

## Chapter Three

# Muscular Christianity and the Adventure Story

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

(St. Paul's *Epistle to the Ephesians*, chapter 6, vv.10-13)

The Lord Jesus Christ is not only the *Prince of Peace*; he is the *Prince of War* too.

(Charles Kingsley, *Brave Words for Brave Soldiers and Sailors*, 1855)<sup>1</sup>

The history of the British boys' adventure story is pretty well known now. Its origins in romances and ballads, the novels of Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) and Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), and its development through the works of such writers as Captain Marryat, R.M. Ballantyne (1825-1894), G.A. Henty (1832-1902) and Rider Haggard (1856-1925) into the twentieth century with W.E. Johns, (1893-1968) and the historical tales of Geoffrey Trease (1909-1998) and Rosemary Sutcliff (1920-1992) have been discussed by many scholars and critics such as Margery Fisher, Martin Green and Joseph Bristow.<sup>2</sup> This chapter, by contrast, focuses on the religious, specifically Christian

element, in the development of the genre, particularly in the middle of the nineteenth century, to suggest how it arose, to describe some of its characteristics, and then to trace how it gradually changed.

Christianity had, of course, often played a part in the earliest stories of adventure. *Robinson Crusoe* of 1719 is a kind of romance about divine providence, as the hero sees his shipwreck as a punishment for disobeying his father and going to sea, and the story is shot through with Christian meaning. For the first time in his life, Crusoe kneels down to pray and then begins to read the Bible daily after he is thrown on to the desert island, we remember. *Robinson Crusoe's* most famous juvenile successor, *The Swiss Family Robinson* of 1816 is about a pastor and his family shipwrecked on a desert island and is also full of religious pieties. The evangelical writers of the early nineteenth century, such as Hannah More and Mrs Sherwood, produced their realistic domestic tales mainly in order to promote Christian values, although adventure stories such as Mrs Hofland's *The Young Crusoe* and Captain Marryat's *The Children of the New Forest* tended to be more secular in their attitudes at this time.

During the 1830s even the evangelical literature began to change its character, as was discussed in earlier chapters. Such magazines as the *Children's Weekly Visitor*, which began in 1832, though containing a weekly Bible lesson, are much more secular than earlier periodicals. Indeed the enormously popular books by the American writer 'Peter Parley' (Samuel Goodrich, and the various British imitators who borrowed his pseudonym), contained an enormous quantity of history, travel, natural history and other subjects which showed a much greater emphasis upon facts. Even such stories as Parley's 'Tale of Youthful Courage' (1844), the adventures of two boys captured by Red Indians, begins by comparing the Hudson River with the Thames, the Loire, the Tagus and the Andes. Utilitarianism was beginning to dominate an age which saw the establishment of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in 1827 and the British Society for the Advancement of Science in 1831, as already noted.

From the 1850s, however, a new kind of boys' story began to appear in which robust, middle-class young men pursued their adventures heroically but with a strong sense of Christian faith, a manner which at least partly inspired the term 'muscular Christianity'. The origins of the phrase are somewhat obscure. The *O.E.D.* says that the term was first applied from about 1857 to the ideal of character exhibited in the writings of Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), and quotes from *The Edinburgh Review* of January 1858. This says of Charles Kingsley that

the principal characteristics of the writer whose works earned this burlesque though expressive description, are his deep sense of the sacredness of all the ordinary relations and the common duties of life, and the vigour with which he contends ... for the great importance and value of animal spirits, physical strength, and hearty enjoyment of all the pursuits and accomplishments which are connected with them.<sup>3</sup>

Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* of 1855 is the most famous, and in many ways the best, example of the genre. This strange, powerful, prejudiced, and sometimes tedious tale – it is nearly a quarter of a million words long – is set in the sixteenth century during the English War with Spain. The story focuses upon the life and adventures of Amyas Leigh, a young boy from Bideford, and, in Elspeth Huxley's opinion, 'the quintessential muscular Christian'.<sup>4</sup> We first meet him as a schoolboy longing to go to sea, and follow him through his journeys with Sir Francis Drake and later his bitter service in Ireland. But when he, like many of his companions, falls in love with the local beauty Rose Salterne, they form a Brotherhood of the Rose to protect her. When she is subsequently abducted by the Spanish nobleman Don Guzman, Amyas and his companions launch a rescue mission and sail to the West Indies. Amyas' ship is damaged on the way, and so they abandon it and march inland to capture a great Spanish galleon, rescuing the beautiful Indian maid Ayancora in the process. However, Amyas then discovers that Rose and his brother Frank have become victims of the Inquisition, causing him to become bitterly anti-Spanish and obsessed with taking his revenge on the evil Don Guzman. When the Armada attacks, Amyas pursues Don Guzman to his death, until a great storm strikes and Amyas is blinded. Only then does he come to realise how he has sinned in his obsessive desire for blood-vengeance, and begins to repent. Now appropriately contrite, he returns home safely to Devon to marry Ayancora, completing the traditional romance pattern.

