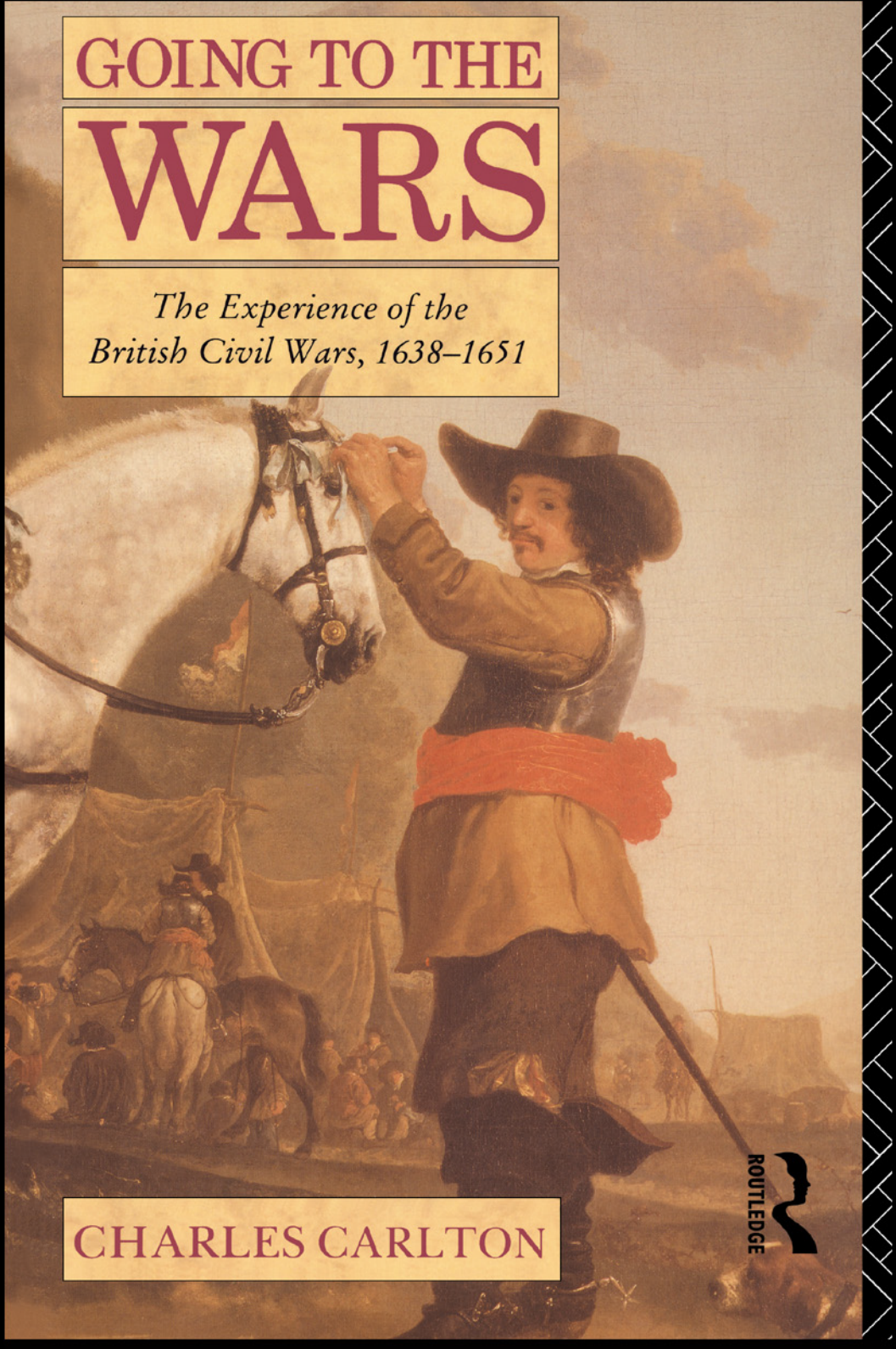
GOING TO THE WARS

The Experience of the British Civil Wars, 1638–1651



CHARLES CARLTON

ROUTLEDGE

GOING TO THE WARS

During the 1640s, tens of thousands of young British men set off for the Civil Wars full of that innocent enthusiasm with which so many before and since have welcomed the prospect of battle. Few had much idea of the reality of war. Brought up in a relatively peaceful society, they were totally unprepared for the military discipline, the physical exhaustion, the divided loyalties, the emotional strain, the loneliness, and, above all, the violence of combat.

Going to the Wars studies the British Civil Wars as a military experience. It is not a traditional campaign history, a political history of the war, or an analysis of weapons, organization, supply or tactics. Rather it explains how men prepared for combat, how they campaigned, fought battles and endured sieges. Others also endured the horrors of war, and the book pays special attention to those often excluded from a military panorama: women, children and prisoners of war.

Combining extensive research in primary sources with the work of the new military historians such as John Keegan and Richard Holmes, Charles Carlton provides a fresh look at the event once described by G.M. Trevelyan as the most important happening in our history.

Charles Carlton is Professor of History at North Carolina State University. His many publications include *Royal Mistresses* (1990), *William Laud: 1573–1645* (1987), *Royal Childhoods* (1986), and *Charles I* (1983). For five years he was a part-time soldier in Britain's Territorial Army, serving as an officer in the Welch Regiment, the Special Air Services Regiment, and the Intelligence Corps.

'A fascinating and brilliant book…the real value of this book is the insights it gives us into what it was like to be involved, both as a soldier and as a civilian…a complete and detailed view of the horror of civil war…There are lots of gems in this remarkable book.'

Literary Review

'A remarkable book, full of stories, emotions and terrible scenes recorded with a grim common sense…This is the most revealing and memorable book about its period since Christopher Hill's *The World Turned Upside Down*. I commend it not only to anyone interested in the century but to anyone interested in the nature of war and the nature of human beings.'

The Scotsman

'A rather astonishing book, which enters upon the field with an exhilarating mixture of assurance and diffidence. Carlton takes us systematically and excitingly through the life and labours of the men who joined the war…The evidence laid before us is enormous: letters, poems, songs, newspaper reports are all drawn on. No doubt of it: Carlton's prodigious labours have given us a three-dimensional picture, reality rather than learned abstraction.'

Independent on Sunday

'Charles Carlton's exhilarating survey of the British civil wars, 1638 to 1651, overflows with amazing facts…A totally absorbing book, which details daily life during this vital time in our history in a way that has not been bettered…Here is, as near to truth, our violent history as it affects the lowest and highest in the land told in splendid abundance.'

City Recorder

'This splendidly researched book tells us what the British Civil Wars were really like…We are unlikely to get closer to the front line than the pages of this book.'

Manchester Evening News

GOING TO THE WARS

The Experience of the British Civil Wars 1638–1651

Charles Carlton

London and New York

To the memory of my father, Colonel Charles Hope Carlton, M.C., Royal Army Medical Corps, who as a surgeon in two world wars knew only too well the actuality of battle,
and
to my children, and their posterity, in the hope that they may never know the reality of what I am trying to describe.

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FOREWORD

John Keegan

Military history has undergone a great change in the last thirty years. Even in the two decades after the Second World War it remained what it had traditionally been, a record of events and decisions rather than of personal experience. The war inspired a great deal of personal reminiscence, yet historians—even those who were themselves veterans—made little attempt to integrate any of it with their narrative. The development of social history had already influenced political and economic historians; the social history of warfare continued to remain neglected long after historians in other disciplines had begun to realize the importance of admitting the personal dimension into their writing.

Signs of change appeared slowly. In 1943 Irvin Bell Wiley published his remarkable *The Life of Johnny Reb* and in 1952 followed it with a companion volume, *The Life of Billy Yank*. The two books attempted to portray, with considerable success, what the material circumstances of campaign were for the common soldier on each side in the American Civil War. He did not, however, deal at length with the experience of the soldier on the battlefield. In 1947 the American combat historian, S.L. A.Marshall, published a short but seminal work, *Men Against Fire,* which argued that the battlefield experience was a social one; his theme was that social and cultural factors went far to determine how men did—or did not—fight.

These approaches began to bear fruit in the 1970s. In 1976 I published a book, *The Face of Battle,* which drew upon the methods of both Marshall and Wiley. It attracted considerable attention, was translated into seven languages and remains in print to this day. It was, however, experimental in method and limited in scope. More recently specialist scholars have applied the social history method to particular wars or periods of military history with a more rigorous attention to sources than I had attempted. Victor Hanson, an American classical scholar, re-interpreted hoplite warfare in fifth-century Greece through careful assessment of city-state social history in the texts. Geoffrey Parker had already reconstructed the social dimension of the Eighty Years' War in great detail from the records of the Spanish army in the Netherlands.

Parker confined his treatment, however, to the routines of the Spanish army, while Hanson had been more interested in the battlefield experience. Though each had achieved noteworthy scholarly advances, they had been made on a single axis rather than across the whole front. Charles Carlton, in this admirable and original book, shows how our knowledge and understanding of a much-studied war can be transformed by integrating the social history of both campaign and battle into a single whole.

By meticulous re-sifting of the texts, using testimony overlooked or rejected by earlier historians, he has made the English Civil War—and its satellite conflicts in Scotland and Ireland—a comprehensible, convincing and moving human event. It is difficult to think of any of its aspects he has neglected. Death, wounds, hunger, hardship, fatigue, want of shelter, absence from home and of loved ones, lack of news—all the ordeals, fears and anxieties which form the real and daily experience of the soldier in battle or on campaign are here, richly documented from letters, contemporary pamphlets and official records. So, too, are the inducements and consolations of going to the wars—loot, travel, freedom from the daily grind, jolly company, chance encounters with the opposite sex. He recognizes and records the ordeals that the war threw on women; but also the emancipation that it brought some of them, obliged to run families or manage estates in the absence of their menfolk. His passages on the anguish that separation brought to couples united by heartfelt affection supply an important corrective to the view propagated by many early modern historians that marriage in the pre-Romantic age was a 'businesslike' arrangement. His emphasis on the deep affront to their Christian morality felt by many challenged to take sides—even when they did so—is a corrective, too, to the approach of those historians who represent seventeenth-century religion as a cloak for material interest.

Historians of battle—who think, as I do, that battle is what war is ultimately about—will be particularly impressed by his unflinching analysis of what happened when pike and shot drew to killing range on the small—but surprisingly numerous—fields of the war's engagements. Carlton's civil war is war in all its dimensions. His book is a magnificent book. It will be read, used, quoted and admired by historians of the English Civil War, and by military historians in general, for decades to come. As an example of how the history of a single war may be written in the round, it will put the historical community on its mettle.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In writing this book I have incurred many obligations, which it is my most pleasant duty to acknowledge. First and foremost I am extremely grateful to the Harry F.Guggenheim Foundation for awarding me a fellowship for two years during which I was able to do the bulk of the research and writing. My own university generously supplemented this grant. I am grateful to the Folger Shakespeare Library, and to the Cambridge University Library for their help and many kindnesses. Staff from my own university library, particularly from the inter-library loan department, are a tribute to the outstanding work of North Carolina State University's unsung heroines—and heroes. At Cambridge University I enjoyed the hospitality of Wolfson College, and the intellectual stimulation of Professor Collinson's and Dr Morrill's seminars. I am grateful to the members of the latter, as well as to audiences at the Pacific Coast Conference of British Studies, the North American Conference of British Studies, the American Military Institute, and Triangle Strategic Studies Seminar, for many helpful comments.

