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The Dark Mirror: War Ethos In Juvenile Fiction, 1865-1919

Peter A. Soderbergh

During the bustling generations prior to the First World War public interest in the written word increased dramatically. In 1885, it is fair to say, Americans were afloat in a sea of printer's ink and splashing around happily.

Impressed by the phenomenal popularity of Horatio Alger's stories (1867-1910) commercial publishing houses reasoned that the juvenile market was largely unmined, economically promising, and sufficiently roomy to tolerate many competitors. Hired to launch and sustain the publication of books for the young were members of an entirely new profession. They were—to quote Ralph Gardner, one of Alger's biographers—an “army of swift writers well-equipped with adjectives, heroic phrases and the ability to make readers tingle with excitement.”¹

On the empirical assumption that young folks were tingle-prone, and cognizant of the shaky status of the infamous “dime novel,” publishers and their phantom scribes-in-residence swamped Americans, ages eleven to eighteen, with hardbacked novelettes of questionable quality. Often released in “series” of a dozen titles or more, these inexpensive *schmöker* invariably recounted how resourceful boys and girls fell into and wriggled out of “adventuresome” situations at home and abroad.

It was thus that several generations of American progeny were introduced to the improbable escapades of their alter egos: *Young Puritans*, *Border Boys*, *Darewell Chums*, *Automobile Girls*, *Motion Picture Comrades*, *Musket Boys*, and the like. Not to omit the more familiar *Frank Merriwell* (which ran to 208 titles), *Bobbsey Twins*, *Camp Fire Girls*, *Rover Boys*, *Tom Swift*, and *Boy Scouts*. By 1914 there were nearly 100 separate series of this genre in circulation. The authors left few topics untreated, moved the reader facilely back and forth through history, and immersed their pubescent protagonists in every circumstance imaginable. Young readers were taken on the 250-page road with *Motorcycle Boys*, to the Big Top with *Circus Boys*, camping with *Meadow-Brook Girls*, to the gridiron with *High School Boys*, into the clouds with *Girl Aviators*, out West (a favorite place) with *Ranger Boys*, and into alligator-clogged everglades with the *Motor Boat Club*. The United States was crawling with lucky, plucky kids.

Every thematic possibility was pursued to its vanishing point. It was perhaps inevitable that war, to some the most exhilarating of experiences, would rise to a position of prominence in such books. War, said Theodore Roosevelt—whose particular brand of Americanism haunted the pages of most of these novelettes after 1898—was the “great adventure,” after all, and the writers seemed to agree. In the wake of the Spanish-American conflict they began to shift their sights from back-

yard antics to military maneuvers, old wars, and international brushfires—detailing in each the exploits of boys and girls who reveled in their new martial settings. Suddenly they were all hot-blooded nephews and nieces of Uncle Sam whose devotion to Old Glory knew no bounds. No military incident, from Lexington to Vera Cruz, was overlooked as a backdrop to the courageous capers of fictional youths with alliterative Anglo-Saxon names (“Archibald Archer,” “Billy Barry,” “Dave Dashaway,” “Harry Hazelton,” “Tom Taylor,” *et al*).

It is no exaggeration to say that, by 1918, the cheery adolescent of 1895 had been transformed by the writers into a war-crazed instrument of national policy, as we shall see. How did this pattern develop? Who was responsible for the unparalleled turn about in literary characterizations? It all began, quite innocently, shortly after Appomattox.

Reconnaissance: 1865-1898. In this “gilded” era of relative peace most writers of juvenile books depended on the late Rebellion as a source of war stories. William T. Adams (“Oliver Optic”) sallied forth with his “Army and Navy Series,” a five-volume set completed in December, 1865. Adams (1822-1897), whose motto was “First God, then country, then friends,” subsequently offered another twelve stories in the “Blue and Gray Series.” By 1893 the sales of these, and his other youth books, were estimated at one million copies. Another former educator, Edward S. Ellis (1840-1916), contributed his *Campfires of General Lee* (1875) to the growing list of Civil War-derived titles, plus extensive writings on our various Indian Wars. Charles A. Fosdick (1842-1915), known to his readers as “Harry Castlemon,” was a wounded veteran of the Federal Navy and a “prominent G.A.R. man” in his later years. Fosdick finished his multi-volume “Gunboat Series” in 1868 and “War Series” in 1893, taking his young readers through Sherman’s Georgia campaign. “Boys don’t like fine writing. What they want is adventure,” Fosdick maintained. “I have tried to help boys to be men,” he wrote. “Patriotism has been my keynote . . .”²

For a number of reasons the sum total of these sorts of writings did not constitute a glorification of war qua war.

