant was his exploitation of the 'Tommy Atkins' speaker, for instance to criticize the quality of the troops' provisions ('Tommy on His Tack') and to draw out the pathos of the civilian-soldier at war ('A Letter from the Front').[3] When chiding his audience, the journalist could also sound like Kipling in his lecturing mood:

> While we're counting what we save on the ancient toys we gave
> To the lads who went to fight for us and die,
> Come the tidings, grim and fleet, not of victory, but defeat,
> And, between ourselves, we know the reason why;
> We may trace it, in debate, to our Generals or to Fate,
> But we know the blame is ours who grudged to spend
> The price that none may shirk, of the tools to do the work -
> And we pay it three times over in the end.[4]

1 'The Voice o' The Nation' (signed 'Hosea, Jun.'), in <u>The Spectator</u>, Vol.LXXXIII, 23rd December 1899, pp.955-6; reprinted in <u>Songs of the War</u> 1900. Several similar poems appeared in the periodical under Adcock's pseudonym.

2 'Our Patriotic Poets', from <u>Songs of the War</u>.

3 Both included in <u>ibid</u>.

4 'An Awakening', from <u>ibid</u>.

This attains the standard only of a recitation-piece - it is a 'rhymed editorial' not written by a journalist of genius - and its artistic shortcomings reveal the gap which existed between Kipling and Kiplingism during the war.

Similarly, T.W.H. Crosland, literary editor of The Outlook 1899-1902,[1] indifferently doled out affectionate imitations, scurrilous parodies, and penetrating criticism. After Kipling's illness in 1898 - siding with the many bards who felt that imitation must be the sincerest form of flattery - Crosland published 'Kips':

> O 'e's eyes right up 'is coat,
> Little Kips,
> An' a siren in his throat,
> Rudyard Kips;
> An' when that there siren vents
> All yer ear-drum feels in rents,
> An' the bloomin' continents
> Says, "That's Kips!"[2]

- here is Kiplingism's indulgent caricature of its hero. When Kipling's opponents stressed these same traits maliciously, there emerged a figure in verse which corresponded to that drawn by Max Beerbohm in his celebrated ''Ampstead 'Eath' cartoon. Crosland was an industrious imitator (his 1899 verse-collection was happily entitled Other People's Wings), and Kipling's work

1 As Professor van Wyk Smith observes, Crosland (1865-1924) went on to produce some surprisingly good poetry during World War One (see War Poems By "X" 1916, The Collected Poems of T.W.H. Crosland 1917, Last Poems 1928), success which his Boer War piece 'Slain' anticipated (see Ch.VII(i) below, and Appendix XV). For biography, see W. Sorley Brown, The Life and Genius of T.W.H. Crosland 1928; also Swinnerton, op. cit., pp.39-43.

2 From The Outlook, Vol.III, 11th March 1899, p.175.

frequently served him well, both before and during the war. Some of his renderings merely duplicated the model, as with '"Bobs" Again', published after Roberts's appointment to the South African command ('With acknowledgements to Mr. Rudyard Kipling', in The Outlook);[1] on other occasions, Crosland light-heartedly toyed with his material; he could also take his cue to copy a model in order to convey a new argument, as with the serio-comical 'The Absent-Minded Mule'.[2]

However, the journalist went beyond simple imitation of Kipling's poetry as an aid to self-expression. Like Adcock, he turned his hand to producing cockney poems, as with the whimsical 'Chocolate':

> "...Tommy's got a lot to do, thumpin' Paul for me an' you,
> A present from the Missis cannot fail to make him gay."
> "Ho," says the Queen, says she,
> "Sixty thousand horse an' foot-
> 'Half a pound of chocolut
> For Mister Thomas A.'"[3]

In more serious mood, 'Hospital' borrowed Kipling's 'Tommy' as the pattern for a complaint about the treatment accorded to injured and demobilized soldiers:

> O, it's 'Ero this an' 'Ero that, an' the ladies smile so sweet,
> While the common British Tommy gets the workus an' the street-
> The workus an' the street, my boys, the workus an' the street,
> The man that did the fightin' gets the workus an' the street.[4]

1 op. cit., Vol.IV, 23rd December 1899, p.680; reprinted in The Five Notions 1903.

2 ibid., Vol.IV, 4th November 1899, p.439; reprinted in The Absent-Minded Mule and Other Occasional Verses 1899.

3 From The Outlook, Vol.IV, 25th November 1899, p.532; reprinted in ibid.

4 From The Five Notions.

Kipling had formerly denounced the public's ingratitude towards its Tommies; in this Boer War contribution to Kiplingism (which, like some of the genuine soldier-poems, spoke where the mentor kept silent) Crosland extends the reproach into a charge that returning officers, by contrast, received lavish attention - an excursion into social criticism of a kind avoided by Kipling. And in his collection The Five Notions, as well as offering several friendly imitations, Crosland went on to expose his models' shortcomings. He made mischievous use of 'The White Man's Burden', deflating Kipling's high sentiments about philanthropic Imperialism by suggesting other aspects of the 'burden' which had to be endured:

> Take up the White Man's burden,
> Descend his reeking shafts,
> Gasp in his red-hot workings
> And get your air in wafts...[1]

- the parody thus popularised the views of commentators such as J.A. Hobson, who argued that the 'white-man's-burden' interpretation of empire-building imperfectly camouflaged a selfish capitalism. This questioning of Kipling's grasp of Imperialism's widest issues was again used to satirize the writer's attitude to the South African problem: the title-poem of Crosland's volume exploded Kipling's 'notions' concerning the cause and conduct of the war, as a perceptive 'common-man' speaker singled out his apparently facile suppositions. For example, retorting

1 ibid. (cf. Drummer Hodge, pp.112-3).

to the claim that Rhodes's interest had been worthy and disinterested (as conveyed in Kipling's memorial-poem to his friend):

> My aunt! - 'is sky! The sky was wot,
> Tho' all things else choked up 'is cab,
> 'E most distinctly 'adn't got
> An' most distinctly couldn't grab.

'South Africa' was likewise parodied, re-characterizing Kipling's 'woman wonderful':

> Nigh three years she fought and fought,
> Working us much woe there,
> All her land is dripping red,
> Many thousands dead as dead,
> Now they're sitting on her head,
> And it's safe to go there.

As elsewhere, the journalist brings 'poetry' down to the level of mere political jingling - the level out of which Kipling was trying to elevate his work - but these witty lines emphasize the point that Kiplingism, whether friendly or hostile, found a vigorous existence in newspaper verses and helped to define the art and teaching which went on trial during the war. We shall see that Kipling's imitators sometimes produced valid and interesting contributions to poetry: but the writer himself had to answer to more reputable critics who were undoubtedly influenced by the Frankenstein's Monster into which Kiplingism generally turned.

(ii)

Petty journalistic verse-criticism was irritating to Kipling: powerfully so, when it flourished profusely. Late in the 1890s, however, several notable literary figures also began to attack his work, seriously quarrelling with the artistry and teaching of Kiplingism.

Prominent was the Scotsman Robert Williams Buchanan (1841-1901),[1] who, in 'the last shadow' of his life[2] bitterly resented the public's disinclination to praise his prolific output of verse, prose-fiction, and drama, and who was witnessing the triumph of Capitalism and Jingoism over the Humanitarianism which he had always championed. In his verse-collection The New Rome 1898,[3] Buchanan cast himself in the role of a latter-day Juvenal: but with unworthy hysteria when describing his own standing as a poet -

> ...Send me strength to stand erect, in Life's great Hippodrome!
> The mob shrieks "Ad leones!"
> And on the Imperial throne is
> Christ with the crown of Antichrist, lord of another Rome:
> His legions shriek around him,
> His creatures deify him,
> But naked in the ring I wait, while the harlot Fame sits by him.[4]

1 See Harriett Jay [and others], Robert Buchanan: Some Account of His Life, His Life's Work, and His Literary Friendships 1903; John A. Cassidy, Robert W.Buchanan 1973.

2 Jay, op. cit., Ch.XXVIII.

3 The volume is wrongly attributed to the year 1900 in Drummer Hodge, pp.64-5.

4 From the Proem, 'To David in Heaven. Thirty Years After'.

He had a ready pen for literary and social criticism - lack of success with his own creative writing notwithstanding - and was perhaps best known to his contemporaries for such activity. Buchanan's most celebrated dispute began with a censorious review of Swinburne's 'decadent' Poems and Ballads in 1866, reaching its climax five years afterwards with 'The Fleshly School of Poetry: Mr.D.G. Rossetti', the article which so upset the sensitive Pre-Raphaelite: Buchanan may have hoped similarly to unseat Kipling, whom he identified as a leading instigator of the age's vices and false values at the close of the century.

The critic's view of 'this Empire, which is Rome rejuvenated', especially in his verses, was garishly coloured. Within the corrupt society, he considered himself to be a lonely, true patriot:

> Not love the dear old Flag? not bless
> Our England, sea and shore?
> O England, those who love thee less
> May stoop to praise thee more.
> To keep thy fame from taint of shame
> I pray on bended knee,
> But where the braggart mouths thy name
> I hail no victory![1]

In fact, Buchanan's concern about abusage of 'the dear old Flag' could be likened to Kipling's dismissal of the flag-waving M.P. in his 'Stalky' story at about this time; certainly, he was not so isolated in detesting Jingoism as a friend implied in judging

1 'Victory', in The New Rome.

> ...yet his patriotism is tuned to a key rather foreign to the intelligence manufactured under our modern imperialistic environment.[1]

Nor was the reminder about the fate of Rome unlike the warning in 'Recessional' about the transience of empires: except that Buchanan believed Imperialism to be inherently evil and, not at all concerned to improve the quality of empire-making while the trust was held, he gladly contemplated the coming downfall -

> With bread and pageants we appease
> The home-bred mob, while o'er the seas,
> Snatching the spoil of many lands,
> Conquering we sweep with sword and fire,
> Nay, building up with bloody hands
> The glory of our heart's desire,-
> Raising (like thee, old Rome!) our own proud funeral pyre![2]

Thus Buchanan adopted firmly-entrenched ideological positions - against Imperialism, War,[3] Britain's cause in South Africa -[4] from which his attacks on his opponents were uncompromising: Kiplingism, in his interpretation, provided a perfect target.

1 Archibald Stodart-Walker, Robert Buchanan: The Poet of Modern Revolt, 1901, p.290.

2 'Old Rome', in The New Rome.

3 cf. his anti-War novels, e.g. The Shadow of the Sword 1876, That Winter Night 1886.

4 A ballad, 'Pat Muldoon; or, Jack the Giant-Killer Up-to-Date', appeared in To-Day, Vol.XXIV, 2nd November 1899, pp.434-5; with other anti-War poems, included in Buchanan's Complete Poetical Works, Vol.II, 1901.

In The New Rome, a very unflattering picture was drawn of Kipling, to whom Buchanan pointed as general and direct proof that the nation was back-sliding. Repeatedly, the critic insisted that Kipling offered a cheap artistry which could only convey cheap teaching. The collection's title-poem, where Buchanan complained at length to the Devil about the age's degeneracy and progress towards an 'accurst time', contained this passing allusion:

> Lo! -all the gods men hail'd on bended knees
> Are fallen and dead, and o'er the seven seas
> Only the little banjo-bards are strumming!

In another piece, 'Hark Now, What Fretful Voices', attacking the 'patriotism' which involved just empty shouting, the cries of 'the homebred curs of England' (recalling the opening stanza of 'The English Flag') were said to receive this response:

> Hark, how the half-breed answers
> With strident harsh refrain,
> Echoed by Windmill-Journals
> That whirl yet grind no grain-
> Out o'er the peaceful waters
> The hideous notes are hurl'd,
> While poets of the banjo
> Defy the listening world!

The phrase 'half-breed' sneers at Kipling's Anglo-Indian origins; again, the poet is accused of being a petty literary figure, the leader of a raucous banjo-chorus which can be mentioned in the same breath as the jingoistic Press.

In 'The Ballad of Kiplingson', the satirist indulged in a lengthy caricature-portrait of his enemy which re-emphasized these general complaints, and in so doing, well summed up the hostile interpretation of 'Kiplingism'. Buchanan's poem loosely parodied

the opening of Kipling's 'Tomlinson' 1892, where the central character is judged unworthy to enter heaven;[1] but Kiplingson's dialogue with St. Peter introduced such a catalogue of sins that the reader could speculate that he would find a welcome in the other place. Buchanan's creature was presented as a small man with a loud cockney voice, who called on St. Jingo and waved 'an infant's flag'; a journalist and Tory pet; one who made up to Cockneys and Jews in his empire-singing, propagating a Press jingoism-

> Wherever the Flag of England waves, down go all other flags;
> Wherever the thin black line is spread, the Bulldog bites and brags!

- and readily threatening to enlist force (though not actually to fight) in order to get what he wants. Deservedly, this obnoxious character is excluded from heaven:

> "O Gawd, beware of the Jingo's wrath! the Journals of Earth are mine!
> Across the plains of the earth still creeps the thin black penny-a-line!
> "For wherever the flag of England waves" -but here, we grieve to state,
> His voice was drown'd in a thunder-crash, for the Saint bang'd-to the Gate!

So Kipling becomes the personification of the Jingo, just as in Beerbohm's cartoon. Buchanan has picked out his weak spots, like the strident flag-waving from the early 1890s, accusing him of narrow partisan allegiances; the effective attack is directed against the journalistic associations of his work - the spot which

1 Published in The National Observer, NS Vol.VII, 23rd Jaunuary 1892, pp.248-9; reprinted, slightly revised, in Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses 1892.

Kipling's imitators had made perhaps weakest of all. The poet's cockney diction was restricted to his barrack-room ballads: journalist-bards in the Press were responsible for linking Kiplingism with the cockney commentary on national and world affairs. Buchanan subsequently pursued this interpretation of what Kipling taught; and in an earlier essay he had explained what the term 'cockney' denoted:

> The true Cockney...regards his own City as the Centre of the Universe; his own outlook as the one outlook on life and literature; his own taste as the only taste to appreciate what is pleasant and what is beautiful; his own little pool of thought and feeling as the one Ocean where a man-tadpole can comfortably push about. ...[1]

It had become possible to taint Kipling with the opprobrium traditionally attached to 'cockneyism': bigotry and ignorance, as of the ''Arry' and 'Bill' characters then being ridiculed by Punch. Ignoring the fact that the barrack-room ballads formed a small (though novel and vigorous) part of his work - Buchanan himself utilized the vernacular monologue as an effective vehicle for social complaint, with 'The Last Christians III: "Hallelujah Jane"' - the critic attacks Kipling's art and Imperialism through Kiplingism. Moreover, the fact that such an interpretation was current in 1898 indicates why it was so unfortunate for his reputation that twelve months later Kipling chose to supply the Daily Mail's war-fund with cockney, music-hall verses.

1 'Imperial Cockneydom', in The Coming Terror and Other Essays and Letters 1891, pp.228-9.

Buchanan, however, did attempt in one poem, 'The Dreamer of Dreams', to refute an authentic, distinctive part of Kipling's teaching.

> "We are men in a world of men, not gods," the Strong Man cried;
> "Then woe to thy race and thee," the Dreamer of Dreams replied,
> "The Tiger can fight and feed, the Serpent can hear and see,
> The Ape can increase his kind, the Beaver can build, like thee.
> Have I led thee on to find thee of all things last and least,
> A Man who is only a Man, and therefore less than a beast?
> Who bareth a red right arm, and crieth 'Lo, I am strong!'
> Who shouts to an empty sky a savage triumphal song,
> Who apes the cry of the woods, who crawls like a snake and lies,
> Who loves not,neither is loved,but crawleth a space and dies,-
> Ah, woe indeed to the Dream that guided thee all these years,
> And woe to the Dreamers of Dreams who ran as thy Pioneers!"

Exploiting all the literary allusions of the title 'Dreamer of Dreams',[1] Buchanan again pathetically projects himself as a scorned visionary. The Strong Man's malevolent cry comes from the closing crescendo of 'A Song of the English'-

> Stand to your work and be wise -certain of sword and pen,
> Who are neither children nor Gods, but men in a world of men!

- and fairly represents the strain repeated throughout Kipling's verse and prose: the settler struggling against land and climate, Findlayson building his bridge, the imperial administrator shouldering his 'burden', until during the South African War 'the Islanders' are reminded that their security

> ...was not made with the mountains, it is not one with the deep.
> Men, not Gods, devised it. Men, not Gods, must keep.

We have seen how critics such as Spencer also accused Kipling of celebrating the brute nature: Buchanan holds that Kipling

1 cf. Deuteronomy XIII 1; William Morris, 'An Apology', in The Earthly Paradise; Arthur O'Shaughnessy, 'Ode: We Are the Music Makers'.

has thereby led the audience away from comprehending the higher virtues formerly taught by the true Dreamers. The visionary whose teaching had been largely ineffectual cherished the belief that Man may become divine by fulfilling his potential: according to the popular Kipling, he will inherit the earth and remain simply a Man. While the 'Strong Man' characterization was exaggerated in its charge that Kipling possessed no loftier vision, there was some degree of truth in Buchanan's complaint. With his insistence on depicting character without comfortable romance (the cockney-speaking, roguish Tommy; the un-Eric-like schoolboy; Mowgli being fitted for life by learning the skills of jungle-survival) Kipling did seem determined to forswear 'the man divine'. In his imperialistic teaching, moreover, the writer was more firm in praising action and material achievement than he was precise in explaining the essential purpose of it all: we have noted his recourse to the 'something understood' device, the pageant-poems, the concept of 'bearing the Ark to Zion'. This shortcoming was one which prevailed throughout the loyal poetry of the 1890s; certainly, Kiplingism more frequently upheld 'the red right arm' as a feature of empire-building -

> I should like to punch some fellow's 'ead for good old England's sake!

- than counselled attendance upon the Dreamers of Dreams. But it should further be said that Buchanan himself, despite his protestations, had no coherent guidance to offer concerning the richest meaning of human existence.

In December 1899, the period when the champion of Britain's cause was much in the public gaze, Buchanan returned with a

caustic critical attack entitled 'The Voice of "The Hooligan"',[1] where he maintained that Kipling

> ...in his single person adumbrates, I think, all that is most deplorable, all that is most retrograde and savage, in the restless and uninstructed Hooliganism of the time.

'Hooligan' was an epithet recently taken into the language,[2] and was employed to supersede 'Cockney' because it added a connotation of active, wanton, physical destructiveness which Buchanan believed to be appropriate in the context of the early war-fever. Once again, he made Kipling the narrow target for a general complaint about the age's degeneracy, contending that during 'the last few decades' there had been a recession towards 'Barbarism': the success of Kipling's work typified this decadence, and his verse and prose had exerted a malign influence on public morality. To prove his case, Buchanan reviewed Kipling's published volumes systematically, showing how the writer had graduated from providing 'little kodak-glimpses' of the romance and scandal of Anglo-India, through the verses in Barrack-Room Ballads (mostly alternating between 'the lowest Cockney vulgarity' and the pretentious 'high-falutin'') and The Seven Seas (less vulgar, but containing matter which was 'frankly and brutally indecent'), to the newly-published Stalky and Co., which demonstrated that 'the truly ideal schoolboy is not a little sentimentalist, he is simply a little beast'. According to the critic, Stalky and his friends were 'three young

1 In The Contemporary Review, Vol.LXXVI, December 1899, pp. [774] -789.

2 cf. Clarence Rook's articles in The Daily Chronicle 1898-9, used for his study The Hooligan Nights 1899.

Hooligans' who, in their viciousness, were 'not like boys at all, but like hideous little men'; he gloated that 'recent political developments' - the unhappy opening campaigns of the war - suggested that, as Kipling had wished, such types had indeed become servants of the Empire.

Buchanan ended by deploring the fact that Hooliganism, which had already corrupted politics and the Press, should now be entering into Literature also. His final words amounted to a patriotic apostrophe, during which he lauded his countrymen's qualities (including their ability to spread through the world 'what is best and purest in our Civilisation': a seeming contradiction of his anti-imperialistic strictures in The New Rome) and hoped that 'their present wild orgy of militant savagery' would cease before they were irrevocably 'swept back into the vortex of Barbarism altogether'.

Thus there was little novelty in Buchanan's war-time assessment of Kiplingism, nor in his view of the New Rome. He was tempting his readers to make Kipling the scapegoat both for the rampant Jingoism which disfigured the popular attitude towards the conflict and for the incompetence which prevented the imperialistic adventure from being successfully concluded; and his attack was couched in the powerfully moralistic style which had formerly demolished Rossetti. Wielding the widely-respected tenet that literature will encourage vice unless it avoids mentioning it, or at least displays it censoriously (one thinks of the struggles of novelists such as Thomas Hardy during the 1890s), Buchanan carefully stressed the 'realistic' intention of Kipling's writing so as to convey the impression that it principally consisted of vulgar matter designed to please the

Mob. It is noteworthy that he ignored 'Recessional', for example, a poem which could scarcely be interpreted as a 'Hooligan' utterance.

Unlike Rossetti, Kipling was not to be floored by such an onslaught, and his reputation was too secure to be destroyed by it. Although, as Professor van Wyk Smith notes, Buchanan's criticism, both in The New Rome and in this article, came at an awkward time,[1] there is no evidence that the self-respecting audience, anxious to dissociate itself from the Mob, turned away in consequence of the strictures: it was later during the weary conflict that disillusionment somewhat divided the Laureate of Empire and his supporters - a disillusionment stemming from mutual dissatisfaction. The 'Hooligan' attack did cause several ripples of critical controversy, as when Sir Walter Besant tried to defend Kipling and denigrated Buchanan's 'ethics of criticism',[2] but it was chiefly significant for marking the start of a widening campaign against the writer during the war, largely conducted by opponents of Kiplingism's politics, and including also literary critics who questioned whether Kipling should be counted among the masters of English poetry. Buchanan's jealous attacks, therefore, helped to begin the process which, spurred by the 'bastard school of false Kiplingism' and not hindered by the publication of 'The Absent-Minded Beggar' and the lecture-poems, by the end of the war set Kipling apart as a lone patriot and prophet-in-the-wilderness in his turn.

1 Drummer Hodge, pp.102-3.

2 See Besant, 'Is it the Voice of The Hooligan?', in The Contemporary Review, Vol.LXXVII,January 1900, pp.[27]-39; Buchanan, 'The Ethics of Criticism. A Word to Sir Walter Besant', ibid.,February 1900, pp.[221]-230. This dispute was reproduced in book form in America. Besant also contributed a letter to Literature in response to a correspondent who had criticized his January article, prompting a spirited general debate on the merits of Kipling's art (see the issues of Vol.VI, 27th January - 10th March 1900).

(iii)

'Kiplingism' could be defined by the writer's critics in ways which distorted his teaching and literary achievement; and while there were parts of his work, notably the overtly 'patriotic' verse, which were not always admirable, Kipling's position was made unfairly vulnerable by his perfervid imitators - as the early career of Edgar Wallace clearly demonstrated.

An actress's bastard, Wallace was raised as a foster-child near Billingsgate;[1] after little schooling and a succession of briefly-held jobs, in 1893 he enlisted in the Royal West Kent Regiment - whence he transferred to the Medical Staff Corps. In July 1896 he was drafted from Aldershot to a Simon's Town military hospital, from which comfortable billet he observed Cape Colony in the aftermath of the Jameson Raid, and the progress towards war. However, Wallace purchased his discharge in May 1899,[2] and went on to earn celebrity as a war-correspondent, working first for Reuter's, then for the Daily Mail: it was for Harmsworth's newspaper that he produced the controversial reports virulently attacking Cape disloyalists, and raised scandals with his evasion of Army censorship.

A prelude to Wallace's prose fiction was the publication of political journalism, plus a considerable amount of verse, notably Kiplingesque imitations. He was determined to rise socially,

1 See People: A Short Autobiography [1926] ; [Violet Wallace], Edgar Wallace by His Wife [1932] ; Margaret Lane, Edgar Wallace: The Biography of a Phenomenon (1938), 2nd edn. 1964.

2 Professor van Wyk Smith misleadingly implies that Wallace actually served during the war (Drummer Hodge, pp. 116,119).

through his writing:[1] and he exploited his unique advantages of being a private soldier and a witness of the imperial concerns in South Africa to ride on the wave of Kipling's popularity. Prior to the war, the Press, in South Africa and later in Britain, fêted him as 'the Soldier-Poet of Cape Town', until contemporary readers felt that they possessed a Kipling of the ranks: when The Daily Chronicle first noticed him in 1898, it wondered whether Kipling had 'a possibly dangerous rival in this poetical "Tommy"'.[2] Indeed, Wallace's daughter still argues that

> ...my father had one advantage over Kipling in that he was born in London and brought up as one of the class he described and he was actually a private in the army.[3]

But Wallace was by no means a living Tommy Atkins offering an ingenious contribution to Kiplingism: he was a sharp-witted, ambitious young man who, as his autobiography reveals, struggled to improve his social position even before leaving the Army and who found it expedient to attempt to share Kipling's reputation. Recalling the initial refusal of the Cape Times's editor to accept journalistic writing in addition to his verses, Wallace commented:

> He was too fine a gentleman to point out my deficiencies. I was just a Cockney soldier, half illiterate, gauche and awkward.[4]

- but examination of his manuscript notebooks has shown that he was alert enough to manufacture a 'cockney' diction for his poems:[5]

1 cf. People, especially pp.5-6.

2 op. cit., 19th February 1898, p.7.

3 Private letter from Miss Penelope Wallace, 23rd February 1977.

4 People, p.89.

5 A.M. Lewin Robinson, 'Edgar Wallace at the Cape', in Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library, Vol.28, September 1973, pp.2-10.

the activity was not surprising for one who aimed to achieve literary recognition, yet the studied artifice distances Wallace from, for example, many of the 'Tommy-poet' contributors to The Friend in 1900. His 'advantage' was neither a penetrating insight into barrack-room life, nor an extraordinary artistic gift, but the ability to flatter an audience: unfortunately for Kipling, in striving to detach himself from his caste and speak as a knowing spectator, Wallace was prone to make easy appeals, turning 'Tommy Atkins' into a music-hall figure.

Wallace's small talent led him naturally to imitation. While stationed at Aldershot, he frequently visited the London Music Halls; his early verse-writing experiments were crowned by a lyric which was actually made successful by a famous artiste.[1] He also willingly produced jingles for his canteen comrades and the larger audience of the camp's own Music Hall: in 1898 a South African newspaper published an example of this work, 'Albura', a tepid song with a swing resembling 'The British Grenadiers'.[2] According to his biographer, there was always a performative quality in Wallace's verse;[3] a judgement which could be linked with T.S. Eliot's view that Kipling's poems were intended 'to act'- except that Wallace's productions rarely transcended their music-hall-stage facility. The debt to Kipling was freely acknowledged: 'I was a frank imitator', Wallace said of his verses written prior to the Boer War,[4] and his widow affirmed that the writer 'for ever

1 Lane, op. cit., pp.53-7.

2 Text kindly supplied by The Edgar Wallace Society.

3 Lane, op. cit., pp.76-7.

4 People, p.106.

remained a great Master in Edgar's eyes'.[1] The many idle spells at the Simon's Town hospital first encouraged him to read Kipling's work,[2] and imitations of the 'barrack-room ballads' were being jotted down in his notebooks even before the production of 'Tommy's Welcome to Rudyard Kipling' in honour of the poet's 1898 visit to the Cape;[3] afterwards, Wallace found a Press market for verses more or less closely modelled on Kipling's work - with increasing confidence, he moved away from direct imitations -, and his British verse-collection appeared under the plagiarizing title Writ in Barracks 1900.

The welcoming poem, which was published prominently in the Cape Times (Wallace received Kipling's personal thanks for his effort: plus the advice not to become a professional poet), was Kiplingesque in style, without using a specific model. Its adulatory sentiment was mixed with sour observations on the Tommy's social status -

> We should like to come an' meet you, but we can't without
> a pass;
> Even then we'd 'ardly like to make a fuss;
> For out 'ere, they've got a notion that a Tommy isn't class;
> 'E's a sort of brainless animal, or wuss!
> Vicious cuss!
> No, they don't expect intelligence from us.[4]

- reinforcing Kipling's own efforts to challenge the public's habitual estimation of the private soldier. Indeed, Wallace

1 Violet Wallace, op. cit., p.95.

2 People, pp.85-8; cf. Lane, op. cit., p.61.

3 Robinson, op. cit.

4 From the Cape Times Weekly Edition, 26th January 1898, p.8; for inclusion in Writ in Barracks Wallace re-titled the poem 'Tommy to His Laureate'.

returned to this congenial theme in other works, such as 'The Patriotic Colonist' and 'An Impression of James - Tommy':[1] this latter belonged to a series of cockney monologues put in the mouth of 'James Jawkins', a Bermondsey-born emigrant whose perceptive, highly partisan comments on the South African political and social situation represented Wallace's contribution to the period's voice-of-the-Common-Man poetry. For his Cape readers, Wallace also provided formal patriotic poems, many stridently anti-Boer in sentiment - these a dissatisfied London reviewer subsequently likened to Kipling's 'religio-patriotic' prophetic strain -[2] but it was his Soldier-Poet character which caught the home audience's imagination. The publication of 'Tommy's Welcome' opened a door to London newspapers such as The Daily Chronicle, The Evening News, and The Pall Mall Gazette, fostering his new vein of cockney Kiplingism.

Some of these pre-war poems competently imitated Kipling's art, catching the music and sometimes aspiring to the conception. In particular, 'Ginger James':

> A spell I had to wait
> Outside the barrick gate,
> For Ginger James was passin' out as I was passin' in;
> 'E was only a recruit,
> But I give 'im the salute
> For I'll never git another chance of givin' it agin!
>
> 'E'd little brains, I'll swear,
> Beneath 'is ginger 'air,
> 'Is personal attractions, well, they wasn't very large...[3]

1 Included in The Mission that Failed 1898.

2 The Echo, 27th August 1900, p.[1].

3 In The Daily Chronicle, 9th April 1898, p.4; reprinted in Writ in Barracks.

- during the further four stanzas it becomes apparent that the reprobate is receiving a military funeral. There are occasionally direct verbal echoes from Kipling's work, as with

> An' 'e rode down on a carriage like a bloomin' city toff...

- which recalls stanza 5 of 'The Widow's Party'. But even this poem betrays the fault which set Wallace's verse apart from its model: the scene from Army life is described by a vain soldier-narrator, who in this instance vaunts his superior knowledge by officiously identifying the drummers' music as 'a rather slow selection from a piece that's known as "Saul"'. Another offering, 'The Prayer' (which perhaps apes Kipling's 'Hymn Before Action'), was less successful because Wallace tried to impose too heavy a burden on his 'Tommy':

> O God of Battles! Lord of Might!
> 'Ere in the dusky, starry light,
> My inner self I've weighed...[1]

- in this rehearsal of the 'prayer-before-battle' motif there is incongruity between the regular verse-form and the diction, half-cockney and half-'poetic', as the soldier grapples with the concepts of Life and Death.

Wallace was skilful at reproducing a 'barrack-room ballad' atmosphere, as with the 'old campaigner' lectures 'Make Your Own Arrangements' and 'Tommy Advises', which cast no disgrace on Kiplingism;[2] but elsewhere, he went on to distort, and so debase,

1 In The Evening News, 21st July 1898, p.2; reprinted in The Mission that Failed and Writ in Barracks.

2 'Make Your Own Arrangements' appeared anonymously in The Pall Mall Gazette, 23rd September 1899, p.2; both poems were included in Writ in Barracks.

his model. In pieces such as 'Her Majesty Has Been Pleased -', 'T.A. in Love', 'Tommy's Autograph', the narrator was turned into a music-hall comic, parading his character and experiences for the audience's entertainment.[1] 'Tommy's Autograph', for example, relates the enlistment procedure in this key:

> Wot a name! An autygrarf!
> 'Nuff to drive a feller darf';
> Callin' Christian name an 'auty' an' the uvver name
> a 'grarf'...

- underlying the humour is a valid cynicism concerning this particular aspect of Army life, but it is stifled when the reader laughs <u>at</u> the Tommy rather than with him. Such works evoked a frivolous music-hall setting, where the poet and his audience could chuckle together in the comfort of the stalls.

Kipling's soldier-characters always dominate their poems, whereas the self-consciously naive Tommies of Wallace's verses invite the audience to fill out their deficiencies. When Wallace's soldier was set up as a clown, the audience's response was cheaply given: but when he was made an object of pathos, the demand on the audience was more serious - and there was sometimes strength in the poem's facility. Before the Anglo-Boer conflict began, Wallace composed some 'battle-poems', 'After!' and 'War', providing further evidence of his capacity to write from imagination rather than experience: as Professor van Wyk Smith remarks, the works had affinities with 'the sensationalistic naturalism' prevailing in contemporary war-correspondence, and

1 'T.A. in Love' appeared anonymously in <u>The Pall Mall Gazette</u>, 28th July 1898, p.2; all three poems were included in <u>Writ in Barracks</u>.

they marked 'a new departure' in Kiplingism.[1] 'War' treated the theme of 'the part that is not for show', consisting of an orderly's uncompromising account of his hospital tent, the doctor's terse remarks, the death of their badly-wounded patient; despite an over-reaching towards pitiable detail, the poem was effective - particularly where the narrator gradually adopted an impersonal 'It' to describe the dead body.[2] For 'After!', Wallace reverted to vernacular diction, offering the monologue of a soldier searching the battlefield for his brother: we are confronted with the 'mangled horrors of the slain', and share the speaker's distress as he wanders and questions, goaded by his mother's injunction to look after the brother and forbidding himself to anticipate the worst. Finally:

> They're layin' out our dead just now,
> He can't be -no, that -that ain't sense,
> An' when he comes there'll be a row!
> A keepin' me in this suspense!
> 'Tis here our line of killed commence,
> I'll sorter look -for make-pretence!
> Pretendin' someone's here I know,-
> I'm half inclined to turn aback,-
> But one by one, along I go,
> And see the crimson clottin' black...
> His troop was first in the attack!
> What! Jack! Is this - this Thing our Jack?[3]

Much can be excused in the poem for the sake of the last line. So naive is the narrator in his self-deception that the audience is in no 'suspense'; the work succeeds because our sympathy is

1 Drummer Hodge, pp.116-7.

2 Included in "War!" and Other Poems 1899; reprinted in Writ in Barracks.

3 Published in Cape Times, 23rd May 1899, p.4; re-titled 'Cease Fire', reprinted in Writ in Barracks. Wallace heavily re-drafted this final stanza in his notebook before achieving the desired effect (Drummer Hodge, pp.117-8).

engaged by his plight, we are uneasily fascinated by the matter-of-fact descriptions of the battlefield horrors - and especially, because the outcome is so sudden and more shocking than either the Tommy or the deeply-involved audience had expected. In this case, 'Kiplingism' has been extended into a modern kind of war-poetry.

After the commencement of hostilities, Wallace hastily collected up his verse in cheap booklets - "War!" and Other Poems, "Nicholson's Nek!"- and published fresh material in South African and British newspapers. 'Nicholson's Nek' was a conventional battle-poem of the sort which a fireside patriot could have written; but he pursued his Kiplingesque art with works like 'Legacies' - the plaintive dying words of a Tommy -, and 'Army Doctor'.[1] Another soldier-poem, 'My Pal, the Boer' anticipated the subject later treated by Kipling in 'Piet': Wallace's speaker was less indulgent, but his sentiments were not wholly alien to Kipling's -

> An' 'e 'ad a silly notion
> That the cause of the commotion
> Was Chamberlain a-fightin' for 'is money...[2]

During a home visit in 1900, the Soldier-Poet confidently arranged for the publication of Writ in Barracks; when the volume appeared that August, however, it received a mixed critical reception which offered a significant commentary on Kiplingism's general standing.

1 In The Daily News, 5th March 1900, p.2, and 7th April 1900, p.9; both reprinted in Writ in Barracks.

2 From Writ in Barracks.

The reaction was not entirely unfavourable;[1] and Wallace's work remained sufficiently popular to be quoted frequently by contemporary writers on the war. Most reviewers condescendingly tolerated the volume -

> ...his imitation of his great exemplar is so childlike and frank that one hardly smiles at it, or, smiling, smiles kindly[2]

- although inevitably the verse was found to lack the stature of its model: in Arthur Waugh's opinion, it was 'of the same mannerism, but of less intellectual vivacity'.[3] The Daily Chronicle valued the distinctive 'tears of humanity' found in 'War', 'Legacies', and 'After!'.[4] However, some doubted whether 'any reflection of the "Barrack-Room Ballads" can ever hope to endure beyond the hour that calls it forth';[5] while others earnestly wished that Kiplingism would soon expire altogether:

> Imitation is not always flattery. Even if it be clever, it may have the effect of opening the eyes of men to the defects of its model. It may give an impetus to reaction, and justification to a growing weariness. ...How long... will British patriotism find its most vigorous expression in these khaki-coster rhythms, these music-hall sentiments, and this facile vein of brag. Surely there is a better way. Surely even the Boer war, in the necessity of which we believe, but in which we take no joy, might inspire a poem of stern and sombre beauty...[6]

1 Following Wallace's hint of dissatisfaction in People, pp.166-7, Lane claims that the verse-collection was poorly received and sold badly (op. cit., pp.105-6); for a correcting account, see John A. Hogan, 'South African Days', in Edgar Wallace Society Newsletter, No.25, March 1975, pp.2-3.

2 The Athenaeum, No.3807, 13th October 1900, p.470.

3 'The Poetry of the South African Campaign', loc. cit., p.54.

4 'The Sincerest Flattery', op. cit., 28th August 1900, p.3.

5 The Echo, 27th August 1900, p. [1].

6 'Too Much Drum', in The Academy, Vol.LIX, 1st September 1900, p.168.

This is the mood of war-weariness turning against Kiplingism, the reaction prophesied by Buchanan; and the call of 'let the poetry fit the war' parallels H.C. Beeching's appeal for old-fashioned patriotic verse. During the trials of the South African conflict, cockney artistry and cockney sentiments of Wallace's type were found to be inadequate - to the detriment of the Master's reputation:

> It is all very well to say we are sick to death of this sort of thing. We are; we almost shiver when the work "Kipling" is mentioned, for fear it should be the man himself at his worst, or one of the innumerable imitators of his faults...[1]

Such comments prompted Wallace to re-direct his poetic endeavours. His daughter claims that his careless sense of humour faded,[2] and in his war-correspondence (as, later, in his autobiography) Wallace indeed professed great sympathy with the troops' sufferings during the conflict: his prose-journalism sometimes repeated the sensationalist technique used in 'War' and 'After!'-

> ...the "Private Atkins -killed" you pass so indifferently in these days is still a Something that lies with pinched nose and grey face, staring blankly up to the unflecked blue..[3]

But it is more likely that he was diligently attending to the public's changing taste when he began to produce formal epitaph-poems and (still with the 'performative' impulse) death-bed

1 'The Sincerest Flattery', op. cit., p.3.

2 Private letter of 14th March 1977.

3 From 'To Arms!', in Unofficial Dispatches [1901], p.60.

monologues spoken by gallant officers:[1] the ambitious Soldier-Poet ceased to tread in his Master's steps once his inferior 'barrack-room ballads' and political verses had helped to impair the value of Kiplingism.

(iv)

As we discussed in Chapter III, Kipling greeted the war with 'The Old Issue', a political and imperialistic justification of Britain's cause - considered cynically, a 'rhymed editorial'. During the conflict's early, difficult days, the poet needed to demonstrate that neither his teaching nor his artistry amounted to the cockney 'penny-a-lining' of which opponents such as Buchanan accused him, and with which imitators such as Wallace and the journalist-versifiers associated him. The production of 'The Absent-Minded Beggar', consequently, was a bad mistake.

In his autobiography Fleet Street and Downing Street 1920, the journalist Kennedy Jones indicated how Kipling was hurried into taking his ill-fated step.[2] Jones recollected the Daily Mail's decision to offer Kipling £10,000 to serve as its war-correspondent (although he declined, we have seen that he did subsequently contribute propaganda-pieces from South Africa), and then its offer to pay for verses promoting the Royal Patriotic Fund which

1 e.g. 'A Casualty' and 'After Two Years!': see Ch.VII(i) below, and Appendix XII, XIII.

2 op. cit., pp.254-7. See also Carrington, Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work (1955), 2nd edn. 1970, pp.363-5.

opened on 22nd October 1899. However, when a dispute arose over the Fund's administration, the newspaper chose to use Kipling's poem for the centre-piece of its own appeal - thereby guaranteeing a less disinterested platform. When the poet's manuscript arrived, there was such doubt about the merit of 'The Absent-Minded Beggar' that the proprietors wondered whether it ought to be introduced unobtrusively: but it was boldly allowed all prominence in the issue of 31st October, while other newspapers gave simultaneous publication after contributing a fee to the appeal. The Daily Mail - possessing full rights over the instantly-popular poem - commissioned a tune from Sir Arthur Sullivan, who, after some difficulty, produced a composition based on the music-hall song 'Tommy Atkins';[1] according to Sullivan's biographer, when this was first introduced at the Alhambra, 'the effect was as stirring as that of the first performance of God Save the King in 1745',[2] and certainly 'The Absent-Minded Beggar' became one of the war's most successful songs. Harmsworth's newspaper exploited the piece exhaustively: Mrs. Beerbohm Tree gave nightly recitations at the Palace Theatre; a band competition was held at the Albert Hall; Kipling's manuscript was auctioned, facsimiles were sold; handkerchiefs were distributed, printed with the words and patriotically illustrated.[3]

1 cf. J.B. Booth, Old Pink 'Un Days 1924, pp.111-2.

2 Percy M. Young, Sir Arthur Sullivan 1971, p.253.

3 Arthur Shirley's fund-raising play The Absent-Minded Beggar or For Queen and Country opened at the Princess's Theatre on 25th November 1899.