I am particularly delighted that John Keegan has written the foreword to this book for it was he who—perhaps unknowingly—planted the seed from which it has grown. About ten years ago I was invited to an after-dinner talk given by a Sandhurst lecturer at Cambridge to a small group of senior army officers on what had historically made the British soldier fight. Drugs—especially alcohol—and plunder, Mr Keegan argued with compelling evidence, were the main reasons. As colonels fumed and brigadiers turned puce, I thought this was a brilliant insight. It prompted me to read Mr Keegan's work which has been the inspiration not just for this book but for a generation of 'new military historians'.

I am grateful to my niece and nephew, Sophie and Ralph Bostock, for the patience (doubtless augmented by the promise of a trip to MacDonalds) they displayed when I dragged them around Edgehill and Cropredy. Hally Phillips hosted my visits to Carisbrook, while Alan Turton showed me Basing, letting me try on his armour and port his pike. Visiting battlefields has been one of the more pleasant tasks, from striding across Naseby in the rain, getting my legs torn in the hedgerows of Newbury, getting lost in the

bocage of Lostwithiel, and picnicking near the (disgracefully neglected) Queen's Sconce at Newark.

While researching and writing this book I was fortunate to be invited to teach during the early summers of 1988 and 1989 at Liaoning University, Shenyang, China, where friends—who had better remain nameless—taught me a lot about revolutions and the memory of civil war. Even though my course on the English Revolution, scheduled a couple of weeks before Tiananmen Square, was cancelled by the Chinese one, those exhilarating days taught me much about the tumultuous 1640s. Reading about them in the quiet of a library or the security of one's study one can too easily forget how emotionally draining such times can be. Then ordinary men can be great, powerful people can turn craven, and all have to live with their consciences. As the regicide Thomas Harrison said about Charles I's trial and execution, 'It was not a thing done in a corner.'* Seeing Shenyang's students march off to protest against a corrupt regime must have been like watching, say, the London Trained Bands depart for Gloucester. Being the only westerner on a train hijacked by radicals gave me some idea of the chaos and fear that ideas in action can engender. Sitting with a quarter of a million people outside the provincial communist party headquarters, the world seemed about to be turned upside down. And a few days later when the experience of defeat came to Tiananmen Square, I cried: but then so did many cavaliers on 30 January, 1649.

In another respect, at least, writing a book is similar to fighting a war: in both what keeps one going—more than anything else—is the friendship and advice of others. Among the many people who have helped me far more than they can ever realize and I can ever acknowledge with a mere alphabetical list are: Ian Atherton, G.R.Aylmer, Joe Caddel, Anthony Clayton, Esther Cope, Barbara Donagan, Christopher Duffy, G.R.Elton, Mark Fissell, Edward Furgol, Ian Gentles, Don Higginbotham, Joe Hobbs, Richard Holmes, J.R.Kenyon, Clark McCauley, Alistair Menzies, John Morrill, Jane Ohlmeyer, Geoffrey Parker, Linda Peck, Paul Seaver, Joe Slavin, Lawrence Stone and Andrew Wheatcroft. Last, and never least, to Caroline my greatest debt is due, for always being there whenever I came back from the wars.

5 August 1991
Raleigh, North Carolina

* Quoted by C.V.Wedgwood, *The Trial of Charles I* (1964), 252.

1

THE ACTUALITIES OF WAR

> If I had time and anything like your ability to study war, I think I should concentrate almost entirely on 'the actualities of war'—the effects of tiredness, hunger, fear, lack of sleep, weather…it is the actualities which make war so complicated and difficult, and are usually so neglected by historians.
>
> Field Marshal Wavell to Basil Liddell-Hart

In the summer of 1639 Richard Lovelace had everything a young man of 20 could wish for, 'being then accounted', wrote the contemporary historian, Anthony Wood, 'the most amiable and beautiful person that eye ever beheld…much adored and admired by the female sex'.[1] Lovelace was the eldest son of a large, wealthy and ancient Kentish family. Both his father and grandfather had been distinguished soldiers. He had the double blessing of a Cambridge education and an Oxford MA, while his excellent connections at court obtained him an ensign's commission in the First Bishops' War and a captain's in the Second. In the well-known lines Lovelace explained to his Lucasta the excitement that he—like so many other innocent young men before and since—felt about going to the wars:

> Tell me not, Sweet, I am unkind
> That from the nunnery
> Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind,
> To war and arms I flee.

Over the years much has been written about the wars to which Lovelace went, because historians as distinguished as G.M.Trevelyan have argued that the cataclysm which engulfed the British Isles in the middle of the seventeenth century was the most important happening in our history. At the time Edward Hyde, the Earl of Clarendon, described it as the Great Rebellion in which a few extremists duped the mass of decent moderate men. While this view prevailed during the eighteenth century, in the first half of the nineteenth Thomas Babington Macaulay challenged it by arguing

that the civil wars were essentially a Herculean struggle between liberty and despotism, which the former won, thus making possible the glories of Victorian England. Towards the end of the century S.R.Gardiner portrayed the turmoil as a Puritan Revolution, in which Godly Protestants resisted the counter reformation of pseudo-catholic royalists. In more recent times Karl Marx and his followers have interpreted the crisis of mid-seventeenth-century England as the first great Bourgeois Revolution. During this period the gentry supposedly rose—or at least the mere gentry came to the top—as the aristocracy experienced a crisis. Others have turned this thesis on its head by arguing that the aristocracy was behind the revolution all the time. Recently revisionist historians have stressed the short-term, even accidental nature of events, in which the acts of individuals played a more important role than the seemingly inevitable and impersonal forces that the reformation set in motion a century before. John Morrill, for instance, has suggested that the civil wars were essentially Wars of Religion.[2]

Whatever these events may have been, of two things there can be no doubt. First that the debate over the causes and nature of the crisis that engulfed the British Isles during the middle of the seventeenth century will continue, and second that they were a complex series of wars, in which men and women killed and were killed, had their bodies maimed, and had to endure some of the most traumatic experiences any human being can face. While these wars may have had different causes, may have been waged for widely varying goals, and may have employed different techniques, they share a commonality which is only just beginning to be recognized.[3] The appellation 'the Wars of the Three Kingdoms' is rather a mouthful (which anyway ignores the Principality of Wales). Perhaps they could be better called 'The British Civil Wars' if only because this is more succinct, and may be used to include Ireland as part of the British Isles.[4] Without doubt contemporaries recognized the conflict's complex nature, the first use of the term 'civil wars' being in a pamphlet of 1643.[5]

There is no shortage of excellent books on the civil wars. J.R.Kenyon's *The Civil Wars of England* (New York, 1988) is the best recent survey that combines military and political history. *The English Civil Wars: A Military History of the Three Civil Wars, 1642–51* (1974) by P.Young and R.Holmes is an excellent introduction. Austin Woolrych's *Battles of the English Civil War* (1961) and A.H.Burne's *The Battlefields of England* (1951) deal with the confrontations between armies, while Brigadier Peter Young, the doyen of civil-war historians, has covered individual battles in his many books and articles.[6]

The supply of local studies is just as rich. County histories as those by Mary Coate on Cornwall, R.W.Ketton-Cremer on Norfolk, A.C.Wood on Nottinghamshire, David Underdown on Somerset, Anthony Fletcher on Sussex, Alan Everitt on Kent, Anne Hughes on Warwickshire, and Valerie Pearl on London, spring to mind.[7] So do regional studies, such asClive

Holmes's *The Eastern Association during the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1974), John Morrill's *The Revolt of the Provinces* (1976), and David Stevenson's *The Scottish Revolution, 1637–44* (Newton Abbot, 1973), and *Revolution and Counter Revolution in Scotland* (1977). The list of biographical studies of participants in the war, ranging from major figures, such as Charles I and Cromwell, to minor players, such as Sir Richard Grenville or Ralph Josselin, is too long to mention. C.H.Firth and Godfrey Davis have written widely on the parliamentary forces.[8] Mark Kishlansky has contributed a provocative interpretation in *The Rise of the New Model Army* (Cambridge, 1979), while the work of Ronald Hutton, Peter Newman, Ian Roy and Joyce Malcolm have done much to shed light on the royalist armed forces.[9] Last, and far from least, there are numerous investigations of the wars' political background, of which those by J.H.Hexter, Blair Worden and Brian Manning are especially noteworthy.[10]

This book will not try to duplicate such works. Instead it will look at the war as a war, as an experience in which violence—real or threatened—affected the lives of the inhabitants of the British Isles. Since there was little fighting at sea, the main effect of the navy, which parliament controlled, being to prevent foreign intervention, this book will examine the 'actualities of war' on land.

'If I had time and anything like your ability to study war,' wrote Field Marshal Wavell, the Second World War British Commander, to Sir Basil Liddell-Hart, another equally distinguished writer on military matters,

> I think that I should concentrate almost entirely on the 'actualities of war'—the effects of tiredness, hunger, fear, lack of sleep, weather…. The principles of strategy and tactics, and the logistics of war are really absurdly simple: it is the actualities that make war so complicated and so difficult, and are usually so neglected by historians.

Wavell was reiterating a point that Leo Tolstoy had made nearly a century before. The Russian novelist, who had seen action in the Caucasus and Crimea, admitted that he was fascinated with 'the reality of war, the actual killing. I was more interested to know in what way and under the influence of what feeling one soldier kills another than to know how the armies were arranged at Austerlitz and Borodino.' Professor Geoffrey Elton, the distinguished Cambridge historian, who also fought as an infantryman in the British Army in Italy, agrees that professional historians have neglected the realities of war, since 'astonishingly few' of them have addressed this topic.[11]

At one level the reasons for this neglect are simple: at another they are extraordinarily complex.

Surviving records dictate the sort of history which may be written. Ordnance, for instance, always creates large amounts of paperwork, ifonly

because 'bumpf' is a hedge against the misappropriation of material. For much the same reason armies usually create good pay and muster rolls. Thus it is far easier to write a history of the raising of an army than on how that army fought. Again, because headquarters units are safely away from combat, it is much simpler to write on strategy, showing how divisions and regiments moved cleanly like pins on a map, than it is to show tactically how platoons, squads, individuals, scrabbled frantically on the ground.

Training manuals, military codes of conduct usually survive as records of how things should be done. Unit diaries or ships' logs may record a version of what might have happened. Yet even logs or diaries, sometimes written during the heat of battle, usually eschew the actualities of war, for the banalities of hard facts, such as the text of orders rather than whether they were, or could have been carried out. During battle men are often too busy or too frightened to create records, and when they do so are often surprised by the banality of what they produce. For instance, the recording of RAF crew intercom conversations or the chatter of US gunship helicopter pilots in Vietnam during intense combat frequently sound like a parody of a bad war film.

The reason is simple: human beings often try to hide behind banality in order to escape the extraordinary.