This is a good example of Kingsley's 'muscular Christianity', for Amyas and his stout companions cheerfully fight the Spanish as their Christian duty. The nature of Kingsley's moral discrimination is made quite clear, for while Amyas's violence in pursuit of personal revenge is sinful, Kingsley has no doubt that it is morally absolutely right to fight the Spanish in a just cause. The book is thus rife with countless battles and sea-fights. The horrors of the Spanish Inquisition are vividly described, as are the British massacres in Ireland. Despite this

predilection of the book as a whole towards violent action, however, most of Amyas's deeds, such as his attack on a Spanish gold-train and rescue of some poor Indian captives, are characterised as brave and courageous, not least as they were inspired by the words of the great Elizabethan seaman and cavalier hero, Sir Humphrey Gilbert:

We are going in God's cause; we go for the honour of God's gospel, for the deliverance of poor infidels led captive by the devil; for the relief of any distressed countrymen unemployed within this narrow isle; and to God we commit our cause. We fight against the devil himself; and stronger is He that is within us than he that is against us.<sup>5</sup>

British children's literature had contained examples both of Christian feeling and exciting adventures earlier, of course, but the intensity of their combination in works that began to appear in the 1850s requires some kind of tentative explanation.

During the 1840s, as was argued in the previous chapter, children's literature's dominant utilitarian character began to change – an increasing capacity for warmth, laughter and imaginative enjoyment began to appear in the works of Edward Lear and Hans Andersen, while a more serious brand of adventure story, full of a sense of responsibility, was being produced by writers such as Captain Marryat and Harriet Martineau (1802-1876).

During the 1850s two events in particular seem to have deeply affected public attitudes. The Crimean War of 1854-1856 with its harsh physical conditions and heroic disasters such as the Charge of the Light Brigade aroused intense feelings of patriotism. Kingsley himself was deeply involved, writing to his friend F.D. Maurice (1805-1872) in October 1854 about one of the bloodiest battles:

It seemed so dreadful to hear of those Alma Heights being taken and not to be there; but God knows best, and I suppose I am not fit for such brave work.... But I can fight with my pen still.... Not in controversy, but in writing books which will make others fight.<sup>6</sup>

Kingsley's passionate involvement led him to produce a pamphlet called *Brave Words to Brave Soldiers and Sailors* in the winter of 1854-1855 in which he tried to inspire fighting as a Christian duty: 'The Lord Jesus Christ,' he said, 'is not only the *Prince of Peace*; he is the *Prince of War* too. He is the Lord of Hosts, the God of Armies, and whosoever fights in a just war, against tyrants and aggressors, he is fighting on Christ's side, and Christ is fighting on his side; Christ

is his captain and his leader, and he can be in no better serve. Be sure of it; for the Bible tells you so.'

We see something of this same praise for Christian valour and heroic fighting when Hereward, the last of the old English, takes up his sword against King William and the Norman invaders in Kingsley's later story *Hereward the Wake* of 1866. Hereward slaughters and beheads fifteen Normans in order to rescue his mother at the Battle of Bourne. And subsequently Wilton of Ely makes Hereward a knight, and urges him 'to take back his sword in the name of God and of St. Peter and St. Paul, and use it, like a true knight, for a terror and punishment to evildoers, and a defence for women and orphans, and the poor and oppressed, and the monks the servants of God.'<sup>7</sup>