Kipling's poem was thus thoroughly 'popular', and, ironically, it brought him the degree of fame which he had wistfully bestowed upon his imaginary composition in 'My Great and Only'. The work's sentiments were consistent with Kipling's views on energetic patriotism, the good cause of the war, the character of the soldier: but, as he ruefully acknowledged, the style of this tremendous, well-intentioned practical contribution to the war-effort undermined his dignity as 'Laureate of Empire'. In Bloemfontein, while 'The Absent-Minded Beggar' was enjoying its first flush of success, he told Julian Ralph:

> "Yes...I have heard that piece played on a barrel-organ, and I would shoot the man who wrote it if it would not be suicide."[1]

- and in 1914 Kipling was still extremely sensitive about the poem's adverse effect on his literary reputation.[2] His loud, easy verses - which signally 'lacked "poetry"', as he said -[3] allowed him to be identified with the literary and jingoistic vulgarity which many commentators deplored as a feature of the early war-fever: and so helped to confirm Kipling as the poet appealing to The Man in the Street more than to the high-brow reader of literature.

1 War's Brighter Side 1901, pp.112-3. In Something of Myself, Kipling was still impressed by the fact that Sullivan's tune was 'guaranteed to pull teeth out of barrel-organs' (p.150).

2 See Lord Newton, Retrospection 1941, pp.203-4; also, Lord Birkenhead, Rudyard Kipling 1978, p.205.

3 Something of Myself, p.150.

The more virulent critics included Marie Corelli, who (rather like Buchanan) asserted that there was a degenerate spirit abroad, which this unhealthy war-song typified. She objected to the Daily Mail itself for exerting a dangerous influence on public thinking and morals: and in writing 'jumble-verse' for that newspaper, Kipling had spoilt his opportunity of rising to the occasion -

> We should have preferred Mr. Kipling, for his own sake as well as the nation's, to have written such a lyric as should have out-rivalled the finest of Thomas Campbell's -a lyric to last for all time, and ring like a clarion clearly on through English literature, when we and our generation have passed away; not to have flung us a set of "flash" hurdy-gurdy verses, entitled by a catch-word which implies more contempt than honour for the English arms....[1]

With his prominent voice, Kipling was a ready target for attacks on the age's declining social standards, and Corelli claimed that she was now uttering her long-held opinions; she drew a line between high patriotic poetry and the jingoistic verse appealing to the mob -placing Kipling on the side of popular journalism and the Music Hall. Similarly, while acknowledging 'The Absent-Minded Beggar''s financial success, another commentator regretted that he had associated himself with the general failure to produce good war-poetry, by contributing

> ...that deplorable, meaningless and vulgar jingle which has hardly yet ceased to pursue his hapless fellow-countrymen at every turn, to their suffering and misery.[2]

1 Patriotism or Self-Advertisement? A Social Note on the War 7th edn. 1900, pp.21-2.

2 Mabel C. Birchenough, 'Wanted -A New War Poet', in The Nineteenth Century, Vol.XLVIII, October 1900, p.640.

H.C. Beeching, normally an admirer of Kipling's poetry, lamented:

> The eleemosynary success that has attended Mr. Kipling's song...and Sir Arthur Sullivan's setting, proves that these artists have more exactly gauged the mind of the lower middle class.[1]

-and in so doing, fed the jingoism which defamed the best ideals of patriotism and its true poetry. Thus, in finding its wide audience, the poem alienated the champions of sense and education: which was rather hard on Kipling, who had merely responded to the Daily Mail's request for loyal, fund-raising verses.

'The Absent-Minded Beggar' was an example of Art-for-Country's-sake which, owing largely to the Press campaign, became entangled in the war's social controversies: its effect was exacerbated, moreover, by the snowballing 'Kiplingism' which captured the poem. Kipling was blamed for infusing 'the rampant passion of commercialism' into the war-effort, thereby impeding literature from adopting a noble stance:

> ...Mr. Kipling's shouting song handed over the poetry of the hour, scrip and scrippage, into the hands of sensational journalism.

He gave a lead to imitators who distorted such value as their model possessed: 'in the implicit poetry and forthright manliness they have no share'.[2] The author was even charged with corrupting the Music Hall! Albert Chevalier (the 'Coster's Laureate') held that the poem had encouraged too many concerts given over to amateur

1 'English Patriotic Poetry', loc. cit., p.535.

2 Waugh, op. cit., p.49.

reciters, while those performances which did employ recognized artistes were too frequently designed to 'advertise' the organizers; he composed a parody expressing these sentiments, which he sang at the Queen's Hall.[1]

The poem did indeed engender many inferior imitations and parodies: on 18th November 1899, The Evening News (which had previously offered a rendering, supposedly Tommy's grateful reply to his Poet)[2] humorously noted that the 'shoals' of amateur verses sent in by readers betrayed an unmistakable 'Absent-Minded Beggar' prototype[3]-and such productions continued to make up a significant portion of the war's minor verse. Some were merely frivolous in spirit; others self-importantly tried to supplement or extend Kipling's message. For instance, R. Adams Foster's "'Thankful Tommy" - His Reply to "The Absent-Minded Beggar"', published in an illustrated booklet in 1900, used an uneasy colloquial diction to convey jingoistic woolliness concerning the purpose of the conflict. With more artistic capacity, Harold Begbie provided 'Brought Forward (The Volunteer)', where he drew a somewhat hopeful picture of the patriot who has 'buckled on his armour' and whose 'bursting heart is spoiling for the fight!'. Begbie shared Kipling's concern for the civilian's sacrifice, focusing attention on Tommy's dependants:

1 Before I Forget 1901, pp.166-7.

2 op. cit., 16th November 1899, p.2.

3 'War Songs: A Medley', op. cit., p.2.

> There's a little wife in Clapham with a baby in a pram,
> She is spending rather less on shopping now,
> And she does not meet her husband by a crowded scarlet tram
> That comes tinkling in the twilight to the Plough...[1]

Among the rival works welcomed on the music-hall stage was C.W. Mudie's 'Stick to Your Colours, Lads. The Straight Tip'. It would be hard to decide whether Mudie was directly influenced by Kipling, or whether his fund-raising piece sprang from the tradition upon which Kipling himself had drawn: but his verses reveal the close correspondence -offensive to serious commentators- which existed between the Laureate of Empire and the Halls. Mudie's tone was more blatantly 'patriotic'-

> Bring our your bands and banners every Sunday morn,
> And let us have a jolly good parade,
> 'Mid strains of martial music we will pass the boxes round
> And shew foreigners the stuff of what we are made...[2]

The writer also made much of the fact that 'Tommy' indicated the Reservist who had left his job and family behind; he deflated Kipling's appeal for 'a shilling' into one for 'a tanner', a request addressed, however, to 'ye working men' receiving their wage 'as Saturday comes round'.

None of this petty activity enhanced Kipling's reputation. Other versifiers, meanwhile, exploited his model for the purpose of re-directing or countering his sentiments. W.T. Stead's periodical War Against War in South Africa published 'A Voice From the Ranks', a

1 From The Handy Man and Other Verses.

2 From The War Songster [1900].

parody suggesting that government funds were required, not 'poor folks' subscriptions'.[1] Also sabotaging Kipling's hearty 'we're-all-pulling-together' mood, J. Sheldon Redding, who was serving with the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in South Africa, disputed the fairness of the 'absent-minded beggar' appellation since the nature of the trades which had been so loyally quitted compelled the soldiers to leave their dependants impoverished. The troops were said to be grateful for the Fund, but did not consider it to provide simple charity:

> For we take it as the payment of a debt the nation owes,
> While glad the nation's waking up to that.[2]

More seriously than Kipling, Redding indicated that later the demobilized soldier would need help -'make it easier for him to rise and not to fall'-, beginning with a public willingness to think better of him and treat him decently.

Redding's 'Apology' thus belonged to the interesting body of 'soldier-poetry' which imitated, and occasionally confounded, the work of the Soldiers' Poet; and the poem also serves as a reminder that 'The Absent-Minded Beggar' created a wider controversy about its author's right to stand as the best champion of the ordinary soldiers.

From the outset, Kipling's strikingly novel portraits of 'the Soldiers Three' in prose and, especially, 'Tommy Atkins' in verse had provoked debate: though his success in fixing the rough-and-

1 op. cit., No. 18, 16th February 1900, p.285.

2 The Absent-Minded Beggar's Apology 1900.

ready yet intriguing soldier-type in the public's affection was indisputable. Later commentators have criticized Kipling for turning Tommy Atkins into 'a kind of domestic pet',[1] and for creating an artificial image which officers foisted on their men until 1914:[2] but his work contributed to the rapprochement between the empire-conscious public and its Regular Army which was an integral feature of Imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century. And for all the serious-minded carping, Kipling's creation remained archetypal during the war, surpassing the 'Drummer Hodge' figure belonging to the more thoughtful poetry of writers like Hardy and Housman:

> He's a wonderful patriot and democrat this soldier of ours, stiffened by hard drill, straight-backed, with an alarming swagger, an oiled curl, and a quaint, aggressive pride in his calling. ...This is the type of soldier that most of our modern song writers eulogise. It is the type which Mr Rudyard Kipling has presented in his poetry of the barracks and battlefield.[3]

Kipling had first supplied the 'type' which the public wanted: and 'Kiplingism' was swollen during the conflict by innumerable writers (notably war-correspondents) exploiting the image according to the continuing popular taste, throughout all kinds of literary contributions. Observers such as Buchanan and Corelli, however, self-appointed guardians of national morality, questioned whether Kipling's portrait of the Regular was true-to-life; and even within the Army, opinions were divided. In 1892, a young gentleman-ranker testified to the popularity of Barrack-Room Ballads among

1 John K. Dunlop, The Development of the British Army 1899-1914 1938, p.9.

2 cf.Robert Graves, The Common Asphodel 1949, pp.216-7; also, George Orwell, 'Rudyard Kipling' (1942), in Critical Essays 1946, pp.105-8. During an address to The Kipling Society (an organization singularly attractive to military officers), Major R.H. Hughesdon once praised Kipling's influence on his profession: 'he gave civilians an understanding of Army life, and officers an insight into their men' (The Kipling Journal, Vol.VII, July 1940, pp.23-6).

3 John Macleay, 'Introductory Note' to War Songs and Songs and Ballads of Martial Life [1900], p.xxvi.

his comrades stationed in Burma, commenting to his family:

> There never was a man and I should think never will be again who understands "Tommy Atkins" in the rough, as he does. Probably you would find it difficult to understand his inimitable mixture of soldiers slang and Hindustanee, and it is also of course essentially a man's book.[1]

Some soldiers complained that Kipling's character-drawing was misleading:

> The real soldier is not so illiterate nor so immoral as Kipling represents him, and he never was theatrical.[2]

Toleration became scarcer during the Boer War, but previously there seems to have been general agreement that Kipling's fanciful exaggerations (or, occasionally, unwitting misunderstandings) had usefully endeared the Army to the public.[3] We have seen that there was strong evidence of the writer's personal popularity among the troops in South Africa.

But Kipling's attempt to extend his characterization of the cockney-speaking, roguish, timeless Regular into the 'Absent-Minded Beggar' who would uphold the Empire in South Africa was less acceptable. Elements of the old portrait remained offensive; and, despite Kipling's stress on the obvious social aspects, it was felt that he had treated superficially the issues involved when civilians went to war. Scottish soldiers, for instance,

1 George Herbert Housman: letter of 19th July 1892. (From private papers, copyright belonging to The Housman Society.)

2 Robert Blatchford, My Life in the Army [1915], pp.297-8. See also soldiers' complaints in The Evening News, 17th October 1898, p.2.

3 cf. Capt. P.C.W. Trevor, 'Thomas Atkins on Rudyard Kipling', in The Idler Illustrated Magazine, Vol.XIII, August 1898, pp.136-41.

disliked the continuing 'cockney' image.[1] An officer complained of the poem's shallow appeal to 'the passing mood of the public'.[2] And we shall see how other combatants echoed Redding's view that the civilians' return from war would be as crucial as their departure. In a broad-ranging controversy, The Saturday Review during the first four months of 1900 gave space to readers' letters expressing dissatisfaction with what it called 'Rudyard Kiplingism'.[3] Contributors were worried about the bad effect which Kipling's Absent-Minded-Beggar Tommy was likely to have on world opinion and on the morals of new recruits; other points were trivial, as when a 'Field Officer' stoutly maintained that during twenty years' service he had never heard the epithet 'absent-minded beggar' used in barracks.[4] But it was significant that several writers confessed a long-felt dissatisfaction with the factual content of Kipling's teaching: the same 'Field Officer' insisted that the portrayal of the private soldier as an illiterate was thirty years out of date, owing to the success of daily regimental schooling; an Indian-service 'Civilian' concurred, and added-

> ...let it not be supposed that I charge Mr.Kipling with having set down aught in malice;-nay, it is as certain as anything can be, that he is a sincere well-wisher of the man whom he takes a strange delight in fitting with such unpleasant "additions" as "The Absent-Minded Beggar." Whether Mr.Kipling knows his "Tommy" or not, he assuredly knows his own public....[5]

1 James Barnes, The Great War Trek 1901, p.100.

2 'A British Field Officer', The Army and the Press in 1900 1901, p.6.

3 See the issues in Vol.LXXXIX for the period 20th January - 14th April 1900.

4 op. cit., 17th February 1900, p.204.

5 ibid., 3rd March 1900, p.268.

Such criticism was aimed at the usefulness of Kipling's art, the quality which guaranteed its legitimacy in the face of moralizing attacks like those of Buchanan and Corelli. 'The Absent-Minded Beggar' retained an overwhelming popularity, and cockney soldier-verses flourished during the early months of the conflict: but it is interesting to see an anticipation, albeit from a minority voice, of the poet's own conclusion that his soldier-type was becoming obsolete. The 'Service Songs' of The Five Nations represented part of Kipling's response to the South African War, yet we have discussed how he prefaced these with the statement

> 'Tommy' you was when it began,
> But now that it is o'er
> You shall be called The Service Man
> 'Enceforward, evermore.

- the prelude to his dream of a civilian-based army of educated, respectable, loyal Britons. 'The Absent-Minded Beggar', therefore, marked the peak of the old-style Kiplingism - but revealed its weaknesses as well as its strengths.

(v)

According to the term's contemporary usage, Kipling and Wallace, along with the host of journalist-versifiers and fire-side writers who treated matters military, were 'war-poets'. However, during the South African conflict, the term also began

to designate the combatants who turned to verse-making in order to convey their experiences and emotions.[1] Genuine soldier-poets had occasionally appeared during earlier campaigns, but the peculiar circumstances of the 1899-1902 war - in some respects, anticipating the World War - allowed such contributors to thrive on an unprecedented scale. The Boer War troops were uniquely able to produce ambitious poetry (from the dawn of ages, fighting-men have amused themselves with rhymes and songs which remain unprinted and unprintable)[2] thanks to the literacy bestowed by national and military educational schemes; we have heard the complaints against the ignorant 'Tommy Atkins' stereotype, but a more important factor was the influx of educated civilians into the ranks. The soldiers were encouraged to write by the same Press and public who had welcomed Kipling and Wallace, and who during the war were greedy for news 'from the Front' in every shape and form. This encouragement largely provided the means for the soldier-poets to become audible - in newspapers, periodicals, the book 'trade in khaki' -, but important outlets for their work were also the so-called 'battle newspapers' produced in the besieged garrison-towns, prisoner-of-war camps, rest- and embarkation-camps, at guard-posts, and on board the long-distance troopships.[3] Thus the verse constituted a somewhat forced growth

1 In Drummer Hodge, Ch.VI, Professor van Wyk Smith provides a full and very interesting survey of this authentic soldier-poetry. (See also Lewis Winstock, Songs and Music of the Redcoats 1970, Ch.11.)

2 See Graham Seton Hutchison, 'Martial Music', in Journal of The Society For Army Historical Research, Vol.XX, Summer 1941, pp.98-101.

3 See Daily Mail, 21st March 1900, p.7, where a history of 'battle newspapers' was briefly traced from the Crimea, Lucknow, etc. (A forerunner in South Africa had appeared during the first Anglo-Boer War, when News of the Camp was produced by the Pretoria garrison from 25th December 1880 until 9th April 1881.)

- being composed for the benefit of the audience more than of the poet - yet it contributed significantly to the literature of the war.

The 'battle newspapers', as the most celebrated example, The Friend, showed, stimulated a generally light strain of verse which, although offering a fascinating insight into the writers' immediate reactions to the conflict in which they were participating, was designed to entertain rather than to vent deeply-held feelings about War.[1] Contributions to the Press were intended more seriously, but were usually of second-rate artistic quality: 'doggerel can express the heart'. For example, in February 1900, The Pall Mall Gazette provided some 'characteristic poems' written by convalescent soldiers, commenting 'Some of the effusions are distinctly funny, if only for their defiance of all known laws of poetry':[2] worst were those which attempted high patriotic styles, a situation matching the amateur civilian contribution to 'war-poetry' - and, unlike the poetry of the Great War, much of the Boer War's soldier-poetry merely harmonised with the fireside performance. When seeking aids to self-expression, the soldiers, too, utilized the models of which they were best aware,

1 The publications (several of which were reprinted for the benefit of the home public) can also illuminate the war's wider creative writing. e.g. the final issue of The Waterfall Wag (produced by officers imprisoned at Pretoria) offered editorial sentiments anticipating 'the not far-distant future when Boer and Briton will join hands in friendship - a friendship which will become fast when they know us better, & find that revenge is no part of our nature, and that they are allowed to enjoy the rights and privileges which were denied to us' (The Pretoria Prisoners' Paper [1901], p.[27]) - sentiments surely paralleling the theme of Kipling's 'Half-Ballad of Waterval', that the miserable experience of captivity inspires forgiveness and understanding.

2 'The Soldier as Verse-Maker', op. cit., 27th February 1900, p.8.

drawing on the patriotic verse tradition (Professor van Wyk Smith judges that much of their work was founded on Henley's Lyra Heroica and Langbridge's Ballads of the Brave),[1] and on its bastardised music-hall counterpart. Wallace's canteen verses 'Albura' demonstrate how soldier-writers were already accustomed to follow formal styles; again, before the war, The Evening News nourished the solemn muse of Corporal Harold Hanham, 2nd Royal Fusiliers, whose later pretentious contributions to the Daily Mail went unchanged in manner despite allegedly having been written at the Front in lead pencil on scraps of paper.[2] The serious war-poetry - outside the inevitable 'gracefully graceless ribaldry'[3] and sentimental sing-songs -[4] was, then, an imitative rather than inventive art: and a favourite model was found in the work of the Soldiers' Poet, creating the curious situation whereby the poetry which Kipling had based on the Army was reflected back by serving soldiers.

Kipling's verse appealed to the soldier-bards partly because it already exploited Army convention -

> Queer barrack-room ballads -just as Kipling renders them, only more so- are roared out into the night...[5]

1 Drummer Hodge, p.158.

2 e.g. 'Fear Not a New Majuba' in The Evening News, 22nd September 1899, p.2; 'Cleanse the Flag', ibid., 11th October 1899, p.2; 'Britons, Unite!', in Daily Mail, 7th April 1900, p.7.

3 See J.H.M. Abbott, Tommy Cornstalk 1902, pp.92-3.

4 cf. Kipling's letter of 27th February 1932 recalling how 'in the S.A. campaign Tommy moaned all through his sing-songs'; reprinted by J.B. Booth, The Days We Knew, (1943), 1944, p.32. Also, James Barnes, The Great War Trek, p.100.

5 Abbott, op. cit., p.92.

- and partly because the poems (the whole range of his work provided material) had gained currency, among Regulars and civilian-soldiers, through having been set to music:[1] folk- and hymn-lyrics, music-hall and parlour songs traditionally aided the military muse.[2] It has been claimed that the new poems by Kipling which were given tunes - 'The Absent-Minded Beggar' and 'M.I.' - became special favourites in South Africa.[3] A piece such as 'Mandalay', consequently, well-known because of its various musical settings, served the soldiers very ably: an imitation was included in The Cossack Post (a 'battle newspaper' originally inscribed in a ledger by the Volunteer detail stationed at De La Rey's Farm),[4] and the sentiments and phraseology of this rendering closely resembled another version which the home Press had picked up a year before[5]- perhaps suggesting that Kipling's work generated an oral tradition larger than recorded texts now show. But Kipling gave a lead in more than physical models: as the creator of the 'Tommy Atkins' romance in poetry, he indicated the ethos in which soldier-verse could be located - demonstrating what Army life ought to consist of, what form of words would be acceptable to describe soldiering experience.

1 For musical settings, see J.McG. Stewart, Rudyard Kipling: A Bibliographical Catalogue 1959, Appendix E.

2 cf. Winstock, op. cit.

3 Hutchison, op. cit., p.99. (We have noted, however, that some soldiers - the Scotsmen - had reservations about 'The Absent-Minded Beggar'.)

4 'De La Rey', in the issue of 27th March 1901: The Cossack Post: Journal of B. Squadron, Paget's Horse 1901, pp.64-5. Kipling's 'Troopin'' was also closely imitated: ibid., pp.99-102.

5 'On the Road to Kimberlay', in The Sphere, Vol.I, 28th April 1900, p.440. ('Mandalay' had previously appealed to the soldier-bards participating in the 1896 Nile expedition: see Robert Pierpoint, 'Parodies of Kipling', in Notes and Queries, 10th Ser., Vol.XII, 9th October 1909, p.297.)

Proof of this appeal of 'Kiplingism' to the aspiring soldier-poet was provided by an educated volunteer, P.T. Ross, who illuminated his letters with deft parodies both of the 'barrack-room ballads' and formal poems (such as 'The Native-Born'), and occasionally used verbatim quotation to sum up his feelings.[1]

The soldiers imitated Kipling mostly to produce light-hearted, or mildly-grumbling, verse, of the kind which continued to appear after the war.[2] Probably the authors belonged principally to the better-educated elements - the civilian-soldiers, and officers - because it seems unlikely that many semi-literate men would freely attempt 'cockney' verses: though Wallace's work showed that there was no reason why Kipling's ballads should not provide as adequate a model as did traditional verse styles; and indeed, one of the 'characteristic poems' submitted to the The Pall Mall Gazette was entitled 'A Cockney's Opinion', an energetic but trivial production. (A parallel might be found in Scottish soldiers composing vernacular poetry).[3] But in a few instances, determined writers traded on Kiplingism's 'Tommy Atkins' voice and image to considerable effect.

Kiplingesque soldier-poems were of course most heavily concentrated in The Friend. In War's Brighter Side, the war-correspondent Julian Ralph described how Roberts's troops enthusiastically supported the newspaper during their recuperation at fever-stricken Bloemfontein largely because, to supplement

1 A Yeoman's Letters 1901, passim.

2 e.g. contributions to 'Mozart', Army Service Corps Ballads 1905.

3 e.g. G.W. Anderson, Seaforth Songs, Ballads, and Sketches 1890.

the official notices and articles, the editors solicited 'Tommy poetry' from them. Kipling - 'our distinguished poetry editor'-[1], who apparently acted like Beetle running a school-magazine, was the chief champion of their contributions: 'when we derided much of it as outrageous twaddle, he praised its quality'-[2]

> At the idea of re-writing and improving Tommy's verse he was pained, and when Mr.James Barnes, on one occasion, spent half a day in putting a "Tommy" poem into Queen's English, Mr.Kipling was righteously indignant, and spent an hour in getting it back to Tommy's vernacular.[3]

If Kipling hoped to obtain some striking literary offering - to discover the People's poet rising up 'from Bermondsey, Battersea, or Bow' predicted in 'My Great And Only'- he was much disappointed. Nevertheless, the authentic, schoolboyish soldier-poetry stood alongside his own productions, with works borrowed from Wallace and new compositions by A.B. Paterson; during The Friend's existence under the correspondents' editorship, some two dozen 'Tommy poems' appeared, usually over initials or pseudonyms, or else anonymously - and several paid Kipling the compliment of imitating his artistry. Ralph claimed that the soldiers were 'fired by the genius' of Kipling:[4] but the vernacular poems designed to bring 'Tommy Atkins' to life, as it were, seemed to be produced rather by literate men.

1 op. cit., p.133.

2 ibid.

3 ibid., p.83.

4 ibid., p.82. See also Ralph, At Pretoria 1901, pp.189-90 (quoted in Drummer Hodge, pp.109-10).

However, when the Tommies did speak, they sometimes revealed the significance of Kiplingism as the key to articulation. One of the most eager contributors was B. Charles Tucker, who began with the cockney welcoming verses 'To the Soldiers Poet'[1] (which, incidentally, expressed no resentment about the 'absent-minded beggar' label) and then, with more confidence, attempted formal patriotic poems. By contrast, another frequent contributor who signed himself 'Mark Thyme', probably an officer, sported with Kiplingism: he mimicked the style ('The Absent-Minded Beggar' became 'The Moderate Drinker's Lament', ''Orse or Fut' pretended to be a barrack-room ballad),[2] and belittled the inaccuracy of civilian 'Rudyardkiplingese' poems.[3] This turning of Kiplingism against its originator was the verse counterpart of the criticism being expressed in The Saturday Review.

After the war, a Royal Dublin Fusiliers officer, Arthur Edward Mainwaring,[4] published Ante-Room Ballads (under the pseudonym 'Centurion'), whose contents, he claimed, had been mostly 'scribbled in note-books' in South Africa. He candidly plagiarized; and he found an important model in Kipling's work. Most notably, Mainwaring exploited 'Tommy' to arouse greater sympathy for the Regular officer:

1 See Ch.III(iv) above.

2 In the issues of 6th April 1900, p.[3], and 7th April, p.[3]: reproduced in War's Brighter Side, pp.315-7, 328-9. 'Mark Thyme' often contributed verse and prose to The Household Brigade Magazine; 'The Moderate Drinker's Lament' had appeared in the issue of Vol.iii, January 1900, pp.32-3.

3 See Appendix III.

4 Mainwaring served throughout the conflict, and was the author of several books on recreational pastimes and his regiment's history. (See also Chapter VII(i) below, and Appendix XIV.)

> I got into an omnibus to save a hansom fare,
> A fat old man laid down the law to all the people there:
> "Our officers are useless, sir, mere gilded Popinjays"
> Which was riling, but reminded me of one of Kipling's lays.
> For it's "Captain This and Major That" and "only fit to play"
> But it's "Mafeking celebrations" when you read who led the way:
> You read who led the way, my friends, and smiled at jostling death,
> Till e'en your dull veins tingled, and you cheered till out of breath.[1]

This responded to the public's severe criticism provoked by the military set-backs - criticism of the sort to which Kipling was contributing in his prose fiction- and it is significant that Mainwaring turns to Kiplingism in order to be heard: there is also an indication of Kiplingism's elasticity, when we remember that T.W.H. Crosland borrowed precisely the same model in order to disparage the officer caste. In another piece, 'The Poem that Failed', Mainwaring used a Tommy-speaker to berate 'The Islanders':

> Oh Kipper, Ruddy Kipper, you 'ave bin and broke my 'eart,
> By the nonsense you 'ave bin and wrote, and thort so blooming smart...[2]

- his complaint, though, was only against Kipling's 'flannelled fools' and 'muddied oafs' taunts; regretting that the poet had harmed his own reputation, 'Centurion' asserted that his 'good old friend T.A.' readily forgave him.

1 'Captain This and Major That'.

2 Previously published in Truth, Vol.LI, 6th February 1902, p.338.

By contrast, the verses in Captain Harry Graham's[1] Ballads of the Boer War: Selected from the Haversack of Sergeant J. Smith 1902 (by 'Coldstreamer') quarrelled with the 'Kiplingism' under whose auspices they came into print. Graham projected a cockney-speaking soldier who derided some of the public's ideals concerning the nature and purpose of the war - his accounts of soldiering in South Africa make an interesting comparison with Kipling's 'Service Songs', whose publication they anticipated by a year - and grumbled about the treatment of the Regular soldier and his officers. For example, 'The Blockhouse' conveyed the misery of line-guarding duty, giving an incidental dig at Kipling:

> For what you h' asks at present
> Is more than my shilling's worth
> An' it ain't my bloomin' idea at all
> O' what Mister Kipling likes to call
> The "Gawdliest life h'on earth!"

- the poem also dismissed the unsuitable selection of reading material sent by the well-meaning to lighten the soldiers' monotony. Nor did Graham subscribe to the romance of 'my pal, the Boer': in 'The Mail Cart', he condemns the enemy's deliberate destruction of mail-bags since, granted his comrades' yearning for news from home, this 'seemed like takin' h'innercent lives'. When a Boer tells his prisoner that he reserves cut bullets for game-shooting, this diatribe is provoked:

1 Jocelyn Henry Clive Graham (1874-1936) was a prolific writer of humorous and satirical verse, e.g. Ruthless Rhymes for Heartless Homes [1899], Verse and Worse 1905 (including parodies of Kipling's work), Deportmental Ditties and Other Verses [1909].

"Ho yes," I thinks to myself, "not much!
But you're hall the same, you blooming Dutch!
With a hinnercent look in your childlike heyes,
An' it's nothing but lies, an' lies, an' lies!
Till we finds you hout -when you doesn't care,
But you lies some more, just to make things square!"
An' I looked at that treacherous lead, an' guessed
Wot 'ad made that 'ole in the trooper's chest.[1]

Here, as throughout, Graham makes his point using a vernacular diction managed more with confidence than skill. And while his anti-Boer sentiments accord with those uttered by Kipling during the conflict, they differ greatly from the conciliatory 'Service Songs' published in The Five Nations in 1903: 'Sergeant Smith''s cockney views, for example on the subject of block-houses -

I ain't no faith in Brother Boer;
I'd keep 'em there, an' build some more,
Maybe we'll want 'em all afore
Ten years is run[2]

- could not later be endorsed by Kipling's soldier-narrators, who were committed to mouthing his political propaganda.

Graham's ballads provided a different insight into the conditions of the war; but he became particularly eloquent about the nation's relationship with its Army - a favourite subject for soldier-poets. In 'The Queen's Chocolate', the narrator is baited by a civilian -an ''armless h'ass'- pretending to want to purchase his share of the celebrated Christmas-gift: reminiscent of Wallace's art, the Tommy almost

1 'The White Flag. A "Regrettable Incident"'.

2 'Peace'.

becomes a figure of fun, but his possessiveness over the only present he has received from 'a girl back home' (the notion that a soldier takes the Army, the Queen, as his 'mistress' was common in the poetry of the day) stirs not mirth but uneasiness -

> "She'd never know!" sez you? May-be!
> (Gawd rest 'er soul!) Per'aps you're right.
> But still I likes to think as she
> Is watching 'ow 'er soldiers fight,
> An' smilin' somewheres in the sky
> A-seein' 'ow 'er soldiers die!

Elsewhere, common military grouses were aired: war-correspondents supposedly sent home biased reports, encouraging favouritism ('My! - 'ow the Public loves a kilt!'); slighting observations were made about 'one young Gen'ral I could name' and the over-decorated members of 'a certain staff' who have never heard shots fired.[1] The cockney soldier is once made to eulogise his officers:

> A pleasant, h'affable cove, 'e was,
> An' a gentleman, too, as well I knew.
> 'E wasn't no starched society pet,
> Nor yet no h'ignorant young cadet;
> But a h'orficer, 'im as didn't forget
> As a private's 'uman, too.[2]

- but this battle-tried loyalty (Graham deflected public criticism more impatiently than Mainwaring) does not allow the proper, traditional military hierarchy to be abandoned:

1 'The Press'.

2 'The Mail Cart'.

An' we chatted away there, sociable-like
(Tho' I didn't forget my place; no fear!)

Thus the poem became a camouflaged 'ante-room ballad', making 'Kiplingism' overtake Kipling himself.

The soldier-poet was irritated most by the public's ingratitude towards the Regulars (he scorned their adulation of the inefficient short-service Volunteers), and outside his verse-collection Graham devoted two lengthy poems, 'The Home-Coming' and 'Time-Expired',[1] to bitter criticism of the treatment accorded to the returning heroes after the war. Not only were there no 'Welcome-'ome' celebrations for the late-comers, but no jobs either:

The Winter's close upon us now,
An' ev'ry week there's thousands landed,
All "time-expired," to find as 'ow
They're out-o'-work, an' broke, an' stranded...

Grumbling aftermath-of-service poetry was well-established in war literature: we have noted T.W.H. Crosland's lines on 'the workus an' the street'; Kipling, too, might have been expected to follow up his 1890 championing of the Crimean veterans, his winning portraits of 'Tommy Atkins', his trumpeting in 'The Absent-Minded Beggar'-

Let us manage so as later, we can look him in the face,
And tell him -what he'd very much prefer-
That while he saved the Empire, his employer saved his place,
And his mates (that's you and me) looked out for her...

1 See Appendix IV, V.

- and his sympathy with the troops' sufferings on the battle-fields and inside the mismanaged hospitals in South Africa. The Soldiers' Poet did afterwards pity the 'poor fighting-men broke in our wars', but because he remained preoccupied with the wider issues of Imperialism, the duties of patriotism at home, the virtues of the ideal civilian-soldier, it was left to contributors such as Graham to exploit Kiplingism in order to make the very justifiable complaint. The mixture of anger and entreaty in these post-war verses perhaps pushed Kiplingism further along the path taken by the 'Sergeant Smith' ballads: far from cajoling or amusing, they are intended to rebuke and shame, as the common-man cockney speaker presses home truths on the audience which is weary of hearing about soldiers and sated with 'Rudyardkiplingese' barrack-room verses. The soldier-poet insists on reminding the public about their former preferences; indeed, without being able to trade on the fashion for cockney verses, soldier complaints would perhaps have gone unheard -Professor van Wyk Smith tells of a serviceman's traditional war ballad whose disgruntled sentiments were reversed between manuscript and public printing.[1] There was clearly a wide gulf between Graham's 'time-expired' Regular unable to find a job and Kipling's returning combatant meditating on 'patriotism' as he settled down again in 'Ackneystadt, just as 'Coldstreamer''s portrayal of war experiences differed from Kipling's. The Soldiers' Poet created more true poetry: but it

1 Drummer Hodge, pp.195-7.

may be that Graham -like other imitators- created more truth in their artless contributions to Kiplingism. Certainly, the presentation of the cockney soldier as a victim of War, both when campaigning and when receiving his nation's ingratitude, sets Graham's work on the same side as some of the poetry produced by Sassoon and Owen during World War One.

Chapter V

For England's Sake

In contrast to the 'Kiplingism' which sought expression through what was easy or vulgar, the greater part of the South African War's verse aspired to place itself in the lofty tradition of patriotic poetry (whose features were outlined in Chapter II). Few of the authors had any deep interest in, or comprehension of, the conflict's issues, however. They were simply aware that the supremacy, prestige, and perhaps even the security, of their country and Empire were being put in jeopardy - that the Lion's tail was being painfully twisted, as opponents of the war said - and in a response which was as much defensive as belligerent they forwarded the war-effort: citing the traditions and virtues of the Britain in which they earnestly believed, exhorting her soldiers and civilian-volunteers to battle, lamenting the sacrifice, conscientiously thanking God for the victory. Professor van Wyk Smith characterizes the unquestioningly loyal poetic response as 'gross over-reaction to a war 6,000 miles away':[1] but he underestimates the high pitch which nationalistic self-satisfaction had attained by the year 1899, the unlooked-for severity of the tests imposed on this country by the struggle, the re-awakening of fears for the safety of the Island-Home during the chant of hostile world opinion. In effect, the poets were moved to re-affirm, and sometimes revise, their ideals of what Britain and her Empire signified in the world and in its history.

1 Drummer Hodge, p.45.

During the 1890s, four poets were acknowledged as leading contributors to the mainstream of the patriotic mood: Alfred Austin, W.E. Henley, Henry Newbolt, and William Watson. Their work prior to the war revealed different interpretations of the role of composing poetry 'for England's sake'; throughout the conflict they fulfilled the expectations of the home audience by providing distinctive strains of poetry, efforts noteworthy both in their own right and because they gave a lead to amateur verse-makers. Watson's work was additionally interesting since he felt obliged to raise his voice in condemnation of his country's activities in South Africa.

When Tennyson died in 1892, it was widely recognized that no other poet would be capable of speaking for and to the nation with equal success. But Lord Salisbury's announcement in January 1896 that Alfred Austin[1] had been appointed to the Laureateship caused particular dismay in the literary world which both resented the partisan bias and believed that his artistic gift was inappropriately modest. Austin (1835-1913) was not a poets' poet: yet, because of the peculiar licence then allowed to patriotic verse-makers, he was a reliable spokesman for the nation - 'a symptom of the late-Victorian popular mood', it has been suggested.[2] Professor C.K. Stead

1 See Austin's Autobiography, 2 volumes, 1911; also, N.B. Crowell, Alfred Austin: Victorian 1953.

2 'The Banjo-Byron' in TLS, 13th November 1953, p.718.

execrates him for promoting the worst in the old poetic,[1] and it is probably true that Austin became embarrassingly redundant after the Victorian age; but precisely because his patriotic verse was so orthodox and predictable he was the perfect candidate to succeed Tennyson in the 1890s. Thus, one contemporary critic felt that his 'genuine and intimate love of nature', with the 'uncompromising' patriotism that made him 'a worthy continuator of recent tradition', adequately fitted Austin for the office;[2] and we mentioned in Chapter II (ii) how the poet was congratulated for standing in the anti-Decadent Art-for-Morality's-sake fold, for being 'essentially, primarily English' in his love-of-Country expressed through love-of-the-countryside, for celebrating the Island-Home - altogether, for providing poetry of 'common-sense and healthy directness'. Even in 1908, The Quarterly Review argued at length that for the sake of his 'matter' much could be forgiven in Austin's admittedly erratic 'manner'.[3]

At his best, Austin was a lyrical poet. But as his career progressed, he was increasingly seduced by the notion that 'the persistent production of poetry of high seriousness' would guarantee the achievement of literary greatness.[4] He described himself as a Classicist:

1 The New Poetic (1964) 1977, pp.67, 71-5, etc.

2 Thomas Seccombe, 'The Poets Laureate of England', in The Bookman, Vol.XXII, July 1902, p.130.

3 'The Poetry of Mr. Alfred Austin', op. cit., Vol.CCVIII, January 1908, pp.173-202.

4 Austin's theories of literature were recorded (albeit somewhat incoherently) in The Garden That I Love 1894, Second Series 1907; The Bridling of Pegasus 1910.

> ...for the greatest poetry Intellect must combine with Feeling, and poetry, genuine poetry, must be born of high thoughts fused and made one with deep emotion.[1]

In pursuit of this theory, Austin divided poetry into four types, placing the 'Reflective' and 'Epic or Dramatic' above the 'Descriptive' and 'Lyrical'.[2] The practical result was that he moved from his early Byron-like social satires (Browning dubbed him 'Banjo-Byron' for his efforts) to produce lengthy narrative poems based on the Italian and German struggles for unification whose progress he had witnessed at first hand; still lengthier 'Reflective' poems, mostly arising from his own inward struggles with his Roman Catholic faith; and an interminable verse-drama on Alfred the Great. At the end of his life, Austin may have felt that such works constituted his 'genuine poetry'. But the writer was better regarded for less grandiose verse: for example, Nature poems; and the patriotic odes, sonnets, and lyrics, which when erring, did so in the cause of 'high seriousness'. In trying to express impeccably worthy and loyal sentiments, Austin fulfilled the condition imposed by H.C. Beeching; and by building 'the loftier towers of rhyme' for which Newbolt called, he aspired to the noblest ideals of the patriotic verse tradition.

Austin's place was not really 'second to Kipling' as the poet of England and Empire,[3] because, remaining sententious and serious where Kipling was often breezy and exuberant, he stood respectably against 'Kiplingism': a polarity which Punch frequently illuminated. Moreover, Austin's teaching

1 The Garden That I Love, Second Series, p.128.

2 See 'The Essentials of Great Poetry', in The Bridling of Pegasus.

3 Crowell, op. cit., p.196.

conveyed far less awareness of Greater Britain. In his insular view, England was the 'hub' of the Empire and the colonies served as appendages to her:[1] she bestowed on them Liberty and Light, they provisioned the Island-Home fortress with food and goods.[2] Nor, therefore, was he a 'poor shadow of Henley', as Professor van Wyk Smith suggests, since Henley represented the expansionist Tory Imperialists in matter and rarely attempted the high manner of patriotic utterance. It was only the Boer War which brought the two poets to beat 'politically to very much the same pulse', and even then, to use the critic's own words, Austin was distinguished for providing sophisticated expression for sentiments akin to the 'Cockney honesty' in music-hall belligerency.[3]

Prior to his appointment, Austin frequently complained that the age insensibly failed to perceive the truth and beauty of his work. In 1873, for instance, he stated in the preface to Madonna's Child that he refused to issue his volume anonymously, even though

> ...no poem can at present hope for fair critical treatment, to which [my] name is attached.[4]

1 cf. The Garden That I Love, Second Series, p.126.

2 Crowell believes that Austin was fired by the 'romantic imperialism' which followed Disraeli's 1872 Crystal Palace speech, and that he succeeded Tennyson in promoting the Empire (op. cit., especially Ch.VII). But although he was always prepared to spring to the defence of England's overseas possessions (e.g. in warning Russia away from North India and Egypt: England's Policy and Peril 1877) this was more for England's sake than for theirs. Notably, he opposed the imperial unity schemes of his friend Joseph Chamberlain, holding that business, not sentiment, should govern trade (cf. Autobiography, Vol.II, pp.266-7).

3 Drummer Hodge, pp.25, 52. On the sympathy between Austin and music-hall bards, see C.A. Bodelsen, 'The Red White and Blue. A Footnote to English Literary History', in English Studies, Vol.19, 1937, pp.161, 162-3.

4 op. cit., p.iv.