Without doubt war is the most horrible, most catastrophic, and most immoral event known to man. It is, to quote Tolstoy again, 'the vilest thing in life'. Such a conclusion contradicts the assumptions of human progress inherent in the Whig view of history. For Marxist historians war is in itself irrelevant since the long-term results are inevitable. Because all too often military history has been used to glorify war, or else to train officers to win bigger and bloodier battles, it has gained a less than savoury reputation. But as Clausewitz, the nineteenth-century Prussian who founded the modern study of war warned, 'it is of no purpose, it is even against one's better interests to turn away from the consideration of the real nature of the affair, because the horror of its elements excites repugnance.'[12] At the individual level war threatens death or horrid wounds, noises, sights and fears that those innocent of battle cannot imagine, and those who have survived cannot forget. War is so obscene that it is pornographic.

And yet war, like pornography, exerts a profound fascination. If, as General William T.Sherman insisted, war is hell, then, as artists from Dante to Hieronymous Bosch have recognized, many people find looking at the experience of hell, as opposed to actually going there, far more interesting than heaven. 'As long as war is regarded as wicked, it will have its fascination', Oscar Wilde observed. Norman Davies took this point a stage further when he wrote that 'The popularity of books and films dealing with war and violence, like that for pornography…attests to thepleasure provided by the vicarious satisfaction of frustrated drives.' The links between male sexuality and violence are nigh universal, having been charted

in some 112 different societies. They do not appear to have changed much over time, having been recognized long before Sigmund Freud delineated them. During the American Revolution, for instance, Dr Samuel Johnson noted that 'every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier'. More recently during the Falklands campaign an officer in the Parachute Regiment observed 'The only real test of a man is when the firing starts.'[13]

It is as if having experienced battle was as much a criterion for full masculinity as having had sex. Indeed the links between being a warrior and being a man have always been strong. Bulstrode Whitelocke, who took part in the civil war, recalled that in September 1643 at the First Battle of Newbury 'both sides performed then with good manhood and animosity'.[14] The ability of a soldier's uniform to attract women has always helped persuade young men to take the Queen's shilling. Just as US Marine Corps recruiters used to promise 'to build men', so Captain Abraham Stanton, a veteran of the English civil war, avowed that as a result of military training 'Myriads of men now bear arms that bore nothing but only shapes of men before.'[15] Troops innocent of battle are called virgin soldiers, waiting for the baptism of fire, which is seen as an important an event—although hopefully a far less pleasant one—in their lives, as losing their virginity.[16] Thus Edward Hyde, the civil wars' most distinguished contemporary historian, called Lord Somerset, the duke whom Charles I made a general notwithstanding his complete lack of military experience, 'a virgin soldier'.[17]

Having never seen combat—although having served as a part-time soldier—I am all too aware of the problems faced in trying to write about an experience of which I am innocent. They are a little like those faced by a lifelong celibate trying to draft a sex manual. Both activities are so personal, so intense that no amount of reading other people's experiences can fully compensate for the lack of one's own.

On the other hand, because they are so intensely personal, one's own experiences can cloud other people's. One tends to see all military events in egotistical terms. Having combat experience may lock one into a view of battle from which it is very difficult to escape. For instance, a Vietnam veteran, even one who believes in God, may find it hard to credit the role religion played in combat in the English civil war: he would credit his survival to our artillery support, their bad shooting, or pure luck, rather than the direct personal intervention of the Almighty. As Sir Basil LiddellHart observed, the historian who fought during the defeat of Dunkirk might find the elation felt by the victorious cavalry at Naseby far harder to comprehend than if he had never left the secure confines of his study.[18]

'We have shared the incommunicable experience of war', wrote Oliver Wendell Holmes of his service in the Union Army. Battle is so traumatic an

experience that even today survivors are loath to talk about it, particularly those who were on the losing side. When they do so they often hide in formulas or clichés, which seem to act as salve for mental wounds that may never heal. Such was even more true in the seventeenth century, for which records of close introspection about all matters (except religious salvation) were extremely rare.[19] The few autobiographies or diaries from the period do not convey a very strong sense of self. When seventeenth-century men did write about their wartime experiences they invariably used the third person. Just because those veterans did not talk so openly about fear, violence, elation and despair, as men do today, it does not necessarily follow that they did not experience them as intensely. Thus whenever possible I have quoted extensively from the records so the survivors of the civil wars may speak for themselves. If the subject of my book is war and the pity of war, then the people best able to explain it are those others who have known it at first hand.

To overcome the chasm between his own experience and the experiences about which he is writing the military historian must use all the tools of his trade. While the experience of battle changes over time, as General Sir John Hackett has recently argued 'the essential soldier remains the same. Whether he is handling a sling shot weapon on Hadrian's Wall, or whether he is in a main battle tank today, he is essentially the same.' As the pop singer Donovan described 'The Universal Soldier':[20]

> He's four foot two, and he's six foot four
> He fights with muscles and with spears.
> He's all of thirty one and he's only seventeen
> He's been a soldier for a thousand years.

Perhaps historians have focused too much on change rather than continuity. We may be able to learn more about the experience of war in the British Isles three centuries ago by also examining it in more recent times, when interviews, even statistical surveys, the starkness of film, the frankness of novelists and the writers of memoirs, and the work of military sociologists have done much to shed light on its reality.

But come to think of it there is little difference between this and other historical endeavours. Few political historians have served as kings or presidents: hardly a business historian has headed a major corporation. So going to the British civil wars is in many respects much like embarking on any other historical journey. To discover the actualities of war the historian must first immerse himself in the surviving records, and then with caution and imagination combine his own experiences with those of others to make that leap into the dark that is the past.

2

THE DRUM'S DISCORDANT SOUND

I hate the Drum's Discordant Sound,
Parading round and round and round.
To thoughtless youth it pleasure yields
And lures from cities and from fields.
John Scot of Amwell (1730–83)

In 1628 Sir Edward Cecil, Viscount Wimbledon, a veteran of the continental wars, complained that 'This Kingdom hath been too long at peace.' Perhaps he was trying to justify the failure of the expedition to Cadiz which he had led with a degree of incompetence noteworthy even for early seventeenth-century English generals, for he continued, 'our old commanders, both by sea and by land are worn out, and few men are bred in their places, for the knowledge of war, and almost the thought of war is extinguished.'[1]

Others—at home and abroad—agreed with Cecil. In the Spanish Netherlands most people thought the English had become 'effeminate, unable to endure the fatigations and travails of a war: delicate, well-fed, given to tobaccos, wine, strong drink, feather beds; undisciplined, unarmed, unfurnished with money and munitions'.[2] Englishmen agreed. 'What hath effeminated our English, but a long disuse of arms?' asked Richard Johnson in 1631.[3] Seven years later James Wemyss, Master Gunner of England, wrote to Charles I, who was contemplating going to war against the Scots, that the realm was woefully unprepared: there were, for instance, only four men in the land who knew how to fire a mortar.[4] The situation in the Ordnance Office was even worse. According to Sir John Haydon, the surveyor was ill, the chief clerk was in prison, two other clerks had absconded, a third was out of town, the yeoman and his gunner were absent without leave, while the master gunner was dead.[5]

In spite of such dire warnings, and contrary to the advice of John Stewart, Earl of Traquair and Lord Treasurer of Scotland, that it would take a standing army of at least forty thousand English troops to make the Scots

use the new prayer book just issued in the king's name, Charles insisted on a war.[6] The preparations reflected England's pacific traditions. 'Out of curiosity to see the spectacle of our public death, I went to Bramham Moor to see the training of our light horse', wrote Sir Henry Slingsby, a Yorkshire gentleman. His diary entry continued: 'These are a strange spectacle to this nation in this age that have lived this long peaceable, without noise of shot or drum, and we have stood neutral and in peace whilst all the world beside hath been in arms and wasted with it.'[7]

The contrast between the bumbling light cavalry which Slingsby saw playing on Bramham Moor, and the reality of continental combat could not have been more marked. Seventeenth-century Europe was extremely warlike. 'This is the century of the soldier', observed the Italian poet, Falvio Testir, in 1641.[8] There were only three years of peace during the whole of the seventeenth century: its wars were more frequent and widespread, lasted longer, and killed many more people, both civilians and combatants, than before. As Sir George Clark has written, 'war was not a mere succession of occurrences, but an institution, a regular and settled mode of action, for which provision was made through the ordering of social life.'[9] So profound was this change that several historians have talked of a 'Military Revolution'. Armies became bigger, soldiers were better trained, the state grew more powerful. Europe was approaching the modern age when, to use Clausewitz's dictum, 'War is a mere continuation of policy by other means.'[10]

The ways by which wars are continued are many. The causes of wars may be complex, and although not fully understood at the time can become a matter of acrimonious debate for historians ever since. To fight a war, taxes must be levied, soldiers must be recruited and trained, officers appointed, plans made, and supplies supplied. All these changes took place in the British Isles during the 1640s when the military revolution touched all the three kingdoms, transforming the British Isles from a military backwater to the forefront of European affairs. All over the land large armies were raised, modern tactics were introduced, and millions were touched by war and its violence. So profound was this change that war became the norm. Instead of the demand for demobilization which has usually followed great wars, such as the Napoleonic War, or the World Wars of our own century, soldiers—at least on the winning side—wanted to remain with the colours. Thus a standing army came into being.[11]

Even though the Restoration did much to curb the power of the military, by turning the commonwealth into a horrid example of what happens when jumped-up major generals take over, Britain continued to maintain a strong military presence, primarily at sea. Just as parliament changed from being an occasion into an institution, so did the conduct of war. Such should not be surprising, for a main function of the former has always been to pay for the latter.

It has always been the individual soldier, sailor or airman who has paid war's final price, and has been the ultimate means by which it has been prosecuted. It is they who answer the drum's discordant sound: they are the ones who must bridge that chasm from peace and living to killing and death.

John Evelyn experienced this transition when on coming down from Oxford he volunteered to join the king's army. The drunkenness, swearing and fornication of the soldiery upset him so much that he retreated quite literally to cultivate his garden. When England became too dangerous even for that harmless hobby, Evelyn fled to the continent.

Of course nothing can fully prepare one for the realities of war, and yet the British Isles went to civil war during the middle of the seventeenth century with a surprising ease. Five influences greased the skids. First, the varying degree of violence present in different parts of the British Isles. Second, the previous experiences and folk memories of war. Third, the military institutions which already existed. Fourth, the mental mechanisms that facilitated going to war. And fifth, the baptism of fire that most individuals faced. The first three influences will be discussed in this chapter, and the last two in the next.

Several historians have argued that early modern England was a pretty violent place, where men frequently carried weapons which they used at the least provocation. 'This was a rough, superstitious, excitable and volatile society', Geoffrey Elton wrote about Henrician England.[12] According to A.L.Rowse things had, if anything, got worse by Good Queen Bess's Glorious Days. 'One cannot exaggerate the violence latent in society', he wrote,

> the violence of men's impulses was, as often as not, uninhibited and released…stealing and robbery were endemic…murder and manslaughter were frequent, there were constant fights and affrays, ending in wounding or death…. Life in a world where pestilence and famine were regular, was indeed very cheap.