First, as the century waned so did some of the bitterness between North and South. Politicians, journalists, and veterans—not always from the winning side—began to call for an accommodation, for the sake of the commonweal, and the redemptive tone was often reflected in juvenile books. In his preface to *Within the Enemy’s Lines* (1889) “Oliver Optic” spoke of the “growing harmony,” his reluctance to rekindle “Old fires,” and his hope that memories of the war “will excite no more ill feeling . . .”

Second, the United States was experiencing an extended period of contentment, if not smugness. Delighted with its growth (under Divine aegis) the body politic believed it was progressing to the fore and need not resort to war again to achieve national ends. Edward Ellis, in his 1884 history text for children, put the feeling this way: “Peace and prosperity reign within our borders, and in all the world no land is more highly favored than ours.”

Third, the key figure of the era, Horatio Alger, Jr. (1832-1899), who overshadowed every other author of his species, excluded war from his books. Although he tried

desperately to enlist in 1861, and was fully responsive to the emotional magnetism of the Rebellion, he did not employ war as a story base. In this respect, involuntarily perhaps, Alger may have discouraged other writers from probing war as a literary context. For the time being the battle of wits was more popular than the battle of, say, Lake Erie. However, although Alger's stories remained in great demand after his death, their popularity succumbed to newer juvenile books which drew their strength from the electricity generated by the "splendid little war" of 1898. In a sense, the inoffensive naiveté of the Algerian mode went down with the *Maine*.

Essentially, then, this period in adolescent literature was permeated with the memory of war and its equipage, rather than by the will to war. By choice, it was an insular phase in our history, and juvenile books contained little hint of the psychic and geographic expansionism that lay ahead. If war was a useful thematic device at all, it was only as a yardstick by which post-1865 generations might measure their patriotic quotients. Men like Adams, Ellis, and Fosdick believed it was one's "sacred duty" to educate youth to the sacrifices of the 1860's, thereby nourishing patriotism in the hearts of those who, through no fault of their own, had been deprived of Civil War participation. As Warren L. Goss (1835-1925), creator of a "War Series" in the 1890's, phrased it: he hoped his books would "inspire the youth of to-day with the same love for their country that animated the boys of '61 and '65 . . ." (Goss was a survivor of both Libby and Andersonville prisons).³ Beyond the cultivation in the young of a certain reverence for their nation's severest trial, these writers would not go.

Skirmish: 1899-1914. William Adams and his colleagues were innocent no doubt of any conscious intent to sway their readership to Militarism. On the other hand, they may have been influential in honing patriotic hatchets to a cumulative sharpness that begged for testing. It may also be a moot point. As restrained as American writers were, there was no shortage of war stories in the mellow 1890's.

Through the keen-eyed courtesy of C. Scribner's Sons of New York the indigenuous void was filled by the prolific George A. Henty (1832-1902), a British author of over eighty books for young men. Henty's consuming interest was, to quote the *London Times*, "all the wars, great and little" in which his country had engaged since 1688. Ignited by his Crimean experiences (1855) Henty gave the rest of his life to weaving an irresistible "blend of fact and extravagance" around the hostilities in Afghanistan, South Africa, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Egypt, and Haiti—to recall a few—as well as the American Civil War. His war tales were based on historical facts, muscular, romanticized, terribly proper, and reiterative. To Mr. Henty war was clearly a viable solution to international problems, be they territorial or ideological, and he so informed millions of readers. One could not, the *Review of Reviews* remarked, "enter a schoolroom or look at a boy's bookshelf without seeing half-a-dozen of [Henty's] familiar volumes."⁴

The outbreak of the Spanish War presented the alert American author with the chance to do what Henty had done so mechanically for thirty years: dramatize a legal, homegrown, "hot" war. Thousands of boys and girls, sipping on a thinning Civil War gruel, welcomed the new menu enthusiastically.

James Kaler (1848-1912), who as "James Otis" had given them *Toby Tyler* (1880) and numerous light-hearted magazine pieces, wrote three volumes on the 1898 war. The "Elsie" sequence by Martha "Farquharson," nee Finley (1828-1909), departed from the norm with *Elsie's Young Folks in Peace and War* (1900). But the war story field was cornered by a man who not only inherited the mantles of Adams, Alger, and Henty, he surpassed them all: Edward Stratemeyer.