Just as traumatic as the Crimean War were the events of the Indian Mutiny which followed. Lasting from 1857-1859, it was marked by dreadful atrocities committed on both sides, as well as brave deeds. Sir Henry Havelock (1795-1857), for example, marched with a small force 126 miles in ten days in the heat of the Indian summer, winning four battles on the way, before recapturing Cawnpore from an army nearly four times its size. As well as a brilliant soldier, Havelock was also a devout Christian who used to pray for two hours each morning before marching at 6 a.m. 'Thanks to Almighty God who gave me the victory,' he wrote to his wife after an early success, 'I now march to retake Cawnpore.' Later in the year Havelock also successfully achieved the Relief of Lucknow. Not surprisingly, he became a legendary hero – with a statue built in his honour on the west side of Trafalgar Square. Through models such as Havelock, the notion of the Christian soldier began to gain currency from the 1850s. James 'Quaker' Wallace, another hero of the Mutiny, chanted the Scottish version of the 116<sup>th</sup> psalm as he charged into action, while the image of Bible-reading, mystical Brevet-Major Gordon (1833-1885) became famous for his brave exploits in the Far East in the early 1860s long before his death at Khartoum in 1885.<sup>8</sup>

The achievements of such men as Dr Thomas Arnold (1795-1842), the famous Headmaster of Rugby School (1828-1842), had also opened up a debate about the purpose of education earlier in the nineteenth century. Arnold attacked the bullying and drunkenness which then existed in many schools, and made Christian values and the College chapel central to school life. While emphasising the importance of learning and spiritual values, however, Arnold also encouraged games and sports for exercise and relaxation. His influence was enormous – from the 1850s disciples such as C.J. Vaughan (1816-1897), Headmaster at Harrow from 1845-1859, and Edward

Thring (1821-1887), Headmaster at Uppingham from 1853-1887, both of them friends of Kingsley's, began to develop a philosophy of education which combined Christianity with a vigorous and competitive athleticism. Rowing, football, cricket, even boxing all became more and more important, not only in order to improve physical health but to instil discipline and moral values. A.C. Wilson, Second Master at Lancing from 1851-1869, said 'The great value of a school is that it is, or ought to be, a place of moral discipline, and this discipline is taught as much in the playground or cricket field as in the classroom.'<sup>9</sup>

*Tom Brown's Schooldays* of 1856, by Charles Kingsley's great friend Thomas Hughes (1822-1896), not only established the popularity of the school story but is perhaps one of the best known examples of this 'muscular Christianity'. In the first part of the book we are introduced to the Brown family living in Uffington, where Squire Brown's eldest son Tom grows up with the village boys before going to Rugby School in the 1830s. Here he is befriended by East who introduces him to the ways of the school and Tom even plays in the extremely strenuous annual Rugby match on his first day. At a great concert after the match, he hears the Head Boy, Old Brooke, praise the new Head Master, Dr Arnold, and then gradually becomes used to school life. He gets lost in a cross-country run, survives being bullied by and scorched by Flashman, and is caught by a gamekeeper illegally fishing. At the end of term Tom is nearly expelled and receives a stern warning from the Head Master.

When Tom returns for the new session, he is put into a study with a rather delicate new boy, Arthur, instead of his old friend East. Although Tom rather resents this at first, he gradually falls under the influence of Arthur's Christian behaviour, beginning to say his prayers and to read the Bible regularly, but also in his turn introducing Arthur to such activities as bird's-nesting and cricket. When fever sweeps the school and Arthur falls seriously ill, Tom realises how much he has come to value his friendship, and, when Arthur recovers, Tom gives up using cribs for schoolwork. Perhaps as a result of Arthur's influence, even the boisterous East receives Christian confirmation. Gradually all three boys change, and Tom especially becomes a more self-disciplined character. The story ends with the great cricket-match between the school and the M.C.C., in which both Tom and Arthur play. In a kind of Epilogue, years later, when Tom hears of Dr Arnold's death, he returns to the school chapel to pay tribute to the great Headmaster who helped him to grow up.

The book is clearly serious. It is about a character's development, tracing Tom's growth from his earliest years in the village to his

emergence as a responsible Christian adult. It has a warm and vigorous narrative, full of memorable incidents such as Flashman's bullying, Arthur's fever, and Tom's great fight with Slogger Williams. It is full of relationships, with East, with Arthur, with the great Doctor, with Diggs, the clumsy fifth-former who helps Tom, and with Martin, the mad scientist. But it is also about fighting, of which Hughes, the author, is a firm advocate. This is the preface to Tom's fight with Slogger Williams, when Tom steps in to protect Arthur after an argument with Slogger about school-work:

After all, what would life be without fighting, I should like to know? From the cradle to the grave, fighting, rightly understood, is the business, the real, highest, honestest business of every son of man. Everyone who is worth his salt has his enemies, who must be beaten, be they evil thoughts, and habits in himself, or spiritual wickednesses in high places, or Russians or Border-ruffians, or Bill, Tom, or Harry, who will not let him live his life in quiet till he has thrashed them.