This image of an England which apparently combined the nastiest features of Matt Dillon's Dodge City with those of Ian Paisley's Belfast, carried over into the early seventeenth century, when, according to Carl Bridenbaugh, the 'daily life in England' was 'crowned with crimes of violence'.[13] The authorities then responsible for law and order agreed. They instituted vicious public punishments for violent crimes, and ordered that the official homily against 'Contention and Brawling' be read frequently in every church on Sunday.[14]

A statistical analysis (albeit a rudimentary one), does not support the view that early modern England was an especially violent place. Between 1588–90 and 1630–9 a peer's chances of being involved in a fray fell threefold.[15] In seventeenth-century Myddle, the Shropshire villagechronicled by Richard Gough, there were only two executions: one, a civil war soldier,

hanged for horse stealing, and the other a common murderer. Between 1560 and 1750 in Earls Colne, a larger village in Essex, there were three homicide convictions. In the county of Essex, between 1620 and 1630, there were some 190 accusations of murder—a rarely undiscovered crime.[16] These killings owed as much to alcohol as to pre-meditation, one-third being committed during or immediately after a drinking bout. Then, as now, drink was an important narcotic in releasing men's inhibitions against violence. While the comparative scarcity of firearms, which accounted for 11.6 per cent of the homicides, would lessen fatalities from brawls, rudimentary medical care meant that a far higher proportion of those wounded during them died.

Figures from Westmorland in the second half of the seventeenth century show even lower levels of violent crimes. There were very few assaults, or rapes, or even cattle rustling in the county, particularly when compared to non-violent crimes such as coin clipping, burglary and theft. In the whole of Westmorland, a border county where one might anticipate much mayhem, during the last half of the century there were only half a dozen murders. Perhaps this was due to a shortage of firearms. In Kirkby Lonsdale in the 1620s only 5 per cent and in the 1630s 7 per cent of households possessed weapons, as compared to 17 per cent in the 1640s.[17]

Levels of violence are, of course, relative. Yet compared to other societies seventeenth-century England was surprisingly peaceful. In late Elizabethan and early Stuart England, when one monograph alleges that rural artisans lived 'in contempt of all authority', there were some forty food riots. Yet during the eighteenth century—that Age of the Aristocracy when deference seemingly prevailed—the rate was three times higher.[18] Stuart England lacked the casual and common, official and private violence of Bourbon France. Compared to seventeenth-century rural China, where murder, mutilations, revenge killings, organized crime, bandits and blood feuds, were mundane, it was a veritable oasis of tranquillity.[19] Using the figures for reported murders, and cases ruled as murder after they had been brought to trial, we can calculate a homicide rate per hundred thousand inhabitants of 1.42 and 0.83 for Essex. The figure for Westmorland was lower at 0.04: that for Kent higher at 4.2. The equivalent figures for England and the United States today are 4 and 9.4. So the problems of obtaining and interpreting statistics notwithstanding, seventeenth-century England seems to have been a reasonably peaceful society.[20]

Of course, the relationship between a society's level of violence and its capability to go to war is a tenuous one. For instance it would be hard—and perilous—to compare the fighting records of British Army regiments which recruit from vicious slums, with those who draw from bucolic shires. While the American South has a record of personal violence, it would be foolish to suggest that its long-standing military traditions have given it a pronounced superiority on the battlefield as compared to other parts of the United

States. On the other hand inhibitions against war, such of those of various Indian ethnic groups as compared to, say, the Sikhs, Gurkhas or Rajputs, can inhibit a group's readiness to fight.

In the dozen years before the outbreak of the British civil wars official royal propaganda extolled the blessings of peace. 'Look up', Ben Jonson advised people as they entered the Banqueting Hall at Whitehall, 'to read the king in all his actions.' Above them they would see Rubens' masterpiece, one of whose three great central panels acclaimed James I as a peace-maker.[21] More obvious was the message in Rubens' 'Saint George and the Dragon', a painting which so pleased the king that he gave the artist a diamond ring. In it he painted Charles as St George, England's patron saint, who has just rescued a maiden (who bears an uncanny resemblance to Queen Henrietta Maria) from the Dragon of War. On the left two women support a third who has apparently just survived a fate worse than death. In the foreground are corpses, and civilians begging for mercy. All of them are symbolic victims of the Thirty Years' War, from which happy England has been spared, as demonstrated by the idyllic rural background and the heavenly choir of cherubs fluttering above.[22]

Painting was not the only form of court-sponsored an which celebrated the advantages of peace. Poets identified the king with peace:

> Welcome Great Sir, and with all the joy that's due,
> To the return of Peace and You.

Thus wrote Abraham Cowley on Charles's return from a state visit to Scotland in 1633.[23] Masques such as *The Triumph of Peace* (1633) were dedicated:

> To you, Great King and Queen, whose
> Smile doth scatter blessings through the Isle.

Thomas Carew joined in the chorus:[24]

> But let us that in Myrtyle bowers sit
> Under secure shields, use the benefit
> Of peace and plenty, which the blessed hand
> Of our good king gives this obdurate land.

And if England did have problems then they were due to a surfeit of peace. *Salmacida Spolia,* the Twelfth Night Masque for 1640, opens with a Fury fomenting a storm over England:

> And I do stir the humours that increase,
> In thy full body, overgrown with peace.

This conceit, together with the masque's main message that the love of king and queen will bring harmony to a land where by early 1640 Charles's Scots

policy had failed, his army had refused to fight, and his personal rule was in tatters, was clearly absurd.

Notwithstanding the work of officially sponsored artists, poets and playwrights, Charles I's commitment to peace was a little thicker than the paint upon the ceiling of the Banqueting Hall. The king would have loved to bow to public pressure and join the Thirty Years' War, and thus restore his sister Elizabeth and her husband Frederick to the German Palatine whence they had been driven in 1618. Ballads urged:

> The true religion to maintain
> Come let us to the wars again.

But going to the wars meant going to parliament for taxes, and parliament inevitably meant a renewal of the constitutional crisis that had bedevilled the 1620s.

Levels of violence in Ireland and Scotland seemed to have been much higher than those in England. During the sixteenth century, as Elizabeth ruled a peaceful land, James VI had to quell his discordant nobility. In the Highlands and Western Islands 'periodic violence was an essential and honourable part of life'.[25] The warrior was the hero: loyalty unto death to one's clan chief the supreme virtue. Such blood feuds, which often degenerated into massacres, were in part the product of pastoral farming that forced clans to compete for grazing. Cultural, religious and linguistic differences engendered tensions between the Highlands and the Lowlands. In Ireland, where several groups such as the Irish, Old and New English competed against each other, religion was the main cause of violence (as it still is today). A survey of 4,255 adult males in Ulster in 1630 revealed that 2.3 per cent owned guns, while 56.7 per cent had swords or pikes, a far higher level of weapons ownership than in England.[26] Thus while comparative statistics on levels of violence in early seventeenth-century Scotland and Ireland with those in England are flawed, it seems safe to assume that they were far higher in the Celtic fringes. Scotland and Ireland went to war before England, without much debate, and with—it cannot be argued—a far greater degree of ferocity.

Even though a very high proportion of English adult males, and a fair number of Scotsmen, had gone off to fight in the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland (which obviously affected most of that island's inhabitants), by the late 1630s few veterans were still alive, and all were too old to unsheath their swords once more. Nonetheless the collective memory of the Elizabethan campaigns was still powerful. Fathers and grandfathers told young men of their experiences, engendering the tradition that each generation had to fight its own war—if only to satisfy the Oedipal urge of sons to prove that they are as good as their fathers. For instance, Charles and Buckingham attacked Cadiz in 1625 to emulate Sir Francis Drake's epic

raid, even though their basic objective was the restoration of the Palatine a thousand miles away in Germany.

The remembrances of Tudor rebellions and previous civil wars figured far more prominently in early Stuart mentalities than did the conquest of Ireland.[27] Sir Thomas More estimated that the Wars of the Roses had cost more English lives than the campaigns in France, while towards the end of the sixteenth century Thomas Craig put the casualties at a hundred thousand. Shakespeare portrayed the Wars of the Roses as an unmitigated disaster:

> I and ten thousand in this luckless realm
> Had left no mourning widows for our death

So declared Lord John Clifford in *Henry VI* (II, vi, 14). In *Richard II* (iv, i, 144) the Bishop of Carlisle warned of the horrifying consequences of rebellion and the deposition of kings:

> The blood of English shall manure the ground
> And future Ages groan for this foul act….
> Disorder, Horror, Fear and Mutiny
> Shall here inhabit, and the land be call'd
> The Field of Golgotha and dead men's skulls.

Even though collective memories greatly exaggerated the horrors of the Wars of the Roses—and by implication the benefits of living under a stable Tudor monarchy—the memory of rebellion was not half as dangerous as its contemplation. The printer dared not include the Bishop of Carlisle's speech until 1608. Perhaps he remembered how close the Bard and his players came in 1601 to being committed to the Tower after they staged *Richard II* the evening before the Earl of Essex's abortive coup against the queen.[28] Shakespeare and his company had good cause for fear because the Tudors ruthlessly punished those even remotely connected with rebellion. Although a couple of people died fighting during the Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536, one hundred and seventy rebels were executed afterwards. In comparison 'Bloody Mary Tudor' was positively indulgent: after Wyatt's rebellion of 1554, between sixty to seventy people were hung, about the same number as died in combat. Even though only six Englishmen were killed during the Northern Rising of 1567, between two to three hundred were executed afterwards.[29] Perhaps such ferocious punishments worked, for a surprising feature of early Stuart English life was the absence of rebellions. Unlike Elizabeth, Charles I never used the rack to root out subversives, nor executed a single aristocrat for rebellion.[30]

Indeed there was a marked drop in the number of aristocrats taking part in wars of any sort. While in Henry VIII's reign practically every able-

bodied peer had seen active duty, by the 1620s only one in five had done so.[31] Without doubt the actions in which British forces were engaged during that decade were so inglorious that they were hardly worth the view.

One such débâcle was the expedition that left England in early 1624 under the command of Count Ernest von Mansfeld, a freebooter whom the Spanish Ambassador called 'an infamous man that had long wasted the empire by his spoils and robberies'.[32] The illegitimate son of the Governor of Luxembourg, who felt the stigma so bitterly that he became one of those bully boys who bloomed during the Thirty Years' War. As liable to plunder his own employer as he was the enemy or neutrals, Mansfeld raised a rag-tag expeditionary force, which rendezvoused in late December at Dover. While most Englishmen were only too eager to ring bells, light bonfires, and even cheer the departing troops, few were willing to pay taxes to support them, and even fewer volunteered to join their adventures. To dodge the draft men gouged out their eyes, or hacked off fingers; a few committed suicide; many deserted. Mansfeld's army was poorly armed and worse disciplined: indeed had they been better equipped with anything more lethal than cudgels they might have killed more of their officers whom they beat up.

At the end of January the Mansfeld expedition set sail from Dover, much to the relief of the Mayor and citizens, without much idea of where they were headed. When the French refused to let them land at Calais, they sailed aimlessly around for several days, before finally going ashore near Breda. Lacking rations, warm clothing and ready cash they could not survive a winter in the Rhine Delta (an experience which decimated the far better disciplined and equipped allied troops in 1944–5). 'We die like dogs,' wrote one commander from his regimental headquarters (a pig-sty the tenancy of which he had most likely obtained by consuming the previous occupant), 'and in the face of an enemy we could not suffer as we now do.'[33] Within six months only six hundred of Mansfeld's twelve thousand men were left.