Born in 1862 Stratemeyer published his first titles in 1894. From the Spanish War he drew the substance of a "Flag of Freedom Series" (written under an early pseudonym "Capt. Ralph Bonehill") and the more popular "Old Glory Series," of three and six volumes respectively. *Under Dewey at Manila*, a title in the latter set, was "the financial hit of the juvenile publishing industry in 1899" and eventually ran to twenty editions. Stratemeyer was on his way to becoming a millionaire and the undisputed, if invisible, czar of the juvenile book world. Before he died in 1930 Stratemeyer and his stable of writers published over 700 titles, which sold tens of millions of copies, using sixty-odd pseudonyms in the process.⁵

In terms of author attitudes toward war, there were noticeable shifts after 1898. For example, the concept of the moral, external mission was introduced. "Elsie's" brother "Max" voiced it in Martha Finley's 1900 volume. Viewing the destruction of the Spanish fleet from the deck of Commodore Dewey's flagship *Olympia*, "Max" opined that "... war is an awful thing; but in this instance right is on our side, because we have undertaken the cause of the oppressed." Ed Stratemeyer maintained in his preface to *When Santiago Fell* (1899), that the U.S.A. "stepped in and gave to Cuba the precious boon of liberty," and might grant her statehood if she could not stand alone. "Walter Russell," young sailor-hero of Stratemeyer's *Fighting in Cuban Waters* (1899), was "ready to lay down his life for the cause of humanity and for the honor of Old Glory," shielded as he was by an "all-wise and all-powerful Providence."

Another new pattern evolved concomitantly which may be described as the "Preparedness" syndrome. After 1901 the general public may have been willing to let our shaggy, depleted military forces atrophy, but Stratemeyer, Frank Patchin (1861-1925), H. Irving Hancock (1867-1922) and writers of their persuasion were not. In their stories unqualified support was given to the Army and Navy. Clearly, a military career was an exciting, rewarding, "manly" choice for a patriotic boy to make. Leading characters-in-uniform were drawn as non-smoking, non-drinking ("We're real soldiers . . . and we do not handle the stuff"), sanitary, well-conditioned, incorruptible lads who killed other philosophically ("It was savage work, but war consists of such scenes.") Boys often rose from Private to Lieutenant in two volumes, preserving Uncle Sam's integrity in foreign parts along the way or, at least, saving a costly cruiser from colliding with an errant buoy. No surprise, then, that Sergeant "Terry Noll" of Harrie Hancock's *Uncle Sam's Boys on Their Mettle* (1913) asked: "Who wants to be President as long as he may be a military officer?"

The third major change concerned the "enemy" and how he was portrayed. The age of amelioration was over. Any persons who opposed or betrayed the United States and its credentialed representatives were spoken of (alternately) as Satanic,

depraved, misguided, recalcitrant, cruel, and unseeing. Our Spanish foes were depicted as crafty, decadent torturers who could not stomach a good fight and deserved the object lesson in democracy. Sailor "Russell," serving on the *Brooklyn*, condensed it all. "The Spaniards are—are brutes!", he sputtered. So were the Boxers in China (1900), and so was Emilio Aguinaldo for refusing to accept U.S. domination of the Philippines (1899-1901) gracefully. The Moros *insurrectos* of Mindanao were bloodthirsty, tricky "brownies" who would rather decapitate American soldiers than eat. And in his *The Battleship Boy's First Step Upward* (1911) author Patchin wrote of two "Hawaiian" recidivists who got a month's bread and water for felonious assault and being A.W.O.L. "I'm glad those niggers are in the brig . . .," said Seaman "Sam Hickey." The literary penalties for being an alien were very severe.⁶

In sum, a new sort of patriotism began to infest these books. Perhaps it could be called an aggressive, fervant nationalism which transcended in scope and intensity the spirit of loyalty of previous years. Whereas pre-1898 books encouraged patriotism via nostalgia and sober reflection, the later volumes seemed to be saying: put yourselves in top mental and physical shape, for the time of testing is ahead and Uncle Sam must not be found wanting. Prophecy, commerce, and history conjoined in a literary admixture that "Real Boys and Girls" absorbed widely. As Arthur Prager observed recently, in those days "War was glamour . . . Uniforms were splendid, and battles were glorious. There were no pre-teen doves." In part, these books may explain why.