His 1891 collection, Lyrical Poems, included a sonnet of comfort for scorned poets:

> Hearken not, friend, for the resounding din
> That did the Poet's verses once acclaim:
> We are but gleaners in the field of fame,
> Whence the main harvest hath been gathered in...[1]

- offering the myopic argument that the cause of failure lay elsewhere than with the poet's competence. The securing of the Laureateship, however, ended Austin's complaints. His reputation in the literary world was scarcely improved, but, as N.B. Crowell argues, and the tone of Austin's Autobiography confirms, he became deaf to abuse; indeed, the poet considered that his past efforts had been vindicated, and that he had a right and responsibility to speak to the wider public.[2] Austin maintained that poetry could not dissociate itself from Politics, by which he meant a general interest in Country, Empire, mankind:[3] unfortunately, he was unable to forget entirely his links with the Tory party - he had twice stood for Parliament, co-edited The National Review, and contributed to The Standard - and exploited his office, for example publicly to oppose the Liberals during the 1910 controversy over the reform of the House of Lords. But Austin principally conceived his duty as Laureate to be to continue his strain of 'patriotic' poetry. In the dedicatory letter to his friend

1 'Gleaners of Fame'.

2 cf. 'J.O.', 'Mr. Alfred Austin', in The Athenaeum, No.4467, 7th June 1913, p.624.

3 See 'On the Relation of Literature to Politics', in The Bridling of Pegasus.

Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley in Songs of England 1898, Austin wrote:

> In days, now happily passed away, when to descant on the power and the mission of England was deemed a desecration of the Muse, and almost an outrage on morality, you invariably responded with instant sympathy to any note that vibrated with patriotic sentiment....[1]

Never during his career, however, had there been a widespread opposition to loyal poetry, only a hesitancy about accepting Austin's own contributions. As Laureate, he satisfied himself (and so justified his appointment) by fulfilling 'the obligation of his office with that sort of undistinguished adequacy which his previous work...had taught the public to expect'.[2]

Austin, then, believed that he was writing in the best interests of Literature and for his country's sake. It may even be that he conceived that he had a near-religious duty to sound notes 'that vibrated with patriotic sentiment'. He always set patriotism among man's 'noblest passions', equal with sexual love, religious faith, and humanitarianism;[3] and in two long, introspective poems, 'At the Gate of the Convent' 1885 and 'The Door of Humility' 1906, he analysed his dedication to his art, setting on this the value of a quasi-priestly service. In particular, the earlier work allegorized the Poet's

1 op. cit., p. [5] .

2 E.K. Broadus, The Laureateship 1921, p.205.

3 See the preface to Savonarola: A Tragedy 1881; the lengthy introductory essay to the final version of The Human Tragedy 1889; and 'The Essentials of Great Poetry', loc. cit.

resolution to leave the peaceful convent life, with its ordered routine and beautiful countryside surroundings, in order to serve God in the active world by tending his country's altars:

> Loving your Land, you face the strife;
> Loved by the Muse, you shun the throng;
> And blend within your dual life
> The patriot's pen, the poet's song.[1]

As Laureate, Austin attempted to broaden the appeal of his work; a policy which initially proved most unfortunate. Within days of his appointment he produced 'Jameson's Ride', in which he vindicated the futile attempt to overthrow Kruger's government, offering what he imagined to be a 'popular' ballad. A biographer has called this 'a swashbuckling, Kiplingesque tribute to misguided Dr. Jameson',[2] and while the term 'Kiplingesque' does an injustice to Kipling, it is true that the Laureate wanted to write a stirring poem for the People. But Austin was not a ballad-maker, and although the sentiment of the verses well typified the general British reaction to the Raid, their style aroused such condemnation that the poet never repeated his experiment:

> Right sweet is the marksman's rattle,
> And sweeter the cannon's roar,
> But 'tis bitterly bad to battle,
> Beleaguered, and one to four....[3]

1 From At the Gate of the Convent and Other Poems 1885.

2 Crowell, op. cit., p.21.

3 In The Times, 11th January 1896, p.9: not collected up by Austin.

Rather, he took refuge in the impeccable high patriotic style, and sought other ways to increase his audience. The 13 poems collected up in Songs of England 1898 sold for one shilling, and were intended to come within reach of 'the many'.[1] During the years before the war, Austin's audience was regaled with his sentiments on the importance of 'the parent Past' (most notably, England's Darling exhibited the nation's good Anglo-Saxon roots by turning King Alfred into an archetypal English hero);[2] the timeless beauty of the English countryside; the security guaranteed by naval supremacy and the Islanders' willingness to defend their home from foreign menace (the 1889 poem 'Look Seaward, Sentinel!', frequently reprinted in Austin's collections, perhaps best summed up this attitude);[3] a conviction that England championed Freedom, in world politics as in empire-building; the promotion of a rigidly structured social order; and, naturally, a deep devotion to the Queen.[4] The distinctive features of Austin's literary style included stiff verse-forms - he sometimes had difficulty in fitting plausible vocabulary, especially rhyming words, into a chosen scheme - and an ornate diction which, for example, made his patriotic pastoral scenes contrast badly with his Nature poems:

1 Several revised editions appeared during the war to incorporate Austin's latest poems; the price remained unchanged, but the volume went into paper covers.

2 In 1908 The Quarterly Review preferred Austin's Alfred to Tennyson's Arthur (op. cit., pp.180-1).

3 First published in The National Review, Vol.XIII, April 1889, pp. [145] -150.

4 Most of these sentiments were rehearsed in typical fashion in the 1897 Jubilee poem 'Victoria'.

> Where ruminating hide and grazing fleece
> Dapple lush meadows diapered with flowers...[1]

Austin also relied heavily on the pre-fabricated symbols which indicated grand ideals without closely explaining them; and he was fond of setting out his argument in the form of dramatic speeches put into the mouths of allegorical characters.

Once war was declared with the Boers, the Laureate readily placed his loyal pen at the country's disposal. He possessed no exceptional comprehension of the issues: but he was strongly idealistic in his view of the war's causes and conduct. In a letter to The Times on 1st February 1900 Austin sought to silence dissenting voices by repeating Disraeli's catchphrase 'Imperium et Libertas', yet without explaining precisely why Britain's 'material and moral Empire' should seize the Republics;[2] his Autobiography later referred to his country's cause as 'repressing the rebellion and affirming our Sovereignty'.[3] His poetry likewise conveyed laudable but inscrutable ideals: and it thereby offered a good index of 'patriotic' hearthside reaction to the conflict.

Austin insisted that a quest for Freedom was afoot: a quest divinely-sanctioned -

> What is to him
> Or life or limb,
> Who rends the chain and breaks the rod!
> Who strikes for Freedom, strikes for God![4]

1 From 'Look Seaward, Sentinel!'.

2 op. cit., p.8.

3 op. cit., Vol.II, p.282.

4 'Spartan Mothers', from Songs of England, October 1900 edn.

- whose aim was to

> ...plant for ever England's Flag
> Upon the rebel wall![1]

In 'Through Liberty to Light', the poet created a parable to set the conflict in the grandest possible context: through eleven resounding stanzas he showed the Boer War to be the culmination of God's Purpose for England, the ultimate struggle between the forces of Good and Evil - the latter represented by

> ...a race, though of Northern strain,
> With narrow foreheads and narrower hearts,
> who cherished the thong and chain.[2]

Altogether the poem curiously blended immediate issues simply interpreted and extravagant greater vision. With more imagination, Austin even turned the war into a crusade: 'A Tale of True Love', immersed in the dreamy setting of a medieval romance, told how the young squire of Avoncourt, disappointed in love, found a timely remedy for his sorrows in answering the call to oppose 'a crafty, freedom-loathing race' and liberate his countrymen's 'Afric brethren'.

> Then said Sir Alured, "Against such foemen
> I too will ride and strike," and round him drew
> All Avoncourt's hard-knit, well-mounted yeomen,
> And to his lands ancestral bade adieu.
> Beneath him seethed the waters no one barred,
> Over the wave-wide track our steel-shod sentries guard.[3]

1 'To Arms!', in The Daily Telegraph, 23rd December 1899, p.7; reprinted in later editions of Songs of England.

2 From Songs of England, October 1900 edn.

3 From A Tale of True Love and Other Poems 1902.

The romance ended with a picture of Alured's lady-love avidly following the news of her hero's adventures in the distant war.

As the national poet, Austin felt it his duty to reply to opponents of the conflict. In 'The Mercy of the Mighty' - written in September 1900, when victory still seemed imminent - he asserted that Right had triumphed according to God's sanction, and urged that

> ...Might's twin, Mercy, heal the wounds of war,
> Solace the hurt, and cicatrize the scar;
> Let race with race commingle and increase,
> And Concord's portal henceforth stand ajar,
> Guarded by Justice, Liberty, and Peace![1]

His insistence that the issue was 'Freedom' led Austin to retort sharply

> No, not that they were weak, and we are strong,
> Nor to avenge imaginary slight...

- an observation which seems to refute the accusations against rampant Imperialism spread by Robert Buchanan's 'Song of the Slain' in The New Rome 1898. Of course, this celebration of victory was premature, and it was to Austin's credit that he responded to the final ceasefire in far less strident tones: his lyric 'The White Pall of Peace' was inspired by reports of snowfalls in South Africa, something which touched his 'countryside' sensibility and enabled him to salute tenderly the fallen of both sides - before acclaiming his country's triumph.

1 From Songs of England, October 1900 edn.

Over the peaceful veldt,
  Silently, snowflakes fall!
Silently, slow, unfelt,
  Cover the Past with a pall!...[1]

But for the task of stirring and consoling his audience, Austin employed his weightiest style. On 2nd November 1899, following the first military set-backs, The Times published a work in heroic couplets, 'Inflexible as Fate', in which the poet fearlessly recalled the reverses encountered and overcome by Rome whilst struggling against African Carthage. The parallel now seems ludicrous, but the Classical magnitude with which Austin invested the conflict reflected the nation's impression at that moment:certainly, the sonorous lines conveyed a dignified reassurance -

Throughout her vast Realms is neither fear nor feud,
But, calm in strength, and steeled in fortitude,
She fills the gaps of death with eager life...[2]

On this point of filling 'the gaps of death' Austin found much to say in his war-poetry: while paying tribute to the eagerness of the Colonial volunteers, his chief interest was to activate his fellow Britons. However, there was no provision of cockney music-hall verses as a concession to popular taste. To reinforce Sir Alured's sturdy 'yeomen', Austin summoned the heroic inhabitants of a pastoral Britain to defend their Flag:

1 From Sacred and Profane Love and Other Poems 1908.

2 op. cit., p.9; reprinted in later editions of Songs of England.

...Leap up mailed myriads with the light
Of manhood in their eyes;
Calling from farmstead, mart, and strand,
'We come! And we! And we!'[1]

These were reminded of the obligations conferred by the Past -

Whose fathers fought at Waterloo,
And died at Trafalgar!

- while their dependants were counselled to endure suffering with fortitude:

"One more embrace! Then, o'er the main,
And nobly play the soldier's part!"
Thus sounds, amid the martial strain,
The Spartan Mother's patriot heart.
She hides her woe,
She bids him go,
And tread the path his Fathers trod.
"Who dies for England, dies for God!"[2]

The tableau would resemble that World War One poster depicting resolute English womenfolk watching from the window as their men march away to war, except that Austin's poem, portraying the ideal, Classical response, rooted in no specific period, transcends the particularity of the Boer War. There is no concession to the 'Absent-Minded Beggar' strain: Tommy Atkins is not only too vulgar an element to be introduced, but his domestic arrangements are too temporal to matter here.

Austin's notion of events in South Africa may have been woolly, but he clearly perceived and instantly responded to one of the consequences of those events - namely, the threat

1 'To Arms!'

2 'Spartan Mothers'.

to the Island-Home implicit in the world's hostility to Britain's part. We have mentioned how the poet was extremely insular in his patriotic outlook: and throughout his war-verses Austin managed to convey the impression that his countrymen were engaged in a defensive struggle, protecting Freedom and even their own safety. In 'The Old Land and The Young Land', published simultaneously in English and American newspapers, Austin appealed to the bond linking the two nations, so that

> ...if any should bind against either now, they must meet, not one, but both![1]

In his 1908 collection Sacred and Profane Love, the Laureate published the belligerently defensive 'If They Dare!', volunteering the information that this had been written 'at a memorable moment, a few years back, when the defensive spirit of the nation was suddenly roused to the highest pitch' but which had then been put aside lest 'it might aggravate mischievously the popular emotion'. The verses recalled the seas which had always protected the Island, the fierce independence of the Islanders, the support of 'half the world' which they owned, and spurned the threats of conspiring 'bandits' -

> Plotters insolent and vain,
> Muster then your servile swarms.
> Moated by the unbridged main,
> We but laugh at such alarms....

1 From The Daily News, 25th November 1899, p.4; reprinted in later editions of Songs of England.

As Professor van Wyk Smith notes, this spirit contrasted sharply with that of Kipling by the end of the war;[1] Austin flatly refused to detect signs of national degeneracy, so that his heaving seas remain symbolic of security, not danger.

Indeed, Kipling's 'The Islanders' provoked him to write to The Times protesting that the day had not yet come for compulsory military service in Britain and that

> Mr.Kipling's verses, therefore, will only furnish the unmanly envy and immoral calumnies of Continental slanderers with fresh material for their insidious and cowardly campaign of asperation of England and the British Empire.[2]

Austin was thus unshaken in his belief in his country, and congratulated himself on the poetry which (as a 'somewhat older, and therefore wiser' writer than Kipling)[3] he had contributed to the war-effort: poetry which, as always, met the expectation, and largely fulfilled the need, of the hour.

(ii)

Unlike the Laureate, William Ernest Henley (1849-1903)[4] brought to the patriotic verse tradition the distinctive elements of unashamed brashness and an extremely personal

1 Drummer Hodge, p.53.

2 'A Protest', op. cit., 7th January 1902, p.10. (Identified by Crowell, op. cit., p.272.)

3 ibid.

4 See Kennedy Williamson, W.E. Henley: A Memoir 1930; Jerome Hamilton Buckley, William Ernest Henley: A Study in the "Counter-Decadence" of the 'Nineties 1945; 'John Connell', W.E. Henley 1949.

utterance. The former, at worst, amounted to journalistic jingoism; but the latter, at best, produced lyrics of sensitiveness and beauty.

Henley has been remembered as the loud, rough, boisterous man - serving his friend R.L. Stevenson as the model for Long John Silver - who made a domineering presence in the world of letters during the 1880s and 1890s as poet, critic, editor, and literary historian. Kipling, whom he befriended and advanced at the beginning of his London career, eventually felt the need to resist his influence:

> 'Henley is a great man...he is also a cripple, but he is not going to come the bullying cripple over me, after I have been in harness all these years.'[1]

- while Yeats, another member of the 'Henley Regatta' during the early '90s, portrayed his editor as a forceful figure whose resources of energy were forever seeking the outlets frustrated by his physical infirmities:

> ...I see his crippled legs as though he were some Vulcan perpetually forging swords for other men to use...[2]

The values promoted by this 'Vulcan' both in his own work and through his influence on his followers (another commentator characterized Henley as 'that old Pan of poetry')[3] included vigorous Tory Imperialism, and 'activism' as a prescription for personal and national conduct:[4]

1 Quoted by Lord Birkenhead, 'The Young Rudyard Kipling', in Essays by Divers Hands, NS Vol.XXVII, 1955, p.84.

2 Autobiographies, 1966 edn., p.128

3 Bernard Muddiman, The Men of the Nineties 1920, p.8.

4 Following Buckley's interpretation, Professor van Wyk Smith stresses 'activism' as the guiding force in the Boer War verse of Henley and his disciples (Drummer Hodge, pp.40-54, etc.).

> ...in the early 'nineties all life was bitter. The political pendulum was about to swing violently towards the right. The artistic activities symbolized by the physical force schools of Henley or Mr. Rudyard Kipling were to find, in the world, their counterparts in outrages...wars, rumours of wars, pogroms, repressions.[1]

Thus Henley's literary camp strenuously opposed the Aesthetic and Decadent schools: though, as his Boer War verse demonstrated, the quality of his brand of Art-for-Morality's-sake was not always admirable. One of Henley's most celebrated poems was 'The Song of the Sword', an ecstatic eulogy on the God-given instrument of personal, national, imperial power:

> Follow, O follow, then,
> Heroes, my harvesters!
> Where the tall grain is ripe
> Thrust in your sickles...[2]

- and the poet went on offering line after line of frank and crude violence.

Similarly, Henley's political attitudes embraced uncompromising tub-thumping: as early as 1888, for example, he proclaimed -

> In the Boers, this country has in the very heart of her South African Empire a persistent and unscrupulous enemy, who regards no solemn engagements, and who is ever watchful to take advantage of the slightest relaxation on the part of this country.[3]

1 Ford Madox Ford, Return to Yesterday 1931, pp.85-6. (Partly quoted by C.K. Stead in The New Poetic, p.53.)

2 From The Song of the Sword and Other Verses 1892. The poem was dedicated to Kipling.

3 The Scots Observer, Vol.I, 29th December 1888, p.149. Connell argues that Henley's political views were formulated during his editorship of The Scots/ National Observer 1888-94, influenced by its Edinburgh Tory proprietors - and his friendship with Kipling (op. cit., pp.15-17).

And when the war eventually came, in his verse and in the prose journalism published by The Pall Mall Magazine Henley gratified those who expected him to lead a chorus of unashamed jingoism. Britain's military reverses, he said, knocked him 'speechless with wrath and amazement';[1] and he wanted to see the pro-Boers pummelled into silence.[2]

> I read that on Ladysmith Day, when London was transformed into a centre of drink and thankfulness, of shoutings and champagne, old gentlemen blew trumpets and waved flags, and publicly sat on their hats. I can only say that I wish I had been there, to have done the same.[3]

Here the picture of Henley eager but impotent to join in the mindless, premature victory orgy is even more pathetic than that of the cripple urging activism upon other men.

However, insofar as this attitude towards life and literature stemmed from frustration, it represented the boiling-over of a powerful personality. The Henley who bullied his authors and yelled politics at the top of his voice was a strong individual trying to achieve what he believed to be best: and strong individuality was sometimes beneficially stamped on his poetry. Henley's reputation first rested on the 'Hospital Sketches' which recorded his experiences in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary under Joseph Lister's

1 From a letter of 31st October 1899; quoted by Connell, op. cit., p.343.

2 cf. Henley's 'Memoir' prefacing G.W. Steevens, Things Seen: Impressions of Men, Cities, and Books 1900; also, 'Old England', in The Pall Mall Magazine, Vol.XXII, September 1900, pp.135-6.

3 'Concerning Atkins', in The Pall Mall Magazine, Vol.XXI, July 1900, p.283 fn.

care and the hallmark of the poems was their author's capacity for introspection and observation. The 1875 lyric 'Out of the night that covers me', similarly prompted by Henley's illnesses, and which is frequently allowed to sum up his philosophy of life, best conveys this sense of the powerful individuality in which the poet rejoiced:

> It matters not how strait the gate,
> How charged with punishments the scroll,
> I am the master of my fate:
> I am the captain of my soul.[1]

Henley, victim of 'the bludgeonings of chance' yet determined to arise 'bloody, but unbowed', is describing an active defensiveness rather than prescribing activism: elsewhere among his lyrics the fruits of such self-communion are offered in a more subdued tone -

> What is to come we know not. But we know
> That what has been was good -was good to show,
> Better to hide, and best of all to bear....[2]

This meditation was sometimes permeated with a fin de siècle melancholy which would not have offended the Decadents against whom his Anglo-Saxon 'activism' was supposed to stand:

> A sigh sent wrong,
> A kiss that goes astray,
> A sorrow the years endlong-
> So they say.
>
> So let it be-
> Come the sorrow, the kiss, the sigh!
> They are life, dear life, all three,
> And we die.[3]

1 From A Book of Verses 1888.

2 'What is to come', from ibid.

3 'Finale', from Hawthorn and Lavender 1901.

Henley's reflections on Love, Life, and Death perhaps attained their highest quality in the 'Hawthorn and Lavender' lyrics collected up in his 1901 volume of that title.

When the poet came to write patriotic verse, there was a striking division between the shrill, brash public poems and the quieter, intensely personal lyrics. The most worthy sentiment was conveyed in the countryside verses which Henley produced throughout his career, poems such as Hawthorn and Lavender V -

> Sound, Sea of England, sound and shine,
> Blow, English Wind, amain,
> Till in this old, gray heart of mine
> The Spring need wake again!

- expressing a firm love of England rather than a strident pride. Unhappily, when acting as a public orator, his brashness usually dominated. He demonstrated by compiling Lyra Heroica that he understood the elevating 'patriotic' qualities: but the poet was rarely able to reproduce these in his own work with any credit, as his contributions to the Scots/National Observer showed. Perhaps, as Professor van Wyk Smith suggests, the problem was that Henley's strong personal philosophy could not readily be translated into a prescription for national conduct[1] without falling into aggressive journalism. On the occasion, moreover, when he did produce a personally demonstrative patriotic lyric, 'Pro Rege Nostro', its tone, as we have discussed, offended some contemporary critics.[2] At the time of Henley's death,

1 Drummer Hodge, p.46.

2 See Ch.II (ii) above.

several commentators applauded his technical accomplishments and the introspective quality of his verse, but pointedly set aside his political utterances;[1] and in 1921, when Macmillan attempted to revive his reputation by reprinting his seven-volume collected works, Alfred Noyes argued that with his gift for 'portraiture' Henley was a master-poet who could speak well to the post-war audience - yet his overtly 'patriotic' verse, save 'Pro Rege Nostro''s personification of England, the critic dismissed as 'mere Prussianism'.[2]

Henley's support for his country's cause in South Africa was, like Austin's, unequivocal: so much so, that he scarcely saw the need for detailed exposition of the issues to his audience. For instance, he reprinted some of the strident 'patriotic' verses which had first appeared alongside works such as Kipling's 'The Flag of England' in the Observer early during the decade: verses which had suited the heyday of careless New Imperialism, but whose sentiments were distasteful in time of crisis. 'The Choice of the Will', in particular, boasted of Britain's divinely-sanctioned mission to conquer the world, in a mood distinctly reminiscent of Kipling's early imperialistic verse:

1 e.g. G.K. Chesterton, 'William Ernest Henley', in The English Illustrated Magazine, Vol.XXIX, August 1903, pp.546-8; William Archer, 'William Ernest Henley', in The Pall Mall Magazine, Vol.XXXI, September 1903, pp.125-30.

2 'The Poetry of W.E. Henley', in The Contemporary Review, Vol.CXXI, February 1922, pp.[203]-210. (Reprinted in Some Aspects of Modern Poetry [1924].)

> We tracked the winds of the world to the steps
> of their very thrones;
> The secret parts of the world were salted with
> our bones...[1]

'The Man in the Street' reminded Henley's audience of an irresponsible patriotism which ignored, even spurned, the high ideals being urged by other loyal poets during the war:

> 'Death in the right cause, death in the wrong cause,
> trumpets of victory, groans of defeat':
> Yes; and it's better to go for the Abbey than chuck
> your old bones out in the street....'[2]

- here, the public 'activism' broke through:

> For the thing is, give us a cause, and we'll risk our skins
> for it, cheerfully, right or wrong.

And in honour of the prevailing conflict, Henley added a rider to the 1892 text:

> And if, please God, it's the Rag of Rags, that sends us
> roaring into the fight,
> O, we'll go in a glory, dead certain sure that we're
> utterly bound to be right!

Henley's position was thus almost identical to that of Austin and the host of loyal poets. However, far more than Kipling, he deserved Buchanan's censure for speaking with 'the voice of the Hooligan'; critics indeed felt that

1 From For England's Sake 1900. Called 'In Praise of England', the poem first appeared in The National Observer, NS Vol.VI, 18th July 1891, p.223; Henley modified his text each time it was collected up.

2 From For England's Sake. Called 'Outside the Abbey (The Man in the Street)', the poem appeared anonymously in The National Observer, NS Vol. VIII, 15th October 1892, p.552; the 1900 reprinting introduced several textual alterations.

Henley's entire contribution to war-poetry was unsatisfactory. Arthur Waugh, writing in December 1900, while praising him for having produced the best individual lines, could not accept that he had provided any whole poems worthy of the name: he blamed Henley for joining in 'the journalistic saturnalia', 'the rank rowdyism of the Hooligan'.[1] H.C. Beeching added to his complaint that Henley's patriotic lyrics were too personal the charge that his war-verses lacked decent 'literary expression'.[2] Taking such criticism still further, The Saturday Review held that so 'naturally a delicate poet' was incompetent to shout 'at the top of his voice' vigorously and ferociously; it accused Henley of futilely trying to imitate Kipling's popular style -

> But Mr. Henley has been too good a poet to be able to compete with Mr. Kipling on the level of this particular kind of platform....

- and cited his efforts as evidence of the conflict's inability to inspire great poetry.[3]

As the periodical asserted, one of the most obvious aspects of Henley's response to the South African War was this attempt to pitch his verse at a 'popular' level. Several of his works first appeared in The Sphere, an

1 'The Poetry of the South African Campaign', in The Anglo-Saxon Review, Vol.VII, December 1900, pp.50-2.

2 'English Patriotic Poetry', in The Quarterly Review, Vol.CXCII, October 1900, p.531.

3 'Mr. Henley as a Patriotic Poet', op. cit., Vol.XC, 4th August 1900, p.148.

illustrated magazine which came into being in order to gratify the public's interest in the conflict; his recruiting-song 'Over the Hills and Far Away' was published as a half-page spread (complete with Charles Willerby's musical setting) in the Daily Mail;[1] and the collection which he entitled For England's Sake: Verses and Songs in Time of War Henley properly described as a 'sheaflet' merely.[2] Puzzled, agitated, angered, like other fireside patriots Henley had difficulty in finding a medium appropriate to express his heightened sentiments: but unlike most others, this essentially lyrical poet coarsened as well as refined his art.

For example, he utilized a music-hall style for the work originally called 'A Song of Empire' but which became celebrated as 'Storm Along, John!':

> Storm along, John! Though you faltered at first,
> Caught in an ambush, and held to the worst,
> All the old Countries were hard on the spot,
> For they hadn't a son but rejoiced in his lot....[3]

This was not the Music Hall in its sententious mood, but frankly jingoistic:

> And your whelps overseas, John -the whelps that you knew
> For the native, original pattern true-blue-
> O, your whelps wanted blooding, they cried to come on...

1 op. cit., 11th April 1900, p.7.

2 Connell, op. cit., p.349.

3 In The Sphere, Vol.I, 17th February 1900, p.108; re-titled 'Music Hall (Old Burden)', later included in For England's Sake.

Similarly, for his recruiting-piece Henley settled on 'a new song to an old tune', a self-consciously hearty revised version of the song which George Farquhar had made famous in The Recruiting Officer and which had been popular during the Napoleonic Wars.[1]

> Southern Cross and Polar Star-
> Here are the Britains bred afar;
> Serry, O serry them, fierce and keen,
> Round the flag of the Empress-Queen;
> Shoulder to shoulder down the track,
> Where, to the ever-advancing Jack
> The victor bugles of England play
> Over the hills and far away![2]

For inclusion in Henley's 'sheaflet', the newspaper-text's phrase 'ever-advancing Jack' was changed to 'unretreating Jack' - a less vainglorious statement of the military situation. Here, as elsewhere, the diction uneasily combined the 'poetic' with the plain, as if betraying an author deliberately demeaning his art. The poem's final stanza, however, caught the distinctive tones of Henley's patriotic voice:

> What if the best of our wages be
> An empty sleeve, a stiff-set knee,
> A crutch for the rest of life -who cares,
> So long as the One Flag floats and dares?

Furthermore, this 'popular' style of utterance was allowed to convey an unworthy 'popular' sentiment: Henley remained as

1 See Lewis Winstock, Songs and Music of the Redcoats 1970, pp.36-8. Henley allowed echoes of the traditional song to be heard more pleasantly in lyrics such as 'Where forlorn sunsets flare and fade' (The Song of the Sword and Other Verses) and 'Since those we love' (Hawthorn and Lavender).

2 Daily Mail, loc. cit.; slightly revised for inclusion in For England's Sake.

virulent in his anti-Boer expression as he remained shrill in vaunting 'the One Flag', 'the One Race', and so on. In 'Our Chief of Men' (the appellation was cribbed from Milton's sonnet to Cromwell), his least distinguished offering, the crudest of loyal sentiments were aired, ascribing Lord Roberts's interest in pursuing the war to a desire to avenge his dead son:

> They have seen themselves out-marched, out-fought,
> out-captained early and late.
> They've scarce a decent town to their name but he's
> ridden in at the gate.[1]

- the ballad rhythm simply gave greater scope for the poem's vulgarity.

However, when the 1899 military reverses put him in the unlooked-for position of needing to stiffen his country-men to overcome adversity, Henley responded with the poem 'Remonstrance', in which the popular tone of the opening stanzas gave way to a formal appeal in the high patriotic style:

> Rise, England, rise!
> But in that calm of pride,
> That hardy and high serenity,
> That none may dare abide;
> So front the realms, your point abashed;
> So mark them chafe and foam;
> And, if they challenge, so, by God,
> Strike, England, and strike home![2]

1 From For England's Sake. Henley dated the poem 'May 1900', and as an indication of its close correspondence with his prose journalism we might note that in the July 1900 article 'Concerning Atkins' Henley again called Roberts 'our chief of men' and hoped that after Paardeberg the Field-Marshal had not, as reported, shaken hands with 'that ruffian Cronje', a typically despicable Boer (loc. cit., p.282 fn).

2 From For England's Sake.

This sort of formality had been unusual in Henley's work - here, the punch-line was plagiarised from Swinburne, as also perhaps the inspiration - but events in South Africa prompted him to write several more pieces in elevated, impersonal vein. Most notably, he composed laureate-pieces, graduating from the solemn yet self-deflating couplets of '"A Health Unto Her Majesty"' (May 1900)[1] to produce a free-verse threnody on the Queen's death - a worthy contribution to the patriotic tradition which combined dignity and passion as it explored the conventional theme that Victoria had personified her 'England'.[2] The subject Death perhaps stirred a sympathetic chord in the poet, encouraging him to cease shouting and become more reflective: to exploit his lyrical gift for the benefit of his war-poetry. Thus Henley offered a tender epitaph on his friend G.W. Steevens;[3] and his elegy 'The Last Post' won praise even from those critics who deplored his 'popular' verses -

> Blow, you bugles of England, blow,
> Over the camps of the beaten foe,
> Stern in the thought of the victor Mother,
> Sad, O sad, in her beautiful dead![4]

Henley was using the common 'sorrowful Mother-England' image, and throughout the poem he promoted intense, if unexceptional,

1 First published in The Morning Post, 24th May 1900, p.6; reprinted in For England's Sake.

2 'In Memoriam Reginae Dilectissimae Victoriae', in The Morning Post, 2nd February 1901, p.4; the poem was issued as a pamphlet, and subsequently included in Hawthorn and Lavender.

3 Prefacing Things Seen; included in Hawthorn and Lavender.

4 In The Sphere, Vol.I, 21st April 1900, p.399; slightly revised, included in For England's Sake.

devotion to England's cause: in high patriotic style the fallen were hailed as 'Touched to glory with God's own red', and according to the revised text these 'beautiful dead' became 'sacrificial', 'lovely and faithful'. Nevertheless the work emphasized Henley's conviction that the soldiers had died so that

> The One Race ever might starkly spread;
> And the One Flag eagle it overhead...

- another instance of his inability to eschew strident 'patriotism'. Again, the false peace in June 1900 inspired a formal sonnet, the 'Envoy' to For England's Sake, dedicating the poet's war-verses

> ...to the glory and praise of the green land
> That bred my women, and that holds my dead

- a poem which (as through this reference to his own grievous bereavement)[1] became a vigorous, personal justification of his country's cause.

Most of Henley's themes, then, were conventional: his work was notable chiefly because of its strident and personal tone, and it must be acknowledged that the journalist dominated the lyricist in the writer. However, Henley did produce two remarkable poems during the war, works which displayed his poetic talents at their best.

In 'Remonstrance', the patriotic poet's sense of the Past led him dutifully to recall:

1 Henley was deeply and permanently hurt by the death of his small daughter in February 1894 (Connell, op. cit., Ch.11).

> Ours is the race
> That tore the Spaniard's ruff,
> That flung the Dutchman by the breech,
> The Frenchman by the scruff...

But such puerile utterance was surpassed in his beautiful lyric 'The Levy of Shields' which, without once alluding to the conflict that inspired it, commingled Past and present by allowing the drums and bugles of Canterbury Barracks to link modern-day soldiers with the warriors of Poitiers, until the undying spirit of the Black Prince, heroic and victorious, became tangible again.

> Pass? -If he pass, in his Canterbury Chapel,
> The mortal part of him a strew of venerable dust,
> With John Chandos, and his peers,
> And his archers of Poitiers,
> Yet he and his Englishmen are still as fire upon their trust...[1]

This vision of the Black Prince's soul storming by 'with all the fury of long ago' is evoked by Henley's distinctive voice, his nationalistic tub-thumping replaced by a more admirably 'patriotic' achievement of historical imagination.

Henley's poetry, as we have seen, was more pleasing when he set aside the activist prescriptions and provided instead expressions of his own deeply-felt patriotism and sympathetic interpretation of the loyal sacrifice of others. Consequently he achieved artistic success in the poem 'Epilogue', a carefully-meditated piece which, drawing his response to the Boer War into the poetic world of the Hawthorn and Lavender

1 In The Sphere, Vol.I, 24th March 1900, p.275; with revisions, included in For England's Sake.

lyrics, viewed general human progress through the prism of his personal code of 'bloody, but unbowed'. Returning to free verse, Henley expounded the argument that Peace brings luxurious degeneration:

> ...In a golden fog,
> A large, full-stomached faith in kindliness
> All over the world, the nation, in a dream
> Of money and love and sport, hangs at the paps
> Of well-being, and so
> Goes fattening, mellowing, dozing, rotting down
> Into a rich deliquium of decay.[1]

With all its horrors, War alone provides the welcome and necessary remedy:

> ...In wild hours,
> A people, haggard with defeat,
> Asks if there be a God; yet sets its teeth,
> Faces calamity, and goes into the fire
> Another than it was. And in wild hours
> A people, roaring ripe
> With victory, rises, menaces, stands renewed,
> Sheds its old peddling aims,
> Approves its virtue, puts behind itself
> The comfortable dream, and goes,
> Armoured and militant,
> New-pithed, new-souled, new-visioned, up the steeps
> To those great altitudes, whereat the weak
> Live not. But only the strong
> Have leave to strive, and suffer, and achieve.

Professor van Wyk Smith understandably deplores such 'Henleyist' advancement of 'the prophylactic virtues of action and war':[2] yet the poet was energetically expressing a widely-shared view of the day (propounded, indeed, by those whose country had not actually been ravaged by War), the secular

1 From Hawthorn and Lavender.

2 Drummer Hodge, p.51.

counterpart to the adage 'for suffering is a holy thing' frequently uttered during the conflict. The picture of national decay does anticipate Kipling's 'The Islanders' and 'The Lesson',[1] but Henley's doctrine of active defensiveness leads him to the opposite final position: the nation is tempered in the unavoidable fire - just as the strong individual emerges triumphant from his tribulations.

At the time of the Boer War, Henley was rapidly declining in health. Surveying his career, he recognized that he had not been a great poet; and, with the Hawthorn and Lavender poems, the 'Epilogue' steered his work towards a fitting close. Perhaps this piece's very virtues show why Henley was correct in predicting that 'my part in the New Century that is on us will be of the smallest.'[2]

(iii)

Although Henry Newbolt (1862-1938) was a latecomer to the fraternity of Victorian writers - he finally abandoned his legal career for literature only in 1897 - he quickly won a popularity, particularly as a loyal poet and literary critic, which lasted well into the 1920s.[3] Yet this contemporary

1 ibid., p.48.

2 See Henley's essay 'Great Poetry', in The Pall Mall Magazine, Vol.XXII, October 1900, pp.278-82; also the letter of 1st January 1901 quoted by Connell, op. cit., p.354.

3 See My World As In My Time: Memoirs of Sir Henry Newbolt 1862-1932 1932; and Margaret Newbolt (ed.), The Later Life and Letters of Sir Henry Newbolt 1942.

regard nowadays seems as curious (and, to C.K. Stead, offensive)[1] as it remains indisputable. As John Betjeman has remarked, 'patriotism of that sort is out';[2] and in 1973, when Patrick Howarth explained how 'homo newboltiensis' represented an important archetypal hero of popular fiction, he nevertheless admitted that

> In all Newbolt's works I have been unable to find a line which seems to me true poetry...[3]

and concluded that the 'message' rather than artistry must have been responsible for the wide public and critical acclaim. In fact, Newbolt prided himself on craftsmanship, and was praised for his purely artistic achievement.[4] But his work was indeed valued for its superior quality of sentiment, providing verse-lessons of 'simple moral rectitude' conveyed through mystical evocations of 'vague yet ideal' causes:[5] generally more restrained, more respectable than those of Kipling.[6] Beeching judged Newbolt's ballads to be more elegant than Kipling's, to the extent that 'certainly there can be no better lessons for the young in Imperial responsibility';[7] Sir Edward Grey felt that

1 The New Poetic, especially Chs.3-4.

2 'Sir Henry Newbolt after a Hundred Years', in The Listener, Vol.LXVII, 28th June 1962, p.1114.

3 Play Up and Play the Game 1973, p.5.

4 e.g. William Archer, 'Henry Newbolt', in Poets of the Younger Generation 1902, pp.284-308.

5 Drummer Hodge, pp.55-8.

6 cf. Herbert Palmer, Post-Victorian Poetry 1938, pp.39-40; Stead, op. cit., pp.76-7; Archer, op. cit., pp.291-2.

7 'English Patriotic Poetry', loc. cit., pp.528-9.

his friend's poetry constituted 'one of the best & purest influences in present literature'.[1]

When his first collection, Admirals All and Other Verses 1897, received cool greeting from The Athenaeum,[2] Newbolt prepared a long letter championing the lyrical impulse and ethical intention which could create non-partisan, patriotic poetry, as demonstrated by the work of past masters.[3] However, he persuaded the periodical to publish instead 'The Non-Combatant':

> Among a race high-handed, strong of heart,
> Sea-rovers, conquerors, builders in the waste,
> He had his birth; a nature too complete,
> Eager and doubtful, no man's soldier sworn
> And no man's chosen captain; born to fail,
> A name without an echo: yet he too
> Within the cloister of his narrow days
> Fulfilled the ancestral rites, and kept alive
> The eternal fire; it may be, not in vain:
> For out of those who dropped a downward glance
> Upon the weakling huddled at his prayers,
> Perchance some looked beyond him, and then first
> Beheld the glory, and what shrine it filled,
> And to what Spirit sacred: or perchance
> Some heard him chanting, though but to himself,
> The old heroic names: and went their way:
> And hummed his music on the march to death.[4]

Thus, with more humility than Austin, but with the same sense of serving as 'a priest tending the flame on the altar',[5] the

1 Letter to Newbolt, 23rd February 1908: Bod. MS Eng. Lett. d.316, fol.87v.

2 op. cit., No.3665, 22nd January 1898, pp.111-2. See Ch.II (ii) above.

3 My World As In My Time, pp.197-9.

4 op. cit., No.3666, 29th January 1898, p.150; reprinted in The Island Race 1898.

5 Ralph Furse, biographical introduction to Newbolt's A Perpetual Memory and Other Poems 1939, p.xv.

poet dedicated his talents to the service of his revered country. The poem's very substance belied the critic's charge that patriotic utterances usually amounted to 'merely emphatic' verse, but most noteworthy was Newbolt's belief that, though a 'weakling' where action was involved, he possessed a vital ability to strengthen his countrymen with knowledge and guidance. Ten years afterwards, in a verse-letter addressed to his former school-friend Colonel Francis Younghusband, Newbolt maintained that his literary achievements represented a valuable passive service comparable to Younghusband's active service in colonial administration.[1] In practice, the writer not only promoted Art-for-Morality's-sake (this was the recurrent theme of his literary criticism),[2] but raised its concomitant Art-for-Country's-sake to the highest pedestal: indeed, Newbolt's diligence in public office, particularly during World War One, stemmed from a single impulse to place all his talents at his country's disposal.

Until 1910, Newbolt's political affections rested in Liberal Imperialism. He always carefully stressed the moral responsibility underlying the New Imperialism, Britain's 'impossible but not ignoble dream of world leadership'; yet, as 'The Non-Combatant' showed, he was also attracted by the romance of empire-building. In his retrospective account of the 1887 Jubilee:

1 'Epistle to Colonel Francis Edward Younghusband', included in Clifton Chapel and Other School Poems 1908.

2 e.g. 'Poetry and Politics', in A New Study of English Poetry 1917.