The record of the next expedition was even more catastrophic. It was commanded by Lord Wimbledon, 'the general', wrote a contemporary, 'from whom as little could be expected as he performed'.[34] Chosen for his court connections, rather than any military experience or competency, Wimbledon sailed at the van of some eighty-five ships out of Portsmouth Harbour on 2 October 1626. Then they anchored for a council of war which decided to attack Cadiz. When the English bombarded the port on the 20th, to avoid getting hit they opened fire beyond the range of the enemy's cannon. Since the range of their cannon was equally limited the Royal Navy accorded the enemy a similar convenience. Two days later some two thousand British infantry landed on the dunes a few miles south of the castle guarding the entrance to Cadiz Harbour. Having forgotten to fill their water bottles just outside the castle they were delighted to stumble across a

warehouse containing 600 tunns of wine. 'No words of exhortation, nor blows of correction would restrain them,' one of their officers wrote,

> but breaking with violence into the rooms where the wine were, crying that they were King Charles's men and fought for him, caring for no man else, they claimed the wine their own…till in effect the whole army, except the commanders, were drunken and in common confusion.[35]

Seeing the opportunity the Spanish sallied out to clobber the plastered English troops. 'I must confess', reported Wimbledon, displaying that *sang froid* so characteristic of British commanders after a débâcle, 'that it put me to some trouble.' But he excused the incident by saying that even when sober the troops were 'incapable of order', and never obeyed him.[36]

As the expedition sailed home in defeat and disgrace, Lord Delaware, one of its leaders, confessed to a friend, 'Never an army went out, continued, and returned with so much disorder as this.'[37]

Delaware's forecast that the record of the Cadiz expedition for incompetence could never be beaten lasted less than two years. Charles and his chief adviser, the Duke of Buckingham, learned nothing from their mistakes, except, perhaps, not to let minions make them for them. Thus in June 1627 Buckingham personally led a fleet of a hundred ships from Portsmouth to capture the Isle of Ré, just off La Rochelle, where Louis XIII was besieging his rebellious Protestant subjects, the Huguenots. The landings on 12 July went well, some two thousand men wading ashore.[38] Five days later the British started to besiege the main French position at St Martins. By September it seemed as if the French would surrender. The St Martins' garrison was down to a couple of days' rations. On the night of the 28th, however, the French managed to break through using the small fort of La Prée on the mainland side of the island that Buckingham had neglected to take in the initial landing. The mistake cost the British dear. The besiegers became the besieged. 'Our army grows everyday weaker,' an officer wrote home, 'our victuals waste, our purses are empty, ammunition consumed, winter grows.'[39] On 27 October the British made one last desperate effort to take St Martins. They failed, largely because the scaling ladders were 5 feet too short—an inexcusable piece of negligence considering the fact that the besiegers had been staring at the walls for over three months during which they had had plenty of time to measure them.

Two days later two thousand French troops sallied out of La Prée, forcing the British to pull back. Thanks to Buckingham's decision to place the rearguard on the wrong side of the bridge to the small island from which the main evacuation took place, the retreat turned into a rout. A few weeks later the jubilant French king and his victorious officers heard a *Te Deum*

sung in Notre Dame, Paris, beneath some forty captured British colours hung from the cathedral walls.

Had not John Felton, an army lieutenant deranged at being denied promotion, assassinated Buckingham in August 1628, the duke would have surely led the second expedition to relieve the Huguenots at La Rochelle. Under the command of Robert Bertie, Earl of Lindsay, the fleet sailed from Portsmouth the following month, arriving off La Rochelle on the 10th. They found the entrance into the horseshoe-shaped harbour blocked by a boom of large tree trunks chained to one another. A captain tried to blow it up, but instead blasted himself to smithereens. Five days later the English attacked, losing six men. Even more faint-hearted was the next day's assault, in which neither side suffered a single fatality. Several days afterwards, as the anchored fleet watched through their spyglasses, the four thousand surviving members of La Rochelle's original garrison of fifteen thousand surrendered to the French king, having eaten all of the city's horses, dogs, cats, and most of its rats. On 1 November Lindsey's ships departed for home.

For sheer incompetence it would be hard to find such a quartet as the expeditions which left England during the 1620s. Admittedly amphibious operations are extremely difficult to mount and prone to disaster. Yet if such was the case why then were the six most senior officers on the Cadiz raid all soldiers? Without doubt bad weather played a crucial role in all of the expeditions, but bad planning meant that they set out far too late in the year, many troops having hung around billets in England since the spring, untrained and undisciplined. For their limited objectives, most of the expeditions were too large, and thus took too long to assemble: Mansfeld took 12,000 men to the Rhine Delta, 16,399 sailed for Cadiz. True the English lacked the one quality which Napoleon demanded that all his generals possess—luck. The Spanish treasure fleet replete with gold and silver from the Americas sailed into Cadiz a few days after the English had left. Soon after Lindsey's fleet headed home a Biscay storm broke the boom at La Rochelle.

Nonetheless the reasons for the failure are obvious. Leadership was poor. Command was fractured. Goals were poorly defined. Senior commanders issued orders that made those given the Light Brigade seem like models of clarity. Intelligence—both in the psychological and military sense of that word—was in short supply, none of the four targets, for instance, having been adequately reconnoitered. Even though equipment was old and lacking, surely someone could have issued water before landing at Cadiz, measured the height of the walls at St Martins, or fabricated a waterproof charge to blow up the boom at La Rochelle?

By the late 1620s most Englishmen were convinced they knew the answers to these and a host of other questions. At first the loss of men did not cause much of a public outcry. His draftees were, admitted Mansfeld, 'a

rabble of raw and poor rascals'. They conformed to the Elizabethan stereotype of pressed men; 'we disburden the prisons of them, we rob the taverns and ale houses of tosspots and ruffians, we scour both town and county of rogues and vagabonds.'[40] Their neighbours—if not their friends—were more than happy to see them go. Village constables readily forked out to pay, equip and march draftees off to the appointed rendezvous.[41] In Great Waltham, Essex, the Rev. Thomas Barnes preached that it was far better to have 'those straggling vagrants…which do swarm amongst us', and those 'loitering and lewd livers' conscripted to fight abroad, than 'tippling in tap houses' at home.[42] And if most of the twelve thousand Mansfeld took away failed to return home, few of them were missed.

As the demand for men increased, and the supply of ne'r-do-wells ran out, the authorities started to draft local worthies, and the size of expeditions decreased.[43] While over sixteen thousand sailed to Cadiz, only five thousand went to La Rochelle. Casualties were horrendous: 83 per cent on the Mansfeld expedition, 65 per cent in the Cadiz disaster.

Public reaction became shriller after each failure. While few lamented the loss of those who went to the Rhine Delta, in his diary John Rous described the Cadiz expedition as a 'shameful return'. He was even more caustic about the expedition to Ré, which he prophesied 'will breed but evil blood'.[44] Rous was right. Ré caused an outrage. One letter-writer called it 'the greatest and shamefulest overthrow the English have received since we lost Normandy'.[45] A poetaster prayed of the expedition's leader, the Duke of Buckingham:[46]

> And now, Just God! I humbly pray,
> That thou wilt take that slime away.

The political consequences of these military disasters are well known. They produced the constitutional crisis of Charles's first three parliaments that climaxed with the Petition of Right of June 1628. Two months later John Felton took that slime away by assassinating Buckingham, and within six months the king dissolved parliament to rule on his own for eleven years.

The impact these expeditions had on the coming of the civil war is, however, harder to chart. They could have associated military ventures in many men's minds with absolutism and incompetence.[47] Even though during the 1630s the bellicose demanded that England intervene in what they saw as a great Protestant crusade, the Thirty Years' War, the memories of the 1620s made many people as reluctant to get involved in another war, as did, say, those of the First World War, or Vietnam. Perhaps as few as thirteen thousand of the fifty thousand English troops drafted to fight overseas in the 1620s made it home again.[48] Since many of the survivors were broken in health, and others were reluctant conscripts

determined never again to go to the wars, these expeditions did not create a significant pool of veterans for the civil wars. Far more important in this process was the Thirty Years' War, which attracted those restless young men, eager to fight, no matter how doleful the immediate experience of the past.

Although the Thirty Years' War started in 1618 after James I's son-in-law, Frederick, upset the religious balance of Europe by accepting the Bohemian throne, Britain never formally joined the conflict. The war was a confused struggle, fought basically between the Protestant states of northern Europe and the Catholic Holy Roman Empire. The first phase involved the expulsion of Frederick and his wife Elizabeth from both Bohemia (roughly modern Czechoslovakia) and the Palatinate, their ancestral territories on the Rhine and Danube. The second phase centred on Denmark, to which the English Royal family was linked by ties of marriage. In the third phase Gustavus Adolphus swept south from Sweden conquering all in his path until he was killed in 1632 at the Battle of Lutzen. And in the last, longest, and perhaps bloodiest period until the war ended in 1648 the Catholic French intervened to try to curb the power of the Hapsburg Holy Roman Emperor.

The Thirty Years' War caused a staggering amount of damage. 'I could never have believed a land could have been so despoiled had I not see it with my own eyes', wrote one traveller in post-war Germany. The population of Germany as a whole declined from about twenty million to fifteen to sixteen million (in relative terms a far greater loss than during the Second World War). In some places the loss of life was even greater: Marburg fell to half, and Chemnitz to a fifth of their pre-war size. The number of Bohemian villages tumbled from thirty-five thousand to six thousand, while some thirty-five thousand people were slaughtered in 1631 at the sack of Magdeburg alone.[49]

Naturally the inhabitants of the British Isles were keenly interested in the monstrous struggle going on across the North Sea. In the early 1630s large numbers of newsbooks appeared detailing the achievements of that great Protestant hero, Gustavus Adolphus. The Swedish king's death in battle was mourned as though an English monarch had perished. Newsbooks reported a war of unmatched brutality, in which promiscuous plunder, rape, sackings and atrocities, led to famine, disease, cannibalism, and untold miseries (see plate 12). For instance, *A True Representation of the Miserable Estate of Germany* (1638) illustrated the horrors with crude woodcuts that can still sicken modern stomachs hardened by photographs of Dachau or Cambodia. One woodcut showed soldiers using a minister's library of rate books to roast him alive. In another they had just torn a baby from its mother's breast and tossed it the air, to be caught on a pike. A third illustrated troopers stripping a victim's muscles from his hands. The caption to a fourth reads 'Men's guts pulled out of their mouths.'[50] No wonder after

looking at such material Nehemiah Wallington, the London artisan, wrote how lucky he was to live in England and not famine-torn Germany, where 'they did boil whole pots and kettles of frogs and did eat them with their entrails'.[51]

Equally horrible news of the Thirty Years' War reached the British Isles through private correspondence. 'The whole army', wrote Sydenham Poyntz of the Swedish capture of Wurzburg, 'in a fury breaking in the Town pillaged it, Cloisters and Abbies, committing great disorders, using such tyranny towards the clergymen, cutting off their members, and deflowering the nuns.'[52] Writing to his uncle and aunt back home in England from Maastricht, Amias Steynings, an officer in Lord Vane's Regiment, lamented, 'We have passed through great miseries both by sea and land since we left England, and are now in great want for victuals.' So bad were conditions that gentlemen had to dig trenches under cannon fire like common labourers, trying to get by on only a couple of hours' sleep a night.[53]

Poyntz was one of many of Charles's subjects who volunteered for the Thirty Years' War. Ten to fifteen thousand Englishmen saw continental service, as did perhaps as many, if not more, Irish. There were, for instance, several Hibernian regiments in the Spanish and Austrian armies, and seven in the French. Although between 1624 and 1637 the crown issued warrants authorizing the recruitment of 41,400 Scots for service overseas, it is unlikely that these targets were met. Yet some 25,000 Scots, or 10 per cent of the nation's adult males, fought abroad.[54] Some volunteers left the British Isles in officially sanctioned groups, such as the expeditionary force which the Earl of Hamilton raised with royal sponsorship in 1631 to fight for Gustavus Adolphus. (They were such a sorry lot that after a year the Swedish king sent them home.) Others went to fight abroad on their own initiative.