The major publishing companies had no qualms about war stories, of course—the Henry Altemus Company of Philadelphia being a case in point. Sponsor of eight war series, Altemus believed that: "There is no better way to instill patriotism in the coming generation than by placing in the hands of juvenile readers books in which a romantic atmosphere is thrown around the boys of the army. . ."⁷ Within a few years millions of young Americans would get a first-hand opportunity to sample the "romance" of war. Naturally they noticed a discrepancy.

Over the Top: 1914-1919. Publishers were quick to tap the potential of the First World War as a story base. After fifteen years of reliance on past wars, peacetime maneuvers, and foreign spies, a fresh lode of material was struck. Grosset and Dunlap, A. L. Burt, Cupples and Leon, New York Book, Century, World Syndicate, Winston, Saalfield, Barse and Hopkins, and Donohue released new series rooted in the war.⁸ Out of this literary geyser came: *Boy Allies* (which ran to 23 volumes), *Boy Volunteers*, *Our Young Aeroplane Scouts*, *Red Cross Girls*, *Air Service Boys*, *Khaki Boys* (and *Girls*), *Air Scout*, and *Grace Harlow Overseas*. Selected titles in existent series (*Tom Swift*, *Outdoor Girls*, *Camp Fire Girls*, *Boy Scouts*, *Tom Slade*, *Dave Darrin*, *Moving Picture Boys*, and *Motor Boat Boys*, inter alia) were adapted to some aspect of the war. With few exceptions these were Stratemeyer syndicate productions.

For five years the young heroes and heroines of these series outfoxed and out-fought the German General Staff, Zeppelins, Uhlands, hordes of Teuton troops, U-boats, civilian traitors, Fokkers, gas attacks, and Big Bertha in an orgiastic display of American savvy unmatched in the war itself. "Lusitania!", they cried, as they

strove to dispatch Fritzies to the next world. Quarter was often asked, but seldom given, in the heat of battle—and during lulls in the fighting the boys spoke of exterminating “the whole German nation”; “shooting, stabbing, and clubbing” enemy soldiers; mowing down Huns and Heinies like wheat; and saving the world from the bestial Boche’s “genius for destruction and wanton vandalism.” They went on special sorties behind enemy lines, rescued the wounded and were wounded, endured imprisonment and escaped each time, exposed mutineers and conspirators, flushed snipers, and went “over the top” with Allied forces in every campaign. Tom Slade, single handedly, captured the notorious “Major Johann Slaubertrauffn von Piffinhoeffer”—well-known as the Hun who poisoned streams, put cholera germs in rifle bullets, injected American cigarettes with tuberculosis bacteria, and authored the eight-volume *Principles of Modern Torture*.⁹

Such herculean feats had their rewards. Tom Slade got the D.S.C. from General Pershing and a moist kiss from Georges Clemenceau. The Boy Vigilantes hero, “Bob Lane,” was awarded the Order of Leopold by King Albert I of Belgium, in person. “Tom” and “Jack,” the Air Service Boys, earned a Croix de Guerre each for a successful bombing raid (“Bang! Boom! Bang!”) over Prussia. But it was the Boy Allies, “Hal Paine” and “Chester Crawford,” who outdid themselves. Lieutenants in the Belgian Army at age sixteen (volume one), they rise to Majors in the A.E.F. by 1918 (volume twelve). They become, *en passant*, confidants of Generals French, Haig, Gallieni, Joffre, Foch, and Pershing—detouring just long enough to accept the Cross of St. George from a grateful, if depressed, Grand Duke Nicholas of Russia. After debating the merits of war with Kaiser Wilhelm II, squealing on traitors in the Irish Brigade, and saving French President Poincaré from assassination “Hal” and “Chester” are given the ultimate in honors. General Henri Petain turns to them and says solemnly: “You boys are true blue.” Marshall Foch assures them they will be “colonels or better before long.” Ecstatic, the boys dash off on a suicide mission.¹⁰