> The nation seems to have awaked suddenly, like an heir on the day of his inheritance, to a sense of unparalleled wealth and splendid traditions.[1]

Occasionally, the poet slipped into a kind of refined jingoism: as in 'A Ballad of John Nicholson', which eulogised the White Man in India as enthusiastically as Kipling ever did.[2] But for the most part, he concentrated on the special virtues which upheld England and her Empire. His self-appointed role of priest-poet, for example, led Newbolt to produce several hymnal works designed to shepherd his countrymen along the proper paths: the 1898 'prayer-before-battle', 'The Vigil', was in the same mood as Kipling's 'Hymn Before Action'[3] (Newbolt was highly gratified when The Times reprinted the piece at the outset of the World War), and 'Hymn in the Time of War and Tumults' interceded for

> The race that strove to rule Thine earth
> With equal laws unbought;
> Who bore for Truth the pangs of birth,
> And brake the bonds of Thought.[4]

His preference for treating the imperial theme rather than the particular issues of contemporary Imperialism sometimes led to an attitude not far removed from blind faith, however. Newbolt summed up his reaction to the Boer War thus:

1 My World As In My Time, p.162.

2 Included in Admirals All and Other Verses.

3 Published in The Daily Chronicle, 27th January 1898, p.4; reprinted in The Island Race.

4 In Longman's Magazine, Vol.XXXII, May 1898, pp.30-1; reprinted in The Island Race.

> ...there was some fierce recrimination among politicians, but the great majority of us saw no reason to disbelieve in the goodness of our cause, though our feelings drew a conscientious line between Chamberlain and Rhodes, the negotiator and the privateer. War was cleverly and deliberately forced upon us by President Kruger's ultimatum, and from that moment we felt that the question of right or wrong must be put away until the struggle had been decided....In London, among the people with whom we lived, there was a small but indignant minority, belonging mostly to the modern category of 'highbrows': the loyalists labelled them pro-Boers, and were genuinely hurt by their passionate reproaches. It was a very unhappy time, and I remember my relief at finding that our admired friend Leslie Stephen had disappointed many of his circle by declaring that when his country was at war, an Englishman should no more attack her in public than he should hasten to give evidence against his mother in a court of law....[1]

This mixture of loyal idealism and shortsightedness well characterizes the Liberal Imperialist predicament during the war; Newbolt's attitude to the morality of Britain's cause, with the anecdote about Leslie Stephen, seems to reduce his position to that which Henley labelled 'For the thing is, give us a cause...'. We have already noted how, for Virginia Stephen's benefit, in 'Peace (1902)' Newbolt depicted the conflict as nothing more precise, or less splendid, than a crusade:[2] yet this support for Britain which deliberately ignored the particular political issues in South Africa allowed him to produce war-poetry free from the earthy belligerency furnished by Kipling and his followers, and by Austin and Henley. Grey received the dedication of Newbolt's war-collection The Sailing of the Long-Ships and Other Poems 1902

1 My World As In My Time, pp.249-50.

2 See Ch.II (iii) above.

with gratitude for the 'refinement' and 'spirit' that countered 'the shouting style of poetry, which assaults one with its force & vulgarity';[1] while even W.B. Yeats was lulled into praising the 'wise and beautiful things' in the Boer War poems since

> Yours is patriotism of the fine sort - patriotism that lays burdens upon a man, and not the patriotism that takes burdens off.[2]

It was of course a cornerstone of Newbolt's teaching that the Englishman's capacity for assuming such 'burdens' was instilled by his public-school education, and he devoted a considerable amount of verse and prose to expounding the creed which later commentators habitually tag with the catchphrase 'Play up!...and play the game!' from 'Vitaï Lampada'.[3] In likening the School community to a Roman republic where the values of 'duty', 'fellowship' were ingrained so as to fit the young man for the larger clan-organizations of later life - college, Army, nation -, Newbolt was contributing to the 'godliness-and-good-learning'[4] public-school fiction typified by Eric and Tom Brown's Schooldays and carried right into the South African War by H.A. Vachell's celebrated novel, The Hill 1905. In fact, such teaching was not uncontroversial in Newbolt's day:

1 Letter to Newbolt, 12th November 1902: Bod. MS Eng. Lett. d.316, fol.19v.

2 Letter of March 1902: quoted in The Later Life and Letters, p.4.

3 See Clifton Chapel and Other School Poems 1908; Newbolt's quasi-autobiographical novel The Twymans 1911; also, his schoolday reminiscences in My World As In My Time.

4 cf. David Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning: Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal 1961.

from the outset, The Athenaeum was unhappy about 'Vitaï Lampada''s 'combination of cricket and war',[1] and, as Professor van Wyk Smith observes[2] and Kipling's war prose reminds us, public-school virtues were badly discredited in popular opinion during the South African conflict.

However, the poet firmly repeated his views in his Boer War work, as with one of his earliest contributions, 'The Schoolfellow':

> Our game was his but yesteryear;
> We wished him back; we could not know
> The self-same hour we missed him here
> He led the line that broke the foe.
>
> Blood-red behind our guarded posts
> Sank as of old the dying day;
> The battle ceased; the mingled hosts
> Weary and cheery went their way....[3]

The heavy ambiguity of the second stanza implies that 'the Boer War will be won on the playing-fields of Clifton'; a considerable act of faith is required to accept that the virtues learnt from schoolboy games would ensure the unceasing success of Britain's armies. That Newbolt possessed sufficient faith was revealed by his editorial in The Monthly Review on Kipling's 'The Islanders':

1 op. cit., No.3665, 22nd January 1898, p.112.

2 Drummer Hodge, p.59.

3 In The Spectator, Vol.LXXXIII, 18th November 1899, p.749; included in The Sailing of the Long-Ships.

> ...War, like life itself, is either a game, or else a brutality worse than bestial. If its immediate objects are paramount, all is over with the soul of man: to the Islander, at any rate, the child of all ages upon our playing-fields, this is clear: he will "play the game"; he will win if he can do it within the rules; but not at the cost of that which is more than any game, any safety, any life....[1]

Ideally, there is no fault in the proposition that ungodly aims and means cannot lead to godly achievements: practically, we wonder whether War can be played as a 'game'. To the end of his life, Newbolt accepted even the Great War as the price of suppressing German barbarism.[2]

'The School at War', published in June 1901, similarly allowed soldiers on the eve of battle to dream happily of their school-days.[3] And in more meditative vein, Newbolt offered 'Commemoration', where he stressed another aspect of the public-school virtues. Imagining himself in Clifton Chapel - as he had done in the 1898 poem of that title - the poet mused on the service and sacrifice, past and present, of his schoolfellows: then 'the preacher' reminded the congregation of a sacred trust -

> "O Youth," the preacher was crying, "deem not thou
> Thy life is thine alone;
> Thou bearest the will of the ages, seeing how
> They built thee bone by bone,
> And within thy blood the Great Age sleeps sepulchred
> Till thou and thine shall roll away the stone...."[4]

1 'The Lordliest Life on Earth', op. cit., Vol.VI, February 1902, p.5.

2 The Later Life and Letters, passim.

3 In The Spectator, Vol.LXXXVI, 1st June 1901, p.804; included in The Sailing of the Long-Ships.

4 In The Monthly Review, Vol.IV, September 1901, pp.[163]-164.

Thus, employing the religious allusions which figured throughout his verse, Newbolt reiterated his refined philosophy of English racial superiority. The virtues of the present-day were crucial for the race's future: as he had said in 'Clifton Chapel',

> ...what You are, the race shall be.

'Commemoration''s closing stanza, with its proud faith in the unspeakable greatness of the inheritors, showed how Newbolt's ideals had merely been confirmed by events in South Africa:

> And the School passed; and I saw the living and dead
> Set in their seats again,
> And I longed to hear them speak of the word that was said,
> But I knew that I longed in vain.
> And they stretched forth their hands, and the wind of the spirit took them
> Lightly as drifted leaves on an endless plain.

Indeed, as we mentioned in Chapter II, Newbolt was one of the patriotic writers who were particularly concerned with the historical and spiritual continuity of Britain's Past. He produced two novels, The Old Country 1906 and The New June 1909, expressly to indicate the essential sameness between medieval and modern life, while his editing of Froissart was designed to reveal such bonds for the young:

> ...the coolness of the Anglo-Saxon in fight was not more, nor less, conspicuous "down among the vines" at Poitiers, than in the squares at Waterloo...[1]

1 'Introduction' to Stories from Froissart 1899, p.xxiv.

Likewise, his verse 'chanting...the old heroic names', especially when treating the admirals who protected England's shores and the heroes who extended her Empire, evoked the undying Englishness of the English, thereby proving the glorious tradition in which the South African fighting-men could duly be placed:

> I that twined a wreath for olden splendour-
> Drake and Blake and Nelson's mighty name-
> Come again to deck with flowers more tender
> New-made graves of unaccomplished fame.[1]

Newbolt even promoted 'chivalry' as a guiding virtue for his countrymen. His memoirs made much of the spirit of the Crusader whose tomb fascinated him as a child, and the medieval ideal was urged as the key to playing correctly the games of Life and War. Whereas Henley in 'The Levy of Shields' admired the 'fury' of the Black Prince being aroused by the Boer War, Newbolt, as we have seen, encouraged his fireside audience to perceive the crusading vision of their cause:

> No more to watch by Night's eternal shore,
> With England's chivalry at dawn to ride...

The poet's first priority after the outbreak of war was to set this latest conflict into the chain. The troopships of 1899 became timeless 'long-ships', and the everlasting sea-wind blessed their new departure:

1 Epigraph to The Sailing of the Long-Ships.

"I came by Cape St. Vincent, I came by Trafalgar,
I swept from Torres Vedras to golden Vigo Bar,
I saw the beacons blazing that fired the world with light
When down their ancient highway your fathers passed to fight.."[1]

The mere fact that the next link has been forged will not guarantee victory, however, and the poem solemnly reminds the audience of the high virtues which supported the Sea-kings' 'wars of Freedom' in the Past. It is worth noting that four days after the appearance of Newbolt's work his friend Thomas Hardy published 'The Departure', turning the theme of 'all this has happened before' to denounce the intention

To argue in the selfsame bloody mode
Which this late age of thought, and pact, and code,
Still fails to mend. -Now shipped each war-troop stands...[2]

- Hardy's melancholy insistence that these events open yet another shameful page in England's history-book emphasizes how the patriotic celebration of the Past involved a single-minded interpretation. Newbolt's attitude fortified him when the war began to go against his country. Rather than offering grandiose appeals, for example in the way that Austin remembered Rome's difficulties with Carthage and called for rallying round the Flag, he cherished the supposedly hard facts of national history:

1 'The Sailing of the Long-Ships', in The Spectator, Vol.LXXXIII, 21st October 1899, p.568; included in Newbolt's 1902 volume.

2 In The Daily Chronicle, 25th October 1899, p.6; revised and re-titled 'Embarcation', included in Poems of the Past and the Present [1901], 1902. (For further discussion of Hardy's work, see Chs.VI,VII below.)

Valour of England gaunt and whitening,
  Far in a South land brought to bay,
Locked in a death-grip all day tightening,
    Waited the end in twilight grey.
    Battle and storm and the sea-dog's way!
  Drake from his long rest turned again,
Victory lit thy steel with lightning,
  Devon, O Devon, in wind and rain![1]

The grim resolution of Drake could plausibly enter into a Boer War poem because of the Devonshire Regiment's contribution to the defence of Ladysmith.

Yet despite his satisfaction in seeing the 'long-ships' sail once more, the 'game' being played on South Africa's battlefields, Newbolt wrote little about the nature and conditions of the fighting: a reticence perhaps related to his subsequent comment that contemporaneous battle-poetry is usually unsatisfactory because its inspiration is 'too near, too intertwined with glaring realities and confused with disturbing detail'.[2] The glamorous presentation of warfare belonging to his prose renderings of medieval battles and the verses on England's great warriors was largely absent in his Boer War poetry: but when his imagination was seized by a report of exceptional heroism, works such as 'The Grenadier's Good-bye' and 'On Spion Kop' resulted[3] - mundane efforts, and the sort of verse likely to feed Paul Fussell's contempt for Newbolt as a battle-poet.[4]

1 'Waggon Hill (Ladysmith, January 6th, 1900)', in The Spectator, Vol.LXXXIV, 2nd June 1900, p.775; included in The Sailing of the Long-Ships.

2 See Ch.II (ii) above.

3 The former appeared in The Cornhill Magazine, NS Vol.XII, June 1902, p.[721]; both included in The Sailing of the Long-Ships.

4 The Great War and Modern Memory (1975), 1977, pp.25-7, 249-50, etc; see Ch.VII below.

The characteristic quality of Newbolt's poetry was a sensitiveness towards the cost exacted by the war, especially the pain suffered by those at home. Unwilling to examine closely 'the goodness of our cause', he struck elegiac notes on War generally; consolatory verses which were pitched perfectly - and judiciously - to suit the fireside audience. Afterwards, and again in the wake of the Great War, Newbolt was valued for his ability to compose memorial epitaphs:[1] a contribution to war-poetry which complemented his service to the soldiers who 'hummed his music on the march to death'.[2] To one who believed in the validity of human conflict there was no contradiction between war-mongering on the one hand and, on the other, displaying the pitiful consequences of War. In 1905, at the climax of the national self-congratulation on the Trafalgar centenary, Newbolt supplemented the enthusiasm of his study The Year of Trafalgar by publishing in The Times a poem demanding recognition of Nelson's sacrifice for the great victory.[3] Certainly, his evocation of the pity as much as the glory of the Boer War pleased contemporary critics: The Academy praised 'The Volunteer' as 'the best poem which the war has yet produced' because of 'a simplicity and sincerity which lift it above occasional poetry to a place of permanence'.[4]

1 Examples of this art were included in Clifton Chapel and Other School Poems, and A Perpetual Memory and Other Poems.

2 See the letter from the Revd.H.J.Rose describing the popularity of poems like 'Vitaï Lampada' among the Boer War soldiers: The Spectator, Vol. LXXXIX, 18th October 1902, pp.565-6. (Noted in Drummer Hodge, p.[1].)

3 'Trafalgar Day', op. cit., 21st October 1905, p.11.

4 op. cit., Vol. LVII, 16th December 1899, p.712.

Unpretentiously, 'The Volunteer' lamented the first fallen, while silently encouraging others to follow their example:

> "He leapt to arms unbidden,
> Unneeded, over-bold;
> His face by earth is hidden,
> His heart in earth is cold.
>
> "Curse on the reckless daring
> That could not wait the call,
> The proud fantastic bearing
> That would be first to fall!"
>
> O tears of human passion,
> Blur not the image true;
> This was not folly's fashion,
> This was the man we knew.[1]

Here is nothing about the 'cause', and the trite description of death conceals the conditions of battle; instead, Newbolt stills the grief-stricken complaint by appealing to the patriot's innate virtues as explanation of, and inspiration for, active service for England's sake. Later, the poet offered 'By the Hearth-Stone' to simply console the bereaved: he pictured a woman sitting sadly through the night, staring into the fire -

> Low and more low
> The dying glow
> Burns in the embers;
> She nothing heeds
> And nothing needs-
> Only remembers.[2]

1 In The Spectator, Vol.LXXXIII, 9th December 1899, p.873; included in The Sailing of the Long-Ships.

2 From The Sailing of the Long-Ships.

No investigation of her sorrows is necessary: written by a loyal poet, this poem evokes the heart-aching pity of War better than anything written by an opponent of the South African conflict such as William Watson, or even perhaps Thomas Hardy.

However, Newbolt's loyalty to his country's cause tempted him to exploit such sorrow. His counterpart to Austin's 'Spartan Mothers' was 'The Only Son', a quieter and more discreet exhortation, which (again allowing situational imagery to set the mood) explained why the 'bitter wind' of sunset could detect no happiness in 'yonder gray old hall':

"In the great window as the day was dwindling
I saw an old man stand;
His head was proudly held and his eyes kindling,
But the list shook in his hand."

O wind of twilight, was there no word uttered,
No sound of joy or wail?
"'A great fight and a good death,' he muttered;
'Trust him, he would not fail.'"

What of the chamber dark where she was lying
For whom all life is done?
"Within her heart she rocks a dead child, crying
'My son, my little son.'"[1]

Keeping his upper lip Englishly stiff, the bereaved father strikes an admirable and inspiring pose; but with 'his eyes kindling', he is more human than his progenitor, Old Siward. This didactic message is softened, and yet reinforced, by the mother's prostrating grief. Notice that, as elsewhere, there are no Kiplingesque concessions: we infer that the hall's

1 In The Spectator, Vol.LXXXIV, 20th January 1900, p.89; included in The Sailing of the Long-Ships.

fallen son is not a cockney Tommy Atkins. Once more there is no sense of particular causes: the casualty-list might have come from Waterloo, or from the Western Front - the poet is prompting the ideal patriotic response.

In The Year of Trafalgar, Newbolt wrote that true poetry could be achieved once 'The emotions of the fight, the sacrifice, the triumph... [can] be remembered in tranquillity - or at least in peace'.[1] Contrasting with the agitation and exhilaration which characterized so much of the Boer War's final poetry, such 'tranquillity' became the theme of the verses in which he set his blessing on the conflict and its English victims. Newbolt stripped Hardy's 'Drummer Hodge' motif of its anti-War complaint and borrowed something of Housman's A Shropshire Lad atmosphere[2] for 'April on Waggon Hill':

> Your name, the name they cherish?
> 'Twill fade, lad, 'tis true:
> But stone and all may perish
> With little loss to you.
> While fame's fame you're Devon, lad,
> The Glory of the West;
> Till the roll's called in heaven, lad,
> You may well take your rest.[3]

With its depiction of the beautiful English countryside now missed by the dead soldier,[4] and its suggestion that his

1 See Ch.II (ii) above.

2 cf. Palmer, Post-Victorian Poetry, pp.40-1; also Drummer Hodge, p.58.

3 From Collected Poems 1897-1907 [1910].

4 Newbolt's novels The Old Country and The Twymans particularly stressed the importance of patriotic attachment to the very soil of England.

loyal service will be rewarded on the Last Day, the poem fits centrally into the established patriotic verse tradition. And if Newbolt's conclusion seems intolerably sentimental, a belittling of the Boer War's true significance and a blind interpretation of life's realities, perhaps posterity should envy rather than condemn the poet's comfortable faith.

(iv)

> Timorous, hesitant voice, how utterly vile I hold you!
> Voice without wrath, without ruth -empty of hate
> as of love!
> Different notes from these, O watchman, blow to the
> midnight!
> Loud, in a deep-lulled land, trumpeter, sound an
> alarm!
>
> ('A Laodicean')

This policy of rousing his quiescent countrymen was dear to William Watson (1858-1935),[1] a poet of high principles, both moral and aesthetic. 'A Laodicean'[2] was intended to provoke reaction against the South African War, but it might easily have expressed his attitude towards the Sudanese wars of the 1880s, the Armenian massacres of the 1890s, or even the First World War.[3]

1 See J.G. Nelson, Sir William Watson 1966.

2 From For England: Poems Written During Estrangement [1903], 1904.

3 Watson's actual contributions on these events comprised: the 'Ver Tenebrosum' sonnets of 1885; the 'Purple East' sonnets of 1896 (several times revised, as in The Year of Shame 1897); and the verses principally collected in The Man Who Saw, and Other Poems Arising Out of the War 1917.

According to Watson's view of 'The Sovereign Poet':

> He sits above the clang and dust of Time,
> With the world's secret trembling on his lip.
> He asks not converse nor companionship
> In the cold starlight where thou canst not climb....[1]

The wisdom dispensed by the god-like poet-teacher made few concessions to popular taste; so that Watson constantly found himself in the difficult position of seeking a wide audience whom he nevertheless declined to woo. While remaining the antithesis of a 'popular' poet of the Kiplingesque kind, he earnestly desired to offer guidance on public affairs: though his justification of the activity was very down-to-earth. In 1904 he argued for State funding:

> ...I would entreat those amongst us who aspire to the name of patriot to regard as the supreme imperial task of our time the raising of popular intelligence...[2]

- and warned of the State's folly in ignoring 'its manifest and master instrument', Literature. We have elsewhere discussed how such calls for the didactic, near-propagandist, exploitation of 'patriotic' writing were commonplace: unfortunately, there was a strong implication that the struggling Watson was selfishly fishing for financial backing; even to the extent of becoming a paid party spokesman. He was passed over for the most legitimate and valuable public reward, the Laureateship (this evidently contributed to his

1 From The Collected Poems of William Watson 1898.

2 'The State Discouragement of Literature', in The Fortnightly Review, NS Vol.LXXV, February 1904, p.272.

mental breakdown in 1892);[1] in 1909, while influential friends were pressing the Liberal government to accord him a knighthood, he composed - but did not dispatch - an obsequious letter addressed to Asquith, recalling his partisan work and seeking recognition of past and potential services.[2] The poet's worldly ambition was finally rewarded by a knighthood in 1917, recognizing his loyal war-poetry; but financial security always eluded him.

Watson's path was one of increasing alienation from the public. In an influential review of 1891, 'Note on a New Poet', Grant Allen praised his verse for being 'essentially of the Centre':

> For politically as well as poetically Mr. Watson is True Blue. He sails under the good old flag - the flag of Shakspere, Milton, Gray, Burns, Wordsworth. He is all for orthodoxy, patriotism, England, home and duty. And yet he is fresh, vivid, striking, original....[3]

During the 1890s, Watson indeed stood against the poets who scented their pages 'with livid and noxious Fleurs du Mal',[4] and induced his friend and publisher John Lane to sack Beardsley from The Yellow Book after Wilde's downfall.[5] We noted how, after the Boer War, G.K. Chesterton tried to

1 This emerges from the private papers preserved in Bod. MS Dep. Benson 3/54.

2 Bod. MS Walpole c.23, fols. 57-61. Watson's failure to obtain this honour led to his disgraceful lampooning of Asquith's family.

3 The Fortnightly Review, NS Vol.L, August 1891, p.199.

4 'Preface' to Austin's English Lyrics 1890, p.xxiv.

5 J. Lewis May, John Lane and the Nineties 1936, Ch.VIII.

rehabilitate Watson by allowing him 'the old and authentic voice of Milton and Wordsworth';[1] the TLS similarly applauded his anti-war poetry for revealing

> ...the very voice and spirit of England that here rails at England.[2]

As the acknowledged upholder of English poetry's classical tradition, Watson understandably expected that success would come. Inevitably, however, his 'classicism' was open to unkind interpretation, as with W.E. Henley's gibe:

> Can there exist such a thing as a Distinguished Echo? I think so -now.[3]

Watson had no qualms about his approach to poetry-

> A certain touch of hauteur is perhaps inseparable from Style in its most impressive manifestations; an accent as of command may usually be heard in it....[4]

- and gradually he found himself supplying caviare to a general public with a decaying taste for classical metres, elevated diction, and grand, impersonal tone. During the Boer War, his work was seen to rival Kiplingism in artistry as well as in teaching: even when critics compared his collection For England: Poems Written During Estrangement[5]

1 See Ch.II (ii) above.

2 'Mr. William Watson's Poems', op. cit., 9th October 1903, p.288.

3 Letter to John Lane, 29th December 1894: in de V. Payen-Payne (ed.), Some Letters of William Ernest Henley 1933, p.36.

4 'The Mystery of Style', in Excursions in Criticism 1893, p.107.

5 Although the title-page was dated '1904', the volume actually appeared late in 1903.

with Kipling's contemporaneous The Five Nations, some of those who disagreed with his anti-war stance nevertheless conceded that he was the superior artist.[1] But whereas Austin's ungainly contributions to high patriotic verse were redeemed by his impeccable loyalty to the imperial cause, Watson's dissident verse was made no more welcome for being couched in lofty style. His Boer War poetry in fact marked the start of Watson's decline - whose only real reversal was produced by his dreadfully inferior 'patriotic' work during the World War -, but though the poet felt himself to be a victim of public spite, it must be seen that a 'Distinguished Echo' was doomed to neglect in the new century.

Watson's early career was furthered by Alfred Austin, who gave space for his 'Ver Tenebrosum' sonnets in The National Review,[2] along with 'Wordsworth's Grave' and several essays. Austin was no doubt attracted by the younger poet's magisterial criticism of Gladstone's handling of the Sudan war - even though Watson rejected the conflict as wholly unnecessary - and by his vein of fervent, insular loyalty:

> Whom shall I trust, if not my kin? And whom
> Account so near in natural bonds as these
> Born of my mother England's mighty womb,
> Nursed on my mother England's mighty knees,
> And lull'd as I was lull'd in glory and gloom
> With cradle-song of her protecting seas?[3]

1 e.g. 'Mr. Watson's Poems', in The Westminster Gazette, 5th October 1903, p.3; 'Mr. William Watson's Poems', in TLS, loc. cit.; 'A Reader', 'Some Recent Books', in The Contemporary Review, Vol.LXXXIV, December 1903, pp.904-6. Other critics followed Chesterton in preferring Watson's work outright: e.g. 'Y.Y.', 'Two Poets - Two Patriotisms', in The Bookman, Vol.XXV, November 1903, pp.90-4.

2 op. cit., Vol.V, June 1885, pp.484-9.

3 'Home-Rootedness', loc. cit., p.488.

Indeed, the 'tender and caressing phrases' and 'pomp of sonorous numbers' which Watson identified in Austin's own English Lyrics[1] were characteristic achievements of his own patriotic poetry: in particular, 'Jubilee Night in Westmorland' 1897 powerfully conveyed love-of-Country through love-of-the-countryside,[2] while the laureate qualities of his 1902 Coronation Ode somewhat restored Watson's reputation after the war.[3] But his 'patriotism' increasingly inclined towards old-fashioned Liberalism, until the Armenian sonnets occasioned a public split with Austin and undermined his position as a 'True Blue' writer.[4] After this, another reason for Watson's shrinking audience was possibly his failure to solve the difficulty of composing 'loyal' poetry from the standpoint of partisan disaffection. His art was inevitably turned to disputing Kipling's widely-received teaching - 'that apostle of British imperialism - that vehement and voluble glorifier of Britannic ideals'[5]- though generally with more dignity than Robert Buchanan's attacks. 'Recessional', for example,

1 See Ch.II (ii) above.

2 Published in The Times, 12th July 1897, p.5; reprinted in Collected Poems 1898.

3 Published in pamphlet form shortly before the King's illness delayed the coronation; Watson's insistence on withdrawing the work and substituting a slightly modified text (see Selected Poems 1904) resulted in one of his numerous disputes with Lane. A. Quiller-Couch generously praised the poem in 'Mr. William Watson's Coronation Ode', in The Bookman, Vol.XXII, July 1902, pp.130-1.

4 Austin's pained sonnet-sequence 'A Vindication of England. To the Author of "The Purple East"' appeared in The Westminster Gazette, 28th December 1895, p.[1].

5 'The Poet's Place in the Scheme of Life', prefacing The Muse in Exile 1913, p.20.

prompted Watson's 'The Unknown God', in which the poet denied that a God of Hosts specially advanced the Empire, since Britain too often failed to do 'the work of heaven'.[1] Avoiding Buchanan's anti-Imperialism, Watson stipulated that empire-building was acceptable when it promoted freedom and justice in the world; but his sympathies were more with colonialism than with the age's prevailing New Imperialism. When saluting the Liberal settlement of South Africa's constitution, he could evoke the profound, binding power of the 'Imperial Mother' as readily as Austin ever did:

> The love that halts, the faith that veers,
> Are then deep sunk as in the Sea:
> The Sea where thou must brook no peers,
> And halve with none thy sovereignty.[2]

Nor was the writer a pacifist in principle. He taught that Britain should strike blows in righteous causes - as against the Turks in Armenia - and in 1898 declined (like Kipling) to support W.T. Stead's International Peace Crusade.[3]

In contrast to Newbolt's trustfulness, however, Watson found the war against the Boers to be irreconcilable with his patriotic beliefs. He doubted whether the Uitlanders had suffered 'oppression' and 'tyranny' without those grievances being 'part of a price paid for value received, and acknowledged to have been received', and condemned the 'equality' which involved

1 In The Fortnightly Review, NS Vol.LXII, 1st September 1897, pp.[321]-323.

2 'Imperial Mother!', in The Times, 11th October 1910, p.8; reprinted slightly revised, in The Muse in Exile.

3 See the letter quoted by Frederic Whyte in The Life of W.T. Stead 1925, Vol.II, pp.149-50.

> ...the over-riding of the expressed will of a people in their chosen homeland by the will of the stranger and the sojourner within their gates.[1]

The time-honoured Liberal championship of oppressed minorities - 'David' against 'Goliath'- was audible in his observation on Swinburne's 'Transvaal' sonnet:

> The assassination of a State, and the strangling of a people, are not heroical themes, and never while this world endures shall they evoke one note of noble song.[2]

After the war, Francis Thompson sneered:

> For once... [Watson] has enjoyed (we do not doubt he enjoyed it) the novel sensation of being in a minority, of opposing the popular sentiment of his countrymen.[3]

But while the so-called 'political lyricist' found the role of estrangement not wholly uncongenial, he paid a heavy price for composing anti-war poetry and participating in organizations like Stead's International Union and the Liberals' Conciliation Committee. Respectable publishing outlets for dissident verse were few, and payment for such work was small: Watson found himself relying chiefly on The Speaker and after its purchase by anti-war proprietors in January 1901, The Daily News.[4] Other periodicals accepted only non-controversial work (Watson even reprinted earlier poems in the religious journal, Great Thoughts), so that

1 Letter in The Speaker, NS Vol.I, 18th November 1899, p.169.

2 Letter in The Daily Chronicle, 17th October 1899, p.3.

3 'Politics and Poetry', in The Academy and Literature, Vol.LXV, 10th October 1903, p.383. (Authorship identified by Nelson, Sir William Watson, pp.141-2.)

4 Under the pro-war management, the newspaper had criticized Watson's position (e.g. editorial, 4th January 1900, p.4).

former platforms were restricted. The Westminster Gazette, for example, published 'Past and Present' on 19th February 1900 with an ironical editorial remark and afterwards published only the sonnet on the Prince of Wales's escape from assassination as a comment on public affairs.[1] The poet's receipts from Lane during the war averaged less than £100 p.a.: in 1901 he received just £41-9s-4d, and the higher 1902 sum was presumably inflated by the Coronation Ode sales;[2] these financial difficulties were exacerbated in December 1900 by an expensive operation for appendicitis, followed by nursing-home care.[3] Also, as Professor van Wyk Smith says, Watson's standing suffered because his poems

> became the stock-in-trade of the pro-Boer press, a fact which gave them the unfair reputation of being no more than versified journalism.[4]

The obloquy which he endured was deeply offensive and did much to divorce the poet from the public even after the war; in May 1903, he declined to lecture at the Royal Institution principally because

> I am also thoroughly out of touch with English sentiment ...at the present moment, and as, even on literary themes, I could not entirely suppress my opinions on other matters, it is unlikely that I should find myself en rapport with an audience of my fellow-countrymen.[5]

1 op. cit., 9th April 1900 p.2. We have noted, however, the favourable review of For England on 5th October 1903.

2 Bod. MS Walpole c. 23, fols. 65-6.

3 Letter to Lane, 28th November [1900]: Bod. MS Walpole c. 22, fols 23-6.

4 Drummer Hodge, p.133.

5 Letter to Lane, 5th May [1903]: Bod. MS Walpole c. 22, fols. 310r, 309v.

- and in 1917 he still recalled how his situation had been 'so painful to a patriotic man'.[1]

The task of speaking against the conflict, particularly once the guerrilla campaigns imposed dull war-weariness on the nation, was thankless for all who tried. Watson himself was anxious to dispel the implications of the label 'pro-Boer':

> Friend, call me what you will: no jot care I:
> I that shall stand for England till I die.
> England! The England that rejoiced to see
> Hellas unbound, Italy one and free...[2]

In justification, he tried to show why the seizing of the Boer Republics contradicted true patriotism and Imperialism: his approach was consistent with the practice which one contemporary critic defined as interpreting 'politics' in terms of the ideal aspects of a situation[3]- an appreciative reviewer of For England eventually described Watson as an 'inspired visionary'.[4] Thus, as with the reminder about Greece and Italy, the poet pointedly enlarged the definition of 'Liberty': England's own 'patriotic' history offered the example of Simon de Montfort -

1 'Preface' to The Man Who Saw, p.v. See also Watson's dedicatory letter in For England.

2 'On Being Styled "Pro-Boer"', from For England.

3 Archer, 'William Watson', in Poets of the Younger Generation, pp.508-9.

4 'Mr. William Watson's Poems', in TLS, loc. cit.

> And thou with wrath that hewed its way on high
> Fell'st fighting the steep fight of Liberty,
> In a crashing forest of the foe, alone.[1]

- and also (as Kipling recalled in 'The Old Issue', to opposite effect) the overthrowing of 'ruthless John', 'truthless Charles', 'James the despicable'.[2] Napoleon's imperialism had been thwarted for Liberty's sake; and Watson urged

> How the munificent hands of Life are full
> Of gifts more covetable an hundredfold
> Than man's dominion o'er reluctant man...[3]

The human mind's greatest achievement, he reminded, was 'the idea of Justice'. In his blank-verse 'Greeting', Watson hailed as 'Friends of Peace, of Equity, of Freedom' those women members of the Conciliation Committee who met in the Queen's Hall on 13th June 1900: he defined their ideals stringently -

> For what is Patriotism but noble care
> For our own country's honour in men's eyes,
> And zeal for the just glory of her arms?[4]

- and cited the country's past folly in trying to retain an unwilling America. Much of the poet's teaching relied on such general precepts and precedents; though towards the

1 'For England', in The Fortnightly Review, NS Vol.LXX, August 1901, p.[321]; reprinted, slightly revised, in Watson's 1903 volume.

2 'Lines to the Right Hon. James Bryce, M.P.', in The Speaker, NS Vol.IV, 21st September 1901, p.696; reprinted in For England.

3 ibid.

4 From For England.

end of the war, exasperation drove him to depict Mother-England quite garishly -

> ...Behold, she staggers forth,
> Paving her path with babes and sucklings slain;
> Shouting her own applause, if haply so
> She may shout down the hisses of the world;
> Warned vainly, and rebuked by all her Past;
> England, our ancient England, strange and new![1]

Also using general arguments, Watson indicated the changes in the Imperialism which emerged from false patriotic ideals. For instance, pursuing the theme of Life's intangible gifts, in 'The True Imperialism' he contrasted the empire of material dominion overseas against that of spiritual enlargement at home:

> Arise and conquer while ye can
> The foe that in your midst resides,
> And build within the mind of Man
> The Empire that abides.[2]

With continuing 'Little Englander' outlook, Watson also emphasized the dark side of the New Rome analogy:

> The gods first gave, then lightly, touch by touch,
> O'erthrew her seven-hilled throne...[3]

Noting the 'inexorable law' behind temporal empires -

> We too shall pass, we too shall disappear,
> Ev'n as the mighty nations that have waned
> And perished....[4]

1 'Metamorphosis', in The Daily News, 19th November 1901, p.5; reprinted in For England.

2 From For England.

3 'Rome and Another', in The Daily News, 19th April 1901, p.7; reprinted in For England.

4 'The Inexorable Law', in The Daily News, 18th January 1902, p.5; reprinted, slightly revised, in For England.

- he counselled the Empire to deserve the reputation for having achieved 'the purest greatness'. For England ended with a prophetic warning for the victorious, conceited empire-builders:

> He throned her in the gateways of the world,
> He 'stablished her on high before the peoples.
>
> He raised her as a watch-tower from the wave,
> He built her as a lighthouse on the waters.
>
> He maketh and unmaketh without end,
> And He alone, who is first and last, shall judge her.[1]

However, when Watson left inoffensive exposition of loyal idealism and detailed his objections to the conflict, he entered an area of bitter controversy; and here, the elevated style of utterance was less effective in appealing to the conscience of his audience. For instance, the rhetorical tone of his sonnet 'The Enemy' obscured rather than enhanced the Boers' supposed pastoral simplicity:

> Unschooled in Letters, and in Arts unversed;
> Ignorant of Empire; bounded in their view
> By the lone billowing yeldt where they upgrew
> Amid great silences...[2]

In For England, Watson tried to make the work less resonant, in particular by revising the sestet ('Ere all is reft!' became 'Ere all be lost!'; 'To strive for freedom' became

1 'Alpha and Omega', from For England.

2 In The Daily News, 28th February 1901, p.5; reprinted, with revisions, in For England.

'To fight...'). Similarly, 'The Unsubdued' betrayed the very fault which the poet had criticized in Swinburne: that of working up an inappropriate subject into grandiose verse.[1] In short, Watson's preference for speaking with magnificent remoteness implied a less-than-complete comprehension of the Boers whom he was dedicated to helping. Elsewhere, his determination to dwell on the 'methods of barbarism' produced a shrillness of the kind which disfigured so much of the anti-war writing:

> Fulfil your mission; spoil and burn;
> Fling forth the helpless -babes as well;
> And let the children's children learn
> To hate you with the hate of hell.[2]

- when Watson revised 'Lenience' in calmer mood, this polemical tone was quietened, as by the substitution of 'Blind beyond cure!' to open the stanza and 'To hate us' in line 4. More successful was his use of sarcasm in two sonnets, 'Achievement'-

> Who says we fail? We prosper beyond dreams.
> As architects of ruin we have no peers.
> We thought to fire but farmsteads: we have lit
> A flame less transient in the hearts of men....[3]

- and 'Force and Freedom', repeating the poet's favourite argument that the Boers were learning a better love of Liberty which would one day rebound on the conquering Empire.[4]

1 See Appendix VI.

2 In The Speaker, NS Vol.III, 24th November 1900, p.204; re-titled 'Leniency' and much revised, included in For England.

3 In The Speaker, NS Vol.IV, 25th May 1901, p.219; reprinted in For England.

4 In The Daily News, 12th April 1901, p.5; reprinted, with revisions, in For England.

Watson's condemnation was perhaps most effective when he refrained from cataloguing his country's misdeeds like an anti-war pamphleteer. The epigram 'Harvest' conveyed his message perfectly:

> A naked people in captivity;
> A land where Desolation hath her throne;
> The wrath that is, the rage that is to be:
> Our fruits, whereby we are known.[1]

- while 'The Dragons' transformed the events into a carefully-explained fable.[2]

When deploring the loss of life in South Africa, the writer's humanitarian indignation was not allowed to belittle his own country's fallen soldiers, with whose conduct he had no quarrel. A stiff sonnet, 'The Slain', demonstrated how Death made all the combatants sadly equal, irrespective of their cause - a theme previously employed in his 'Ver Tenebrosum' poems - although the extensive revision between the first text in The Speaker of 8th February 1902 and the version in For England revealed Watson's uncertainty about his success. 'Lamentation', published in April 1901, had evoked pity for the dead, sympathy for the poet who saw the futility of their loss, while conveying the comforting notion that the soldiers had joined the 'legionaries' whom God marshals 'Nightly upon the silent field of heaven'.[3] But Watson's best elegy was 'Quietus', a poem omitted from For England: here, Death became merely the return step into pre-ordained Earth, Silence, Night -

1 In The Speaker, NS Vol.IV, 22nd June 1901, p.330; reprinted in For England.

2 In For England.

3 In The Daily News, 17th April 1901, p.5; reprinted in For England.

> O sweet at last is the Silence, O sweet at the warfare's close!
> For out of the Silence he cometh, and into the Silence he goes.[1]

As Francis Thompson hinted, Watson was not loth to include himself among the war's victims. A touch of pride ran through his analysis of 'estrangement':

> Fated to hoist a somewhat lonely sail,
> Against the wind and tide...[2]

- and he cherished his patriotic martyrdom:

> At least one singer, honouring evermore
> Thine inmost soul through all its outward change,
> Shall not, in life's last passion of farewell,
> When the dark wings close over him, bear hence
> The dreadful memory, that he once blasphemed,
> With benison on cruelty bestowed,
> The holy spirit of song; or stood at gaze,
> Unto these deaths consenting, foully mute.[3]

Occasionally, however, the self-assurance gave way to bitterness:

> The England of my heart is she,
> Long hoped and still deferred,
> That ever promises to be,
> And ever breaks her word[4]

- even to despair in the poet-teacher's calling:

> To follow Truth was yesterday
> To England's heart the surest way.
> Follow her now, and thou shalt share
> An exile's fate, an exile's fare.[5]

1 In The Speaker, NS Vol.V, 1st February 1902, p.505.

2 'Lines to the Right Hon. James Bryce, M.P.'.

3 'Metamorphosis'.

4 'An Ideal Passion', in The Daily News, 7th January 1902, p.5; reprinted, slightly revised, in For England.

5 'The Tragic Change', from For England.

Watson's self-characterization as the-poet-in-the-wilderness accorded with the tone of his private correspondence after the war; and curiously, his disillusionment brought him to a position not unlike Kipling's. The spokesman for the losing cause, Watson could not easily share the post-war tranquillity of Austin, Henley, Newbolt: he yearned to escape into the healing countryside,[1] to stand alone at the sea-shore until his troubled thoughts found sympathy with the restless waves and were stilled by

> The everlasting taciturnity;
> The august, inhospitable, inhuman night,
> Glittering magnificently unperturbed. [2]

The influence of Watson's poetry was not extensive outside the committed anti-war organizations; yet, as we have said, his opposition to the conflict caused lasting damage to his trade and reputation as a national poet. In January 1900, The Daily News accused him of failing to perceive 'the ideal and the heroic side in this stand for liberty and the higher civilization':[3] but Watson deserves recognition as the only leading 'patriotic' poet who examined the war's issues and, believing that the Empire's ideals were false and that the 'heroism' lay with the victims of its expansion in South Africa, devoted all his powers to rebuking his countrymen, for England's sake.

1 e.g. 'In City Pent', in The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine, Vol.LXII, August 1901, p.616.

2 'Melancholia', from For England.

3 op. cit., 4th January 1900, p.4.

Chapter VI

...That God Defend the Right

(i)

For the Lord our God Most High
He hath made the deep as dry,
He hath smote for us a pathway to the ends
of all the Earth!
(Kipling: 'A Song of the English')

Explicitly and implicitly, the late-Victorian love and pride of country and Empire rested on the faith that Greater Britain enjoyed a special relationship with the Deity. While posterity is rightly suspicious of this outlook (Professor van Wyk Smith, for example, deplores elements of surrogate religious belief and a 'travesty of Christ militant'),[1] there is no doubt that it was widely professed and sincerely held at the time of the South African War. Throughout the upsurge of loyal poetry after the 1870s, religiose sentiments provided themes for almost every contributor, so becoming a key factor in locating the verses in the Art-for-Morality's -sake movement. Indeed, some writers exploited religion to find a manner of composition also. In Chapter II(iii) we suggested that the overall appeal of patriotic poetry had certain affinities with hymnwriting; by the end of the nineteenth century, as Henley's 'Pro Rege Nostro' demonstrated to the extreme, poets were even adapting imagery and language to produce devotional addresses in which Mother-England became identified with God:

1 Drummer Hodge 1978, pp.60-1.

> There's the menace of the Word
> In the Song on your bugles blown,
> England-
> Out of heaven on your bugles blown!