It is no good for Quakers, or any other body of men, to uplift their voices against fighting. Human nature is too strong for them, and they don't follow their own precepts. Every soul of them is doing his own piece of fighting, somehow and somewhere. The world might be a better world without fighting for anything I know, but it wouldn't be our world; and therefore I am dead against crying peace when there is no peace, and isn't meant to be. I'm as sorry as any man to see folk fighting the wrong people and the wrong things, but I'd a deal sooner see them doing that, than that they should have no fight in them.<sup>10</sup>

So a corpus of children's literature emphasising the importance of combining Christian faith with vigorous, heroic activity, inspired by Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes, developed (F.W. Farrar's school-story *Eric, or Little by Little*, of 1858, though immensely popular, does not quite fit into this genre because although undoubtedly evangelical, it is hardly 'muscular'). R.M. Ballantyne, a devout member of the Scottish Free Church, produced a whole series of adventure stories with boy-heroes who combine a strong, brave and energetic character, with a simple faith in God. *The Coral Island: A Tale of the Pacific Ocean* of 1858 is the best known example. *The Coral Island* is clearly a *Robinsonnade*, narrating the adventures of three boys, Ralph, Jack, and Peterkin, who are shipwrecked on a desert island in

the tropics. They build an encampment, explore the island, live off the proceeds of hunting – not to mention the abundance of ripe fruit – and rescue some natives from attack by cannibals. Later, a party of pirates capture Ralph, but he manages to outwit them and return to the island with their schooner. In the last part of the story, the three companions escape from the island, but are themselves captured by cannibals until a missionary arrives who successfully converts the cannibals to Christianity, and so frees the boys to return home.

There is plenty of vigorous action in the story. The boys defy sharks, survive storms and drive off an initial threat from cannibals, whose chief Jack manages to kill with a wooden club after a ferocious fight. Confronted by a dying pirate, however, Ralph regrets his own neglect of true religion, and helps to comfort the dying man with the words 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved'.<sup>11</sup> The treatment of the missionaries, though laughably unconvincing, is also quite sincere, for though Ballantyne's story abounds in adventure and romance, it never fails to assert the importance of Christianity.

Ballantyne's desert-island adventure, with its picture of British boys exploring the tropics and civilising the natives, contains within it elements of imperialism, of course. And the transition from evangelical and 'muscular' Christianity towards something more like a belief in colonialism and the British Empire is also seen in the books of W.H.G. Kingston (1814-1880).

Kingston is most famous for his tales of adventure at sea, and an early story seems to anticipate Kingsley's more full-blooded 'muscular Christianity' for it contains a strong religious element. *Peter the Whaler; His Early Life and Adventures in the Arctic Regions* of 1851 shows the fifteen year-old hero rebelling against his clergyman father and being sent to sea in order to escape being punished for poaching. Then, after exciting adventures whaling in the Arctic and fighting off pirates, Peter returns home to tell his father 'I have come back infinitely richer. I have learned to fear God, to worship Him in His works, and to trust to His infinite mercy.'<sup>12</sup> But, although Kingston retained his Christian faith, his later works, still full of thrilling adventures in faraway places, seem to place a much greater emphasis on imperialism and the *Pax Britannica*. In his periodical *Kingston's Magazine for Boys*, published from March 1859, Kingston's 'Editorial' specifically addresses itself to boys who will one day be 'battling with the realities of life under the suns of India, in the backwoods of Canada or the States, on the grassy downs of Australia, over the wide ocean, among the isles of the Pacific, or on the distant plains of Columbia'.<sup>13</sup> Kingston's most popular books, 'The Three Midshipmen Series', consisting of *The Three Midshipmen*



(1862), *The Three Lieutenants* (1875), *The Three Commanders* (1876) and *The Three Admirals* (1877) closely resemble some of Marryat's high-spirited nautical novels such as *Midshipman Easy* of 1836, and concentrate on the virtues of the heroic British naval officer in a variety of adventures, including sea-battles. Although poverty and poor health seem to have driven Kingston back to more quasi-religious writing towards the end of his life, there is little doubt about the secular and nationalist values of his most popular novels in mid-career.<sup>14</sup>