Elsewhere, American boys and girls are no less inflamed, but they are vastly more frustrated. The four Khaki Boys are impatient to travel the “glory road” to the trenches, even if their names (“Bob,” “Jimmy,” “Roger,” and “Ignace”) appear someday “under that dreadful but glorious heading, ‘Killed in Action.’” Tom Swift, suspect because he did not enlist on April 7, 1917 (Do you think he’s a slacker?), is perfecting his War Tank “A” in the area of Tinkle Creek. “Down with the Huns!”, he shouts as he clanks over the countryside, hoping that Uncle Sam will accept his invention. Not so lucky as Grace Harlow and the Red Cross Girls, who actually get to France, the Outdoor Girls must settle for knitting socks, hostessing at Y.W.C.A. huts, nabbing spies, and propping up their beaux’ morale. Sometimes the pressure is unbearable. “Oh, if I could just put on a uniform, and take up a gun and—and—go after those awful Huns!” Miss “Mollie” screams. No better off, the Camp Fire Girls’ chief Winnebago, “Sahwah the Sunfish,” unloads. “I wish I were a man!”, she cries. “Then I could go to war and fight for my country—and go over the top. The boys have all the glory and excitement of war . . . It isn’t fair!” The Boy Globe Trotters, stranded in Constantinople, are fretting over passage that will enable them “to reach the firing zone” before the European struggle ends. All roads led to the

Western Front.

There are a number of observations one can make about this phase of war-story development. For one, the "Preparedness" motif of the 1901-1914 period was extended vigorously. We hear "Jacques," friend of the *Air Scout* (1914), contending that "Being ready is a fine defense, you know." And a *Motor Boat Boy* (1915), "Jack," stating that "Preparedness is what is going to count for a whole lot . . . and both Great Britain and the States will learn a lesson before they're through." In this frame of mind it was nigh impossible for these touchy travelers to remain impartial very long.

President Wilson's proclamation (August 4, 1914) notwithstanding, the boys joined the Entente forces and actively resisted the Huns. The typical excuse for dropping the facade of neutrality was atrocious German conduct, as evidenced mainly in the rape of "poor little Belgium." As one of the *Boy Scouts on Belgian Battlefields* (1915) said: "... what we have seen and heard here . . . is beginning to turn us to the side of the Allies." *Air Scout* "Leon Platt," incensed by the killing of a *franc-tireur* by Uhlans, protested that "many more things like this would almost make me enlist," which he does on page 121. The other reason for junking their fleeting feelings of neutrality was the boys' deep respect for their ancestors, none of whom were bad Germans. Aero scouts "Leon" and "Earl" both had "French and English blood in their veins." Vigilante "Bob Lane's" widowed mother was of Belgian royalty. Given their Anglo-Franco lineage the *Boy Allies at Liege* (1915) "were naturally with the Allies." Normally, all the boys spoke three languages fluently.

One would not know from these series that there was an ongoing (1915-1917) national debate over the posture of the United States vis-à-vis the European war. Without hesitation, Stratemeyer's syndicate, Patchin, Hancock, Percy K. Fitzhugh (1876-1950), and others decided that their fictional offspring would show the way to the preservation of Western civilization, the realities of history aside.¹¹ Until America woke up, their hard-fighting, right-thinking emissaries would hold the line. And it was exciting to boot. "I can see," said one Boy Scout in 1916, "how an up-to-date war with . . . Germany is bound to give the world heaps of surprises and thrills."

Once the United States entered the war on April 6, 1917 the literary floodgates swung wide and the juvenile heroes swept to new heights. Any one of the *Boy Allies* possessed the terrible efficiency of Sergeant Alvin York, the independence of Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, the coolness of Major Charles Whittlesey, the swagger of Colonel Douglas MacArthur, the ebullience of Sergeant Joyce Kilmer—and more. Bloody combat was a strain now and then, but the boys "were fighting for what they knew to be right, and . . . that carried them through."

No quartet could match the talents of the *Army Boys*. In five volumes by "Homer Randall" they bayoneted, axed, strangled, and punched the German army (which "quailed before these supermen!") into submission. The boys ("Frank," "Bart," "Tom," and "Billy") were at their best in hand-to-hand combat when there was "a red mist before their eyes and their blood was pounding in their veins and drumming in their ears." It was then, Boches everywhere, that they thought of the Alamo ("The glory of it! The magnificence of it!"), Bunker Hill, Gettysburg,

Little Big Horn, and Palo Alto, randomly. "Shooting, hacking, and swinging their rifle butts," the busy boys thought about Old Glory—"an unstained flag, a glorious flag, a flag that had never been smirched by defeat"—and redoubled their efforts. The Germans could not take it. They were no match for the "Yankee boys", those "demons" of the cold steel. The Huns ran for the Rhine. His metabolism having dropped down to high, "Frank Sheldon" mused that "when it comes down to close quarters, the American eagle can pick the pin feathers out of any Prussian bird."