Henley's over-enthusiasm was exceptional, but other poets were not far behind in linking Britain with the Deity's purposes. William Watson, in his excited 'Ver Tenebrosum' sonnets, asserted that should his country fall from power,

> Justice were thenceforth weaker throughout all
> The world, and Truth less passionately free,
> And God the poorer for thine overthrow[1]

- while, as we have seen, the protest-poem 'Alpha and Omega' which closed his Boer War verse-collection successfully turned on the central patriotic conceit that God had deliberately raised up the country whom He would finally 'judge'. More quietly than other writers, Newbolt conveyed a sense of Christian dedication throughout his work, as for example in 'Commemoration', with its message-

> And One that is stronger shall gird thee,
> and lead thee swiftly
> Whither, O heart of Youth, thou wouldest not.[2]

But most notable for allying the Deity with the Empire was Rudyard Kipling, whose extensive command of religious allusions and fondness for striking the pose of prophet-cum-preacher ably fitted him to popularise the conceit. It is

1 'Restored Allegiance', in The National Review, Vol.V, June 1885, p.486.

2 See Ch.V(iii) above.

debatable, though, whether during the 1890s his professions of faith, or the solemn assertions that the Empire's trust was God-given, reflected deep-seated personal belief: more persuasive was the writing through which he sought to exorcise the devils unleashed by the World War, so that Kipling may earlier have been siding with the many loyal poets for whom 'God' was a convenient reference in didactic literature. The criticisms of his concept of 'godliness' made by Buchanan and Watson before the Boer War were strongly reinforced by Richard Le Gallienne's dismissal of his 'religious jingoism' in 1900.[1]

According to Henley's Lyra Heroica preface, there existed a 'sacred quality of patriotism' which true Englishmen ought to share.[2] Such over-zealousness on the part of loyal poets in allowing a love of country to subsume a love of God, and vice versa, indicates the climate at the end of the century which prompted commentators such as Tolstoy, J.A. Hobson,J.G. Godard, to argue that the narrow attitude produced both false patriotism and false Christianity.[3] Edmund Gosse was aware of further disturbing implications when he recalled the prayerful reaction of his Plymouth Brethren parents to The Times's report of the Alma victory in the Crimea:

1 Rudyard Kipling: A Criticism 1900, especially Ch.III.

2 op. cit., 1891, p. [vii] .

3 e.g. Tolstoy, Patriotism and Christianity 1896 (including material previously published in The Daily Chronicle); Hobson, The Psychology of Jingoism 1901, Part I, Ch.III and Part II, Ch.II; Godard, Patriotism and Ethics 1901, Ch.V.

> This patriotism was the more remarkable, in that... [my Father] had schooled himself, as he believed, to put his "heavenly citizenship" above all earthly duties. To those who said: "Because you are a Christian, surely you are not less an Englishman?" he would reply by shaking his head, and by saying: "I am a citizen of no earthly State." He did not realise that, in reality, and to use a cant phrase not yet coined in 1854, there existed in Great Britain no more thorough "Jingo" than he.[1]

The faith which quite sincerely identified a 'God of Battles' supervising Britain's fortunes could represent not just a crude Jingoism, but also a love of country whose bigotry was so pervasive as to pass undetected. This outlook generated the peculiar attitudes towards the duties of citizenship, Imperialism, and War which prompted the utterances of loyal poets - and which became subjects of controversy during the South African conflict.

Perhaps with an air of indicating causes to explain the effect of Britain's rise as a Great Power, the national Churches frankly encouraged religious patriotism, even to the extent of presenting the British as a new Chosen Race. In a wartime sermon of February 1900, for example, Canon James Fleming told his congregation:

> God has made England, as it were, the ark of the world, in which the Holy Scriptures are preserved...[2]

1 Father and Son 1907, p.35.

2 Weeping for the Slain 2nd thousand [1900] , p.7.

- and such belief in the Divine Plan behind Britain's history and mission belonged similarly to the teaching of Non-conformist leaders like the Methodist Hugh Price Hughes and the Baptist Dr. John Clifford.[1] The practical contribution made by religious bodies to the expansion of the Empire was of course very significant throughout the nineteenth century: the Anglican Church founded almost a hundred colonial and missionary bishoprics during this period,[2] and most denominations sought influence in the thriving White colonies and to bring the Gospel to backward natives both within and outside the wider Empire. This last concern helped in particular to motivate the late-century New Imperialism, casting the British in the role of an altruistic, civilizing people - as though specially commanded by God to take up the White Man's Burden. The diverse activities described by the term 'Christian Imperialism'[3] accounted for more of the late-Victorian Church's considerable energies than did the better-celebrated 'Christian Socialism' which, preferring to concentrate on domestic interests, so vigorously opposed the Boer War.[4]

1 See for example, [Dorothea Price Hughes], The Life of Hugh Price Hughes 1904, Ch.XX. Clifford's sentiments (characteristically outlined in God's Greater Britain 1899) were channelled into dedicated opposition during the war.

2 For discussion of the constitutional and doctrinal issues raised when the home Church came into dispute with Bishop Colenso of Natal, see A.O.J. Cockshut, Anglican Attitudes 1959, Ch.5.

3 On 24th November 1901, a meeting was held at the People's Palace to enable missionary organizations to discuss 'Christian Imperialism: Our Colonies and the Native Races'.

4 See Peter d'A. Jones, The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914 1968.

Religion's well-meaning support for empire-building was open to disparagement, however, and created dilemmas for individual churchmen. With regard to the general motive, J.A. Hobson was among those who accused the Churches of hypocrisy, since Trade more than the Bible seemed to be the dominant factor in extending British influence; and several religious poets displayed a sensitiveness about their country's true cause during the South African War -

> Not that the only end beneath the sun
> Is to make every sea a trading lake...[1]

- sometimes expressing open shame:

> We let the diamond dust and golden lure
> Dim and bedazzle eyes half-blind for hate...[2]

Moreover, the establishment of colonial congregations and missionary organizations gave the Churches vested interests in what was occasionally a precarious 'earthly State': they were tied to supporting political and military initiatives to consolidate Britain's position, particularly in Africa and China, and their valuable interests were put at risk along with those of everybody else when imperial supremacy was challenged. The situation in Southern Africa exemplified the difficulty, in that the Churches were inclined to support the war after October 1899 on the grounds of needing to defend their material interests in the Cape and Natal, and of removing

1 Archbishop Alexander, 'Is "War the Only Thing that has No Good in It"?'. See section (ii) below.

2 Canon Rawnsley, 'A Timely Confession'. See section (ii) below.

the obstacle of Boer opposition to their missionary work among the Blacks. Hence Canon Fleming ended his sermon by naming the cause not 'Africa for England' but 'Africa for Christ'.[1] Acquiescence in empire-building, however, demanded acquiescence also in the strong-arm methods inseparable from the successful expansion, pacification, and defence of Britain's territories, so that the religious conscience was increasingly troubled to accept that Mother-England's might was indubitably right. At the time of the Zulu War, William Cox Bennett touched on this subject in verse, when he devoted one of his Songs for Soldiers to noting the anomalous militancy involved in Imperialism:

> Oh, we've an odd way of Christianizing
> These Caffres and such; our mode's surprising;
> This minute the Bible and Christ we preach,
> The next to our Martini rifles we reach.
> It's pleasant to us the heathen to bore
> With the Gospel of Peace -but then
> Next moment, our smite-the-cheek fit is o'er,
> And again we're hunting men.[2]

The theme was intensified during the 1890s when Robert Buchanan in The New Rome censured the popular adulation of 'Christus-Jingo', the blood-stained and false God of Imperialism.

This questioning whether Imperialism's means legitimately served Christianity's ends took its place in the larger debate about the status of human conflict which attracted considerable attention towards the end of the century. A

1 op. cit., p.15.

2 'Bibles and Rifles', in Songs for Soldiers, No.1 [March 1879], p.8.

growing impulse to discredit War on humanitarian grounds had long been recognizable: Thomas Carlyle, for instance, in Sartor Resartus 1831, evoking the horrors of the battlefield, had dryly indicated the utilitarian wastage in taking the sturdiest men away from the land for soldiers and subsequently making paupers of their dependants.[1] Condemnation of this situation in which simple men killed other simple men when their masters had a quarrel became precisely the topic of one of Thomas Hardy's final Boer War poems, 'The Man He Killed':

> "Yes; quaint and curious war is!
> You shoot a fellow down
> You'd treat if met where any bar is,
> Or help to half-a-crown."[2]

In his 1866 lecture 'War', John Ruskin held that war-making could be good and worthy, improving the quality of Art and national life; but he defined the conditions so stringently that modern War was effectively outlawed -

> ...scientific war, -chemical and mechanic war,- worse even than the savage's poisoned arrow....[3]

Ruskin was by no means the last Victorian to be attracted by the romance of War yet disgusted by the reality of human conflict. He also criticized Christianity for failing to mitigate War's sufferings, and denounced ungodly attitudes towards war-mongering. The tide of humanitarian feeling,

1 op. cit., Book II, Ch.VIII.

2 In The Sphere, Vol. XI, 22nd November 1902, p.173a; reprinted, slightly revised, in Time's Laughingstocks and Other Verses 1909.

3 The Crown of Wild Olive 1866, p.171. In My Early Life: A Roving Commission 1930, Winston Churchill similarly regretted that, after 1895, 'Democracy and Science' had transformed War from the 'cruel and magnificent' into the 'cruel and squalid' (pp.78-9).

strongly backed by religious ideological rejection of War, ran highest during the 1890s, culminating in the Hague Peace Convention of 1899, with its calls for disputes to be settled by arbitration if possible, and for soldiers, civilians, and property to be spared the maximum of suffering and damage during any conflict. This convention was signed by Britain and applauded by her Churches, a token of changing attitudes in this country. Thus, in his thoughtful article of July 1902, 'War and Poetry', Bernard Holland could discuss how the old view that War is demanded, justified, or at least tolerably softened, by religion was beginning to waver:

> ...perhaps one out of many signs of an increasing contradiction between the fact of war and the conscience of civilised humanity.[1]

However, such laudable rejection of War amounted only to an undercurrent to general thinking and action. It scarcely influenced practical politics, and few churchmen pressed for the absolute pacifism which would forbid any defence of the Island-Home or (though here the matter was less clear-cut) the advancement of Christian civilization abroad. On the other side, strong counter-arguments were devised to satisfy the troubled religious conscience: in particular, as Holland noted, 'the Darwinian gospel' (which he called 'almost a new religion') interpreted 'evolution', including the fierce international struggles for supremacy, as the working-out of God's Will;[2] narrowly applied, this view explained why the British, emerging triumphant from such conflicts, must be

1 op. cit., in The Edinburgh Review, Vol.CXCVI, July 1902, p.51.

2 ibid.

the new Chosen Race. In response to the Boer War, acceptance of human conflict as a feature of the Divine Plan was pushed to extreme lengths, notably by an Anglican clergyman, W.W. Peyton, who argued that 'the war in the Creation' made suffering and sacrifice indispensable to man's spiritual fulfilment.[1]

The long-drawn-out struggle against the Boers engendered urgent new arguments about Christianity's relationship with patriotism, Imperialism, and War. With the honourable exception of the Quakers, the major Churches formally backed the conflict, though, especially among the Non-conformists, opinion was bitterly divided;[2] afterwards, as during the public controversy in 1905, the stubborn stand was remembered with some embarrassment,[3] and historians have blamed their response to the Boer War for contributing to the disillusionment which set into the Churches after the turn of the century.[4] More than any other military adventure since the far-distant Crimean War, the conflict in South Africa raised issues which were deeply troublesome to the religious conscience in Britain: this was one of the reasons why the episode became recognized as the Victorian 'Great War'. The struggle was begun and pursued without appeal to international arbitration; the Empire's

1 'The Crucifixion and the War in the Creation', in The Contemporary Review, Vol.LXXVIII, October 1900, pp. [518]-531 and December 1900, pp.[835]-857.

2 See Stephen Koss (ed.), The Pro-Boers: The Anatomy of an Antiwar Movement 1973, passim.

3 See [Alfred Marks], The Churches and the South African War 1905.

4 e.g. Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church, Part II, 1970, p.224.

interests in South Africa were being secured by conquering fellow White Protestant Christians[1] (the salvation of the Blacks was emphasized rather later than it should have been)[2] who, ironically, also considered themselves to be the Chosen People; ideals of Freedom and Justice were uncomfortably mixed up with considerations of trade and investment; by the standards of the day, blood was being spilled in dismaying quantities. So long as the conflict remained recognizably a 'war' between organized armies, however, Britain's part could still be justified to the satisfaction of most: but as the struggle became what Campbell-Bannerman called 'not a war', with the guerrilla campaigns, farm-burning, and concentration camps after mid-1900, approbation was far less easily given. From the outset, critics like W.T. Stead opposed the war on politico-religious grounds,[3] but more purely religious objection was voiced in response to these 'methods of barbarism', so adding powerfully to the swell of humanitarian, pacifist, Socialist, anti-war protest.

1 However, coolness already existed between the English Churches and the nationalistic Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa; during the war, effort was devoted to discrediting the Boers' Calvinism, e.g. by W.J. Underwood, a Wesleyan minister 'late of Pretoria', in 'Are the Boers Really Pious?', in The Free Church Chronicle, Vol.I, December 1899, pp.[400]-402. See also Rider Haggard, The Last Boer War 1899, pp.10-11 76-8, etc.

2 The sister of Olive Schreiner and of the Cape Premier, Mrs.Henrietta Stakesby Lewis, wrote an impassioned pamphlet on Britain's duty to save the Blacks from Boer domination: The War: A Voice from South Africa: A Message to the Christian People of Great Britain [1901]. Opponents of the war dismissed such 'Christian Imperialism' as hypocritical.

3 From the mid-1890s until his death in 1911 tirelessly crusading for international peace, Stead edited War Against War in South Africa during the conflict's first eight months, and published celebrated pamphlets such as Shall I Slay My Brother Boer? [1899] and The Truth About the War [1900]. See also 'The Great Pacifist: An Autobiographical Character Sketch' in The Review of Reviews, Vol.XLV, June 1912, pp.[609]-620; and Frederic Whyte, The Life of W.T. Stead, 2 volumes 1925.

The poetry faithfully reflected the spectrum of religious attitudes for and against the conflict, occasionally revealing the indecision of writers pulled between customary acquiescence and growing doubts that Right lay unmistakably with the imperial cause - or indeed, lay with either of the armies caught up in the bloodshed.

(ii)

In times of peace especially, patriotic writers were fond of composing solemn prayers-before-battle to remind their countrymen that war should be made only in godly causes. Kipling produced his 'Hymn Before Action' in 1896; two years later, Newbolt offered 'The Vigil', with its repeated injunction

Pray that God defend the Right

- and also 'Hymn in the Time of War and Tumults'. The real struggle in South Africa, however, prompted numerous glib appeals to the Deity: these were similarly designed to rouse and yet reassure their audience in the traditional manner of patriotic verse, but they betrayed the fact that 'God' was a conventional literary figure for the loyal writers who never doubted Britain's motives and success in pursuing the indisputable Right. Thus Swinburne in 'The Transvaal' unashamedly derided the 'Foul tongues that blacken God's dishonoured name', and Austin's 'Spartan Mothers' chanted

Who dies for England, dies for God!

Elsewhere, the ready conflation of 'love of country' and 'love of God' was achieved more elaborately, but scarcely more thoughtfully. In Chapter V(i) we noted the Laureate's 'Through Liberty to Light', with its argument that the war represented the culmination of God's purpose for England, the final conflict between Good and Evil; also, the Revd. Lauchlan Maclean Watt supplemented 'The Grey Mother' (which itself closely linked God and Mother-England) with 'A Song of Empire', demonstrating how the expanding Empire fulfilled 'a Destiny divine', but warning that 'the cross' must be borne humbly, the sword wielded righteously:

> So suffer not our hearts, O God of Hosts,
> To crown our days with garlands of our pride,
> Or count our greatness by the trampled coasts,
> And vanquished kingdoms grappled to our side;
> But by our service, by our toil and pain,
> By our true standing guard for Freedom's sake...[1]

For clergymen and poets alike, however, casual and complacent sentiments became inappropriate in the face of the apparent defection by the Lord of Hosts which allowed the Boers to dominate the first battlefields. This difficulty (critics like W.T. Stead were able to crow that God was obviously displeased with Britain) was confidently resolved from pulpits by the argument that the Chosen Race was being chastised for past sins and the irreverent spirit of entry into the war: final victory would still go to the Right, it was claimed, and lessons were drawn from the

1 From The Grey Mother and Other Poems 1903. See.Ch.II(iii) above.

tribulations visited upon the ancient Israelites. For example, the Bishop of Derry, during a Christmas war-fund sermon in 1899, held that the nation's well-deserved punishment merely showed God's special love;[1] while Canon Fleming, after comparing the sorrows of Biblical Israel to those of present-day Britain, eloquently insisted:

> There is something sublime in the sight of a nation prostrate at the feet of God.[2]

In the conflict's opening phase, such sentiments were behind the calls for a Day of Humiliation like that respected during the Crimean War, and were frequently reflected in verse. The Spectator, chief outlet of Newbolt's poems, late in December 1899 gave space to J.A. Merivale's 'Intercessional':

> We pray to Thee, we turn to Thee,
> For in Thy chastisement we see
> The signal of thy love;
> Bidding us rise and cast away
> Luxurious ease, and in the fray
> Once more our metal prove.[3]

- like so many writers, Merivale managed to combine patriotism and religious utterance, as when in this poem of penitence he lauded 'the venturous sea kings' brood' (an ideal surely inspired by Newbolt). At the same season, Canon Rawnsley[4] composed 'A Timely Confession':

1 G.A. Chadwick, God and the Nation 1900.

2 Weeping for the Slain, p.13.

3 op. cit., Vol.LXXXIII, 30th December 1899, p.989.

4 Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley (1851-1920), whose family was closely acquainted with the Tennysons (see Charles Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson (1949) 1968, pp.25, 47, 107-8, etc.), a founder of the National Trust, was well-known for his prolific composition of public verses. During the war, Punch produced some amusing lines, 'To Liz (On reading Canon Rawnsley's thousandth war-poem)' (Vol.CXVIII, 13th June 1900, p.422). See Eleanor Rawnsley, Canon Rawnsley: An Account of His Life 1923.

> Wherefore, in mercy lest the pillars fall
> Of this Heaven-ordered -this imperial realm,
> Thou hast decreed, that, humbled to the dust
> By these veldt shepherds and their mountain wall,
> We should, ere arrogant bluster overwhelm,
> Learn that our God who made us great is just.[1]

- anxious to dismiss the disturbing implications of the Empire's reverses in South Africa, the clergyman-poet thus produced a patriotic sonnet in the high style which acknowledged the reproof in the same breath as proudly affirming God's favour. Further military set-backs took place before Rawnsley, in less vainglorious tone, petitioned the Deity to 'Make humble all that was too high' and to 'Cast down the lofty, raise the low'.[2]

Merivale's view that the nation was being cured of enervating 'Luxurious ease' through welcome 'chastisement' expressed the conclusion of the theological and philosophical argument, still forceful at the period, that War can serve to uplift peoples and individuals. W.E. Henley's rejection of the 'rich deliquium of decay' brought by Peace and curable only by savage War[3] took its place in the long line of secular reasoning to which Francis Bacon's more cautious teaching had provided a well-known contribution:

1 From Ballads of the War (1900), 2nd edn. 1901.

2 'The Day of Intercession', ibid.

3 'Epilogue'. See Ch.V(ii) above.

> No body can be healthful without exercise, neither natural body nor politic; and certainly to a kingdom or estate a just and honourable war is the true exercise. A civil war indeed is like the heat of a fever; but a foreign war is like the heat of exercise, and serveth most of all to keep the body in health; for in a slothful peace, both courages will effeminate and manners corrupt....[1]

In a stern theological view, painful challenge, adversity, a series of tribulations, cause man to turn back to God: so that War, with all its vicissitudes, can help to check immorality. Hence followed the late-nineteenth-century re-shaping of Darwinism, as in Peyton's account of 'the war in the Creation'. The Boer conflict, according to this view, was to be welcomed as a remedy for the nation's slackening moral fibre (here we recall the sentiment of Kipling's 'The Lesson': and the pessimism of 'The Islanders' and 'The Dykes' when he felt that the remedy was failing), with the additional attraction that victory in the arduous but righteous struggle would enable Britain to further God's work in South Africa.

A significant contribution to the war's literature, therefore, was the republication of some carefully-chosen verses which the late Richard Chenevix Trench, Archbishop of Dublin, had written before and during the Crimean War. In his introduction to the volume, Frederic W.H. Myers applauded the age's growing Christian anti-War sentiment; but he maintained that 'English captains' and 'English poets' were right

1 'Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates': from J.M. Robertson (ed.), The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon 1905, p.773.

> ...to make of war's worst horrors a lesson of nobleness, and as it were a trumpet's summons to the answering soul.[1]

The poems included Trench's war-time sonnets 'Yes, let us own it in confession free' and 'From what of passion and of earthly pride', which strongly resembled Rawnsley's strictures on Britain's arrogant entry upon God's business in South Africa; they also yielded a classic apologia for divinely-sanctioned suffering:

> O life, O death, O world, O time,
> O grave, where all things flow,
> 'Tis yours to make our lot sublime
> With your great weight of woe.
>
> Though sharpest anguish hearts may wring,
> Though bosoms torn may be,
> Yet suffering is a holy thing;
> Without it what were we?[2]

This latter work, perpetuated by Palgrave in the Second Series of The Golden Treasury 1897, immaculately summed up the theological justification of War which, despite the tendencies towards pacifism, remained firmly established at the beginning of the South African conflict.

By coincidence, the poem actually inspired by the Boer War which most strongly sought to reaffirm this attitude was composed by another prelate in Ireland, William Alexander, Primate and Archbishop of Armagh (1824-1911). Before the first month of fighting had passed, Alexander (who happened

1 In Time of War 1900, p.vi.

2 ibid. Included in Elegiac Poems 1843.

to be a friend of Cecil Rhodes, and who took particular interest in Church and imperial affairs in South Africa)[1] published in The Times the quatrains 'Is "War the Only Thing that has No Good in It"?', a work which amounted to a verse-sermon on the virtues of War as exemplified by the prevailing battles.[2] The arguments tendered by what Professor van Wyk Smith dubs 'one of the most extraordinary poems' produced during the conflict[3] were unexceptional: the Primate saw War to be a God-sent blessing, as inherent a part of Creation as 'the earthquake' and 'the storm' which likewise brought men closer to their Maker; its general power to uplift was demonstrated in its beneficial influence on the nation at large, political leaders, and the combatants, both British and Boer; its specific virtues were to provide men with a high cause, passing them through a 'baptismal fire', and to ennoble the survivors who witnessed the deaths of their comrades. Alexander's division of Britain's soldiers into 'The gallant Private' noted for his 'heroism obscure' and 'lofty littleness' (a view bolstered up by the supercilious reference to Book I, Chapter II of à Kempis's text) and 'they of greater state' who profit more from War's lessons is an interesting reflection of the Army's time-honoured social stratification into enlisted men and officers: a stratification

1 See Eleanor Alexander (ed.), Primate Alexander Archbishop of Armagh 1913, Ch.XIV.

2 See Appendix VII.

3 Drummer Hodge, p.60.

which was somewhat blurred by the arrival of large numbers of volunteers later during the war. His anticipation of the soldiers' spiritual improvement through campaigning and battle of course conformed to a very widely accepted notion: Kipling offered a secular exposition in his poem 'The Return' -

> An' last it come to me -not pride,
> Nor yet conceit, but on the 'ole
> (If such a term may be applied),
> The makin's of a bloomin' soul

- and upon this rested his whole belief that the civilian-soldiers' experiences in South Africa gave them a better understanding, and so toleration, of their home country.

However, Alexander's verses <u>did</u> possess some remarkable features. First, there was the tone of persuasive earnestness, as the sermonist-poet, employing a first-person address, unflinchingly seized the biggest nettles from among the anti-War arguments - 'war is hell' was General Sherman's celebrated evaluation - and insisted on his hard conclusion:

> The ascending earthquake dust of battle frames
> God's pictures in the skies.

It was as though the Primate had suddenly enjoyed a long-awaited opportunity of refuting the Christian opposition to human conflict which had been gathering during recent years. Secondly, there was the fact that he defended the ideal of War and not its actuality, adopting the conventional language of hearthside poets to an extreme extent. Alexander interpreted 'War' simply in terms of glorious battlefield activities, and in attempting to show their uplifting

qualities he inevitably glossed over the unpleasantness, so that the audience heard of 'the war's red rain', 'the oratorio of the cannonade', 'The wind of battle breathing on their cheek', dead men lying down 'Like sleepers...'. Such under-estimation of human suffering was not unchallenged in poetry by 1899 - the image of soldiers 'Fast, fast asleep amid the cannon's roar' could already be contrasted with Wallace's 'Is this -this Thing -our Jack?', for example - and once events in South Africa progressed beyond the stage of pitched battles being fought by uniformed armies, bland religiose-romantic justification of Alexander's kind became suspect, as the war's later poetry revealed.

In his memoirs, the Primate recalled the controversy aroused by his verses;[1] and his theological position was indeed vulnerable to objections such as that War is too costly and damaging to be a 'medicine', and that as a man-made evil it should not be equated with the natural accidents and disasters which by themselves offer sufficient exercises in spiritual therapy. As a former military chaplain, he nevertheless defended the 'moral discipline' enjoyed by soldiers, adding:

> When the blessed time shall be accomplished wherein wars shall cease in all the world, the part of the soldier will be over. But meanwhile he bears his part in God's great design.[2]

1 Eleanor Alexander, op. cit., pp.84-5. (See also the letter reproduced by Hobson to conclude his scathing chapter 'Christianity in Khaki', in The Psychology of Jingoism.)

2 Eleanor Alexander, op. cit., p.84.

- and probably the consensus of contemporary opinion remained behind him (at least until the World War). Early in 1900, Alexander's verses were reprinted in a penny pamphlet along with a prayer specially written for use by the troops, and Lord Roberts was anxious 'that every one of our soldiers should have a copy'. The author recorded that many wrote to thank him in letters

> ...ill-spelt, ill-written, hard to read through tears, and too sacred to be given to the world.[1]

This belief that warfare's hardships served in particular to uplift the combatants fighting for God and Country was developed still further by poets determined to show that the cause in South Africa unmistakably fulfilled 'the Right'. Alexander's comfortable view of the fallen brave, who, impressing their fellows by 'high self-sacrifice', are set to find eternal rest, is as old as the teaching of all civilized societies: the warrior's reward for his unselfish, dutiful service is a place in Heaven, or Valhalla, or the Elysian Fields, and Christian poets long before Rupert Brooke sang that it does not matter where the good soldier's body lies since his soul is assuredly safe. However, as we shall examine more fully in Chapter VII, such conventional '_pro patria mori_' attitudes were seriously questioned during the Boer War: Hardy's 'The Dead Drummer', for instance, struck so discordant a note by lamenting the battlefield victim who was for ever sadly misplaced in the cosmos -

1 _ibid._, pp.85, 86.

> Yet portion of that unknown plain
> Will Hodge for ever be;
> His homely Northern breast and brain
> Grow up a Southern tree,
> And strange-eyed constellations reign
> His stars eternally.[1]

In response to doubts about the validity of War, some religious commentators put forward near-fanatical claims to show why the soldier's special suffering represented a 'holy thing'. According to Peyton:

> ...Militarism in its primeval character is a service of suffering. It is not every year that the martyr hears the call to the stake nor the soldier the call to arms. Every nation keeps a standing army, which should be educated, not into the glory of arms, but into the law of sacrifice. Every Christian nation has, in secret, an army of martyrs ready to be called out, strictly educated in the law of sacrifice. The crisis comes when the bugle sounds: "To the altar of sacrifice," and the soldier mounts the altar of sacrifice. War is redeemed from carnage by the principle of sacrifice, as is the struggle of all nature. The martyr's service is given directly to religion, and by implication to country and civilisation and generations to come; the soldier's service is given directly to country and by implication to religion and civilisation and generations to come.[2]

One wonders what is the strength of the reservation that War is acceptable while belligerency remains 'in its primeval character', and how the individual and national conscience will be satisfied of the justness of the cause in which the soldier dutifully mounts 'the altar of sacrifice'. Also noteworthy is the characterization of the soldier in a role

1 In Literature, Vol.V, 25th November 1899, p.513; for inclusion in Poems of the Past and the Present [1901], 1902, the text was slightly revised, as by the re-phrasing 'Grow to some...' in line 4 of this stanza.

2 'The Crucifixion and the War in the Creation', in The Contemporary Review, Vol.LXXVIII, December 1900, p.838.

very different from the 'Tommy Atkins' figure, as the point is made that War, far from being a half-evil in need of excuse, actually gives positive encouragement to goodness and so is crucial to 'religion and civilisation and generations to come'.

Alexander claimed that the example of dying comrades allowed 'the Spirit' to lead battle's survivors to 'a great presentiment of high self-sacrifice': in other words, to regard death in battle as just such a kind of martyrdom. Under the emotional pressure of the South African conflict, other poets went on to make the inviting transition from describing the suffering soldier as martyr-like to describing him as 'Christ-like'; but this in a didactic way which differed significantly from the practice of writers moved by the World War. The image of the soldier as 'Christ' was to appear repeatedly in the work of the trench-poets who endured and witnessed the greatest depth of suffering,[1] and even entered into the hearthside verse of authors like Hardy, Kipling,[2] and Newbolt:

> Broken and pierced, hung on the bitter wire,
> By their most precious death the Sons of Man
> Redeem for us the life of our desire-
> O Christ how often since the world began![3]

1 See Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (1975) 2nd edn. 1977, pp.117-20. Fussell claims that the soldier-poets were inspired partly by such sights as the roadside crucifixes found on the Continent: but he neglects to explain the inspiration of civilian poets at home - or to seek parallels in earlier war-poetry.

2 e.g. Hardy's controversial 'The Wood Fire'; Kipling's 'Nativity', inspired by his son's death.

3 'A Perpetual Memory: Good Friday, 1915', included in A Perpetual Memory and Other Poems 1939.

Yet, as typified by Newbolt's lines, the prime intention became to rouse pity and indignation for the futile victims of battle: in the horrors of the 'modern' warfare anticipated by Ruskin, soldiers were called 'Christ-like' not because they fought and suffered triumphantly to defend the Right, but because they died in a man-made sacrifice which was as disgusting, deplorable (and, if the element of tragedy is required, as inescapable) as the Passion and Crucifixion. The civilian-poets of the Boer War did not push the analogy to such troubled lengths: wishing to vindicate the principle of tolerating War, they concentrated on the worth of the soldier's sacrifice, not its painfulness or inadequacy.

The most successful attempt thus to elevate his country's fighting-men was made by Richard Le Gallienne (1866-1947) in 'Christmas 1899'.[1] Le Gallienne's poetry had not previously included traditional 'patriotic' verse, and his last notable newspaper piece had been 'The Cry of the Little Peoples', a work sympathizing with Europe's oppressed minorities;[2] the gloominess surrounding the first war-Christmas touched his romantic sensitivity, leading to a curious ambivalence between acquiescence in the conflict and impulsive condemnation of War per se. But in the third stanza of the resulting poem, his attitude towards the Empire's soldiers was unambiguous.

1 See Appendix VIII.

2 Published in The Daily Chronicle, 23rd June 1899, p.4; reprinted in New Poems 1910.

By associating their blood with the wine which unworthy 'merchants' will 'lift up...in your hand', Le Gallienne imagined his countrymen to be profiting from a sort of Holy Communion; Christ-like, the soldiers serve and die 'for all the rest', shedding their blood so that others may continue to live - and 'cheat'. The poet resolved to show himself to be grateful for, and deserving of, this sacrifice through active loyalty to the land on whose behalf they die: and England, suddenly equated with the Father Himself, is said to be giving 'well-beloved' sons to 'save the world' - a claim which raised the religio-patriotic conceit to a remarkably high pitch, and came oddly from the pen of one who criticized Kipling for providing 'religious jingoism' in his verse. Although the blood is described as 'a fierce vintage tragically red', the stanza's closing image of 'the wine-press trod' reflects the mood of religious militancy found in Julia Ward Howe's 'Battle Hymn of the American Republic', while Le Gallienne's acceptance of the sacrifice is reinforced by his ostentatious account of men hurrying 'to a wild death with laughing feet' and dying 'with smiling faces strangely blest', followed by the insistence that their mothers adhere to the Newboltian ideal of overcoming bereavement 'with proud unhappy eyes'. Death in battle, however sad in itself, is welcomed as ultimately useful: the soldiers become saviours bringing redemption and inspiration, and are not to be pitied as mere victims of War. Elsewhere in the poem, the audience learned that in South Africa England was performing 'the cruel work of God', and the view that goodness emerges even from the miseries of human conflict brings us back to Peyton and Alexander, and to Trench's axiom that 'suffering is a holy thing'.

The audacity of 'Christmas 1899' (like its final censure of War, as we shall presently note) was a consequence of the heightened emotions brought about by the conflict's opening phase and crystallised by the religious festival. As the war changed in character, however, poets had less inspiration for portraying Britain's increasingly victorious soldiers as martyrs sacrificing themselves in fierce battles against overwhelming forces of evil. Thus at Easter-tide 1900, Canon Rawnsley contented himself with likening a dying soldier to the suffering Christ in a parable which ignored the panoramic theological implications of his death and stressed only its obvious significance:

> ...And heard a voice from Heaven that cried:
> "I thirst," and knew The Crucified.
> Thereat he felt that he too might dare,
> Even in his death that thirst to share,
> And prayed: "Oh Jesu, I have given
> All, and would follow Thee to Heaven."
> Even, as he prayed, an angel said:
> "The Cross is thine! be not afraid!"
> Then led him to the water's brink,
> And bade him humbly stoop and drink;
> His thirst was quenched, light filled his eyes,
> And he was glad in Paradise.[1]

In the clergyman's teaching, the dying man is brought closer to God because his sufferings resemble those of Christ: there is small claim for his 'sacrifice' or the 'redemption' which it achieves as, setting aside any idea that War is divinely-sanctioned, Rawnsley extracts a moral from the pity rather than the glory of the battlefield. But his didactic message

1 'Wounded on Good Friday', from Ballads of the War 1901 edn.

is the old-fashioned one nevertheless, since the warrior's sufferings become ultimately worthwhile: for having 'given all' and taken 'the Cross' he is rewarded with 'a place in Paradise'.[1]

(iii)

> Then did the preacher choose for text,
> "Peace and on earth good-will."
> My spirit murmured, sorely vexed,
> "Then Christians wherefore kill?"
> (Rawnsley: 'Home from the Front for Christmas Day')

So much staunch justification of War in principle, and of Britain's South African crusade in particular, inevitably provoked considerable opposition from writers who disputed the basic assumption that a Lord of Hosts was unfailing in strengthening the Empire and its armies.

The formal stand adopted by the Churches provided a target for angry verse. Just as the Liberal John Morley sweepingly complained that '"Not one in a thousand of the Anglican clergy have preached morality since the war broke out"',[2] minor poets like G.F. Bradby offered rough treatment to churchmen generally for their belligerent teaching:

1 Rawnsley later came still closer to apotheosizing his country's soldiers, in poems like 'Good Friday, 1915' and 'Easter Day, 1915' (included in The European War 1914-1915: Poems [1915]).

2 Francis W. Hirst, In the Golden Days 1947, p.209.

> Give to the Churches faith to pray
> For what they know they should'nt [sic] ask,
> And such abounding grace that they
> May cheerfully perform the task,
> Wave flags, and loyally discount
> That fatal Sermon on the Mount.[1]

And indeed, the dilemma in individual consciences, torn between loyalty to country and faithfulness to a creed which seemed to give no sanction to the conflict, also became apparent at this level of petty versifying. The Revd. Arthur Compton Auchmuty, who in 1882 had compiled the children's anthology Poems of English Heroism according to high literary and ethical 'patriotic' principles,[2] now contributed verses to the dissident organ The New Age: for example, the sarcastic '"A Form of Intercession": A Paraphrase', and 'The Christian's Pro Patria Mori'-

> I fear my service scarce will satisfy
> Thy fond illusion crude, that who would serve
> His country must consent to swear to kill
> His kind to order for her, -kill and die.
> Kill for her? Nay; to die is all my will,
> Nor at life's cost from pure devotion swerve.[3]

Less introspectively, the journalist-poet Arthur St. John Adcock abandoned his cockney verses in order to experiment, in 'After Battle', with a grave hymn to the war-loving Deity following the style of unflinchingly loyal poets: but he

1 'Processional (Imperial)', from Some Verses 1902.

2 See Ch.II(i) above.

3 Both poems reprinted in Four Sonnets for the Times 1900. Auchmuty was among the subscribers for the publication of Songs of the Veld 1902, a collection of anti-war verses culled from The New Age.

found himself recognizing that 'Thou wert their God no less than ours' and condemning the willingness to resurrect a false, savage, 'primal god'.[1]

For the most part, this fervent 'anti-War' writing amounted to polemic rather than poetry: its quality was even lower than that of its fervent 'pro-War' counterpart, which could at least draw on the weighty patriotic tradition lying behind it. However, the task of commenting on the obstinate religious vindication of the conflict was also taken up, with more artistic accomplishment, by two leading writers, George Meredith and Thomas Hardy.

During the 1890s, Meredith's poetry had denounced grasping Imperialism and War;[2] privately and publicly he criticized Britain's activities in South Africa, from her initial motives -

> This hateful war tears me in two. I have to wish for the success of our men in the cause that I condemn. The Demon is in that mount of Gold....[3]

- to the 'fruitless butcheries' and 'insensate inhumanity' manifested towards the end of the conflict.[4] Believing that patriotism's truest ideals were being wilfully set aside,

1 In Songs of the War 1900. Adcock's sonnet on the Peace settlement, 'Rebels' (written in William Watson's grandiose style), was included in Songs of the Veld.

2 e.g. 'The Warning' 1896, and 'The Cageing of Ares' 1899 (dedicated to the Peace Council at The Hague).

3 Letter of 31st October 1899, published in C.L. Cline (ed.), The Letters of George Meredith, Vol.III, 1970, p.1338.

4 Letter published in The Daily News, 25th February 1902, p.3; see Cline, op.cit., p.1424 (also pp.1427-8).

Meredith frankly disapproved of the newspaper war-verses published by Austin, Kipling, and even his friend Hardy. His frustration was particularly directed towards the home public, and one of his widest complaints, made after the first month, resulted from having witnessed both sides' instinctive appeal to their gods in time of strife. 'At the Close' appeared in The Daily Chronicle on 16th November 1899:

> To Thee, dear God of Mercy, both appeal,
> Who straightway sound the call to arms.
> Thou know'st;
> And that black spot in each embattled host,
> Spring of the blood-stream, later wilt reveal.
> Now is it red artillery and white steel;
> 'Till on a day will ring the victor's boast,
> That 'tis Thy chosen towers uppermost,
> Where Thy rejected grovels under heel.
> So in all times of man's descent insane
> To brute, did strength and craft combining strike,
> Even as a God of Armies, his fell blow.
> But at the close he entered Thy domain,
> Dear God of Mercy, and if lion-like
> He tore the fall'n, the Eternal was his Foe.[1]

The implication in line 2 was that there should have been recourse to arbitration, as demanded by the Hague Convention. Placing himself as an impartial observer of events, Meredith thus insists on the supremacy of the God of Mercy -and Justice-, rejecting the naive, brutish fabrication of a 'God of Armies'. Neatly, the poet juxtaposes trite heroic vocabulary ('sound the call to arms', 'embattled host', 'will ring the victor's boast', and so on) against plain-spoken identification of the real battle-winning qualities; his final simile likewise deflates the well-worn characterization of England 'the Lion', reinforcing his contention that in the realm of human conflict, mere Might is not identifiable with Right.

1 op. cit., p.6; reprinted in A Reading of Life, With Other Poems 1901.

The phenomenon of religious militancy also influenced Hardy's musings on War during the South African conflict. Agnostic by inclination, the writer came to feel that the war marked civilization's further drifting away from any power recognizable as 'God': and he particularly noted Christianity's readiness to allow narrow 'patriotism' to betray its highest ideals. In the early war-poem 'Departure' he asked:

> When shall the saner softer polities
> Whereof we dream, have sway in each proud land
> And patriotism, grown Godlike, scorn to stand
> Bondslave to realms, but circle earth and seas?[1]

- the question put Hardy on the side of thinkers such as Tolstoy and Hobson, though without subscribing to their respective Christian and Socialist beliefs. When asked by a French critic to assess the conflict's effect on literature, he included a rebuke for fellow-authors who were encouraging ungodly attitudes:

> ...Un trait caractéristique, d'importance secondaire, mais très curieux, parmi une certaine catégorie d'écrivains, est le déguisement, sous une terminologie chrétienne, de principes qui, sans être nécessairement inadmissibles au point de vue de la politique internationale, sont et demeurent anti-chrétiens parce que inexorables et impérieux.[2]

Active pursuit of even the most admirable political ends - Hardy is close to citing the paradox of Imperialism - can lead to insensitiveness about the means of achieving them. Christian faith becomes perverted:

1 In Poems of the Past and the Present.

2 Gilbert Giluncy, 'La Littérature Anglaise et la guerre du Sud-Africain', in Revue Politique et Littéraire: Revue Bleue, 4e Série, Tome XVIII, 16 Août 1902, p.213. For Hardy's English version of his comments, see The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928 (1962), corrected edn. 1975, p.311.