Secularisation was indeed spreading rapidly from the 1860s, particularly in the public schools through the accelerating growth in those institutions of athletics and competitive games. As Harrow, Lancing, Marlborough, and Uppingham increasingly emphasised the importance of physical education, so many other schools followed their example. More resources were spent on pitches, and on new gymnasias and staff. Registers and statistical records were assiduously kept. The whole elaborate and hierarchical apparatus of house matches, colours, and competitive games between schools was established, and the significance of particular events grew exponentially. Attendance at Lords for the annual cricket match between Eton and Harrow reached twenty-four thousand in the 1870s, for example.<sup>15</sup>

But the ideal of *mens sana in corpore sano* was gradually being replaced by a belief in the value of competitive sport for other reasons. As J.G. Cotton Minchin said, 'If asked what our muscular Christianity has done, we point to the British Empire. Our Empire would never have been built up by a nation of idealists and logicians. Physical vigour is as necessary for maintenance of our Empire as mental vigour.'<sup>16</sup> Thus there was a gradual change from the 'spiritual' manliness of the 1850s and 1860s, suggested by Kingsley and Hughes, to the ludic ideology of the 1870s and 1880s, associated with a greater emphasis on physical development in the name of secular patriotism and imperialism. It is a far cry from Dr Arnold's views on education. 'Muscular Christianity' is being replaced by muscularity and patriotism.

This process is particularly evident in the development of the two main genres of boys' fiction from the 1870s – the adventure story and the school story.

Kingston, the author of so many thrilling sea-stories, was succeeded in 1880 as the editor of the significantly named *Union Jack: Tales for British Boys*, a penny weekly devoted to adventure stories, by G.A. Henty, who became the most prolific exponent of the genre in the last decades of the century. A widely experienced war-correspondent who had begun his career in the Crimean War, Henty began writing for children when poor health made further strenuous travelling

impossible. Soon he was producing four books a year, ranging from historical works such as *With Clive in India; or, The Beginnings of Empire* in 1884 to stories about contemporary events, such as *With Buller in Natal; or, A Born Leader* of 1901. By the time of his death in 1902 Henty had produced nearly eighty books for his main publisher Blackie alone, as well as numerous essays, short stories, campaign histories and adult novels for other publishers. He is by this prolific output supposed to have taught history to generations of schoolboys.<sup>17</sup>

The hero of Henty's stories is usually a teenage boy, the son of a clergyman or farmer perhaps, who leaves home at the beginning of the tale as the result of a domestic crisis, in order to seek his fortune elsewhere. Often accompanied by a faithful companion, the young hero undergoes various difficulties, shipwrecks, attacks by hostile natives, skirmishes, unjust captivity, and treachery, until the narrative rises to a great climax which is often a fierce battle against powerful opponents, before the hero triumphs and returns home safely.

Religious didacticism has completely disappeared from these stories, but Henty took his moral responsibilities seriously, trying to guide his young readers – 'My Dear Lads', as he often calls them in his prefaces – towards such virtues as honesty, loyalty and resourcefulness, but especially pluck. All Henty's books articulate a confident belief that the British possession of such qualities is unequalled, and that the British Empire is an unrivalled instrument for justice and civilised values.

Here first, to give an example of how important athleticism combined with moral decency had become, is the description of sixteen-year-old Charlie Marryat, the hero of *With Clive in India*:

He was slight in build, but his schoolfellows knew that Charlie Marryat's muscles were as firm and as hard as those of any boy in the school. In all sports requiring activity and endurance rather than weight and strength he was always conspicuous. Not one in the school could compete with him in long-distance running, and when he was one of the hares there was but little chance for the hounds. He was a capital swimmer and one of the best boxers in the school. He had a reputation for being a leader in every mischievous prank; but he was honourable and manly, would scorn to shelter himself under the semblance of a lie, and was a prime favourite with his masters as well as his schoolfellows.<sup>18</sup>

There is not much mention of Christianity here, nor in the works of Henty's contemporaries and successors, such as Sir Henry, Rider

Haggard, 'Herbert Strang' (pseudonym of George Herbert Ely [1866-1958] and James L'Estrange [1867-1947]) or Captain F.S. Brereton (1872-1957), who wrote adventure stories such as *With Rifle and Bayonet* (1901).

