GENERAL EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Imperialism was more than a set of economic, political, and military phenomena. It was a habit of mind, a dominant idea in the era of European world supremacy which had widespread intellectual, cultural, and technical expressions. The 'Studies in Imperialism' series is designed to explore, primarily but not exclusively, these relatively neglected areas. Volumes are planned on the scientific aspects of imperialism, on education, disease, the theatre, literature, art, design, and many more. But in redressing the balance in favour of these multi-disciplinary and cross-cultural studies, it is not intended that the economic, political, and military dimensions should be ignored. The series will also contain books in these fields and will seek to examine colonial and imperial developments in a variety of periods and in diverse geographical contexts. It is hoped that individually and collectively these works will illumine one of the most potent characteristics of modern world history.

In this book W.J. Reader attempts to understand what he describes as 'one of the most extraordinary mass movements in history', the voluntary enlistment of two and a half million men in the British army in the first sixteen months of the Great War. He seeks to explore the cultural dimensions of the age which helped to form those volunteers' patriotism and their willingness to sacrifice themselves to defend a faith which allied a conviction about national superiority to a divine right to imperial rule. This ideology, national and international at the same time, had suffused popular entertainment, education, juvenile literature, the arts, and the press during the preceding decades. An entire generation had been brought up to a particular set of attitudes about war, a favourable view of the armed forces in British imperial life, a veneration for the monarchy, and a belief in the importance of the British Empire to the spread of civilisation across the globe. To this was added the paranoid Germanophobia of the pre-war years. The volunteers were, perhaps, influenced by a powerful set of interlocking ideas which our more sceptical and pluralistic age finds difficult to comprehend.

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