As the war drew to a close juvenile derring—do reached a crescendo analogous to the last movement of Tchaikowsky's *Overture of 1812*. Blood up and sensing the kill the boy heroes became feisty, hard-hearted, and glib. The old wide-eyed bravado of 1915 was gone, transformed by combat glory and victory into a deadly certitude. In the books of 1918-1919 the perky, clever doughboys, flyers, and guerillas of 1916 were shown as cunning, cold professionals whose *raison d'être* were to slaughter mobs of Germans. Even the traditionally poised U.S. Navy officer lost his perspective as the time of Ragnarök drew near. In Harrie Hancock's *Dave Darrin After the Mine Layers* (1919) the metamorphosis was completed. Lieutenant Commander "Dave"—a humorless, unyielding blend of Admiral Nelson and Captain Bly—sets out with his destroyer to "win the war by killing Germans." Forty-eight pages thereafter he is asked by a junior officer if he wishes to pick up any German survivors in the waters nearby. "Too bad . . .," "Darrin" replies calmly, "Our first business is to sink enemy ships. We cannot be humane just yet." Four enemy submarines later, lounging at a hotel, "Dave's" lovely wife "Belle Darrin" expresses her views on the war, proving that "Dave" married wisely. When she hears reports of the sinking of German ships, she feels "a sense of relief . . . that more of the loathsome beasts have been removed from a decent world."¹² By 1919 our heroes' behavior bore a striking resemblance to the qualities they abhorred in the Hun "fiends" just the year or two before.

On November 11, 1918 the *Camp Fire Girls*—not "Sahwah's" unit—happened to be in Paris. The Armistice celebration was tumultuous. "Bettina," out among the crowds, could not contain herself. "I want to shout, weep, laugh over victory," she said. "Glorious France, how much she has suffered and how much she has won!" Everyone agreed. And so did they agree six months later, in transit to England, with the Allied officer who stood on the deck of their channel steamer. Gazing at the fading French coast line, he salutes—and says proudly (and a little sadly): "It has been a great adventure—a world adventure, this fighting for brotherhood . . ."

Epilogue. By mid-1919 the military cycle in juvenile fiction was over. The patriotic impulse that led to the literary excesses of 1915-1918 took thirty years to ripen, but a mere six months to spoil. The late war was a dead issue, and the authors sensed its decease quickly. Only Cecil B. DeMille—who knew before the Armistice that the *shrecklichkeit* movies of 1917-1918 would soon be "box office poison"—found out sooner. For the writers it was au revoir to the *Boy Allies*, hello to Nancy Drew, *Bomba the Jungle Boy*, *Marjorie Dean*, and *Pee-Wee Harris*. The *Army Boys*, *Air Scout*, *Khaki Girls*, and their comrades were retired to the Non Man's Land of flea markets, dusty attics, and junk shops where—frayed and jaundiced—they

wander aimlessly.¹³

In the days when these epic potboilers proliferated there was controversy as to their effect on the adolescent mind. Many reformers insisted that these "vile," "cheap," "debauching," "vitiating" novelettes be removed from newsstands, bookstores, and public libraries (as, indeed, they often were). Chief Boy Scout librarian Franklin K. Mathiews (1873-1950) warned parents in 1914 that such books were "Guaranteed to Blow Your Boy's Brains Out." The authors—of whom he held Ed Stratemeyer in least esteem—had "no moral purpose" or "real intelligence." Their pernicious products were precisely what vice-hunter Anthony Comstock meant when he spoke of "traps for the young."¹⁴

In extremis, Mathiews' position—that a cause-effect relationship existed between books and corruption—would force one to conclude that millions of young Americans were influenced by these volumes to believe that war was The Real Glory. That Americans monopolized battlefield bravery, military leadership, and weaponry innovation. That other nations would be wise to allow the United States to make decisions for them. That the military was an irresistible force when mobilized, capable of saving oppressed peoples from defeat and slavery. That in a righteous cause our soldiers may perform any act which appears to justify a moral end.

The quantification of any such massive, indelible influence has always been elusive—whether the "corrupting" element be books, magazines, photographs, or films. No one really knows how direct or lasting the impact of the 1898-1918 war stories was on those who matured in the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's. *Fortune* magazine for April, 1934, was positive that the books were not "insidious enough to undermine the morals of a nation." but then, few people saw war as subversive an agent as: explicit sex, vulgar language, radical ideas, or infamous behavior. Righteous war, by definition, could not undermine. The war ethos, unassailable in wartime, was left undisturbed during peaceful interludes. Not until the late 1960's was it subjected to serious, widespread scrutiny. Still the ethos remains deeply imbedded in the public subconsciousness. Reeling from recent attacks it nonetheless resists excision, glowering out from the dark recesses of the national psyche like a cornered animal. And it persists in simplistic war films, "action" magazines, and "combat" comic books aimed at the juvenile reader of today. Just a few lengths behind the Four Horsemen, the Ghosts of the Army Boys ride on.