> I met a religious man on Friday...and I said, We (the civilized world) have given Christianity a fair trial for nearly 2000 years, and it has not yet taught countries the rudimentary virtue of keeping peace: so why not throw it over...? It shocked him, for he could only see the unchristianity of Kruger.[1]

- and in the resulting War, simple men kill and die unnecessarily.

But despite his despair for the Christian vision of Peace on earth, Hardy for a time refused to regard this retrogressive trend as irreversible. In an interview with William Archer in February 1901, the writer - keen to deny his reputed 'pessimism' - said that he foresaw the time when War would cease because of humanitarian enlightenment:

> ...doomed by the gradual growth of the introspective faculty in mankind -of their power of putting themselves in another's place, and taking a point of view that is not their own.[2]

- Hardy here came as near as possible to accepting the doctrine of 'Do unto others...', though he did not suppose that there would be supernatural inspiration behind the slow process: 'war will come to an end, not for moral reasons, but because of its absurdity'. He thus arrived, albeit by a different path, at the same conclusion which Bernard Holland was to offer in his 'War and Poetry' article, that War would be stifled by humanity's increasing refinement: and this belief that the world was progressing into ever greater perfection was very important to contemporary hearers - we

1 Letter of 25th February 1900: in E. Hardy and F.B. Pinion (eds.), One Rare Fair Woman: Thomas Hardy's Letters to Florence Henniker 1893-1922 1972, p.92.

2 'Real Conversations Recorded by William Archer. Conversation II. - With Mr. Thomas Hardy', in The Pall Mall Magazine, Vol.XXIII, April 1901, p.535.

have seen how the Victorian patriotic mood, both in its interpretation of history and its religious outlook, stressed the accumulating achievement and abhorred any suggestion of retrogression. Hardy's optimism was reaffirmed in 'The Sick God', the work concluding the 'War Poems' section of Poems of the Past and the Present, published later the same year: the poet happily recorded that the reign of the 'Battle-God' was gradually drawing to an end, the Deity becoming discredited by his own excesses and his supporters unwilling and unfit for fighting -

X

Yet wars arise, though zest grows cold;
Wherefore, at times, as if in ancient mould
He looms, bepatched with paint and lath;
But never hath he seemed the old!

XI

Let men rejoice, let men deplore,
The lurid Deity of heretofore
Succumbs to one of saner nod; [1]
The Battle-god is god no more.

In his final manuscript draft, Hardy had broadened some narrow (and possibly offensive) nationalistic references - for example, in stanza IV 'Duly the sworded British Queen' became 'Often an early King or Queen'-[2] to produce a universal, allusively Christian, celebration of 'the gods of men in amity'. This message, however, perhaps conflicted with the philosophy of The Dynasts, that men were helplessly driven into strife by the omnipotent, unfeeling Will.[3]

1 Re-titled 'The Sick Battle-God' in subsequent editions.

2 Bod. MS Eng. Poet d. 18, fol. 18.

3 See Ch.VII(ii) below.

Criticism of the principle of religious militancy, and dismayed observation of its effect on the nation's response to the war, were thus readily offered by some verse-writers. But for others, repugnance came only after special prompting: and at no point during the conflict was this more apparent than at Christmas in 1899, when even loyal poets were influenced by the general impulse to condemn the events taking place in South Africa.

The first war-Christmas was immediately preceded by the 'Black Week' of military disasters which left the home public shocked and deeply anxious for their battered armies and beleaguered garrisons.[1] Anti-war voices were quick to exploit the situation, pointing out that there could be no place for customary festivities and hypocritical thanksgiving for the birth of the Prince of Peace: The Speaker, for instance, criticized morale-boosting Christmas-tide sermons, noting the irony of the war breaking out after the great Peace Conference and disputing the justice of Britain's cause.[2] More boldly, W.T. Stead, in an article paradoxically entitled 'Cain's Christmas, 1899', told his readers that the conflict demonstrated the failure of all the centuries of Christian teaching and, as a sobering thought for the season, predicted

1 In fact, the public later learned of unexpected truces (whose memory has since been superseded by the still more remarkable legends from the Western Front during the First World War). Throughout most of the Mafeking siege, for example, the Boers declined to fight on the Sabbath, and the town was allowed a welcome respite during Christmas 1899: see J.L. Comaroff (ed.), The Boer War Diary of Sol.T. Plaatje: An African At Mafeking (1973), 2nd edn. 1976, pp.77-9, 90.

2 'Christmas Sermons', op. cit., NS Vol.I, 30th December 1899, pp.332-3.

that further punishment might yet await the nation; after the festival, he analysed some Christmas sermons, providing an abusive commentary on their war-mongering sentiments.[1] George W.E. Russell, chairman of the Transvaal Committee, also said that merry-making was inappropriate under the circumstances: the Boer War, like the Crimean conflict before it, was totally reprehensible, and the critic recalled Britain's shameful inability to recognize a _just_ cause - as shown by her refusal to champion the Armenians in 1896.[2] On the other side, religious leaders tried to give reassurance - as when _The Church Times_ firmly urged that the war-news ought not to prevent good cheer -[3] but the prophets of doom and gloom enjoyed the better advantage; as indeed they did again, though to a lesser degree, in 1900 and 1901. On 21st December 1901, _The Daily News_ could effectively remind the nation of their miscalculation in having expected the war to end before Christmas _1899_, deploring the entire conduct of the fighting.[4]

Temptation to draw out the particular incongruity between Christmas-tide and War was strong, and the predictable theme had been attempted by poets long before the Boer conflict. During the Crimean War, for example, Alexander Smith opened his sonnet 'Our Mother':

1 _War Against War in South Africa_, No.10, 22nd December 1899, p.152; No.11, 29th December 1899, pp.162-3.

2 'An UnChristian Christmas', in _The Speaker_, NS Vol.I, 23rd December 1899, pp.313-4.

3 _op. cit._, 22nd December 1899, p.739.

4 'Three Christmases', _op. cit._, p.3.

> Christmas will come. Is England gay and glad?
> Weary she turns from the untasted feast...[1]

- telling England's soldier sons to take fresh courage from this caring sorrow. The 1864 Christmas of the American Civil War prompted Longfellow to compose 'Christmas Bells', a meditation on the signal absence of 'peace on earth' which nevertheless detected God's acquiescence in the battle against 'Wrong';[2] likewise in 1870, with more sensitiveness than he was to display during the early months of the Boer War, Alfred Austin had devoted one of his poems on the Franco-Prussian War to the religious implications of blood-shed at such a season.[3] But the atmosphere in Britain at the end of December 1899, thanks partly to the efforts of anti-war commentators, became uniquely intense, troubling verse-writers of all kinds.

At the level of popular journalism, Adcock produced the cockney soldier-poem 'A Letter from the Front', making his speaker describe the dangers and hardships of the campaign which so contrasted with the festivities supposedly being enjoyed at home. The pensive Tommy sympathized with his enemy -

> And p'raps, y'know, their kids'll pine
> And cry for them -as yours and mine
> Would cry for me...[4]

1 From Sonnets on the War 1855.

2 Included in Flower-de-Luce 1867.

3 'Christmas, 1870', included in Interludes 1872.

4 From Songs of the War.

- in a manner which emphasized his status as a civilian-soldier; he also philosophized about the conflict's dubious moral validity:

'...We may be strong to conquer wrong,
But right may be too dearly bought.'
(The veldt is billowed hereabout,
Where friend and foe lie stark and still.)
It made my dream more dark with doubt
To hear your Christmas bells ring out,
'Peace and goodwill'!

Yet right or wrong, to fight and win,
Is all the right a Tommy knows;
When dawn came in we burst agin
With flame and death upon our foes.
They thought o' wife and kids, maybe;
I thought o' mine with feelings grim,
And every Boer I met, y'see,
Thinks I, 'It's either him or me'-
And it was him!

A simple man, motivated by unsophisticated passions, the soldier pointedly leaves to wiser minds the resolution of his Christmas -tide doubts.

A still greater air of dilemma was evident in Le Gallienne's 'Christmas 1899'. The sacramental allusions in the third stanza conveyed the poet's approval of the soldiers' part in South Africa, but his main purpose was to set the war in a seasonal context in order to deliver a final message of heavily-qualified acquiescence. His arguments in support of Britain's cause, consequently, were placed against the background of the desolating sorrow which was spoiling the nation's Christmas celebrations. Dear suffering was the price of carrying out 'the cruel work of God', leaving no comfort or consolation anywhere. As he said in stanza 4, not even the inevitable military victory would be satisfying, since

the pastoral enemy were childishly simple: though the sadistic harshness of the progression from 'Children there are that must be whipped to grow' to 'must be whipped with fire' rather over-emphasizes his point. This grim acceptance of the war, however, gained a new perspective in the final stanza, where with unexpected vigour the poet raked the heart of the painful dilemma surrounding 'its glorious infamy'. War may be divinely-sanctioned, soldiers may imitate Christ in sacrificing their lives for the greater good, tribulations may turn men back to God: but the sorrow and suffering necessarily deny Christianity's fundamental promise of ending all strife, of achieving 'the great world peace'. Le Gallienne's hope that 'God may hear the prayer' was unconfident, and he ended with a suitably melancholy reflection that just as the present Christmas was overshadowed by suffering, so the season's emblems traditionally represented sadness mingled with joy. The holly berries are 'too red', reminders both of the soldiers' blood now being spilled in South Africa and (taking up the allusions in stanza 3) of the Blood which had to be shed for mankind's salvation.

Le Gallienne's attitude thus resolved itself into faithful impatience: despite the miserable consequences of the war, he remembered that suffering was indispensable to God's unfolding Purpose, and, while yearning for the time of Peace, he accepted that the struggle left England 'holy with sorrow'. By contrast, Hardy's reaction developed into a complaint against Christianity whose severity once more belied the optimism of 'The Sick God'. On 23rd December 1899,

The Westminster Gazette published 'A Christmas Ghost-Story', a short poem whose cosy, Dickensian, happily-ever-after title gave no warning of the discomforting sentiments of the text.[1] As in 'The Dead Drummer', Hardy dispelled the conventionally pleasant picture of the soldier fallen nobly in battle: the 'Riddled bones' of his unknown warrior were out of place, and the mournful, grave-tied spirit - not resting in Heaven - prompted the poet to ask a question which was stark and unanswerable. Indeed, the poet's label 'Some-One crucified' half-doubted the authority of Christ and the ineffectual 'All-Earth-Gladdening' law of Peace. This presentation of the soldier as a hapless, eternal victim of the War which cannot be God-sent made a significant impression on its original readers, as was indicated by the comments included in The Daily Chronicle's Christmas Day editorial, published on the same page as Le Gallienne's poem. Conceding Hardy's 'fine conception', the newspaper added:

> ...but we fear that soldier is Mr.Hardy's soldier, and not one of the Dublin Fusiliers who cried amidst the storm of bullets at Tugela, "Let us make a name for ourselves!" Here is another ideal which conflicts, alas! with the sublime message we celebrate to-day; but it is at least an ideal of duty and of heroism, and it lifts the soldier -the soldier whose business is the fighting of his country's battles- out of that sordid atmosphere in which some of our verse-makers are content to paint him.[2]

1 See Appendix IX.

2 op. cit., p.4.

Appealing to the old virtues of 'duty' and 'heroism', the writer thus refused to examine closely the conflict of ideals ('to fight and win, Is all the right a Tommy knows', as Adcock said), taking refuge in the religio-patriotic romance of War which wanted to view the soldier as a hero-martyr rather than a cockney rogue. The editorial ended on the note that neither undue mirth nor undùe despondency was called for that Christmas: it believed that festivities would be appropriate the following year.

Hardy retorted in a long letter, published by the newspaper on 28th December. To justify his dead soldier's disgruntlement, the poet insisted, 'surely there is artistic propriety - and, if I may say so, moral and religious propriety - in making him, or it, feel thus, especially in a poem intended for Christmas Day'; for a spirit which shared 'the essence of the Universal', 'bodily courage' was irrelevant, and whereas melancholy 'soldier-shades' had also been created by other writers,

> ...the authors of these Latin, Greek, and Hebrew fantasies were ignorant of the teaching of Christmas Day, that which alone moved the humble Natal shade to speak at all.[1]

Hardy's 'phantom' was therefore entitled to a hearing, and his metaphysical seasonal regret over 'the battles of his life and war in general' was far more significant than the heroic but

1 op. cit., p.8. Hardy's poem and letter were reprinted approvingly in War Against War in South Africa, No.11, 29th December 1899, p.166.

particular circumstances of his death. Such antagonism towards the work succeeded in goading the poet to press his complaint still further, as became apparent when 'A Christmas Ghost-Story' was reprinted in his 1901 verse-collection. Now dated 'Christmas-eve, 1899', the poem's message was forced harder on the reader, since the body, more gruesome in death, was said to belong to 'your countryman': that is, to a civilian-soldier, capable of asking the vexing questions for himself. (In his letter to The Daily Chronicle, Hardy had stressed the importance of the 'shade' being 'neither British nor Boer, but a composite, typical phantom'.) The poet allowed Christ to come nearer, as 'that Man Crucified', the bringer of unmistakable hope - but went on to stress the failure of His mission by adding the final couplets which uncompromisingly condemn the persistence of human conflict. Hardy composed line 12 in his manuscript as:

> But tarries yet the peace for which he died[1]

- and the alterations to 'the Cause' and 'He died' more directly challenged Christianity to prove its authority. Le Gallienne wanted quicker fulfilment of God's promise, but Hardy was impatient for the easy fulfilment that would convince him of its validity: he did not share the faith which could comprehend God and War together, which could find worth in human suffering and the soldier's sacrifice.

1 Bod. MS Eng. Poet d. 18, fol.8.

Surprisingly, Hardy's conclusion rather than Le Gallienne's was the one more closely shared by Rawnsley during the first war-Christmas, when his doctrinal acceptance of the conflict became superseded for a time by an emotional response to the events spoiling the season of peace and goodwill to men. For an old folks' Christmas dinner entertainment he offered some verses whose forthright message -

> And this we folk of sixty years
> Assembled at these tables say:
> God never planned these wars and tears,
> And Peace is the Diviner way[1]

- contrasted sharply with his work acknowledging the Deity's sanction for War, the glamour of battle, the virtues of patriotic heroism. Rawnsley also produced 'Home from the Front for Christmas Day',[2] an anti-war recitation-piece which, unpretentiously straightforward and earnest, achieved an effect comparable to that of Southey's self-consciously naive 'The Battle of Blenheim'.

Like Hardy's Natal phantom, Rawnsley's soldier-Ghost was disposed to complain about his fate, finding the all-too-Christmassy festivities at home especially exasperating. As štanzas 5 and 6 indicated, his experiences had instilled a charity broader than that of the civilian church-goers, so that he turned a remarkably severe gaze on those leading God's worship. As elsewhere in his writing, the poet Rawnsley thus created a fictional character able to examine the clergyman's attitudes:

1 'War and the Old Folks' Creed', from Ballads of the War 1901 edn.

2 See Appendix X.

> Then did the preacher choose for text,
> "Peace and on earth good-will."
> My spirit murmured, sorely vexed,
> "Then Christians wherefore kill?"

At other times, the question has been answered with ideological propriety: but doctrines of the God-sent War and the virtues of suffering are not emotionally satisfactory - particularly when expounded in the hearing of the battlefield victim and the bereaved mother in church on Christmas morning. The Ghost's exasperation and the pathos surrounding the weeping parent (an indispensable figure in a tear-jerking recitation) are the measure of Rawnsley's troubled conscience as he feels the weakness of his militant clerical position. But at the same time he promoted reassurance through the soldier's mother, with her sincere yet futile prayers for her son's safety, her intercession on behalf of war-mongers everywhere, her plea for universal Peace: her faith makes the church seem still 'a place of prayer', her appeal to God's love makes Peace seem still conceivable. Although he went further than Le Gallienne in excluding War from the Divine Purpose, Rawnsley stopped short of allowing his trust in God to waver.

In 1900, the Christmas season was not overshadowed by such a sense of much blood being spilled in vain, and Rawnsley's work was typical in reflecting the less heightened emotional atmosphere. He produced a sonnet, 'The Choir Invisible', in which he pondered whether it was right to be merry when so many friends were no longer able to join in 'our Christmas singing' -

> In silent graves and terribly alone
> Their bodies lie, where bells no news are bringing.[1]

But the clergyman avoided raising any more disquieting ghosts, as in the poem's sestet he affirmed that happiness was still possible: the fallen 'hero sons' remained present in memory, while

> Their souls have felt
> What meant those angels over Bethlehem's steep,
> Who sang "God's peace to men of Godlike will."

The audience now received the patriotic poet's standard consolation, and the Nativity angels were introduced in order to clinch the stale argument. Again, in 'Christmas Day, 1901', Rawnsley further hardened his attitude towards War. More than Longfellow, he detected in the Christmas bells a call to arms:

> Ring out your Christmas music to the fells,
> Though blood-drops hang on every holly tree,
> Though loud as passionate wind and surging sea,
> The air is full of hatred that foretells
> The havoc of the nations. Hark! it swells
> Fierce and more fierce -wolf-notes of jealousy
> Mixed with the cry of Mammon's madding glee-
> Wherefore, ring on, ye undisheartened bells!...[2]

Strife and urgency are thus aroused by threats from without (Rawnsley's sentiment corresponds to the belligerent defensiveness manifested by Austin and other poets): the bells ring out in defiance of immediate danger, human

1 From Ballads of the War 1901 edn.

2 From A Sonnet Chronicle 1900-1906 1906.

conflict becomes an elemental impulse - and there is neither time nor place for a pew-box meditation on the irreconcilability of Christianity and War. The holly-berry emblem is now boldly taken as a reminder that Christ's birth must bring suffering; the sonnet goes on to argue that the 'Christmas' message specifically denied the quick or easy achievement of Peace. When able to view War in the abstract, Rawnsley returned to the belief that the world moves but slowly towards the millennium, and that evil will be overcome only by active resistance: suffering therefore must be accepted patiently.[1]

Thus the principle of War came to be seriously questioned by poets, particularly during the Boer conflict's gloomiest period, when even the most loyal of clergymen-writers doubted that Christians were being true to their creed in promoting bloodshed anywhere. But attempts to show that the love of country involved in supporting the fighting in South Africa was inconsistent with true love of God generally failed to disturb the confident patriotism which lasted throughout the war-years: the deepest crise de conscience could be resolved by stressing the sterner side of Christian teaching, and the cause continued to be regarded as a 'crusade'. War

1 The unfortunate significance of Christmas-tide strife continued to prompt melancholy verses from Rawnsley, although he never again succumbed to his anti-War mood of 1899. cf. 'A Christmas Thought, 1903', inspired by the Macedonian conflicts, and 'Christmas, 1905', responding to the bloodshed in Russia (both poems included in A Sonnet Chronicle 1900-1906). The World War generated works such as 'The Christmas Bells, 1914' (included in The European War 1914-1915: Poems).

viewed in the abstract could promise ultimately to achieve 'the Right': however, as the character of the struggle changed, the home public became more aware of the need to justify practices as much as principles - and poets joined their voices to those who wondered what part could be played by a loving God in this ignoble kind of human strife.

(iv)

'Oh, Watchman, seek the night afar
  For Him, our God and Lord,-
Among those thunder-clouds of War
  Doth He not wield the sword?'
'Lady, indeed I see Him there,
  But bow'd in woe like thee!'
    (Robert Buchanan: 'The Widow: A War Song')

At the outset, Meredith had rebuked the antagonists for identifying the God of Mercy with a 'God of Armies'; but the majority of verse-writers were reluctant to abandon the traditional religio-patriotic conceit that the Empire's increasingly victorious forces served as the Deity's instrument for defending the Right. This meant that when tribute was paid to those who suffered in the good cause, loyal poets found it possible to evoke compassion without condemning the source of the misery. Henry Newbolt's pictures of the brave yet sorrowful dependants at home provided good examples of this attitude, while others were keen to laud the soldiers who, dying 'for all the rest', actually constituted the sacrificial victims cum faithful

servants. The Revd. Aubrey Mildmay, for instance, characterizing England as 'the high God's lieutenant', gladly proclaimed:

> Death on the veldt! It is angel-attended;
> Sweet is the sound of a nation's "Well-done!"

- though he completed the facile quatrain on a more admirable note:

> Sweeter to know when the carnage is ended,
> Briton and Hollander yet shall be one.[1]

Similarly, Harold Begbie celebrated the activities of Army chaplains in battle:

> These are God's witnesses who stand
> Where weeping England counts her loss,
> Who lift with firm and holy hand
> High o'er the battle Jesu's Cross;
>
> And 'mid the swaying armies drown
> War's angry clang with words of Life,
> Bringing to those the eternal Crown
> Slain in the momentary strife...[2]

A prime function of loyal poetry was to console its audience, and, to a still greater extent than Alexander's depiction of 'the Spirit' inspiring warfare's survivors, this sort of work gave the Deity a positive, assentient, role in the conflict: reconciling the 'God of Mercy' and 'God of Armies', harmonizing Patriotism and Christianity.

1 'In the Waiting Time of War', from In the Waiting Time of War and Other Poems 1900. (Professor van Wyk Smith quotes only the first two lines: Drummer Hodge, p.62.)

2 'Battle Priests', from The Handy Man And Other Verses 1900.

But Begbie's verses also share the tendency seen in Rawnsley's 'Wounded on Good Friday', of depicting God as standing outside the fighting, ready to mitigate suffering rather than wielding the sword. As the initial crises of the war passed, the image of the Christian Soldier - the Christ-emulating martyr - began to pale, and the place of the God of Mercy was stressed more and more: something which was especially noticeable when poets looked beyond their own uniformed combatants to consider the nature of their enemies in the field. Despite the long-standing propagandist representation of the Republican Dutch as unkempt, repressive 'boors' - not true 'White Men', as Kipling said in his uncharitable moods - a supposition remained current, in Britain as throughout the Western world, that they were a simple, devout, pastoral people[1] (akin to Horace's 'Roman peasant soldiers', according to J.A. Froude).[2] This picture influenced Le Gallienne's 'Christmas 1899', and when exploited in anti-war poems such as Watson's 'The Unsubdued' it haloed the Boers as a minority-nation heroically resisting oppression. Politically, Kruger's position was unsavoury, but sentimentally, the Boers' stubborn defence of hearth and home offered much to admire: certainly the deeds of the farmer-soldiers and the hardships inflicted on their families turned the thoughts of many religiose poets away from the Lord of Hosts.

1 On the attitudes of Continental writers, see Drummer Hodge, Ch.VIII.

2 Oceana, or England and Her Colonies 1886, p.42.

In the conflict seemingly waged against a nation instead of an army, English writers began to question whether their cause really held the monopoly of Justice. After the peace-treaty was eventually signed, The Outlook published some anonymous verses, 'The Boer to His Rifle'-

> Nay, do not throw it in the common heap,
> As if it were a worthless hands-upped thing;
> Within my heart an altar-stone I keep
> Secure from will of President or King,
> And I will say, when waked from my last sleep:
> This, and my rifle, Lord, are all I bring.[1]

- acknowledging, with a touch of shame perhaps, that the enemy, too, had been inspired by a love of country strengthened by a love of God. Inevitably, this aspect of the Boers' situation had been seized upon with less restraint by anti-war agitators, as in A.G. Shiell's plodding

> For house and home, for land and life,
> The fight is that we fight;
> Grant, Lord, in this unequal strife,
> That Right prevail o'er Might[2]

- and in the ecstatic cry of a New Age bard:

> O sacred, smitten Nation,
> Crowned on thy Calvary...[3]

1 op. cit., Vol.IX, 14th June 1902, p.615.

2 'God's Dilemma', from Pro-Boer Lyrics (1900), 4th edn. [1902]. Shiell was an active critic of the war, frequently writing letters to newspapers and publishing several pamphlets; his contributions to the religious controversy included Briton Versus Boer: A Letter to the Clergy of the Evangelical Church of Switzerland, in Reply to the Bishop of Liverpool 1902.

3 (anon.), 'The Fallen Flag', from Songs of the Veld.

But more significant than the verse which concentrated on the issues of the war was that which interpreted its consequences for the Boer people.

Thus, Rawnsley (whose first poetical excursion into British-Boer relations, after the Jameson Raid, had even compared a charitable 'hero Burgher' to Jesus making the 'sacrifice divine')[1] came to regard the enemy as brothers-in-Christ on whom centred War's pity, not its glamour. In one poem, 'Old Mortality: A Sketch at Ladysmith', the clergyman offered a friendly caricature of the pious Boer:

> With rifle, bible, luncheon-bag, and pipe,
> We saw him going forth each day to snipe;
> We watched him on the foeman get his bead
> Then fire, and turn his Holy Book to read,
> Some chapter from the Kings would suit his case,
> That told how Israel smote a godless race,
> How hip and thigh, at Heaven's august command
> The Hebrew drove the Horite from the land...[2]

The easy pentameter couplets build up a whimsical tone apt in the mouth of a defender monotonously incarcerated in Ladysmith, teasing the Boer's serious religious outlook but poor aim. In the ending -

> And tho' his humour was a little grim,
> We sighed when Death the Sniper called for him

- Rawnsley's sentiment somewhat anticipates that of a twentieth-century trench-poet, evoking the fraternity existing between fighting-men, joint-victims and joint-

1 'Jacob's Well: An Incident in the Skirmish of Doornkop, Transvaal', included in Ballads of Brave Deeds 1896.

2 From Ballads of the War 1901 edn.

sufferers, whose impartial foe is Death. The character and plight of the Boer combatants, however, more usually aroused in the writer a distaste for the business of War as conveyed to him by Press accounts of battle and its aftermath.[1] For example, reacting to an incident reported 'after one of the first battles in Natal', the clergyman-poet characterized himself - significantly - as a doctor touring the battlefield who saw how an aged Boer, mortally wounded, took comfort from his Bible as he waited for merciful release to be granted by

> The Helper of helpless after the fray.[2]

The burgher's piety, with his belief in his nation's good cause, were described generously, and Rawnsley ended by allowing 'the God of the Psalm' to answer the old man's prayer. Dramatized incidents of this kind continued to appear in the Canon's work, again contrasting oddly with the verses justifying abstract War (Professor van Wyk Smith rather unkindly observes that he was 'capable of cheering on both sides'),[3] as the campaign's highly-charged Press reportage provided his religious conscience and aspiring poetic imagination with new, distressing insights into the 'reality' of human conflict.

1 In his collected editions, Rawnsley's works were frequently accompanied by the newspaper excerpts which had inspired them.

2 'After the Battle', published in The Daily News, 7th December 1899, p.3; reprinted in Ballads of the War.

3 Drummer Hodge, p.245.

In another work of imaginative involvement in the aftermath-of-battle situation, 'A Graveside Memory at Ladysmith', Rawnsley powerfully condemned the war for engulfing innocent victims. During the much-reported incident, some Boers had assisted in burying British casualties after an engagement: the poet took up the story -

> Kindlily up there stepped a foeman,
> Stepped to the grave and prayed a prayer,
> Never a son of a British woman
> But felt the breath of the Lord was there.
>
> Faithfully, humbly, did he pray it-
> Prayed to the Father of foe and friend
> To look from Heaven at last and stay it,
> -Make of this terrible war an end.
>
> Plaintively then uprose their chorus-
> A hymn to the God of the warless years;
> The tender heart of a girl came o'er us;
> We sobbed, and turned from the grave in tears.[1]

That God stood outside the conflict was to Rawnsley no less a truth for being discerned by the enemy, and again he presents all the combatants as unhappy victims of evil War. The work trades in pathos more than poetry, but its mood is interesting as a comparison for the immoderate pro-War attitudes of poets such as Alexander. On other occasions, Rawnsley's rejection of War found reasons anticipating those frequently uttered later in the twentieth century. With 'The Dead Boy and the Dying Boer', for example, he projected himself into the account of how a fatally-wounded burgher called for and wept over his son's body before dying also:

1 In The Westminster Gazette, 21st February 1900, p.2; re-titled 'A Graveside Memory at Colesberg', reprinted in Ballads of the War.

here was the material of Victorian melodrama, with the death-bed scene staged on the veldt, and the writer exploited the pathos to the fullest extent, while introducing keen judgements into his narrative -

> So I searched the wreck of the ghastly pile
> God meant for life, by the shattered gun...[1]

But in this case, Rawnsley's inferior poetry was helped out by the work's prose tail-piece, a quotation from the letter written by 'one of the bearer companies' men after a battle' which had provided his inspiration:

> "But," this correspondent confesses, "I had to turn away when the old Boer saw his dead lad. He hugged the body to him and moaned over it, and carried on in a way that fetched a big lump in my throat. Until that very moment I never thought how horrible war is. I never wanted to see another shot fired. And when I looked round again the old Boer was dead, clasping the cold hand of his dead boy."

The poetic technique which Rawnsley had dimly perceived was the shock-tactic: not that relying on the horrors of battle, used in varying degrees by Wallace when hinting at the parts of War 'not for show', by Hardy (in 'The Dead Drummer', the revised 'A Christmas Ghost-Story', and throughout The Dynasts), and most freely by the World War's trench-poets -

> If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
> Behind the wagon that we flung him in...[2]

1 From Ballads of the War 1901 edn.

2 Owen, 'Dulce et Decorum Est', from C. Day Lewis (ed.), The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen (1963), 1971.

- but an attempt to inspire righteous indignation in the reader by forcing on him the unexpected piteousness consequent upon human conflict. The soldier's sacrifice may be horrible, and yet worthwhile; but suffering such as that experienced by the dying Boer cannot be 'a holy thing'. Rawnsley's sympathy with modern attitudes lies closest in his acceptance that all War becomes intolerable - contrary to God's Will and repugnant to humanity - as soon as it brings anguish and death to one ordinary man: not a professional 'Tommy Atkins' or 'a composite, typical' warrior, but a civilian in arms - the theme which had increasingly distressed commentators during the nineteenth century. The clergyman insists that Right cannot be furthered by making victims of a father and son whose proper place is 'the old veldt farm' to which neither will ever return.

Unfortunately, just as his dissidence of Christmas 1899 was short-lived so Rawnsley lost the anti-War spirit thus inspired by some of the practices of the South African conflict. We have noted his defiant Christmas-tide sonnet of 1901, and later he vigorously promoted his country's cause in the World War through both verse and deed.[1] Yet his see-sawing responses offer an interesting example of the Boer War's effect on a patriotic, Christian verse-writer, and were not invariably facile; Professor van Wyk Smith rightly draws attention to his perceptive poem 'The Horrors of War', with its insight that war-mongers are always unworthy of those who fight for them.[2]

1 See Eleanor Rawnsley, Life, Ch.XVIII.

2 Included in Ballads of the War. See Drummer Hodge, p.150.

One form of appeal to the God of Mercy which Rawnsley - in common with most loyal poets - neglected was that inspired by the Boers' hardships off the battlefields. In Chapter V(iv) we commented on the sentiments excited in Watson's poetry by Lord Kitchener's 'methods of barbarism'; a great deal of still shriller work was published during the war, and its authors frequently gave a religiose colouring to their lively if unartistic productions. The New Age, for example, offered verses by amateur writers such as P.W. Roose, who in 'The Boer Child's Question' plaintively demanded '"Was Jesus English?"' and in 'The Meeting of the Innocents' described Britain's action in causing the deaths of so many children as out-Heroding Herod at his worst.[1] Also, (typical of the excitable lady-poets who figured prominently in the anti-war Press) Mary A.M. Marks bewailed in 'The Souls of the Children':

> Then sudden rang on the silence
> A loud and terrible cry,
> That smote like a sword on the midnight,
> And my heart stood still for dread-
> The voice of a great lamentation,
> As of those that mourn for their dead.
> As of Rachel that wept for her children,
> And would not be comforted.
> And I knew it would ring through the ages...[2]

Among the pamphleteers, Shiell remorselessly equated the sufferings of the 'murder-camp' victims with those of Christ:

> Ah! not within the Garden's shade,
> When, on the night in which He was betrayed,
> In dark Gethsemane He stayed,
> More bitter was the cup than He is drinking now...[3]

1 Both reprinted in Songs of the Veld.

2 In The New Age, 10th October 1901, p.647; reprinted in Songs of the Veld.

3 'Christ at a "Murder-Camp"', from Pro-Boer Lyrics 4th edn.

- thereby making the final, not unexpected, claim on the Love and Mercy which outlaws every aspect of War.

Too much of this verse relied on heavy-handed exploitation of religious themes. The intentions of the authors were admirable, and their sentiments were no less sincere than those of the jingoistic verse-writers who shouted encouragement to their country. But citations from the Bible and appeals to the Deity became merely wooden blocks from which 'poems' were supposedly built, and the resulting work probably gave more satisfaction to its authors than uneasiness to the audience whose religio-patriotism was deeply founded. When the time came for loyal poetry to trouble instead of to console, poets needed to utilize the best, not the worst, features of the familiar tradition; as indeed Watson tried to achieve in his grandiloquent but distinctive protest poems.

Yet the religiose indignation was plentifully justified during the conflict's later stages, and even its near-doggerel quality enriched the achievement of the Boer War's verse, where the magnificent but ill-examined abstractions of patriotic poets concerned with 'Justice', 'Liberty', 'the Right', went too far unchallenged. The sentiment which disputed the complacent view that War was concerned with ideals and not realities, causes and not consequences, endorsed the conclusion also reached by sensitive observers of the battlefield, that 'the Right' lay with the hapless victims rather than the perpetrators. To certain uneasy religious consciences, if only for a while, human conflict became 'the sin impossible to be forgiven': a viewpoint which was to be pressed elsewhere, in more genuine poetry.

Chapter VII

To Die For One's Country

In The Great War and Modern Memory 1975, Paul Fussell displays impatience with the traditional patriotic values which underlay and helped to shape social and literary attitudes during World War One. For instance, he adds his voice to the latter-day scoffing at Henry Newbolt and the 'homo newboltiensis' code, quoting at second hand the writer's comment that trench-poets like Wilfred Owen had suffered 'in the nerves and not the heart'; Fussell jibes -

> Only Newbolt Man, skilled in games, can know that[1]

- but ignores Newbolt's full view, that 'the extreme human agony' is endured rather by the helpless parent who sends his son away to war.[2] Again, Fussell offers to 'translate' expressions drawn from the stylized 'special diction' of patriotic-didactic literature:[3] he might truthfully have added that such rhetoric also belonged to loyal war-poetry before 1914 - and the critic's impatience well seals the disrepute into which the old tradition fell during the World War. The 1914-1918 conflict thoroughly shook up attitudes towards patriotism and the moral status and efficacy of warfare; its war-poetry emerged primarily as an 'anti-War' school, vibrant with anger, disillusionment, pity, and (as Fussell shows) bitter irony. Although the artistic achievement of this work has been questioned,[4] there can be no doubt

1 op. cit., 2nd edn. 1977, p.26. Fussell relies on Patrick Howarth, Play Up and Play the Game 1973, p.7, where no source for Newbolt's comment is given (i.e. The Later Life and Letters of Sir Henry Newbolt 1942, pp.314-5).

2 For a more sympathetic dismissal, see Bernard Bergonzi, Heroes' Twilight 1965, pp.122-3.

3 op. cit., pp.21-2.

4 e.g. in English Poetry of the First World War 1964 John Johnston discusses the war-lyric's shortcomings, and the evolution of a new epic narrative form.

that the undermining of 'the rhetoric and gestures of heroism' was healthy and welcome:[1] Arthur Waugh, whose evaluation of the Boer War's poetry we have frequently noted, in contrast to his former appeals for noble verse designed to uplift the fireside audience[2] now praised the trench-poets for revealing the old art's inadequacies -

> ...poetry has, now for the first time, made War -made it in its own image, with all the tinsel and gaud of tradition stripped away from it; and so made it perhaps that no sincere artist will ever venture again to represent War in those delusive colours with which Art has been too often content to disguise it in the past.[3]

As by using phrases like 'sincere artist' and 'delusive colours', such commentators acknowledged that War's disgruntled participants were best qualified to interpret the crucial lesson of what was really involved when the soldier fought and died for his country. The trench-poets in fact were allowed a rather large mandate to bring enlightenment to non-combatants and their bards, whose attitudes seemed to have become redundant through ignorance or insensibility: characteristic of the iconoclastic art was Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum Est', with its insistence on the conflict's horror, waste, futility. Yet there must always remain a poetry capable of meeting the needs of Newbolt's 'extreme agony' - which is surely a valid part of the total response to War.

1 Bergonzi, op. cit., p.222. See also Jon Silkin, Out of Battle 1972.

2 See especially Ch.II(ii) above.

3 'War Poetry (1914-1918)', in The Quarterly Review, Vol.CCXXX, October 1918, p.381. (Waugh's essay was reprinted in Tradition and Change 1919.)

Owen was determined that his truthful, warning 'elegies' would be to his generation 'in no sense consolatory'; but the fireside audience, anxious and suffering bereavement, demands consolation on almost any terms, as A.E. Housman recognized in 1915 when he wrote to his sister, after her son had been killed in France, that 'the essential business of poetry...is to harmonise the sadness of the universe'.[1] This statement is obviously too sweeping to be wholly true, but it goes far towards explaining the attraction of 'the tinsel and gaud of tradition' and 'delusive colours' in civilian war-poetry. Unless the cause's ideals can be elevated irreproachably, and battle's sordidness and waste obscured (we have elsewhere heard a Boer War critic appeal for verse whose 'reserve and idealisation' presented 'the higher part' of human strife),[2] the suffering and sacrifice of the conflict's helpless spectators, too, will become unbearably empty.

We have discussed principally in Chapters II and V how the South African War's poets were generally content to retail old- fashioned, scarcely-examined sentiments of solace and exhortation: works unashamedly couched in the 'special diction' of the kind which allowed Primate Alexander to look blindly beyond War 'at its worst',

> And still find blue in Heaven.[3]

1 Letter of 5th October 1915: in Henry Maas (ed.), The Letters of A.E. Housman 1971, p.141. Mrs. Symons subsequently quoted the phrase as 'to harmonise the sadness of the world' (e.g. 'Boyhood', in Alfred Edward Housman 1936, p.29) and commentators frequently reproduce it thus.

2 Bernard Holland, in 'War and Poetry', July 1902. See Chs.II(ii) and VI(i) above.

3 See Ch.VI(ii) above.

It must be remembered, of course, that the verse-writers were mostly civilians whose 'experience' was received at a secondary remove, and whose response was compounded with overt patriotic attitudes and didactic intentions; but the war's soldier-poets themselves, often turning to the high patriotic verse tradition and to Kiplingism, by no means widely condemned the conflict as a result of their first-hand experiences. So there was a sense, perhaps, in which the poetry settled at an appropriate level, providing a fireside art for a fireside audience. However, there were signs that the impact of the Victorian Great War caused a change in poets' attitudes, so that conventional responses - and in particular the kind of elegiac verse which Owen later scorned as 'poets' tearful fooling' - seemed inadequate. The wavering of religious consciences (as analysed in the foregoing Chapter) was one important indication; and while the casualties mounted 'in the far South land', there emerged a wider uneasiness about the 'sweet' and 'fitting' implications of these deaths. The war did not become a 'literary event' according to Samuel Hynes's definition, that it

> ...[altered] consciousness, and so [compelled] literary imaginations to find new forms for describing the ways in which men kill men...[1]

- because the poetry remained chiefly a fireside art. Nor, as Professor van Wyk Smith contends, was the transformation so radical that

1 The Auden Generation 1976, p.242.

> After the Boer War, war poetry could no longer be merely a sub-department of patriotic verse[1]

- such a division was not clearly seen until the more momentous World War. Rather, cracks began to appear in the edifice as certain writers began to feel that the patriotic verse tradition and its underlying assumptions could no longer provide consolation and comfortable explanation: a development most evident when the war became absorbed into the poetic imaginations of non-'public' contributors like Thomas Hardy, and also Housman, who had to come to terms with the death of his own soldier-brother in South Africa.

Early during the conflict, Arthur St. John Adcock included in his sarcastic 'Our Patriotic Poets' this observation:

> In picters an' pomes war is pritty, no doubt,
> But they makes it look pritty by leavin' things out;
> Yer can't glory in orphans or cripples a bit,
> Or the waste that is shovelled away in the pit.[2]

- and it is interesting that even so inconsequential a literary figure was conscious of war-poetry's conventional subterfuge. The 'pritty' style, however, dominated loyal verse throughout the war, with poets carefully selecting those aspects which could be emphasized most advantageously, and using the customary

1 Drummer Hodge 1978, p.310.

2 From Songs of the War 1900.

'special diction' to the full. Above all, they ensured that what had to be 'shovelled away in the pit' did not become 'waste', since their acquiescence in human conflict rested on the tenet that death in battle - however piteous or horrible - was not without ultimate purpose and value. Eager, sometimes almost over-anxious, claims were made for the quality of the idealised Soldier and his noble, even Christ-like, sacrifice; and it was not impossible for poets to 'glory in' the widowed and the maimed. In Chapter V(iii) we remarked on Newbolt's ability to evoke heart-aching sorrow yet without condemning its cause, in poems like 'The Only Son' and 'By the Hearth-Stone'; other writers maintained an endless supply of powerful religiose consolation, on the theme summed up in Le Gallienne's phrase, that the sufferers were made 'holy with sorrow' -

> God help you! You who wait and you who fight.
> You who give up your lives, and you whose sun goes down
> With that same giving; you who just missed earth's crown
> For brave deeds done, because life's flick'ring light
> Faded so fast. God bless you! May He take
> The sacrifice, the sorrow, and the fears;
> The hoping, and the longing, and the tears;
> And count them all as good -FOR ENGLAND'S SAKE.[1]

Thus the fireside audience's patient endurance became a duty both religious and patriotic, a service equatable with the fighting-men's own useful 'sacrifice'. Only occasionally was the complaint heard that serene contemplation of higher ends was inadequate to support those robbed of husbands, sons, fathers, brothers:

1 'T.C.', 'Pro Patria! 1899-1900', in The Ludgate, NS Vol.IX, April 1900, p.585.