A minister's son, James Turner was educated at the University of Glasgow from which he graduated with an MA in 1631 at the age of 16. Defying his father's wishes that he enter the kirk, the following year Turner volunteered to serve Gustavus Adolphus. He landed in Denmark in 1632 and after marching to Meckleburg 'fell grievously sick'. It was five weeks before he was able to walk. Turner took part in the Siege of Nurenburg, in which four thousand were killed and six thousand wounded, and fought at Hamelin, where nine thousand imperial soldiers perished. In his memoirs he recalled the horrors of war. 'After the battles I saw a great many killed in cold blood by the Finns, who professed to give no quarter.' Campaigning was nearly as bad. 'My best entertainment was bread and water', he wrote, adding with the dry humour that has kept many a soldier going that he had 'abundance of the last, but not so the first'. After a couple of years' service he had become a seasoned campaigner so capable of fending for himself under all circumstances that

'I wanted nothing—horses, clothes, meat nor monies.' Thomas Raymond, an English veteran, concurred that 'so long as money lasted we had a merry life'.[55]

In all Turner became an effective infantry officer, reaching the rank of captain. Some of his memories were of Mars. He recalled how he led fifty musketeers who winkled out a group of snipers hiding in hedgerows near Hessich 'with great loss to them and only three or four of our men'. Other recollections were of Venus. In early 1634 he was billeted with a widow and her widowed daughter at Olendorpe. 'She was very handsome, witty and discrete [sic]…I became very enamoured.' Most of his experiences were harrowing. He remembered seeing burnt-out towns, inhabited by people who had lost everything—goods, families, friends. After briefly returning home in 1634, following his father's death, Turner found that he could not settle down in civilian life, and returned to the Thirty Years' War. He left Sweden in 1640 to continue his trade at home.

The tens of thousands of veterans who took part in the Thirty Years' War and then returned to fight in the British civil wars had a profound impact.

It was one that many Englishmen dreaded. As one sardonically wrote in 1640 about Alexander Leslie, the veteran of Swedish service where he had reached the rank of field marshal, who returned to command the Scots Army, 'he took up the trade of killing men abroad, and now is returned to kill, for Christ's sake, men at home'.[56] In July 1642 *The Manifold Miseries of Civil War* used stories of starvation, cannibalism, and torture from the continent to warn what might happen if civil war broke out at home—all arguments which Thomas Morton repeated the following month in *Englands Warning-Piece*.

Leaders on both sides were especially worried about the effect of introducing mercenaries who had learned their trade abroad. While admitting to Lord Ruthven, the continental veteran, that he was 'a better soldier', Edward Somerset, Marquis of Worcester opposed letting him fight for the king since as 'a soldier of fortune' he was 'here today and God knows where tomorrow'. On the other side Baron Brooke, the Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire, agreed about excluding mercenaries.[57] Addressing the officers of the county militia in late 1642 he explained that 'In Germany they fought only for spoil, rapine, and destruction. Merely money it was and hope of gain.' Parliament was fighting, he continued, for higher causes, and wanted men who were committed to more than their pay. Mercenaries would inevitably prolong the war for as long as possible to continue earning a good living. Another problem with employing mercenaries was that they were liable to introduce into England the horrors of total war which had decimated the continent. 'I shall therefore speak my conscience,' concluded Brooke, 'I had rather a thousand honest citizens who can handle their arms, whose hearts go with their hands, than thousands of mercenary soldiers that boast of foreign experience.'

All too soon, however, the gentlemen realized war was not cricket and that they needed the players: not thousands of veterans bragging about brutalities abroad, but a small cadre distributed throughout the armies to train recruits, reassure raw troops, and to provide a leaven of experienced leadership at every level. They taught both sides the latest techniques. One of Prince Rupert's first services to his uncle's cause was to show the king's sappers how to use a petard to blow in castle gates. The mercenaries helped professionalize armies, a process which took about two and a half years (about the same time it took the British Army in the Second World War). All of the field army commanders in the civil wars were veterans of foreign wars, except Charles, Cromwell, and the Earls of Manchester and Newcastle.[58] In only one of the twenty-nine Scots regiments that invaded England in January 1644 were all three of the senior officers without continental experience: in other words fifty-three out of eighty-seven field officers were veterans. Later that year three out of the four most senior generals at Cropredy Bridge had seen foreign service.[59] Of a sample of 76 civil war leaders, 31 (40.8 per cent) had fought on the continent, 6 (9.2 per cent) in the Bishops' Wars, making a total of 37 (48.7 per cent). Of the 35 parliamentarians, 10 (28.6 per cent) were veterans, as compared to 27 (60 per cent) of the 41 royalists.[60]

In addition to British veterans, foreign mercenaries fought in the civil wars. Although the king may have had some French units, by and large Frenchmen served as individual advisers who brought badly needed military skills. Two engineers, Bernard de Gomme and Leca Roche, came with Prince Rupert, while parliament paid John Rosworme, a German, to supervise the construction of Manchester's defences. At Edgehill, the war's first major battle where expertise was sorely lacking, two Dutchmen, Hans Behre and Philibert de Boyne, advised the Earls of Bedford and Peterborough, while Captain Fanton, a flamboyantly polymath Croatian, who spoke some thirteen languages, helped the Earl of Essex.[61]

While before the civil war Scotland lacked an organized militia—apart from a few ceremonial units in the Royal Burghs—for most Englishmen the militia was their main pre-war experience of things military.[62] By custom all able-bodied males were required to serve to defend their counties, attending musters when ordered, and providing equipment commensurate to their rank in society. The idea that all the king's subjects had a duty to protect the kingdom went back to the Anglo-Saxon fyrd. By Tudor times the militia was the responsibility of the lord lieutenant, the county's leading aristocrat, who through deputies and a muster master was supposed to organize and train its civilian soldiers.

On paper the militia could be a formidable body. A muster roll of February 1638 for England and Wales listed 93,718 infantry and 5,239 cavalry, ranging from 130 soldiers for Rutland to 12,641 from Yorkshire.[63]

Many believed the militia was far less impressive in reality that it was on paper. Like 'Dad's Army', these 'weekend warriors' frightened few foreigners, and impressed fewer Englishmen. John Dryden wrote:

> The country rings around with loud alarms,
> And raw in field the rude militia swarms;
> Mouths without hands: maintained at vast expense,
> In peace a charge; in war a weak defence;
> Stout once a month they march, a blustering band,
> And ever, but in times of need, at hand.

Professional soldiers could be just as caustic as poets. John Corbet, who fought in the Siege of Gloucester of 1643, described the county's militia as 'effeminate in courage and incapable of discipline'.[64] Lieutenant Colonel William Barriffe started his widely read training manual by lamenting that the trained bands are 'called forth to exercise their postures and motions every four to five years. Whose fault it is I know not, but I pray God it will be amended.'[65] Colonel Ward described what he maintained was a typical pre-war summer field day. 'After a little casual hurrying over their postures' the militia men would load their muskets, 'to give their captain a brave volley of shot at his entrance into his inn, where after having solaced themselves for a while after this brave service every man repairs home, and that which is not well taught them is easily forgotten.'[66] The tensions between the professional and amateurs (like that between RN and RNVR officers) continued well into the war. For instance in 1644 a court martial found Sergeant West, a regular from Colonel Baker's regiment, guilty of using 'scandalous and reproachful language' to the Tower Hamlets' militia.[67]

The central government shared these reservations about the quality of the militia. Soon after becoming king, Charles ordered their standards improved by using the brief *Instructions for Musters and Armes and their use* that the Privy Council had issued three years earlier. Far more significant was the cadre of eighty-nine sergeants, all veterans of the Thirty Years' War, whom the crown dispatched to the counties to train the militia. The presence of seasoned soldiers did much to expose civilians to military realities, particularly those who served in the infantry. Cavalry soldiers, who provided their own horses, and thus came from gentry or richer yeomen families, tended to be less amenable to the advice of vulgar veterans. The king had to cancel the regional musters that he scheduled for cavalry regiments during the summer of 1630 because their training was not up to this fairly simple operation.

Charles's attempts to create what he called 'a perfect' or 'exact' militia were doomed to failure. They were symptomatic of his propensity for grandious objectives that exceeded both his resources and his attention

span. The king's plans were most conservative. He deplored the introduction of a newfangled continental style of marching, issuing a warrant in 1632 to retain the traditional English march, as 'the best of all marches'. He urged the militia to revive the use of the longbow, a weapon which had seen its glory days two centuries earlier in the Hundred Years' War. While the longbow was superior to the match-fired musket, it required constant training—far more than the militia was prepared to do.[68]

After all, during the 1630s there was no obvious threat from abroad to stimulate enthusiastic practice, or to prompt local governments into spending vast sums of money on defence. With the repeal in 1603 of the Tudor militia legislation the crown's right to compel subjects to attend musters fully equipped at their own expense rested on custom and the prerogative, not the firmer bases of statute. In 1635 the Mayor and Aldermen of Norwich contested the king's right to raise a militia. More important than legal challenges was the refusal to attend. 'There is not law to enforce him', explained John Bishe of Brighton for having skipped musters for three decades.[69] Magistrates were less inclined to prosecute the recalcitrant, especially if they were also friends. During the 1630s, as the government demanded more and more in unpaid services from local elites, it became harder to find volunteers to serve as company officers. One muster master, Gervase Markham, complained that he never got any respect, having to put up with contempt and rudeness from those he tried to train. In addition muster masters often had to wait for years for their wages: the only way that Somerset could pay Captain Carne was from the county's maimed soldiers' fund. By the end of the personal rule the Somerset militia was in such bad shape that even if it had wanted to fight it would have been incapable of doing so. The Sussex trained bands were in a similarly sorry state.[70]

But there were exceptions to the norm. In 1633 Captain Thelwell reported that Lancashire's forces were 'reasonably well exercised…and able bodied', the county having spent £10,000 over fifteen years to produce a fairly exact militia.[71] Two years later Lieutenant Hammond watched the 'ready exercised and well disciplined' Isle of Wight militia skirmishing along the River Medina; 'A brave show there is, and good service performed', he concluded.[72] Captain de Eugaine, a continental veteran, hired to train the Yarmouth militia, reported after their 1638 field day that 'although I have seen good service in the Netherlands and other places, yet never I saw a better thing.'[73]

Without doubt the best-trained militia was London's. There permanent officers were regularly paid and young men enthusiastically marched off on weekends and in the evenings to the Artillery Ground to drill and fire their weapons. Indeed the trained bands were so widely supported in the capital that when Beaumont and Fletcher satirized them in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1613), the audience hissed the play from the stage.[74]

Like all militias (such as the Territorial Army or National Guard), the trained bands combined the strengths and weaknesses of both civilians and soldiers. They attracted the ambivalence that the former feels towards the latter: dressing up, going off with one's mates for the weekend, for some drill, target practice, and a few beers, was as much fun and as ridiculous then as it is today. To civilians 'weekend warriors' seemed braggarts, worthy of scorn at worst and ribaldry at best. To regular soldiers they appeared dangerously rank amateurs who affronted their own hard-won professionalism. The militia reflected the civilian communities from which they were drawn. For instance, Sir Robert Phelips's refusal to let the sergeants the central government had dispatched to the counties train the regiment he commanded was not the result of a military decision, but the continuation of a county based civilian quarrel.