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NOTES

¹Ralph D. Gardner, *Horatio Alger, or The American Hero Era* (Mendota, Illinois, 1964), 309. On Alger and his times see also John Tebbel, *Rags to Riches: Horatio Alger, Jr. and The American Dream* (New York, 1963) and the recent work of Richard M. Huber, *The American Idea of Success* (New York, 1971), 43-50.

²Fosdick's words are quoted in Jacob Blanck, *Harry Castlemon: The Boys' Own Author* (New York, 1941), 5-6, 13. Blanck's small volume combines reprinted articles about Fosdick with a

splendid bibliography of the author's fifty-two titles (1864-1902).

- ³Warren L. Goss, *Tom Clifton, or, Western Boys in Grant, and Sherman's Army, '61-'65* (New York, 1892), ix. It is interesting to note among the advertisements in this particular Goss volume a strong endorsement of the book by Civil War General William S. Rosecrans (1819-1898), who was relieved of his command following Chickamauga (1863).
- ⁴*London Times*, November 17, 1902, 10, in which the statement from the *Review of Reviews* is recalled. Between 1868 and his death Henty's books are said to have sold at least 150,000 copies in Great Britain and 50,000 in the United States each year. The prolific author wrote three titles a year for thirty years.
- ⁵On the wave of nostalgia which began to crest in 1971 the name and achievements of Edward Stratemeyer were revived. The two best sources of information on his astonishing career are "For Indeed It Was He," *Fortune* (April, 1934), 86-89, 194, 204, 206, 208-209; and Arthur Prager, "Edward Stratemeyer and His Book Machine," *Saturday Review* (July 20, 1971), 15-17, 52-53. Among other series, Stratemeyer conceived and supervised the writing of the *Bobbsey Twins*, *Tom Swift*, *Nancy Drew*, *Hardy Boys*, and *Rover Boys* sequences.
- ⁶Edward Stratemeyer and his contemporaries missed few opportunities to dispatch their fictional boy heroes to the latest available conflict. For example: Edward Stratemeyer, *Between Boer and Briton* (Boston, 1900); *On To Peking* (Boston, 1900); *Under Togo for Japan* (Boston, 1906). In each case young American lads were cast as belligerents who behaved rather arrogantly toward the losers, especially if the defeated parties happened to be Chinese.
- ⁷Taken from an advertisement at a rear, unnumbered page of: "Jesse Graham Flower," *Grace Harlow's Problem* (Philadelphia, 1916). Usually, "Jesse Graham Flower" was a pen-name employed by Frank Gee Patchin. Patchin was also "Laura Dent Crane," popular authoress of the *Automobile Girls* series.
- ⁸An indispensable, comprehensive listing of all major and minor publishing houses and their founding dates may be seen in *Dial*, XXVIII (May 1, 1900), 362-367a.
- ⁹Percy Keese Fitzhugh, *Tom Slade: Motorcycle Dispatch Bearer* (New York, 1918) 121. Fitzhugh, who is mentioned below several times, wrote thirteen titles in the *Tom Slade* series, five of which were devoted to Tom escapades in The Great War. After the war he initiated the more popular *Pee-Wee Harris* and *Roy Blakeley* sets, totalling eighteen volumes.
- ¹⁰Clair W. Hayes, *The Boy Allies With the Great Advance* (New York, 1919), 220. The *Boy Allies* sets were two, one grouping of ten titles by Ensign Robert L. Drake which featured the boys with assorted navies; the other by Haynes which ran to thirteen volumes about two boys serving with various Allied armies. Both sets were released by the A. L. Burt Company commencing in 1915. To some young readers, the *Boy Allies* series "stood head and shoulders above the rest" and were the "best-beloved" of all the war stories. Or so says Arthur Prager in his entertaining account of his addition to juvenile books, *Rascals At Large* (New York, 1971), especially Chapter Six, "Beating the Boche," 167-213.
- ¹¹Harrie I. Hancock produced the most blatant pro-preparedness tracts among all those peculiar to the 1914-1917 period: the four-volume "Conquest of the United States Series" (1916). In it readers find that Germany has invaded the United States sometime in the summer of 1920. For an entire year, at terrible cost to both sides, the U.S. Army (aided by adolescent officers) battles to save the nation from the rampaging Huns. In 1921 the Germans surrender and the United States has "learned its lesson." Never again will it be caught unprepared. The cover of the final volume, *Making the Last Stand for Old Glory* (Philadelphia, 1916) depicts gray-clad German infantry marching past Independence Hall on the way to Pittsburgh. Edward Stratemeyer was not far behind Hancock. As "Lieut. Howard Payson" he created a series featuring young American boys at war before 1917, the most pointed of which was *The Boy*

Scouts Campaign for Preparedness (New York, 1916).