> And yet, they say, the fight goes on!
> O, thou who art his son,
> Should it go on a thousand years,
> For <u>us</u> the war is done.[1]

The deep-rooted faith in War's utility was the factor which allowed poets, and their civilian audience, to close their eyes to the battlefield's physical and psychological unpleasantness, perceiving only 'the higher part' of the struggle. A sense of the horrible bloodshed and misery of fighting in South Africa was strongly conveyed by newspaper correspondents and in participants' letters and reminiscences (we saw in Chapter VI(iv) how a stretcher-bearer's letter prompted Canon Rawnsley's repugnance, in 'The Dead Boy and the Dying Boer') but the squalidness of battle and its aftermath was rarely made a poetic theme. Each major engagement inspired a spate of verses, particularly during the war's first, costly phase, demonstrating that the lives had not been wasted; and poets devoted much energy to reiterating the general patriotic lesson that to perish for England's sake was good, useful, and therefore tolerable. The ardent poetess Cicely Fox Smith celebrated 'The Happy Dead' through romantic beatitudes -

> Happy the dead on some tumultuous field,
> Who, fighting their wild battle in the dark,
> Full-breasted meet their death and know no more...[2]

- whose mood contrasted, as radically as could be possible, with Owen's bitter denunciations of this very stance, in

1 F.V. Lewes, 'Widowed', in <u>The Outlook</u>, Vol.VIII, 18th January 1902, p.845.

2 From "<u>Men of Men</u>" [1900].

'Insensibility'. Attempting to transcend the conflict's particular political aims, many writers returned to the familiar theme that the dead had fallen in pushing back the frontiers of civilization. Before the war, Conan Doyle had contributed to Imperialism's verse:

> ...But where your British brothers lie,
> The lonely cairn, the nameless grave,
> Still fringe the flowing Saxon wave.
> 'Tis that! 'Tis where
> They lie -the men who placed it there,
> That marks the frontier line.[1]

- and Newbolt had offered 'Clifton Chapel':

> "Qui procul hinc," the legend's writ -
> The frontier-grave is far away-
> "Qui ante diem periit:
> Sed miles, sed pro patria."[2]

This tradition was now advanced by less admirable offerings, such as Fox Smith's 'The Outposts';[3] T.B. Hennell, in 'After Nelthorp', tried to choke back tears for 'one who comes no more', but whose soldier-grave marked

> The corner-stone of empires yet to be,
> The seal of freedom on this pleasant land....[4]

Such continual appeal to the greatness of the Cause in which the combatants perished, especially when expressed through exultant 'heroic' rhetoric of Fox Smith's kind, did much to

1 'The Frontier Line', from Songs of Action 1898.

2 In The Spectator, Vol.LXXX, 10th September 1898, p.341; reprinted in The Island Race 1898.

3 Included in op. cit.

4 From Random Verses 1905.

make the picture justifiably 'pritty'; and elsewhere, the unpleasant side of the business was in fact held up as proof of a new-style, ragged heroism. Professor van Wyk Smith observes the 'terse inevitability'[1] of Harold Begbie's verses 'An Incident', with their admiration for the unkempt soldier:

> In his uniform soaking and draggled, with the blood
> in his sleepless eyes,
> Hungry and dirty and bearded, he looks at the morning
> skies...[2]

Comforted by an ever-present 'chum' and steadied by his wise colonel, Begbie's hero rushes to his death - purposefully, for the attack is successful - in a tremendous blaze of glory which transforms raggedness into nobility.

Of course, harsh revelation of the war's horror and piteousness would have denied poetry its consolatory function, and poets were adept at sentimentalizing death on the veldt. A particularly strong theme became the vision of the innocent, dutiful Youth sacrificing himself for his country: but this indulged the sentimental-melancholy mood of Moore's 'The Minstrel Boy to the war is gone...' rather than the 'homoeroticism' which Fussell detects (perhaps over-confidently, granting this verse-tradition) during the World War.[3] As Rayne Kruger observes in Good-bye Dolly Gray, the actual role of the

1 Drummer Hodge, p.111.

2 From The Handy Man And Other Verses 1900.

3 The Great War and Modern Memory, Ch.VIII.

archetypal Soldier-Boy was largely filled by a fourteen-year-old bugler in the Dublin Fusiliers.[1] John Dunn was wounded at Colenso, and his much-publicized pluck was seized upon by the overwrought nation, to the extent that 'the gallant little fellow' was visited in hospital by Princess Christian, given a silver bugle from the Queen, celebrated in verse by Rawnsley and others, and greeted by a huge crowd at Portsmouth Station when he arrived to be reunited with his mother.[2] In poetic imaginations, however, the sufferings of the sacrificial Youth tended to be more intense and exemplary. Fox Smith platitudinously consoled with the tag 'Whom the gods love...', providing verses insistently hymnal in rhythm:

> O strong and true and gallant!
> O life serenely flung
> Upon thy country's altars
> So nobly and so young!...[3]

More striking was the anonymous 'A Child Amongst the Dead', a blank-verse poem which pictured a 'bright-haired, noble boy' lying wounded after fighting for his country: the piece swelled with the sentimental - he is helped by memories of his 'mother's smile' and 'sister's voice'- and the religio-patriotic, so that amidst the cursorily-mentioned 'ghastly signs of strife' the child seems too beautiful and precious to die -

1 op. cit., 1959, pp.145-6.

2 See 'The Brave Boy Bugler of the Dublin Fusiliers', in The Sphere, Vol.I, 17th February 1900, p.111. Also the articles in War Pictures, Vol.I, 3rd March 1900, p.107; 10th March, p.135; 31st March, p.228.

3 '"Whom the Gods Love"', op. cit.

> Surely a sunbeam must have kindled life
> In one cold frame! Is it the sun's red flush
> Just gilding marble? Nay, 'tis life within,
> Tinging yon cheek, ere now so pale, with rose;
> Curving the lips, so lately still, with smiles...[1]

It is a 'pritty' sight; and a 'pritty' concept that his loyal suffering should be redeemed by the sleep-breaking 'summer sun' and '"Sun of Righteousness"' - the same image later used despairingly in Owen's 'Futility'. This Youth suffers, but lives: so War is not indefensible. When other writers allowed the 'sacrifice' to be fully exacted, they turned instinctively to the solace that death in a good cause would be properly rewarded. Thus, Kipling's sister, Mrs. Alice Fleming, (who endured no personal bereavement) joined those who tried to extract consolation from the military <u>débâcle</u> of Spion Kop, producing the verses on 'Young Never-Grow-Old'.[2] She disregarded the battle itself - probably the most gory of the whole war - and within her response accommodated together a view of the Youth's decaying body and a yearning vision of his spiritual happiness:

> God's soldier still, through the streets of gold,
> In your shining harness, Never-Grow-Old.

The moral is trite, that the bereaved must take comfort that their dead child rejoices in Heaven, released from the earthly vale of tears. So much is left out of this fireside 'war-poem': yet within the accepted limits of attitude and rhetorical expression, Mrs. Fleming achieves all success in 'harmonising the sadness of the universe' for her fireside audience.

1 In <u>The Ludgate</u>, NS Vol.IX, April 1900, pp.516-7.

2 See Appendix XI.

This anxiety to idealise death in battle also led poets to create an archetypal Soldier, a loyal patriot who laid his life down willingly. For this purpose, the 'Tommy Atkins' stereotype was usually considered too rough at the edges; nor were contributors anxious to concede that the combatant had attachments outside the battlefield, such as a wife and family, to sour the sweetness of his death - here, admiration for the civilian-soldier became less explicit. The society-poet Austin Dobson published 'Rank and File' in The Sphere when the periodical was dwelling on the war's costly early actions: he mourned the 'undistinguished Dead' in a manner which anticipated the 'Unknown Warrior' image, that of the nameless, common-man Soldier whose unselfish death constitutes a useful service and upon whom can be focused the grief, gratitude, and perhaps guilt, of his countrymen -

> None knows your name.
> Blackened and blurred in the wild battle's brunt,
> Hotly you fell...with all your wounds in front:-
> This is your fame![1]

Once again, the poet chooses exultant heroic vocabulary, clinging to the ideal which allows the Soldier to fall contentedly 'with all your wounds in front'. However, as we shall examine in Housman's work, such complacency was soon deflated when the Soldier was a real person. W.G. Hole, in 'Too Late!', amidst mundane accounts of 'the roll of distant drums','death a hundred times defied', struck a sullen note from the irony that 'F.B.' had died of fever at Ladysmith on the very day of its relief:

1 op. cit., Vol.I, 3rd February 1900, p.53; reprinted in Carmina Votiva and Other Occasional Verses 1901.

> Outside the town with joy was mad-
> But what was that to thee, dear lad?[1]

More frequently, though, the Soldier's end was re-created in narrowly didactic fashion, so as to combine pathos with patriotism. Edgar Wallace, the 'Soldier-Poet' who had formerly produced the imaginative verses 'War' and 'After!', as a newspaper correspondent now obtained first-hand experience of campaigning: yet his later war-poems conventionally sweetened the bitter cup of battlefield death. 'A Casualty', for example, provided a starchy epitaph on the humble Unknown Warrior of the early war, while 'After Two Years!' illustrated Wallace's graduation from speaking for the cockney Tommy to speaking for his worthy officer.[2] In the death-bed monologue, the beseemingly modest detailing of the officer's loyal active service is oddly interspersed with poeticisms ('The roar and rush of death', 'Glory and joy of leading'), which rise to the high, albeit misquoted, dictum '_dulce est_...'.

But before censuring Wallace for propagating tinsel-and-gaud attitudes which as a close observer of War he should have recognized to be fraudulent, let us turn to the verse-offering of a serving soldier:

1 In _Literature_, Vol.VI, 14th April 1900, p.290.

2 See Appendix XII, XIII. Wallace's verse is discussed also in Ch.IV(iii) above.

> But hark! What is that? 'Tis a young soldier dying,
> And he calls to his comrades to hear his last words;
> Tell Nell I have fought as a true British hero,
> And died for Old England 'neath banners unfurled.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> My sight is fast fading, farewell, I must leave you,
> My God calls me home to His haven above.[1]

With its string of patriotic and sentimental-heroic clichés, this could be labelled a music-hall counterpart of Wallace's 'After Two Years!' (composed in the 'Break the News to Mother'[2] mood which flourished during the war): yet it would be wrong not to credit the author with a sincerity which found its outlet through well-worn tradition. The South African War, too, produced its Brookes and Grenfells, fighting-men who wanted to reassure the public that they were content to play the Soldier.

However, within this war-poetry which idealised, selected, painted in delusive colours, there were occasional signs that writers strained uneasily against the narrow confines of convention, producing less-than-consolatory sentiments.

Kipling, for example, could adeptly manipulate the accepted material to soothe his audience. The verses prefacing his hospital-train article 'With Number Three' used elevated diction to inspire pity and respect for 'poor fighting-men broke in our wars' -

1 Pte.H. Shepherd, 'The Soldier's Last Farewell', in Cape Times, 27th December 1899, p.7: the verses were allegedly written at Modder River. (Professor van Wyk Smith locates the work in another South African newspaper of a later date, and calls Shepherd 'a prolific soldierly master of the parlour tear-jerker' - Drummer Hodge, p.183.)

2 Verses by Charles K. Harris, included in War Songs [1900].

> Dust of the battle, o'erwhelmed them and hid-
> Fame never found them for aught that they did.
> Wounded and spent, to the lazar they drew,
> Lining the road where the legions went through...[1]

- while in his earnest tribute to the nurses he reached deeply into the 'patriotic' bag to affirm that heroism emerges through and transcends War's unpleasantness. In 'Dirge of Dead Sisters'-which Lord Birkenhead calls 'one of the finest rhetorical poems Kipling ever wrote'-[2] the poet kept demanding 'Who recalls...?' as he disclosed the parts of War not usually for show: the hospital tents, the ambulance trains, the agony of the wounded, the hurried burials in the fever-stricken Army camps -

> Who recalls the noontide and the funerals through the market,
> (Blanket-hidden bodies, flagless, followed by the flies?)
> And the footsore firing-party, and the dust and stench and staleness,
> And the faces of the Sisters and the glory in their eyes?[3]

- and finally the deaths of the Nurses themselves, in particular that of his friend Mary Kingsley, 'Her that fell at Simon's Town in service on our foes'.[4] For all his indignation at the Army's incompetent medical arrangements, Kipling created a firmly loyal poem: the squalidness is more than balanced by the greater heroism which it engenders,

1 In Daily Mail, 21st April 1900, p.4; reprinted, slightly revised, in Songs from Books 1913.

2 Rudyard Kipling 1978, p.208.

3 From The Five Nations 1903.

4 'The bravest woman of all my knowledge...': Something of Myself 1937, p. [77].

and his respect for the Nurses finds expression in extravagant phrases ('the piteous, noble laughter', 'the glory in their eyes') as he insists that their sacrifice was as worthy as that of the soldiers - 'Her that fell at Simon's Town'. Indeed, Kipling's closing formula derives directly from the patriotic verse-tradition -

> Yet their graves are scattered and their names are clean forgotten,
> Earth shall not remember, but the Waiting Angel knows...

- and he intends this to pay the highest compliment. A champion of Britain's cause in South Africa and (until his son's death at Loos in 1915) a staunch believer in War's efficacy,[1] Kipling thus continued to console and stir his countrymen: but, perhaps as a consequence of his disillusionment with the protracted Boer conflict, sober new strains made themselves heard in his work. In Chapter III we suggested that his 'Service Songs' lost the sprightliness of the proper 'barrack-room ballads' partly because they became heavily charged with propagandist sentiments; they also brooded on the war's raw, unglamorous aspects to an extent which sapped the Tommy-narrators' jocular resignation. 'Stellenbosh', for instance, as Professor van Wyk Smith notes, anticipates a Sassoon-like bitterness that the soldier is made a victim of his generals' incompetence;[2] and not far below the surface of 'The Instructor' lies the Tommy's recognition that

1 On Kipling's acceptance of War as harsh yet useful, see Silkin, Out of Battle, Ch.III: but the critic strangely neglects to consider the bitter 'epitaphs' and bereavement poems written during the World War.

2 op. cit., p.107.

he is a helpless victim of the vast, impersonal, mechanised War characterized by 'Old Nickel Neck' the long-range shell -

> ...The peevish voice an' 'oary mushroom 'ead
> Of 'im we owned was greater than us all,
> 'Oo give instruction to the quick an' the dead-
> The Shudderin' Beggar not upon the Staff.[1]

Kipling's soldier-poems had formerly dismissed War's unpleasantness nonchalantly -

> When you're wounded an' left on Afghanistan's plains,
> An' the women come out to cut up your remains,
> Jest roll to your rifle an' blow out your brains....[2]

- but 'The Return' now conveyed an oppressive, dismaying sense of war-weariness:

> Towns without people, ten times took,
> An' ten times left an' burned at last;
> An' starvin' dogs that come to look
> For owners when a column passed
> . . . . . .
> An' the pore dead that look so old
> An' was so young an hour ago,
> An' legs tied down before they're cold-
> These are the things which make you know.[3]

The poem's didactic purpose was to show how the Tommy's war-experiences instilled in him a new self-knowledge and patriotism; yet in so detailing the dull, miserable reality making up those experiences of useful suffering, Kipling allowed his distinctive art to touch on the themes of waste and futility so assiduously avoided by other loyal poets.

1 From The Five Nations.

2 'The Young British Soldier', in The Scots Observer, Vol.IV, 28th June 1890, p.149; reprinted, slightly revised, in Barrack-Room Ballads 1892.

3 From The Five Nations.

But whereas the Laureate of Empire finally told his audience that weariness and disgust with fighting were not incompatible with heroism and faith in War's achievements, the soldiers themselves sometimes came forward to upset the comfortable attitudes. A.E. Mainwaring - an officer in Bugler Dunn's regiment - went far in discrediting his trade when the 1905 'Centurion' verses included a demand for the reader to 'listen to the other side of the case':[1] to share the participant's sense of the 'ghastly', empty sacrifice and spoiling waste, the agony intolerably suffered at home. In the soldier's gloomy view, War is horrible in many respects, but, as his sardonic comments on promotion reiterate, worst of all is its capacity for self-perpetuation - for filling its own immediate, ultimately purposeless ends.

Also, the sheer accumulation of casualties in South Africa caused uneasiness among poets who preferred to conceive the archetypal fallen hero in the singular. The First World War's uncountable victims greatly disturbed its poets, inspiring angry works like Sorley's

> When you see millions of the mouthless dead
> Across your dreams in pale battalions go,
> Say not soft things as other men have said,
> That you'll remember...[2]

- but the trench-poets did not invent a literary motif in thus assembling the slain. One of the Crimean War's most

1 See Appendix XIV. For wider discussion of the soldier-poets' dissatisfaction, see Drummer Hodge, pp.181-97.

2 From I.M. Parsons (ed.), Men Who March Away (1965) 2nd edn. 1974.

famous poems had been Francis Hastings Doyle's 'The Return of the Guards', in which 'Alma's dead' were allowed a ghostly parade, applauded by the warriors of ancient Sparta who murmured against the dreadful conditions suffered in the Crimean trenches.[1] During and for long after the Boer conflict, loyal poets were keen to lay their many dead countrymen to sleep, peacefully and fruitfully, beneath the veldt. According to J.H.M. Abbott's 'The Song of the Dead', these rested

> ...quietly, underneath the stony kops,
> Where the Veldt is silent, where the guns have
> ceased to boom.[2]

W.G. Hole imagined that, like so many of the Empire's highways, the road to Ladysmith was marked and guarded by the Freedom-preserving dead;[3] and even in 1906, as a sequel to 'Bridge-Guard in the Karroo', Kipling evoked 'the silent army' which forever watched over the vital railway-lines -

> ...In the breathless noon-day silence when the mountains
> swim in the heat,
> Look -look out of the window, for behold we lie at your feet.[4]

For when the Boer War dead rose, they could take on a haunting aspect of the kind which later troubled the trench-poets.

The religious poet William Stevens ensured that once the scarred, weary soldiers

1 Included in The Return of the Guards and Other Poems 1866.

2 Prefatory poem in Tommy Cornstalk 1902.

3 'The Road to Ladysmith', in The Spectator, Vol.LXXXV, 15th September 1900, p.337; reprinted in Poems Lyrical and Dramatic 1902.

4 'The Silent Army', quoted by Birkenhead in Rudyard Kipling, pp.212-3.

...troop as in silent procession
Home from the fields of the war[1]

their destination was Paradise; but before the conflict was a month old, the journalist Barry Pain produced some less comforting cockney verses which depicted 'The Comp'ny of ar Dead' marching through the city at dusk -

An' theer ain't no sarnd as they falls in,
An' they mawch quick step with a silent tread
Through all ar 'earts, through all ar 'earts. . .[2]

Using this abominable 'common-man' patois, Pain wanted to assure the slain that 'theer nimes is writ, an' theer nimes remine': essentially, to repeat the legend from Ecclesiasticus which at Kipling's suggestion became the blanket-epitaph for the World War's dead. Still more uneasy in the presence of 'the men who paid the blood-price', the Canadian poet Robert Service offered a nightmarish account of their return, bloody and broken, from 'bitter' graves to join in the victory parades:

And every eye was staring at the horror of the dead,
The pity of the men who paid the price[3]

- but instead of denouncing the belief that there could remain any sense in which it was sweet and fitting to die for England, Service's massed corpses demanded only that the jubilant

1 'After the War', in The Sunday at Home, January 1901, p.173.

2 'Our Dead', published anonymously in The Daily Chronicle, 28th October 1899, p.4; reprinted, and attributed to Pain, by John Macleay in War Songs and Songs and Ballads of Martial Life [1900].

3 'The March of the Dead', from Songs of a Sourdough 1st English edn. 1907.

public remembered the extent of its debt. Nor were the Boer War casualties always more easily appeased than Sorley's 'millions of the mouthless dead': on the theme that the fallen of both sides would arise

With love in their eyes and all hate forgot

the Daily News's war-correspondent A.G. Hales produced 'The Grey Review',[1] which contained, in diluted form, some of the sentiment of Owen's 'Strange Meeting'.

The audience of the Boer War's poetry, then, wanted and for the most part received work which would inspire, instruct, console, reassure: an art which confirmed their ideals and faith in Country and Cause. But events in South Africa made very heavy demands on the comfortable responses to War, and on the verse-tradition in which these were habitually embodied; so that just occasionally poets acknowledged that the tinsel-and-gaud was artificial - and unsatisfactory. Most notably, the parody-writing journalist T.W.H. Crosland on 11th November 1899 published 'Slain',[2] a perfectly traditional patriotic elegy, woven from the themes of the statuesque peacefulness of the dead, their nostalgia for the countryside, their willing, heroic sacrifice and lost youth, the spiritual improvement bestowed by battle. But Crosland's ironic postscript lifted the mask - and demolished the 'patriotic' edifice through its own rhetoric.

1 From Poems and Ballads 1909.

2 See Appendix XV. Crosland's Kiplingesque verses are discussed in Ch.IV(i) above.

Yea, it is very sweet
  And decorous
The omnipotent Shade to meet
  And flatter thus.

With its confession that the fireside poet approaches War's sufferings and sacrifice with an art designed to 'flatter', satisfying the audience with the merely 'pritty', 'Slain' looks forward to the time when the task of writing 'war-poetry' would be carried out by those whose experiences on the battlefield left them with small desire to provide simply consolatory verses.

(ii)

Certain poets, it seemed, were thus aware that a degree of willing self-deception was demanded from those who wished to view the war comfortably and find satisfaction in its traditional verse. And just such a refusal to cheer, and sigh, with the loyal crowd was the chief feature of Thomas Hardy's reaction to the conflict, when a determination to see beyond the surface romance influenced the distinctive poems composed immediately in response to the Boer War - and helped to shape the attitudes towards patriotism and War expounded so forcefully in his sprawling 'epic-drama' The Dynasts, which he began to set down in 1902.

Fussell believes that in 1914 Hardy was the poet best prepared to 'write' the World War, from an imagination 'more or less ready-made', as 'an event constituting an immense

and unprecedented Satire of Circumstance'.[1] In 1899, however, his position was rather that of an inquisitive observer standing at the edge of the crowd, a man looking closely at events which fascinated him (Evelyn Hardy and F.B. Pinion remark on the paradox of the 'peace-loving man' whose 'warlike' tendencies encouraged him to follow the military tactics with 'keen pleasure')[2] yet unwilling to let himself be carried away in the general sway of emotion. Hardy's peculiar temperament already did much to set him apart: but his poetic imagination was still receptive to new experiences, and his vision of the events' philosophical significance was by no means clearly formulated. We noted in Chapter VI(iii) how his Boer War verses, which in Poems of the Past and the Present formed a single but integral part of his musings on the human condition, embraced both 'A Christmas Ghost-Story', despairing for Christianity's reign of Peace, and 'The Sick God', with its bland optimism. Hardy disapproved of the 1899-1902 war (Gittings actually dubs him and his wife 'Pro-Boers')[3] as a further example of mankind's inability to settle disputes without bloodshed: yet while the struggle in some ways confirmed his pessimism - in June 1901 he commented on an anti-War article that 'Aggres[s]iveness being one of the laws of nature, by condemning war we condemn the scheme of the universe...'-[4] he was reluctant to follow that

1 op. cit., p.6.

2 One Rare Fair Woman: Thomas Hardy's Letters to Florence Henniker 1893-1922 1972, p.xxiii.

3 The Older Hardy 1978, p.100. For Hardy's account of his activities during the war-years, see The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928 (1965) corrected edn. 1975, Chs.XXV-XXVI.

4 In The Young Man, Vol.XV, June 1901, p.191. William Clarke's 'The Curse of Militarism' had appeared in the previous month's issue.

pessimism to its furthest conclusion. We also noted that in February 1901 Hardy was telling William Archer that War would eventually cease through humanitarian enlightenment.

Indeed, during the Boer War, Hardy's position as a 'war-poet' was most unusual. The Wessex novelist was scarcely accepted by the public as a verse-writer at all: although he had privately composed verse for upwards of thirty years, his first collection had appeared unexpectedly only in 1898, meeting with a lukewarm reception, and (until he established himself with the Times poems 'The Darkling Thrush' and 'V.R.' in 1901) he was not looked to as a commentator on public affairs - a consideration which may help to explain The Daily Chronicle's startled reaction to his boldly anti-war piece 'A Christmas Ghost-Story'. Donald Davie argues that 'Major issues of national policy were among the matters that Hardy was too modest to concern himself with', and calls him merely a dutiful, '"honest journeyman"' in his early occasional verses.[1] But his war-poems were designed to take their place on the public platform: most appeared in daily newspapers or popular periodicals, several were related to specific events ('Song of the Soldiers' Wives', for example, celebrated the return of the Household Cavalry),[2] and while they generally caught the 'take-it-or-leave-it' tone which Davie rightly admires as characteristic of Hardy's art, they were nevertheless intended to obtrude upon public opinion, as the

1 Thomas Hardy and British Poetry (1972) English edn. 1973, pp.39, 36.

2 Published in The Morning Post, 30th November 1900, p.5; included, slightly revised, in Poems of the Past and the Present [1901] 1902.

revisions to 'A Christmas Ghost-Story' clearly revealed. A sensitive, detached, highly critical observer of the war, and more especially of its impact at home, Hardy now offered 'public' poetry which, repeatedly exploiting the themes and conventions of the patriotic tradition, conveyed the independent attitudes soon acknowledged as being uniquely his own.

His scrutiny of the war-news nourished a sympathy rare among his fellow-poets:

> Possibly you know by this time the result of the attack on Cronje, which I do not. How horrible it all is: they say that his wife and other women are in that river-bed with his unfortunate army: and the mangled animals too, who must have terror superadded to their physical sufferings. I take a keen pleasure in war strategy and tactics, following it as if it were a game of chess; but all the while I am obliged to blind myself to the human side of the matter: directly I think of that, the romance looks somewhat tawdry, and worse. I do not, of course, refer to this particular war, and the precise shade of blame or otherwise which attaches to us.[1]

- and he took the opportunity to immerse himself thoroughly in the emotional atmosphere at home, enriching his 'experience' of War. Thus the poet went to see embarkations at Southampton early in November 1899, and watched the overnight departure of his local Dorchester artillery, 'amid rain and wind' - 'the scene was a pathetic one', he afterwards commented.[2] Such fireside aspects of War's reality became so deeply absorbed into his poetic imagination that he felt able to re-create the scene at the War Office 'after a bloody battle', 'which, though I have not witnessed it, I can imagine with painful realism':[3]

1 Letter of 25th February 1900: in One Rare Fair Woman, pp.91-2.

2 Letter of 9th November 1899: ibid., p.87.

3 Letter of 19th December 1899: ibid., p.89.

> Last year I called this world of gaingivings
> The darkest thinkable, & questioned sadly
> If my own land could heave its pulse less gladly-
> So charged it seemed with circumstance whence springs
> The tragedy of things.[1]

His resulting 'war-poetry' was of a kind which had little to do with the 'tawdry romance' of Britain's Cause and battles in South Africa; and which, despite originating at the hearth-side, offered small comfort to the wartime audience. Criticizing other writers for concentrating on 'action' instead of 'reflection',[2] Hardy was proud to assert of his own verses that 'not a single one is Jingo or Imperial': 'a fatal defect according to the judgement of the British majority at present, I dare say'.[3] His insistence on seeing real-life 'patriotic' situations through sceptical eyes produced an art whose constant tendency was to deflate popular dulce et decorum attitudes, and though not widely welcomed, his efforts were undoubtedly very distinctive. When reviewing the 1901 verse-collection, his friend Sir George Douglas admired its pervading melancholy tone, saying of the war-poems themselves that they differed from

> ...the serviceable Kiplingisms and Begbie-isms of the hour most notably in this, that they dwell not on the glory, but on the piteousness of the struggle[4]

- an evaluation which would also well serve for The Dynasts.

1 'At the War Office', published in facsimile in The Sphere, Vol.I, 27th January 1900, p.18; reprinted, with revisions, in Hardy's 1901 collection.

2 In Hardy's contribution to Gilbert Giluncy's article 'La Littérature Anglaise et la guerre du Sud-Africain', in Revue Politique et Littéraire: Revue Bleue, 4e Série, Tome XVIII, 16 Août 1902, p.213.

3 Letter of 24th December 1900: in One Rare Fair Woman, p.99.

4 'A New Note of Poetic Melancholy', in The Bookman, Vol.XXI, January 1902, p.131.

Unwillingness to 'blind' himself to 'the human side of the matter' left Hardy again and again taking up customary assumptions and rejecting them as inadequate or dishonest; with the effect that his poetry frequently upset the audience's expectations, by turning the usual patriotic matter against acquiescence in the war.[1] We have previously discussed his rejection of easy Christian justification of the conflict: how 'The Departure' (later re-titled 'Embarcation'), with its message that this latest war turned yet another sad page in Britain's history-book, appeared appropriately to counter Newbolt's 'The Sailing of the Long-Ships';[2] and how poems like 'The Dead Drummer' and 'A Christmas Ghost-Story' attacked the crucial notion that the fallen soldier slept contentedly in his corner of some foreign field.[3]

A central theme of Hardy's Boer War poems (as of The Dynasts also) was his refusal to regard the fighting-man as an abstract Soldier who had no existence outside the battle-field where he fought and died heroically. The revised 'A Christmas Ghost-Story' reminds the audience that the dead soldier was 'your countryman', and similarly the speaker in 'The Man He Killed' - placed on 'The settle of the Fox Inn, Stagfoot Lane' - cannot quite understand why he had to shoot down the fellow-rustic who was called 'my foe'.[4] Most

1 On Hardy's twisting of 'heroic' expectations in earlier ballads like 'Valènciennes' and 'San Sebastian', see J.O. Bailey, The Poetry of Thomas Hardy 1970, pp.62-5.

2 See Ch.V(iii) above.

3 See Ch.VI(ii) above.

4 See Ch.VI(i) above. Fussell claims that among the World War's soldiers this was Hardy's most popular poem (op. cit., p.164).

effective, of course, in breaking up the mystique surrounding the Soldier of patriotic art was Hardy's study of Drummer Hodge, the ordinary man whose suffering and death in War were both unfair and futile. Professor van Wyk Smith admires him as 'an unknown, unglamorous soldier', the 'representative hero of an unwritten human epic';[1] but it is the humanity, not the soldierhood, which emerges most strongly in this portrait of the country-lad, soon killed, whose body is thrown unceremoniously into a hole in the veldt. In Hardy's view, the slain Youth had no cause to fight and die under foreign skies, and his death will remain an everlasting anomaly:

> His homely Northern breast and brain
> Grow up a Southern tree,
> And strange-eyed constellations reign
> His stars eternally.[2]

Stripped of the trappings of the idealised hero-martyr, Hardy's unhappy dead soldier becomes a victim of War, of his countrymen's martial ambitions: a theme avoided by true patriotic poets. In 'Departure', the writer again called the fighting-men victims, this time of deep-set international enmity:

> "How long, O striving Teutons, Slavs, and Gaels
>
> Must your wroth reasonings trade on lives like these,
> That are as puppets in a playing hand?..."[3]

1 op. cit., pp.146, 147.

2 In Literature, Vol.V, 25th November 1899, p.513; slightly revised, and re-titled 'Drummer Hodge', when included in Hardy's 1901 collection.

3 In Poems of the Past and the Present.

- but elsewhere he saw them to be suffering because of their own blindness, so that the troops sailing from Southampton Docks left 'None dubious of the Cause, none murmuring'.[1] In 'The Souls of the Slain' (which The Athenaeum hailed as 'one of the few fine poems suggested by the present war')[2] Hardy devised a moralizing drama, his contribution to war-poetry's 'legions of the dead' motif, to convey the true significance of their sacrifice:[3] when his 'Frameless souls' from South Africa arrive at Portland Bill they expect to 'list to our fame' as lauded by kinsfolk full of praise for 'glory and war-mightiness', but learn instead that they are remembered for homely yet 'dearer' reasons.

'A father broods: "Would I had set him
To some humble trade
And so slacked his high fire,
And his passionate martial desire,
And had told him no stories to woo him and whet him
To this dire crusade!"'[4]

The poet thus discredits trite patriotic and heroic expectations on all sides, reaffirming his belief that once the observer opens his eyes to 'the human side of the matter', 'glory' is excluded from the reckoning. The dead are missed as ordinary men: and those content with this new understanding -

... 'Fame we prized till to-day;
Yet that hearts keep us green for old kindness we prize now
A thousand times more!'

1 'The Departure'.

2 op. cit., No.3871, 4th January 1902, p.7.

3 Silkin offers a good interpretation in Out of Battle, pp.48-9.

4 In The Cornhill Magazine, NS Vol.VIII, April 1900, pp. [433]-436; reprinted, with revisions, in Hardy's 1901 collection.

- wing home, apotheosized almost, 'Like the Pentecost Wind'; while 'those of bitter traditions' Hardy dismisses in his magnificent penultimate stanza.

As ordinary men, the soldiers leave behind them wives, families, sweethearts; and the suffering of the war's fire-side victims also came under the poet's sympathetic scrutiny, inspiring verse so characteristic that it blended into the wider body of his work, scarcely distinguishable as 'war-poetry'. For instance, 'A Wife in London' pivoted on the heavy irony - 'almost too facile', Silkin judges -[1] whereby a soldier's wife, in her miserable Thames-side home, receives a happy letter from the Front on the morning after a swifter telegram had announced her husband's death:

> Fresh-firm-penned in highest feather-
> Page-full of his hoped return,
> And of home-planned jaunts by brake and burn
> In the summer weather,
> And of new love that they would learn.[2]

- as so often in his novels, Hardy demonstrated that more painful even than the moment of tragedy is the lasting, bitter irony which follows. 'The Dear', resulting from the poet's chance encounter with 'A maiden one fain would guard', was published in Newbolt's Monthly Review in acknowledgement of the Peace settlement:

1 op. cit., p.47.

2 In Poems of the Past and the Present. Later editions dropped the two sectional headings, 'The Tragedy' and 'The Irony'.

She glanced from me to the far-off gray,
  And, with proud severity:
"Good-morning to you;-though I may say
  I am not <u>your</u> Dear," quoth she:

"For I am the Dear of one not here-
  One far from his native land!"-
And she passed me by; and I did not try
  To make her understand.[1]

- the poem's first readers escaped the clogging stanza 2 introduced when it was collected in <u>Time's Laughingstocks</u> 1909, and could better savour this note of unspoken, unforgiving reproach towards the greedy war.

Most striking, however, were the 'departure-poems' inspired by Hardy's deliberate attendance at the events which other writers found to be so stirring: here, he played his part as the man standing in a crowd whose sentiments he scarcely shared, and his reactions disappointed those readers who sought customary consolation and exhortation. Thus in 'Departure' he considered the scene while 'the far farewell music thins and fails', noting how 'Keen sense of severance everywhere prevails' and imagining that the very tramp of the soldiers' boots on the gangplank had beat out the condemnation of War expressed in his question 'How long, O striving Teutons, Slavs, and Gaels...?' The inexorably progressive 'The Going of the Battery' treated the subject in still more disconcerting fashion, as Hardy re-created the wet, dark, dreary, unglamorous scene in which the military trappings themselves became frankly ominous in his sight:

1 <u>op. cit.</u>, Vol.VII, June 1902, p. [163].

> Great guns were gleaming there -living things seeming there-
> Cloaked in their tar-cloths, upnosed to the night...[1]

His attention was caught particularly by the tearful womenfolk, and he imaginatively entered into their pitiful situation:

> Yet -voices haunting us, daunting us, taunting us,
> Hint in the night-time when life-beats are low,
> Other and graver things... Hold we to braver things-
> Wait we -in trust- what Time's fulness shall know.[2]

- the war-poems' thematic arrangement in Poems of the Past and the Present allowed 'Time's fulness' to confound these hopes by bringing 'Affixing the Lists of Killed and Wounded' at the War Office. Just as the reader of The Dynasts who has seen the Death-figure appear at the Duchess of Richmond's Ball cannot share the spectators' enthusiasm for the spectacle as Wellington's troops march away to Waterloo,[3] so the discerning poet sees sadly through the tawdry romance of the real-life departures and laments that these may be 'Soldiers marching, all to die'. In 'The Colonel's Soliloquy', Hardy approached the situation from the view-point of a gallant old soldier,[4] trying to reconcile the 'heroic' and the 'human' implications of the warrior leaving for battle. Through what Gittings calls the poem's 'laconic Horatian form'[5] emerges the character of

1 In The Graphic, Vol.LX, 11th November 1899, p.662; emendations in Hardy's 1901 collection included the insertion of two stanzas (I,V). According to his theory that Hardy's Boer War verses were remarkable for following the styles of other poets, Gittings finds the work 'Browningesque' (The Older Hardy, p.101); Professor van Wyk Smith, however, calls it unsuccessfully 'Kiplingesque' in rhythm (op. cit., p.145).

2 'Know' was probably a misprint in The Graphic: the better reading 'show' was consistently used in subsequent reprintings.

3 Part Third, Act VI, Scene IV.

4 The poem was largely written around Major Arthur Henniker, the husband of Hardy's close friend. Bailey notes that the poet later wrote to Sir George Douglas: 'The colonel was meant to be merely an ordinary man of a romantic turn' (The Poetry of Thomas Hardy, p.117).

5 op. cit., p.100.

a worthy, loyal soldier who by no means resents the wounds and hardships suffered in his country's service: yet his war-weariness obscures exemplary martial virtues, and as he reflects that this departure might be his last he finds the patriotic send-off to be empty, inadequate to conceal the true implications-

> But now it's late to leave behind me one
> Who if, poor soul, her man goes underground,
> Will not recover as she might have done
> In days when hopes abound...[1]

Once again, the poet penetrates the surface romance, looking at the wife 'palely grieving' instead of the 'Dolly Gray' of the popular departure-song: the human cost of War which cannot balance the achievements of any particular conflict. In many ways, the Colonel epitomizes Hardy's attitude towards modern War: the world has long known and tolerated human strife, until it should accept that it has grown too old and tired 'To argue in the selfsame bloody mode'.

In his thoughtful Boer War verses, then, Hardy seriously challenged the 'patriotic' attitudes which he considered to be sentimentally and artistically distasteful. But when he arranged the pieces in his 1901 collection as a sequence of studies from the troops' embarkation to their homecoming, he closed on the unexpected note that War, after all, was becoming extinct. 'Song of the Soldiers' Wives' (later increased to 'Sweethearts' also), published in November 1900 as a premature conclusion to his 'war effusions',[2] allowed the women to anticipate joyfully the return of those who would leave 'No more, may be, to roam again'-

1 In Poems of the Past and the Present.

2 Letter of 24th December 1900: in One Rare Fair Woman, p.99.

> Now all the town shall ring to them,
> Shall ring to them,
> And we who love them cling to them
> And clasp them joyfully...

- while, as we have seen, 'The Sick God' was confidently described as becoming 'god no more'. Like the wives in 'The Going of the Battery', the poet now allowed himself to hold on to 'braver things': a luxury scarcely granted, however, to the audience of The Dynasts, whose parts appeared in 1903, 1906, and 1908.

The epic-drama took for its subject

> ...the Great Historical Calamity, or Clash of Peoples, artificially brought about some hundred years ago.[1]

- in other words, the Great Napoleonic Wars which (as the national Trafalgar centenary celebrations demonstrated) by then amounted to a very important episode, legendary as much as historical, in the patriotic 'matter of Britain'.[2] And as far as The Dynasts dealt with this country's part in overthrowing the tyrant Napoléon, it revealed (not, as Harold Orel suggests, 'a patriotic treatment of a great moment in national history')[3] that - to emend Primate Alexander's phrase - our splendid English history was one voluminous misapprehension. Hardy created for 'the mental spectator' a panorama of such vast scale and scope that its individual events, from the great legendary battles to the

1 'Preface', p.vii : all quotations from the Collected Edition 1910.

2 cf. Henry Reed, 'The Making of "The Dynasts"', in John Lehmann (ed.), The Penguin New Writing, No.18, July-September 1943, pp.144-5.

3 Thomas Hardy's Epic-Drama 1963, p.49.

petty deeds of imaginary common people, merged to form a single parable of War; and most significantly, he conceived a cosmic machinery which excluded the loving, assentient 'God' whom patriots believed could extract a higher purpose from mankind's striving and suffering, positing instead the Immanent Will - the universe's motive force which directs without understanding, purpose, gratitude, or compassion.[1] The spectator consequently watches the drama on two levels, the Olympian (where his reactions are guided by the exchanges between the 'Spirits') and the earthly, at which the characters act out their parts almost unaware of the Will's all-embracing Web: in effect, Hardy thus elaborated the position from which he had written his Boer War poems, inviting the spectator to see 'the subject...familiar to all'[2] close up, through discerning eyes, and to relate this to a gloomy concept of the universe.

Throughout the drama, the English characters undoubtedly display nobility and heroism which would not disgrace a 'patriotic' rendering of the matter of Britain. Nelson dies at Trafalgar in a scene which Newbolt praised as adding beauty even to Dr. Beatty's account;[3] Sir John Moore's burial at Coruña after the successful stand is reminiscent of Charles Wolfe's frequently-anthologized poem on the subject;[4] ordinary people prepare to defend their country

1 cf. Reed on The Dynasts marking literature's step from the nineteenth century's dominant Christianity to the twentieth's agnosticism (op. cit., p.139).