Notwithstanding their weaknesses, the militia exposed a very high proportion of the king's subjects to military matters. As the officers drilled, perhaps with little enthusiasm, and afterwards as they drank, with certainly far more, they got to know each other better, and the bonds of civilian life were strengthened into comradeship.

By and large the militia was a reasonable enough foundation for an army. Mobilized, given full-time training, fortified by a veteran or two, and stimulated by the coming of war, it could be licked into an effective force. In 1642 John Pym was told that the Boston militia consisted of 'A Hundred VOLUNTEERS, handsome young men, well armed and every way well appointed', their target practice displaying 'much readiness in the use of arms'. In contrast a few months earlier it was reported that for 'want of exercise' the Pembrokeshire militia was 'not fit for sudden service'.[75] Sometimes the trained bands could be of value: other times—as the two Bishops' Wars demonstrated—they were worse than useless.

The Bishops' Wars, fought between England and Scotland in 1639 and 1640, were far more important politically than militarily because both sides shied from fighting, and when they came to unwelcome blows, sparred with great restraint and little enthusiasm.

Charles's plans for the First Bishops' War were ambitious. A force of Irish Catholics was to land near Carlisle, while their fellows in Ulster were to harass the province's Scots settlers. With an expeditionary force of five thousand troops James, Duke of Hamilton, managed to land in the Firth of Forth region, but failed to prevent the covenanters either from taking Aberdeen and Edinburgh Castle, or from sending the royalists packing at the 'Trot of Tariff'. Next the Scots turned their attention south to the border, where on 30 May Charles joined his army of some twenty thousand men. Neither side wanted to fight: few Englishmen were willing to hazard their lives for a cause in which they did not believe: most Scots shrank from actually using force against their divinely anointed sovereign. On 4 June the Earl of Holland led a mixed force of a thousand cavalry and three thousand

infantry on a reconnaissance into Scotland. Since the former could move faster than the latter, who on a hot summer's day were hampered by the lack of water bottles, the cavalry were on their own by the time they came across Alexander Leslie's men at Kelso. Unable to attack, Holland retreated. This pusillanimous episode shattered the morale of the English forces. Before Kelso an English officer boasted, 'here is a gallant company of cavaliers as brave in courage as in clothes'. Afterwards a captain quaked 'The Scots are very strong…our army is very weak.'[76] Negotiations opened on 10 June, and a week later both sides agreed to start demobilizing within forty-eight hours.

The chief political effect of the First Bishops' War was the end of personal rule. In December Charles decided to call a parliament, the first for eleven years. But as the Venetian secretary noted, 'the long rusted gates of parliament cannot be opened without difficulty'.[77] Nonetheless expectations ran high on 13 April 1640 when the king opened the new session. Balladeers cheerfully sang:

> We may be assured of this,
> If anything hath been amiss,
> Our king and state will all redress,
> In this good parliament.

Hopes that England and Scotland could solve their problems peacefully came crashing down within less than a month. At a hastily called dawn meeting of the Privy Council on 5 May, Charles dismissed the gathering which posterity called the Short, and contemporaries the 'still-born', parliament. The reasons for the king's fatally precipitous decision are obscure. He might have believed that the negotiations he was having with three Spanish ambassadors to exchange Royal Naval protection of their convoys in the Channel for the services of Spanish soldiers, backed up by papal gold, would enable him to crush the Scots without going cap in hand to parliament for money. Anyway the abrupt dismissal of an assembly on which so many had pinned their hopes—let alone the prospect of Spanish intervention in Britain's domestic affairs—was deeply disturbing. After taking part in the First Bishops' War, Thomas Carew, went to rest at the Earl of Kent's house, West Park in Bedfordshire. He contrasted the blessings of peace, as epitomized by England's great country houses and simple rustic foods, with the next war, which was as inevitable as the morrow's hunt:[78]

> Thus I enjoy myself and taste the fruit
> Of Blessed peace, whilst toiled in the pursuit
> Of Bucks and Stags, the emblems of war, you strive
> To keep the memory of our arms alive.

Thomas Peyton found the thought of renewed hostilities so appalling that

he wrote from London to his friend Henry Oxinden in Norfolk, 'Death's harbinger, the sword, famine and other plagues that hang over us are ready to swallow up the wicked age.'[79]

Even though the Second Bishops' War was not the holocaust that Thomas Peyton feared, it was bad enough. On 20 August 1640 Charles left London to join his Northern Army. The same evening the Scots crossed the Tweed at Coldstream and advanced towards Newcastle. Even though the king had at least twenty-five thousand men arrayed on the border they were barely trained; 'we were never disciplined, nor mustered', one wrote in his diary.[80] Sir Edward Conway could only collect three thousand infantry and fifteen hundred cavalry to march the 4 miles from Newcastle to Newburn to try to stop the invaders from crossing the Tweed. Like most battles that of Newburn began on 28 August in a haphazard way. Each side was on one bank of the river, waiting for the tide to go out so they could cross. John Rushworth recalled seeing a Scots officer sporting a black feather in his cap, emerge from his billet, a thatched house in Newburn, and ride to the Tyne to water his horse, a splendid beast.[81] Even though troops on both sides had been moving around unmolested for the whole day, under one of those unspoken agreements to 'live and let live' that soldiers often reach, an English trooper, annoyed by the arrogant way in which a Scots officer stared at him, opened fire, wounding the fellow. Angry, the covenanters waded the river and easily drove the English back to Newcastle, which they abandoned the following week.

Zachary Boyd, a minister from Glasgow, portentously celebrated the triumph:[82]

> In Squadrons came like fire and thunder,
> Men's hearts and heads both to pierce and plunder
> Their errand was (when it was understood)
> To bathe men's bosoms in a scarlet flood.

In fact the Battle of Newburn, the first significant Scots victory over the English since Bannockburn, was more a walk-over than a wipe-out, because one side refused to fight. Thus the king had to make a treaty at Ripon that allowed the Scots to occupy Northumberland and Durham, and paid them £806 per day for the privilege. This meant Charles was once more forced to call parliament.

Support in Scotland for resisting the king's new prayer book by force of arms was both intense and widespread. The Scots swore a covenant refusing to accept the new liturgy, as well as the institution of bishops. Like the Declaration of Independence, the covenant turned a rebellion into a just war in defence of long-held rights. Some Scots could not have enough of the compact. 'Give me a thousand Covenants, I'll subscribe them all,' promised the poet, William Drummond, 'or more, if more you can contrive.'[83] It was far easier to get people to agree on what they were against (be it George III

or a new prayer book), than about what they were for. And most Scots were against Bishops, whom one Edinburgh shoemaker called 'the Firebrands of Hell, the Panders of the Whore of Babylon, and the instruments of the Devil'.[84] By adopting a covenant the Scots associated themselves (in their own eyes at least) with God's chosen people, and turned their cause into a crusade. 'Zeal of Religion transports men beyond themselves', wrote one correspondent from Edinburgh. Another added, 'We are busy preaching, praying and drilling.'[85]

The experience of the ordinary soldier was, as always, far less lofty. John Livingston was conscripted by his presbyter to join the Earl of Carlisle's regiment, with whom he marched to Newcastle. 'I had a little trench tent and a bed hung between two leager chests, and having lain several nights with my clothes on, I being wearied for want of sleep did lie one night with my clothes off.' He got so stiff that he could not move: unable to get dressed, Livingston had to ride Godiva-like to Dunse where he was thawed out in a bed surrounded by pots of boiling water.[86]

During the Bishops' Wars the gap between propaganda and reality was even wider on the English side. Edward Waller imagined the aristocracy leading the royal army to the Border:[87]

> Brave Holland leads, and with him Falkland goes
> Who hears this told, and does not straight suppose
> We send the braves and the Muses forth,
> To Civilize and instruct the North.

As he celebrated Lord Falkland's decision to go and fight the Scots, Abraham Cowley also recognized that war would provide opportunities for some unsavoury characters:[88]

> And this great prince of knowledge is by Fate,
> Thrust into the noise and business of a state.
> He is too good for war, and ought to be
> As far from danger, as from fear he's free.
> Those men alone (and they are useful too),
> Whose valour is the only art they know
> Were for sad wars and bloody battles born,
> Let them the state defend, and he adorn.

In fact in both Bishops' Wars hardly anyone was willing to play the hero. Colonel Garrard, an impetuous young volunteer in Lord Goring's horse, shed the first blood by crossing the Tweed alone and without orders, and thus precipitated the ruinous raid on Kelso.[89] The only heroes of the Second Bishops' War were a couple of Welsh soldiers who stood and fought to the death as their English comrades took French leave for Newcastle.[90]

The reasons for the failure of the English forces are obvious. Although ever since 1323 before each war kings had called parliaments to vote taxes, Charles did not do so in 1638. Although he did so in May 1640, the king dismissed the Short Parliament before it could vote a penny. Charles did not like parliaments, likening them to obstreperous cats 'who ever grow cussed with age'.[91] Having tried—and failed—to rule on its own for eleven years, an unpopular government was now asking people to fight and die for it—something people are loath to do even for the finest of causes. And the king's cause, as a Scots versifier noted, was far from the best:[92]

> What will you fight, for a Book of Common Prayer?
> What will you fight, for a Court of High Commission?
> What will you fight, for a mitre gilded fair?
> Or to maintain the prelates proud ambition?
> What will you get? Your yoke will be lighter
> For when we're slain, the rod comes to your breech.

Many Englishmen did all they could to avoid fighting the Scots. Henry Oxinden, a Kentish gentleman, managed to get two of his tenants exempted from the draft, one pressed man hung himself, while in Lincolnshire and Essex conscripts cut off their big toes so they could not march north.[93]

Those troops that did so were poorly led. The king appointed the Earl of Arundel as commander-in-chief. Edward Hyde, who as the Earl of Clarendon was to advise King Charles II, as well as write the great *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England,* observed that Arundel 'had nothing martial about him but his presence and looks'.[94] The king gave senior appointments to the Earls of Holland and Newport because they were friends of his wife (who had just lost a baby). The Marquis of Hamilton, commander of the amphibious attack on the east coast, did not want to go to Scotland, telling the king 'next to hell I hate this place'. He became even more loath to fight after his mother vowed personally to shoot him if he ever landed in their native land.[95]

The royal army was as poorly equipped as it was led. No bakeries or brew houses were provided. Unlike the Scots, only senior officers had tents, leaving the men to sleep out on the ground. Many of the pistols issued to the soldiers had broken butts, or ones that had been poorly glued together. In theory this made them far more lethal to the firer than the target: in practice, since the firing mechanisms rarely functioned and many pistols lacked touch holes, the point was often moot. To be sure some pistols actually worked. One belonging to a trooper in the Earl of Holland's regiment accidentally went off, killing a gentleman's son from Lincolnshire. When soldiers pay was docked to cover the cost of repairing the deficiencies in their weapons, many of them mutinied, for which two were hanged.