¹²Hancock's "Dave Darrin" series began in 1910, the first four titles taking the young hero through Annapolis. Between 1914 and 1919 six more volumes were produced in which Darrin did yeoman service at Vera Cruz, in South American and Asian waters, and finally in combat against German naval forces. Throughout, Darrin was made to represent the finest aspects of the American sailor/officer hard at work carrying U.S. policy across the oceans. In this light it is worth noting that Hancock went to Cuba for a short while during the Spanish-American War as a correspondent for *Golden Hours*, a young peoples' magazine. Most of his series reflected his preoccupation with the military, and his conviction that the public did not appreciate what a strong army and navy meant to the nation. Edward Stratemeyer was of like mind. As "Frank V. Webster" he devoted the twenty-fourth title in the Webster Series to *Two Boys of the Battleship* (New York, 1915). Four years earlier, as "Captain Wilbur Lawton", Stratemeyer wrote *The Dreadnought Boys on Battle Practice* (New York, 1911), a tale of two juvenile blue-jackets whose exploits earn them a personal decoration from President Taft. Not to be outdone, Frank Patchin joined the pro-Navy trend with the eight-volume *Battleship Boys* series (1911-1915).

¹³It has taken this writer more than a year to collect the various titles cited in this paper. As a rule the 126 books consulted were found among the inventories of Goodwill and Salvation Army stores, used book shops, garages, and other remote locations. Typically, these books are found in poor to fair condition and range in price from ten cents to \$2.50 (for a Stratemeyer in excellent shape). Their consignment to the lowest level of the book-selling world indicates, among other things, that the juvenile series books are not recognized as the powerful, pervasive influences upon childrens' thought that they most certainly were from 1870 to 1930. Fortunately some scholars have seen such books as worthy of collection. For example, one might consult the Popular Culture Collection in the Special Collections section of the Michigan State University Library at East Lansing. Begun in the early 1960's by Professor Russel Nye, a distinguished and perceptive observer of the popular arts, the collection includes approximately 7,500 volumes on all facets of our mass culture (1900-1950). Of the type of series book emphasized in this paper the Library holds nearly 500 titles, in addition to representative dime novels, comic books, almanacs, and women's magazines. Professor Nye's sweeping and penetrating survey of the history of the popular arts, *The Unembarrassed Muse* (New York, 1970), contains a delightful examination of juvenile books from Alger through Stratemeyer in Chapter Three, 60-87.

¹⁴It is fair to say that Franklin Mathiews organized and led the first serious assault on the adventure-laden series books. Founded in 1910, the Boy Scouts of America movement soon discovered itself being used in series plots by writers such as Stratemeyer in a manner unbecoming to the new image it wished to advance. Mathiews was employed by the B.S.A. as censor-at-large and curator of a series of the "very best books for boys" initiated in November, 1913. For the next four years Mathiews took every opportunity to publicize the cause of improved literature, with the strong assistance of the American Library Association and the American Booksellers Association. The essence of his crusade, the theme of which he repeated with little variation in print and in public addresses, may be found in Franklin K. Mathiews, "Blowing Out the Boy's Brain", *Outlook* (November 18, 1914), 652-654. Mathiews gave up the fight against series books after World War One, but the many educators, public librarians, and literary critics whose interests he had aroused continued the campaign throughout the next four decades. For example, see Robert Wallace, "Kids Books: A Happy Few Amid the Junk", *Life* (December 11, 1964), 112-113, Wallace took Edward Stratemeyer to task for the callous manner in which he inundated young readers with series "junk." Thus far, none of the anti-series books move-

ments have diminished the popularity of such perennials as *Nancy Drew*, *Hardy Boys*, or *Tom Swift, Jr.* Collectively, *Nancy Drew* and *Hardy Boys* are selling at the rate of 2.5 million copies per annum in the 1970's.