2 'Preface', p.ix.

3 'The Dynasts', in The Monthly Review, Vol.XIV, March 1904, p.4.

4 Part Second, Act III, Scene IV.

from Napoléon's invasion. The strategic movements at Waterloo are carefully detailed - we think of Hardy's interest in the South African campaigns - and epic speeches are heard, such as Wellington's

> ...That he, I, every Englishman afield,
> Must fall upon the spot we occupy,
> Our wounds in front.[1]

Gratuitous 'heroic' incidents are introduced also, as with the dying Sergeant of the Forty-third and his ragged men whose spirited resistance on the road near Astorga drives back their French pursuers;[2] even Hardy's prose admits partisan bias, for instance when describing Moore's force as 'the little English army - a pathetic fourteen thousand of foot only':

> This harassed force now appears as if composed of quite other than the men observed in the Retreat insubordinately straggling along like vagabonds. ... They resemble a double palisade of red stakes, the only gaps being those that the melancholy necessity of scant numbers entails here and there.[3]

The device of repeatedly focusing attention briefly on such episodes convinces the spectator that in fragmented cases War can be ennobling, uplifting, inspiring; that from Wellington down to the humblest trooper on the battlefield, a man can sincerely strive to fulfil a higher end in fighting and dying for his country, his Cause. But when forced to see War from other sides, we cannot accept that the tolerable aspects compensate for its overwhelmingly disagreeable content.

1 Part Third, Act VII, Scene VII.

2 Part Second, Act III, Scene I.

3 Part Second, Act III, Scene III.

Thus Hardy takes his spectator down among off-the-battlefield events, to see the wounded, the cowardly, the stragglers, the camp-followers:

> Quaint poesy, and real romance of war!

jeers the Spirit Ironic after watching Moore's drunken deserters.[1] These insights into 'the human side of the matter' are supplemented by Olympian observation of the battles, whence armies appear merely as red and blue forces crawling across the landscape and their clashes are seen as impersonal, bestial. The action at Albuera, for example, inscribed in patriotic annals as the model of British heroism in the face of impossible odds, prompts one of Hardy's most lurid prose directions:

> The ghastly climax of the strife is reached; the combatants are seen to be firing grape and canister at speaking distance, and discharging musketry in each other's faces when so close that their complexions may be recognized. Hot corpses, their mouths blackened by cartridge-biting, and surrounded by cast-away knapsacks, firelocks ...together with red and blue rags of clothing, gaiters, epaulettes, limbs, and viscera, accumulate on the slopes....[2]

In particular, the legendary Waterloo engagement progressively degenerates into an unholy slaughter, ending with the massacre of the Frenchmen left on the field, a wild 'hunt' after those who are fleeing, and a haunting spectacle of the casualties as night falls.[3] Histories of the Napoleonic campaigns - such

1 Part Second, Act III, Scene I.

2 Part Second, Act VI, Scene IV.

3 Part Third, Act VII, Scene VIII.

as Napier's Peninsular War, which Hardy used as one of his sources - had acknowledged that the battles had been decidedly not 'pritty': but with his disposition to re-create human suffering 'with a painful realism', the poet presented War's horrors in a way which denied the possibility of extracting any 'patriotic' consolation or heroic inspiration. The characters in The Dynasts become increasingly coarsened, their struggles rise to a climax of barbarity at Waterloo,[1] so that to the all-seeing spectator the willing service and sacrifice is rendered merely pitiful, the battles merely sickening, dehumanising, futile. Though the participants believe that they 'see well what we are doing' and, on their earthly level, often do it heroically and splendidly, the spectator knows that there is no redeeming, higher sense in which their suffering and sacrifice is sweet and fitting: at the height of Waterloo itself, the Immanent Will's web, the 'ubiquitous urging', is visualised for us, 'connecting all the apparently separate shapes', including Wellington[2]- just as throughout It has guided the characters' supposedly free actions, tangling them, blind and impotent, in Its inscrutable, purposeless designs.

The epic-drama's instalments were received with mixed feelings by its first readers, who criticized the unactable-play form, the verse, and, especially, Hardy's interpretation of the universe. A TLS reviewer felt that the poet's outlook

1 cf. Orel, op. cit., pp.93-7; also Silkin, op. cit., pp.33-6.

2 Part Third, Act VII, Scene VII.

divested the characters of humanity, marking the cul-de-sac of his pessimism and denying the audience any opportunity of sympathizing with the tragic victims:

> ...Here there is nothing to fight, and we see not men, but puppets. Mr. Hardy is on the side of his angels, and the world has withered.[1]

Newbolt, although he generally admired the work, could not accept the exclusion of the Christian God from Creation.[2] Later commentators, too, have pursued Hardy's own insistence that he did not view mankind as helpless puppets in a purposeless universe: most notably, J.O. Bailey argues that he expounded an 'evolutionary meliorism' whereby the Will can gradually become conscious and purposeful through experiencing the suffering of Its human particles - indeed, that Hardy yearned for the awakening of a loving God to care for mankind.[3]

However, the justification for such attempts to restore an ultimate meaning for human activity emerges with difficulty from The Dynasts. It is true that the work closes with the Pities leading the other Spirits in what Henry Reed calls an 'exalted' expression of Christian hope -[4]

> ...That the rages
> Of the ages
> Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
> Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair![5]

1 'Mr. Thomas Hardy's Drama', op. cit., 15th January 1904, pp.11-12.

2 See 'The Dynasts', loc. cit., pp.11-12; also 'A New Departure in English Poetry', in The Quarterly Review, Vol.CCX, January 1909, pp.206-9.

3 Thomas Hardy and the Cosmic Mind 1956, especially Ch.4; also pp.214-5.

4 'The Making of "The Dynasts"', loc. cit., p.140.

5 Part Third, After Scene.

- but this optimism is sapped by the many instances in which the Spirits remember that the Great Historical Calamity is a show put on by the Will, implying that after Napoléon some new Dynast will appear, destined likewise to be hurled from his throne:

> So hath the Urging Immanence used to-day
> Its inadvertent might to field this fray;
> And Europe's wormy dynasties rerobe
> Themselves in their old gilt, to dazzle anew the globe![1]

The argument that when the Will perceives sufficient suffering It must eventually cause this to end reminds one of the comment made by Rawnsley's Boer War stretcher-bearer who never wanted to see another shot fired having eventually been taught 'how horrible war is'; and Owen's desire to make his fireside patriot pace behind the wagon that the gassed soldier had been flung in. Yet Hardy, and his audience, were well aware that the Napoleonic Wars had been followed by the Crimean conflict, along with all Queen Victoria's 'little wars'; during the Great South African War the poet cried in despair

> How long, O striving Teutons, Slavs, and Gaels...?

- and his answer was the more momentous World War, whose savagery and horror appalled even him. 'Meliorism' was an illogical conclusion to draw from history and experience; and the only way for the poet to escape from his pessimistic cul-de-sac was for him to have faith in the spirit of humanity. Hence his comment to Archer in 1901 that, appearances not-withstanding, War was 'doomed by the gradual growth of the

1 Part Third, Act VII, Scene VIII.

introspective faculty in mankind'; and his reply to the TLS reviewer that the quality of human existence depended more on mankind than on the incomprehensible Will -

> ... men's lives and actions...being less dependent on abstract reasonings than on the involuntary inter-social emotions, which would more probably be strengthened than weakened by a sense that humanity and other animal life ...forms the conscious extremity of a pervading urgence, or will.[1]

Rather than trying to view the universe from the Overworld, mankind should take comfort from the belief that living and dying here on earth contribute significantly to an Ultimate Purposefulness.

Despite all War's horror and absurdity, there had to remain a place for 'involuntary inter-social emotions' like patriotism: and when the World War began, the poet who had castigated the South African conflict and easy loyal attitudes and interpretations of history evoked indispensable 'traditional ritual meaning'[2] as fresh soldiers departed to fight for Britain's cause -

1 TLS, 19th February 1904, p.53. See also the issues of 29th January 1904, p.30, and 5th February, pp.36-7.

2 Fussell, op. cit., pp.58-9.

Is it a purblind prank, O think you,
Friend with the musing eye
Who watch us stepping by,
With doubt and dolorous sigh?
Can much pondering so hoodwink you!

. . . . . .

Nay. We see well what we are doing,
Though some may not see-
Dalliers as they be!-
England's need are we;
Her distress would set us rueing...[1]

Thus the doubtful, melancholy poet standing in the loyal crowd accepts a rebuke from the fighting-men: unlike his gloomy philosophy, their suffering and death enable life to go on.

So ceases and turns to the thing
He was born to be
A soldier cheap to the King
And dear to me.

(More Poems XL)

In November 1910, Frank Harris pounced 'like a wolf on the fold'[2] and persuaded the Professor of Latin at London's University College to join a luncheon-party. But Housman eventually fled, in what was recorded as a painful scene:

1 'Song of the Soldiers', in The Times, 9th September 1914, p.9; slightly revised and retitled 'Men Who March Away', included in Satires of Circumstance 1914.

2 Letter to Grant Richards, 15th November 1910: in Maas (ed.), The Letters of A.E. Housman, p.113.

> 'At last I [Harris] turned to him and said: "That first poem of yours, the one in which you sing the lads of your country who've been butchered in this or that quarter of the globe to buttress up the insensate Imperialism of our rulers took my very heart when I read it. I call it 'God save the Queen'... Yes, God will save her, the old --, until the many refuse to be fooled any longer."
> 'To my astonishment Housman was indignant, stammered that I had utterly misread him.... And yet surely my misreading was a natural one, bettered his meaning, indeed, if he only had the wit to see it. How was I to know... that a man steeped in savage disgust of life could find comfort in out-cheapening Kipling at his cheapest?'[1]

A sensitive, retiring Tory gentleman, the author of A Shropshire Lad 1896 would resent ill-mannered attacks on any of his poems: yet Harris's comments about '1887' evidently gave deeper offence than the political provocation warranted.

> Despite acknowledging the dangers -
>
> Of all the virtues, he said, the one which had inspired the least amount of good poetry was patriotism, the reason being that it so easily degenerated into vice, for when poets began praising their own country they commonly ended by insulting others.[2]

- Housman was a 'patriotic poet', though one whose work certainly did not lead to 'out-cheapening Kipling'.[3] Still less even than Hardy, the painstaking writer (whom friends conceded 'neither looked nor talked like a poet...seemed to disdain the artist in himself, to be contemptuous of temperament')[4] was not a commentator on national affairs.

1 Hugh Kingsmill, Frank Harris 1932, pp.195-6. cf. Cleanth Brooks, 'Alfred Edward Housman', in Christopher Ricks (ed.), A.E. Housman: A Collection of Critical Essays 1968, pp.73-8.

2 Laurence Housman, A.E.H. 1937, pp.83-4. For an interesting account of the poet's reaction to other patriotic writers, see P.A. Larkin, 'Palgrave's Last Anthology: A.E. Housman's Copy', in The Review of English Studies, NS Vol. XXII, August 1971, pp.312-6.

3 R.B. Pearsall, however, deplores his affection for conventional attitudes: 'The Vendible Values of Housman's Soldiery', in PMLA, Vol.LXXXII, March 1967, pp.85-90.

4 William Rothenstein, Men and Memories, Vol.II, 1932, p.39.

'1887', for example, was perfected long after the Golden Jubilee, appearing only in 1896; most of the poems conceived during the late 1890s and as Housman's response to the Boer War were not completed or made public prior to his 1922 collection, Last Poems, while other pieces remained hidden until after his death in 1936 - and it was remarkable that his twentieth-century readers found this work far from obsolete. The finely-chiselled poems had a didactic intention insofar as they sought to 'transfuse emotion':[1] but this had nothing to do with vaunting abstract patriotic values of 'Liberty' and 'Justice', recounting Britain's splendid Past, or celebrating 'the Blood', 'the Five Nations', 'Greater Britain'. Indeed, the creation of Housman's timeless countryside setting - which would be 'pastoral' but for the all-pervading pain and unhappiness - could scarcely be less Kiplingesque, leaving the Empire as 'lands of morn', 'Africk and...Ind', remote places where men went to fight, die, rest separated from loved ones. The poet did promote many conventional attitudes, much traditional artistry: yet the patriotic and soldier-verses, which coloured only part of the canvas, were offered on his distinctive terms, transformed by his poetic imagination into a unique contribution to loyal writing. Housman's first publisher suggested that to secure greater popularity the Shropshire Lad verses should be re-written into 'a romance of enlistment';[2] and the poet

1 See Housman's The Name and Nature of Poetry 1933, p.12.

2 Laurence Housman, op. cit., p.83.

received a hesitant welcome from the public. William Archer went in advance of general opinion when, reviewing A Shropshire Lad in Grant Richards' 1898 edition, he praised Housman as being 'English of the English': admiring the 'curiously simple, original, and expressive' style which was so metrically precise, he detected an affinity with old-fashioned rustic ballads and a sympathy with Hardy's outlook, and approved Housman's main themes as 'stoical pessimism', 'a dogged rather than an exultant patriotism', 'wistful cynicism'.[1]

The contemporary audience never fully knew just how mundane Housman's patriotic expression could be, because, happily, his notebook jottings remained private. An adolescent poem, 'Sir Walter Raleigh', had betrayed an imagination apparently nourished on loyal verse-anthologies:

> The wearied sun with vain endeavour
> Toils on his burning path for ever
> And sees beneath, on every side
> Her empire stretching far and wide...[2]

- and the most undistinguished rhetorical strains re-appeared in the poet's notebooks:

> Now forms the line and faces
> The lead that spits and rains,
> And fleet the red blood races
> Along the soldier's veins.[3]

1 'A Shropshire Poet', in The Fortnightly Review, NS Vol.LXIV, August 1898, pp.[263]-271. (Reprinted in Poets of the Younger Generation 1902.)

2 From William White, 'Un Poème Inédit de A.E. Housman: Sir Walter Raleigh', in Études Anglaises, VI[e] Année, Novembre 1953, pp.[346]-349.

3 Written c. 1905: in T.B. Haber (ed.), The Manuscript Poems of A.E. Housman 1955, p.77.

It was not until such pieces were worked into fully-conceived poems - a process which could take twenty years - that they acquired special significance. But even Housman's published verse occasionally strayed close to dull convention. The 'love-of-the-countryside' element, for instance, could be facile:

> High the vanes of Shrewsbury gleam
> Islanded in Severn stream;
> The bridges from the steepled crest
> Cross the water east and west.[1]

His moralizing sometimes emerged too blandly, as with the lament in A Shropshire Lad XXIII for those who formerly frequented Ludlow Fair:

> They carry back bright to the coiner the mintage of man,
> The lads that will die in their glory and never be old

- sentiments which approach those of Mrs. Fleming's consolatory verses on 'Young Never-Grow-Old'.

The soldiers who figured in Housman's work also owed much to convention: country-lads, wearing the time-honoured red uniforms and following the music of fife and drums, these were antique types from a tradition older than that of the cockney, urban Tommy Atkins of Kipling and the Music Halls.[2] Thus A Shropshire Lad III, 'The Recruit', dwelt on the country-lad going away to the Army - any lad, in any age, provided that

1 A Shropshire Lad XXVIII.

2 For studies attempting to identify Housman's soldiers with the Kiplingesque types, see Pearsall, 'The Vendible Values of Housman's Soldiery', loc. cit.; also Norman Marlow, A.E. Housman: Scholar and Poet 1958, pp.88-9.

Ludlow Tower still stands - and with its allusions to 'lands of morn' the poem remained located in Housman's timeless 'England'; the soldier's prospects are either to return to a loyal welcome -

> And Ludlow chimes are playing
> "The conquering hero comes"...

- or else to rest in the comfort of knowing, and assurance that others remember, that he died usefully for his country:

> And you till trump of doomsday
> On lands of morn may lie,
> And make the hearts of comrades
> Be heavy where you die.
>
> Leave your home behind you,
> Your friend by field and town:
> Oh, town and field will mind you
> Till Ludlow tower is down.

Poem XXXIV in the 1896 collection, 'The New Mistress', took up the themes that the Queen's Army provides a substitute lady-love for the soldier (treated by Kipling in 'The Widow's Party', and later by 'Coldstreamer' in his Boer War ballad 'The Queen's Chocolate'), allowing a dry colloquial humour to reveal that the aspiring recruit has no illusions about the arduousness of his new service:

> "I will go where I am wanted, where there's room for one or two,
> And the men are none too many for the work there is to do;
> Where the standing line wears thinner and the dropping dead lie thick;
> And the enemies of England they shall see me and be sick."

- crude, unheroic sentiment finally overtakes the rhetoric of 'the standing line wears thinner', as Housman insists that England will profit not from patriotic idealism but from the plain anger of the frustrated swain.

When the soldiers take their place in Housman's poetic world, however, they acquire a fascinating, unique dimension: his bleak world, filled with murders, executions, motiveless crimes; the separation of loved ones by oceans, quarrels, death; the overwhelming sense that all life is moving towards the earth, grave, dust, which mark its absolute end. In A Shropshire Lad XXXV, the poet imagines himself roused from 'the idle hill of summer':

> Far and near and low and louder
> On the roads of earth go by,
> Dear to friends and food for powder,
> Soldiers marching, all to die.
>
> East and west on fields forgotten
> Bleach the bones of comrades slain,
> Lovely lads and dead and rotten;
> None that go return again.
>
> Far the calling bugles hollo,
> High the screaming fife replies,
> Gay the files of scarlet follow:
> Woman bore me, I will rise.

This vision of soldiering's rewards is stark: service is inspired by the death-dance military music, and the narrator yields to an impulse more primal and less explicable than 'love of country', 'honour', 'duty'. Housman's soldier-types, like all men, are treading the path to death - his characteristic lingering admiration for what Fussell identifies as 'beautiful suffering lads'[1] makes their fate seem still more poignant - but he counsels resignation to the inevitable.

1 op. cit., p.282. The influence of Housman's homosexuality on his soldier-poems is particularly emphasized by George Watson in A.E. Housman: A Divided Life 1957.

These are simply called to die sooner than others, being positively 'in love with the grave'; and although their sacrifice stirs morbid foreboding and deep sadness in the poet, he neither questions the precise circumstances of their deeds on 'fields forgotten' nor resents the loss. The 'stoical pessimism' which Archer so valued[1] enabled the atheistic Housman to accept, far more calmly than Thomas Hardy, the sorrow, pain, and death without searching desperately for some higher purpose to redeem mankind's existence. The poetry composed partly in ill-health and personal unhappiness was intended to 'harmonise the sadness of the universe' -

> This is for all ill-treated fellows
> Unborn and unbegot,
> For them to read when they're in trouble
> And I am not.[2]

- and achieved this not by offering tinsel-and-gaud decorations, but by encouraging the reader to resign himself to the worst conceivable: to expurge grief by full indulgence. In the consolatory art which caught at emotions rather than reason, Housman's Soldier acted out a melancholy drama, the pitiable victim of nothing so easily identified and remedied as political machinations, or War, but of the human passions and earthly chances shared by all.

From this resignation to mankind's unalterable lot emerged the poet's 'dogged' and not 'exultant' brand of

1 On the possible Classical inspiration of Housman's attitude, see Marlow, op. cit., Ch.III.

2 Prefatory verses to More Poems 1936.

patriotism, holding the narrow ground between blank futility - Hardy's dreaded Ultimate Purposelessness - and the pessimism which taught a man to make the most of his life before the end came. Just as a timeless 'England' endures despite everything, so it could be hoped that Britain and her Empire would survive the mortal span of individuals and generations, the lasting achievement of those who strove and died for her. Housman's soldiers seldom profess heroic virtues ostentatiously, yet they seem to find fulfilment in their soldiering: even when hastening to the fatal rendezvous which so moves the reader. Patriotic values provided the means of living with a purpose, but were to be treated somewhat cynically since they, also, led to the grave. There were indeed ambiguities in the tone of '1887', as when Housman flatly employed the 'Christ-soldier' conceit, saying that the never-returning fighting-men had 'shared the work with God' and were 'saviours' though 'Themselves they could not save': but Frank Harris mistook for sarcasm what Housman intended as a subtle reminder of the loyal attitudes which must be held for the soldiers' sacrifice to remain worthwhile, leading up to a firm patriotic exhortation.[1]

It has been argued that Housman was in a position to respond well to the 'national emergency' of the South African War:

1 See Brian Gasser, 'A Soldier Cheap to the King and Dear to Me', in Housman Society Journal, Vol.4, 1978, pp.31-2. (The article also introduces other material used in the present discussion.)

> ...united in spirit with the young men who slept on desolate colonial battlefields, and perhaps also visited by those stabs of remorse which afflict the non-combatant in such a context, Housman was admirably fitted, it would have seemed, to become the valedictorian of an age whose anxious last phase coincided with the highest reach of his own sensibilities....[1]

- and that his failure to compose more than 'several of his finest ballads and elegies' or to produce 'a surging Ode upon the Death of Queen Victoria' revealed the decline of his talent.[2] But, surely, no poet was less likely to offer the public a spontaneous 'surging Ode'. The war indeed stirred Housman unprecedentedly into writing two occasional poems, 'Illic Jacet' and, with its sour observation on the Peace, 'The Olive' -

> Close should the fruit be clustered,
> And light the leaf should wave,
> So deep the root is planted
> In the corrupting grave[3]

- yet the main stimulus, predictably, was to his private note-book working, whose results were not revealed until after the World War. The Boer conflict provided Housman with plentiful 'experience' of 'Soldiers marching, all to die' and attractive young men sacrificing their lives on desolate colonial battlefields: but the attitude of mournful acceptance and resignation, out of which his customary poetry should have emerged, was very badly shaken when, on 30th October 1901,

1 Watson, op. cit., p.176.

2 ibid., pp.174, 176.

3 In The Outlook, Vol.IX, 7th June 1902, p.592; reprinted in slightly revised form in Collected Poems 1939 etc.

the six months' South African military service of the poet's youngest brother ended with his death during the ambush on Colonel Benson's column near Brakenlaagte.[1]

George Watson refuses to accept that Housman was greatly attached to 'one who had been, during most of his life, a virtual stranger', judging that the Boer War verses celebrate a Soldier who is 'not so much of a literal Tommy Atkins or even a brother now engaged in combat' but 'some abstract figure who epitomized in his imagination the unfulfilled, cut-off-in-its-prime spirit of youth'.[2] However, the Housman family, in which the poet was the eldest son, was closely-knit. Mrs. Symons, a sister, testified that Herbert Housman remained a favourite with him, whose career and death could be read into 'many of the soldiering verses that A.E.H. wrote - though not into all';[3] and there was no reason why the poet should remain distant from the brother whose regiment was home-based from 1892 until 1901 - to whom he had sent the birthday-gift copy of Kipling's newly-published Barrack-Room Ballads,[4] and in whose pre-embarkation leave he probably shared early in 1901.[5] It is debatable to what extent Herbert Housman's peace-time activities influenced the poet's soldier-types during the 1890s: but certainly the painful loss of a

1 See Gasser, op. cit., pp.33-4.

2 op. cit., pp.175, 174.

3 'Boyhood', in Alfred Edward Housman, p.26.

4 See Ch.IV(iv) above.

5 cf. John Pugh, Bromsgrove and the Housmans 1974, p.lxvii; also Laurence Housman, The Unexpected Years 1937, p.168.

brother who was more than an abstract Soldier had a marked effect on the attitude towards 'dying for one's country' displayed in his later Boer War and subsequent 'patriotic' verses.

That the war's loyal volunteers provided a congenial subject for Housman - Haber says that the motif of 'the soldier's burial' recurred obsessively in his notebook throughout the conflict -[1] was demonstrated when 'Illic Jacet' appeared in February 1900:

> Oh hard is the bed they have made him,
> And common the blankets and cheap,
> But there he will lie as they laid him:
> Where else could you trust him to sleep?
>
> To sleep when the bugle is crying
> And cravens have heard and are brave,
> When mothers and sweethearts are sighing
> And lads are in love with the grave...[2]

Mrs. Symons later alleged that these lines were inspired by the personal bereavement,[3] and, despite the fact that they were published eighteen months before that event, many commentators have supported this. Yet the lament for an abstract Soldier employs too many of Housman's conventional devices to serve for his own brother: patriotic poetry's

1 The Manuscript Poems of A.E. Housman, p.24 fn.23.

2 In The Academy, Vol.LVIII, 24th February 1900, p.169; reprinted, slightly revised, as Last Poems IV.

3 op. cit., p.29. Mr. John Pugh reports that Housman copied out 'Illic Jacet' for members of the family after Herbert's death (private letter of 18th November 1977): Mrs. Symons' mistake presumably originated because she had not seen the periodical publication.

euphemisms soften War's unpleasant aspects ('bed' for the grave, 'blankets' and 'quilt' for the soil), conveying the comfortable notion that the fallen Soldier is

A sleeper content to repose

- a notion reinforced by the poet's distinctive suggestion that he 'lies with the sweetheart he chose'. 'Illic Jacet' was a war-poem of consolation and - 'cravens have heard and are brave'- exhortation; when included in Last Poems it was placed among the 'traditional' pieces near the start of the collection, separated from the works which Housman's bereavement really did influence.

The small group of personal poems in the 1922 volume (included with hesitation, apparently)[1] began with 'Astronomy', verses which had been set down in Housman's notebook late in the war,[2] and which were made public in a charity-album, against his wishes, in 1904.[3]

1 Haber, op. cit., pp.133, 135.

2 Haber, ibid., pp.24, 112.

3 viz. Wayfarer's Love, edited by the Duchess of Sutherland. For Housman's complaints, see Maas, Letters, p.68; also Grant Richards, Housman 1897-1936 1941, pp.56-7. It is not clear, however, how the Duchess obtained Housman's manuscript.

The Wain upon the northern steep
  Descends and lifts away.
Oh I will sit me down and weep
  For bones in Africa.

For pay and medals, name and rank,
  Things that he has not found,
He hove the Cross to heaven and sank
  The pole-star underground.

And now he does not even see
  Signs of the nadir roll
At night over the ground where he
  Is buried with the pole.[1]

Admiring this as Housman's 'most powerful contribution to the poetry of the Boer War', Professor van Wyk Smith notes how he 'strips the soldier's death of all its patriotic and heroic glamour', leaving a sense merely of the 'pitifully small importance' of the willing sacrifice.[2] Remarkable also is the poem's deeply personal accent: the 'strange-eyed constellations' theme, reminiscent of Hardy, conveys a stronger message of futility as Housman remembers his soldier-brother's genuine ambitions - Herbert's early enthusiasm for earning a gentleman-ranker's commission by merit was frustrated, since during ten years' service he attained only the rank of Lance-Sergeant.[3] The image 'hove the Cross' to heaven (which was drafted less richly as 'hove the Southern Cross')[4] seeks almost a religious consolation, though dominant is the poet's regret for the loss of one around whose grave his universe now revolves.

1 Last Poems XVII.

2 Drummer Hodge, pp.177-8.

3 Herbert's ambitions and character emerge clearly in the family letters sent from Burma, 1891-2, after his enlistment: property of The Housman Society.

4 Haber, op. cit., p.112.

'Astronomy' suggested that Housman had come to terms with his grief, allowing the unnamed 'he' to tend towards an abstract figure whose fate revealed the sadness of the universe. But in the work placed next in Last Poems, 'The rain, it streams on stone and hillock', old attitudes, old words even, were transformed in response to the bereavement, producing a bitter poem on 'the soldier's burial' which offered no consolatory sentiment. The verses were among Housman's most heavily re-drafted, the process of composition extending from approximately 1890 until 1922; the basic text, however, was achieved after October 1901,[1] when the poet was moved by letters sent from the Front by Herbert's comrades, and perhaps also by Press reports.

> The rain, it streams on stone and hillock,
> The boot clings to the clay.
> Since all is done that's due and right
> Let's home; and now, my lad, good-night,
> For I must turn away...[2]

- the rocky landscape, the wetness, the sense of haste, all these correspond to details in participants' letters,[3] enabling the poet to project himself into an imaginative re-creation of a scene whose mood is very far removed from the snugness surrounding the 'sleeper content to repose' of 'Illic Jacet'. Housman attempts to rehearse a characteristic stance:

1 Haber, ibid., pp.24, 28-9, 36, 114, 116-7, 135.

2 Last Poems XVIII.

3 For texts see Bromsgrove and the Housmans, pp.lxviii-lxxi: Mr. Pugh confirms that at least one letter was passed to the poet. Broad details of the important military action and its setting were provided by an officer's news-letter, published in The Times, 3rd December 1901, p.10; and by Kitchener's telegrams to the War Office (concerning the Boers' atrocities etc.), reproduced verbatim in the Press.

Good-night, my lad, for nought's eternal;
  No league of ours, for sure.
To-morrow I shall miss you less,
And ache of heart and heaviness
  Are things that time should cure

- but customary 'stoical pessimism' cannot accommodate the death of one who was more than an idealised patriotic Soldier, and the mournful yet not disconsolate resignation achieved by the end of stanza 4 is suddenly swept aside, so that the piece closes on an aching, despairing note:

But oh, my man, the house is fallen
  That none can build again;
My man, how full of joy and woe
Your mother bore you years ago
  To-night to lie in the rain.

The phrase 'the house that none rebuild', with its sense of how precious and irrecoverable is human life, had been composed a decade earlier,[1] but it finds a true place here, in the lament whose poignancy becomes still keener when the reader knows that Herbert's stripped body had actually lain exposed 'on the open veldt all night in the pouring rain',[2] and that Housman grieves for 'my brother', 'our mother'.

In Last Poems XVIII, the poet did not mention the war, or denigrate the Boers who abused his brother's corpse: but in this surreptitious 'war-poem' which broods on a death

1 Haber, op. cit., p.36.

2 Pugh, op. cit., p.lxviii.

brought prematurely and miserably, acceptance that the Soldier can be sacrificed usefully and tolerably in his country's cause has collapsed under the impact of personal loss. Still more revealing of Housman's strained loyalty were some verses seemingly dashed into a notebook[1] but never published during his lifetime:

> Farewell to a name and a number,
> Recalled again
> To darkness and silence and slumber
> In blood and pain.
>
> So ceases and turns to the thing
> He was born to be
> A soldier cheap to the King
> And dear to me;
>
> So smothers in blood the burning
> And flaming flight
> Of valour and truth, returning
> To dust and night.[2]

The official casualty-list for the Brakenlaagte engagement had contained the entry:

> 6365 Sgt. G.H. Honsman[3]

- and this misspelling of Herbert's surname caused the family distressing confusion.[4] Impulsively, the poet begrudged the life of the soldier who to his country was just a name and number carelessly recorded; and whose return to inevitable

1 Haber, op. cit., pp.x, 24.

2 More Poems XL.

3 The Times, 8th November 1901, p.6.

4 See The Bromsgrove ...Messenger, 9th November 1901, p.8.

'dust and night' came about horribly, unbearably. And in the disloyal reproach against 'the King', Housman is goaded into applauding his brother's patriotic qualities of 'valour and truth', now expended: we can perhaps understand his offence at Harris's slight on his regard for those 'lads of your country who've been butchered in this or that quarter of the globe...', a slight which reawoke personal sorrow and touched on deeply-held patriotic beliefs once so sorely tried.

Lance-Sergeant Housman was not an exceptional Victorian soldier, professing little patriotic idealism in the frank enjoyment of military life which was accompanied by grouses about duties and conditions: his prize marksmanship, the quest for medals and promotion, the exhilaration at shooting down rebel Chin hillsmen in Burma, the determination to hunt 'crooked conscienced' Boer guerrillas in South Africa.[1] But the process of making a conventional hero of him was begun by the family's local newspaper,[2] continued through his comrades' well-meaning letters of condolence, and was sealed by the regimental historian who recorded that 'Sergeant Houseman' (sic) was killed 'fighting splendidly'.[3] Shot in the chest, he died literally with all his wounds in front:

1 From a family letter, published in The Bromsgrove...Messenger, 16th November 1901, p.8.

2 The Messenger published several articles, November 1901 - February 1902, eulogising 'just the stamp of man that is required in South Africa' (9th November 1901, p.8); even a loose-leaf portrait was distributed (16th November).

3 H.R. Mends and others (eds.), The King's Royal Rifle Corps Chronicle 1902 1903, p.100.

and if life is to remain bearable for War's fireside spectators, the Soldier must be seen as brave and eager, his sacrifice must become purposeful, sweet and fitting despite its sadness. The attitude may rely on tinsel-and-gaud deception, but it is very necessary. Thus A.E. Housman turned from his intimate and disgusting experience of War and sent out the copies of his 'patriotic' poem 'Illic Jacet'; just as his sister gladly accepted a further copy in 1915 and felt that it helped to console her in bereavement.

When Last Poems eventually appeared, the post-World War audience heard patriotic soldiering verses with a still grimmer undertone. The two pieces which followed 'Illic Jacet' in the collection, for instance, evoked Housman's timeless poetic world and treated customary subjects - but with a new sourness. 'Grenadier', begun in a notebook close to the verses on Herbert's death,[1] resumed the theme of 'The New Mistress', that the Queen specially calls the young man to serve her: the soldier's reward, sardonically recognized, is paltry 'thirteen pence a day' and death -

> My mouth is dry, my shirt is wet,
> My blood runs all away,
> So now I shall not die in debt
> For thirteen pence a day.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> And I shall have to bate my price,
> For in the grave, they say,
> Is neither knowledge nor device
> Nor thirteen pence a day.[2]

1 Haber, op. cit., p.111.

2 Last Poems V.

'Lancer', on which Housman worked after the Boer War, sported with the rhetorical tag from Collins's 'Ode Written in the Year 1746':

> And I with the brave shall be sleeping
> At ease on my mattress of loam,
> When back from their taking and keeping
> The squadron is riding at home.
>
> The wind with the plumes will be playing,
> The girls will stand watching them wave,
> And eyeing my comrades and saying
> Oh who would not sleep with the brave?
>
> They ask and there is not an answer;
> Says you, I will 'list for a lancer,
> Oh who would not sleep with the brave?[1]

The fallen Soldier again rests comfortably, and military glamour attracts fresh recruits: but the 'brave' have sacrificed their earthly happiness (as promised by the adoring girls), and repetition of the patriotic words becomes merely ironic. Moreover, instead of the earlier 'Woman bore me, I will rise' mood, the poet showed a lover and his lass who, 'sighing', passively listen to doomed soldiers marching by, 'Through earth and out of life':

> And down the distance they
> With dying note and swelling
> Walk the resounding way
> To the still dwelling.[2]

Housman's later fighting-men sometimes welcomed death as a release from war-weary life -

1 Last Poems VI.

2 Last Poems VII.

Now no more of winters biting,
  Filth in trench from fall to spring,
Summers full of sweat and fighting
  For the Kesar or the King[1]

- but elsewhere his fallen soldiers were allowed to affirm their loyal virtues and to resent what had been demanded of them:

Here dead lie we because we did not choose
  To live and shame the land from which we sprung.
Life, to be sure, is nothing much to lose;
  But young men think it is, and we were young.[2]

Norman Marlow comments that 'Apart from the resentment in the last line...this is typical of a score of [Greek] epigrams';[3] yet the poem's essence lies precisely in that resentment which recalls the bitterness of the World War epitaphs penned by the bereaved Kipling.

The 1914-1918 conflict itself inspired a public poem which typified Housman's contribution to 'dogged' rather than 'exultant' patriotic verse, and which perhaps explained the renewed appeal of his somewhat crabbed fireside war-poetry. 'Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries' appeared in The Times on 31st October 1917, the anniversary of the first Ypres battle (and, interestingly, almost of his brother's death also):

1 Last Poems VIII.

2 More Poems XXXVI.

3 op. cit., p.47.

These, in the day when heaven was falling,
  The hour when earth's foundation fled,
Followed their mercenary calling
  And took their wages and are dead.

Their shoulders held the sky suspended;
  They stood, and earth's foundations stay;
What God abandoned, these defended,
  And saved the sum of things for pay.[1]

This was not 'conventional patriotism at its most conventional',[2] stressing as it does the lack of idealism in the 'mercenary calling', and accumulating hyperbole to the extent that the poet may be suspected of audacious sarcasm: rather, Housman has returned to the device of '1887', elevating and decorating the ideals which patriots must profess, yet - not unlike Crosland in 'Slain' - acknowledging the act of conscious self-deception through which the rhetoric remains meaningful. The hired soldiers fought because that was their job: in patriotic imaginations, their 'wages' become the glory of dying to save the civilized world. The old verse-tradition was being assaulted by those trench-poets determined to tell the truth about War: but a fireside poet like Housman had learned as long ago as the Boer War the price and value of the consolation whereby the civilian's human agony was endured.

1 op. cit., p.7; reprinted as Last Poems XXXVII.

2 Pearsall, op. cit., p.86.

Conclusion

On 6th June 1902, the TLS commented in its editorial 'Notes':

> The Peace Settlement in South Africa revives the vexed question whether the influence of war on literature is good or bad. The Napoleonic wars led to one of the greatest literary eras in our history. Whether the South African war will have a similar effect or not, the coming of peace is certain to stimulate the productiveness both of authors and publishers....[1]

This comparison with the great Napoleonic struggles was significant as an acknowledgement of the unlooked-for magnitude of events during the preceding three years. As for the Boer conflict's influence on poetry, however, there was to be ushered in no era of remarkable new achievement. The actual war-experience had provided the strongest impulse for composition: afterwards, poets busied themselves by publishing works which had originated in direct response to the events (sometimes material was saved up, often verses were recovered from newspapers or periodicals), but comparatively little attempt was made to follow the Wordsworthian precept of creating poetry from 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'. Housman's 'Boer War' poems appearing in 1922 were exceptional in this respect. The crisis over, impetus was lost for the production of verse which had in any case seldom gone in advance of its audience's expectation of flattery, exhortation, consolation; and in retrospect, the war seemed to lack the glamour, heroism, and noble achievement which should have

1 op. cit., p.167.

provided lasting inspiration. Indeed, the doubts and shaken idealism so evident during the conflict later gave birth to dark works such as Alice Buckton's The Burden of Engela 1904, a 'ballad-epic' recounting the sad experiences of a Boer mother and her family.

That the TLS was able to pose the general 'vexed question' about War's influence on literature was an indication of the dissatisfaction with the South African conflict's poetry widely expressed by critics throughout and after the war-years. Innumerable writers had responded to the impulse and opportunity to produce verse, from a sense of loyal duty, 'for England's sake': but not only the amateur bards' occasional contributions were 'undistinguished, ordinary, mediocre, or worse',[1] a fact which could not be entirely obscured by appreciation of poets' impeccable didactic motives. Established authors who took up the well-worn patriotic lyre - from Austin to Swinburne to Conan Doyle - also confirmed the deeply-rooted artistic tradition which interpreted narrowly poetry's function and need to inspire and instruct, thereby re-affirming the standards of acceptable, even admirable, verse-writing which to modern readers like Professor C.K. Stead seem so exasperatingly low. Yet the uneasiness expressed by contemporary commentators revealed the decay which was setting into the old tradition: the wooden pomposity, and the inclination towards music-hall jingoism, journalism, vulgar

1 Samuel Hynes, 'Fighting Men's Doggerel', in TLS, 14th July 1978, p.794. (A review of Drummer Hodge.)

'Kiplingism', all dangerous to Morality as well as to Art. The crisis of patriotism generated by the war, too, somewhat discredited the matter and artistry taken for granted in the fireside verse. The shrill anti-war agitation offered little that was of literary interest, but there was significance in Watson's attempts to challenge his audience by working with the recognized loyal tradition, as also in the troubled religious sentiments of Canon Rawnsley and the humanitarian dissent of Thomas Hardy.

The war failed to raise up any poets of lasting reputation. Henry Newbolt was one rising author whose position was strengthened by his contributions, but more remarkable was the decline of several fellow-poets. Henley's 'sheaflet' of war-verses scarcely enhanced his artistic achievement; Watson's pro-Boer work speeded the eclipse inevitably resulting from his stubbornness in upholding the English 'classical' tradition; Edgar Wallace became a victim of the strong reaction against the Kiplingism with which he had amused the public; and most surprising was the set-back suffered by the Laureate of Empire himself. The South African War rubbed the lustre from Imperialism, and criticism of the poetry of 'palpable design' in The Five Nations when couched in terms such as

> ...We have had Mr. Kipling's lessons concerning kinship, geography, war, and politics so dinned into our ears by his and other forcible means that they now seem stale, innovations which have become truisms...[1]

1 The Athenaeum, No.3963, 10th October 1903, p.474.

showed that the changing ideals required a fresh approach in literature: the war, however, had altered Kipling's views even more radically than those of his audience, so that he determined to revise the style and appeal of the didactic artistry of whose value he was still further convinced.

In the conflict's prose writing, sincere attempts were made to gratify the public's curiosity about 'the Ordeal of War', 'How does it feel to be in Battle?'.[1] The verse, though, preferred to concentrate on 'the rhetoric and gestures of heroism', even when produced by soldier-poets, allowing the hearthside ideals and illusions to remain for the most part comfortably undisturbed. In this last body of 'war-poetry' to be written primarily by acquiescent civilians, certain parallels and precedents for the World War's new-style art are discernible - anger, bitterness, disillusion-ment, resentment, war-weariness, futility - but it seems difficult to argue that there were direct links with the anti-War sentiments which emerged from the painful experiences of the trench-poets. During the 1914-1918 war, not only did Boer War writing enjoy a small revival but the home audience turned readily to the old patriotic tradition as represented for example by the solidly loyal productions of Watson, the lyrical cries of Rupert Brooke, and later the cynical affirmations of Housman: the trench-poets grasped a new truth to tell, and poetry is always justified by the special experiences, understanding, vision which inspire it.

1 From the subtitle of James Milne's The Epistles of Atkins 1902 (reprinted in 1914).

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