The dilution of Christian values can most clearly be seen in the production of the weekly magazine the *Boys' Own Paper* which began in January 1879. Though occasionally containing brief paragraphs on religion, this magazine, which was actually created by the Religious Tract Society to try and counter the appeal of the violent but popular 'penny dreadfuls', accepted the need to concentrate on publishing attractive but secular adventure and school stories in order to reach the widest possible number of juvenile readers, as indeed it did, reaching figures, it has been calculated, of around a quarter of a million by the 1880s.<sup>19</sup>

Significantly, the first number of the *BOP* opened with the story of 'My First Football Match' by 'An Old Boy' later identified as Talbot Baines Reed (1852-1893). After the success of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, other school stories had followed, such as *Schoolboy Honour* by the Rev. H.C. Adams (1817-1899) in 1861, and *Stories of Whitminster* by 'Ascott Hope', actually Robert Hope Moncrieff (1846-1927), in 1873. But it was Talbot Baines Reed's serials for the *BOP*, later published in book form, such as *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's* (1882) and *The Cock House at Fellsgarth* (1893), which became the greatest influence on the genre of the school story since Thomas Hughes, and laid down the lines for future development. Less didactic than earlier writers, Reed exploited the ingredients of the school story, such as rivalry over games, with skill and zest. *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's*, with its exciting cricket and Rugby matches, was extremely popular. Frequently reprinted, it sold 750,000 copies in penny edition in 1907. (By contrast, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* had sold 150,000 copies by 1898.<sup>20</sup>) The success is deserved, for Reed makes a lively use of the conventions established by Hughes, but developed them with a significant change of tone. Christian values are faintly present, but there is much less explicit didacticism than in Hughes's book, and there is far more humour and good-natured tolerance. Reed develops a story of some complexity by describing the first year of young Stephen Greenfield's career at St. Dominic's, but contrasting his naïve and amusing experiences with the more challenging issues facing his fifth-form brother Oliver. Reed intertwines the two plots with great skill, linking them through the character of a corrupt sixth-former, and fluently moving from a serious account of Oliver's attempt to win the important Nightingale

Prize and to cope with accusations of cheating, to comical descriptions of Stephen's squabbles with his fellow-juniors. Reed's picture of school-life contains touching glimpses of schoolboy honour, and is much more realistic, amusing and secular than the insistently religious didacticism of earlier stories.

By the end of the nineteenth century, in other words, those values loosely associated with the phrase 'muscular Christianity' had almost disappeared. The ideal of the Christian Soldier Hero was being replaced by a different figure, a youth or man of honour certainly, and certainly athletic, but more devoted to secular values such as patriotism and imperialism and loyalty than to Christianity.

The famous poem of 1898 about 'Clifton Chapel' by Sir Henry Newbolt (1862-1938) ends not with thoughts of God but praise for the public schoolboy who dies for his country:

*'Qui procul hinc,'* the legend's writ, –  
The frontier grave is far away –  
*'Qui ante diem perit:*  
*Sed miles, sed pro patria.'*<sup>21</sup>

And in the same year his poem 'Vitai Lampada' memorably expresses the way Christian values have been replaced by others:

There's a breathless hush in the Close tonight –  
Ten to make and the match to win –  
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,  
An hour to play and the last man in.  
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,  
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,  
But the captain's hand on his shoulder smote  
'Play up! play up! and play the game!'

The sand of the desert is sodden red, –  
Red with the wrack of the square that broke; –  
The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead,  
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.  
The river of death has brimmed his banks,  
And England's far, and Honour a name,  
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:  
'Play up! play up! and play the game!'

This is the word that year by year,  
While in her place the School is set,  
Every one of her sons must hear,  
And none that hears it dare forget.

This they all with a joyful mind  
Bear through life like a torch in flame,  
And falling fling to the host behind –  
‘Play up! play up! and play the game!’<sup>22</sup>

As a final footnote to this discussion of ‘muscular Christianity’ and its influence on children’s books in the nineteenth century, one cannot help observing that attendance of spectators at Lord’s for Eton versus Harrow cricket matches which had reached the figure of 24,626 in 1871, had declined to 2,466 by 1972.<sup>23</sup> But that, as they say, is another story.

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