Other forms of protest were more efficacious. 'Our soldiers are so disorderly that they shoot bullets through our own tents', an officer wrote home, 'the king's tent was shot through once.'[96]

The only exception to this dismal performance were the Welsh levies, who were not infected by the insubordination that permeated the English troops. In August 1640, Captain Herbert, a Welshman sent specially with his cavalry troop, forestalled a mutiny in Sir Jacob Astley's English regiment.[97]

Bad recruiting produced soldiers whom one officer curtly called 'most of them beggarly fellows'. Some were signed up from the militia, who could with hard work be turned into decent troops. But by custom, unlike conscripts, militiamen were not obliged to serve outside their counties. So (rather like the US National Guard in the Vietnam War) local worthies managed to wangle a safe billet in the militia, while those at the bottom of society got drafted for the war. Thus the royal army had 'the fewest volunteers that I ever saw in any army', wrote Lord Poulet from Berwick. Hardly any of the pressed men had received any training. Hamilton reported that only two hundred of his five thousand soldiers had actually fired a musket. Sir Edmund Verney summed up the situation by telling his son that 'Our men are very raw, our victuals scarce and provisions for horses worse. I daresay there was never so raw, so unskilful and so unwilling an army brought to fight.' Lord Conway agreed that the troops were 'more fit for Bedlam or Bridewell' than the king's service.[98]

At times it seemed as if a madness swept the land during the Bishops' Wars. The most disturbing thing about the English troops was not their poor fighting ability but the crimes they committed, which, thought Sir Jacob Astley, proved they were 'all the archknaves in the kingdom'.[99] The troops' abuses went well beyond those normally expected from poor recruits. Almost daily in Selby, Yorkshire, soldiers perpetrated infamies on both civilians and their own officers. In Derbyshire they tore down enclosures. They broke jails open in Malborough, Wakefield, Derby, London, and Cirencester, freeing their comrades and those who had refused to pay taxes to fight the Scots. In Essex levies murdered a pregnant woman and plundered several houses. They rioted in Royston, Beccles and Cambridge. Pressed men from Staffordshire chopped up fences around a game park in Uttoxeter for firewood.[100] Troops beat up Oxford undergraduates, whom they despised both as draft dodgers and as privileged members of that bastion of Laudian superstition.

The religious context of many outrages were obvious. In Suffolk conscripts started wearing white sheets to parody bishops' surplices. In churches in Hertfordshire and Essex troops axed for firewood the altar rails just installed on Archbishop Laud's command. Captain Edmund Ayle and seven troopers barged into Rickmansworth church in the middle of Sunday morning service in the summer of 1640, to smash in the altar and its rails.

That evening, over his cups in the local tavern, the gallant captain boasted that it was his seventeenth such visitation.

The most notorious outrages were the murder of officers whom conscripts suspected of being Catholics. At Wellington recruits beat their officer to death, convinced he was a papist since he refused to attend divine service. At Farringdon recruits, outraged at Lieutenant Eures for allegedly cutting off a drummer's hand after the lad hit him with his stick, attacked the officer when he was upstairs in a tavern having dinner. They forced him to crawl out on the beam from which the inn sign hung, beating and stoning him until he fell to the ground. Convinced he was dead, they tossed him into a dung heap. Barely alive Eures crawled out. Discovering he was still alive, the soldiers cudgelled in their officer's brains, and dragged his corpse through the town to stick it in the pillory. The only way that Francis Windebanke, scion of a distinguished Catholic family, could persuade his new company that he was a Protestant, and get them to obey him, was to order them to kneel, and sing psalms, before issuing them with drink and 'stinking tobacco'. And thus were the Godly convinced that he was such a jolly good fellow that he could not possibly be a papist.

Many ordinary folk protested vehemently. 'We find ourselves oppressed with the billeting of unseemly soldiers, whose speeches and actions tend to the burning of our villages,' declared a Yorkshire petition, 'as we cannot say that we possess our wives, children and estates in safety.' Anticipating the Clubmen movement some civilians struck back. So scared was one company of recruits of being waylaid by latter-day Robin Hoods as they marched north through Sherwood Forest, that they doubled their guard.[101]

By forcing the king to call the Short and Long Parliaments, the importance of the Bishops' Wars was far greater constitutionally than it was militarily. Unlike, say, the Thirty Years' War, they were not nurseries that produced cadres of battle-hardened veterans. Indifference, indiscipline, indecision, and pure cowardice all lessened their significance as wars. Indeed the act of war that—more than anything else—changed attitudes towards violence was the outbreak of a rebellion in Ireland in October 1641.

3

A SIGHT—THE SADDEST THAT EYES CAN SEE

One noonday, at my window in the town
I saw a sight—the saddest that eyes can see—
Young soldiers marching hastily
Unto the wars.
Herman Melville, on watching Union troops
moving up to the Battle of Ball's Bluff,
October 1861

In June 1642, during a last summer of peace that for many seemed, in retrospect at least, as halcyon as would be the summer of 1914 for a later generation, Christopher Browne sent a letter to 'My Beloved Daughter'. His chief concern was not the rapidly deteriorating political situation, the frantic collection of arms by all sides, nor the flood of pamphlets that grew more vituperative and numerous by the day. Far from it. Christopher Browne was worried about finding a 'skilful preserver' who could take advantage of his large strawberry crop and the 'abundantly cheap' supply of sugar, to make a good stock of jam.[1] Unlike posterity, Christopher Browne did not know what the future would bring. All he could do was lay in provisions for the morrow.

Notwithstanding the bias of hindsight there is no doubt that the letters, diaries, even public speeches of men and women in the three or four years before the formal declaration of the English civil war on 22 August 1642 were full of fears about the dangers and horrors of strife.

The immediate run-up to the war started twenty months earlier when Charles called another parliament. The auguries were ominous. On 2 November 1640, as Thomas Trenchard and his family were seated for dinner at Wullick, their manor house in Dorset, they were startled when the sceptre, the symbol of royal authority, inexplicably fell out of the hand of the king's statue in the hall, smashing in pieces on the floor.[2]

In London the next day Charles opened the Long Parliament. 'I saw his Majesty ride in pomp', John Evelyn wrote in his diary that evening, 'with all the Marks of a happy Peace.' But once again the euphoria did not last. Led by

John Pym, the Commons purged the king's chief ministers, throwing Archbishop Laud into the Tower and condemning Strafford to death by an act of attainder. 'We hear rumours of war again with the Scots,' Ann Bampfield wrote to her father from Cornwall, 'let the Almighty avert us from those apparent dangers which the times threaten.'[3] The public execution of the king's leading adviser, the Earl of Strafford, was immensely popular: a hundred thousand folk came to see him die on Tower Hill. Although some hoped that the earl's end would usher in a new beginning, many feared that it could lead to hostilities. On 28 May, less than a fortnight after the execution, William Dave voiced his apprehensions to his friend John Willoughby:[4]

> I hope that under colour of preserving the king's prerogatives, we shall not destroy one another, whilst we protest on all sides to make the king glorious and the kingdom happy. We have all protested to maintain the king and privileges of Parliament, and we cannot better perform our vows than keeping the peace.

During the early summer of 1641 it seemed that peace would be as well preserved as Christopher Browne's strawberries. Charles wooed his opponents, appointing moderates, such as the Earl of Essex and Lord Hertford, to positions within the royal household. He attempted to buy off the radical peer Lord Saye and Sele with the mastership of the court of wards—probably the most lucrative sinecure in the land. While publicly declaring 'I never had any design but to win the affections of my people', Charles privately intrigued to make an alliance with the Scots so as to teach his English subjects a lesson.[5] In August he went to Edinburgh to try to win Scottish support: but after three months he failed to do so and had to return to London.

The king's entry into his capital on 25 November was, according to one observer, 'the greatest acclamation of joy that had been known on any occasion'.[6] The Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and some five hundred dignitaries, met Charles outside the city walls to escort him to St James' Palace, as church bells pealed and fountains flowed with wine. Two forces produced the jubilation. First, the fear on the part of moderates that radicals within parliament had gone too far: London merchants were particularly disturbed by outbreaks of mob violence. Second, nearly all Englishmen were terrified by the news that the previous month Ireland's Catholics had risen in rebellion, massacring Protestant settlers in ways and numbers that grew in magnitude and horror with every telling. The atrocities convinced most people that England must raise an army to be sent to Ireland to put down this cruel and unchristian rebellion.

At one level the causes for the Irish troubles then—and for hundreds of years to come—were deceptively simple. 'I see plainly,' explained Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, Charles I's Lord Deputy of Ireland, 'that so

long as this kingdom continues popish, they are not a people for the crown of England to appear confident of.'[7] Barely a generation earlier the English had completed the conquest of their Catholic neighbour with the surrender of Ulster in 1603. They settled the province with loyal Calvinists from Scotland, displacing many of the indigenous inhabitants. During Wentworth's Lord Lieutenancy (1633–9), English rule became far harsher because he believed that 'Ireland was a conquered territory, and the king could do with it as he liked.'[8] An unlikeable man, Wentworth alienated almost everyone as he tried to play off the various segments of society against each other.

In the short run, dividing enabled the English to rule: in the long term it brought them catastrophe. After Strafford was recalled to deal with the Prayer Book Rebellion and was executed in May 1641, the prestige of England's administration in Ireland naturally suffered. The earl's successor, Sir Christopher Wandesford, was an ineffectual governor, who died suddenly in December 1640. The Protestants who dominated the Dublin parliament blocked the succession of the Earl of Ormonde, an able and loyal magnate, in preference for two ciphers, Sir John Borlase and Sir William Parsons. Parliament demanded and received further concessions from the king during the summer of 1641, whilst he dickered with the Irish for support against the Commons. Fearful that Charles was losing influence both in Dublin and London, as well as—after the Bishops' Wars—in Edinburgh, to radical Protestants who were more likely to attack them than the king, Ireland's Catholics launched a pre-emptive strike.[9]

It came on 23 October 1641 as a terrible surprise. Even though an informer had betrayed the plot to seize Dublin Castle, the headquarters of the English administration, all over the land men and women rose in revolt with that spontaneous heroism that has always been the glorious tragedy of Ireland's quest for freedom. 'The crisis burst upon us with the suddenness of a violent torrent', wrote Sir William Temple as he cowered inside Dublin Castle: he added that the rebels, inflamed by Jesuits, 'march on furiously destroying all the English, sparing neither sex nor age, most barbarously murdering them, and that with greater cruelty than was ever used amongst Turks or Infidels'. The Mayor of Londonderry was caught equally unawares, writing to his superiors,

> It cannot but seem incredible to your Lordships that so many British, and so many able for war…should by a base, rascally, contemptible and disorderly multitude be reduced upon the sudden to that extremity as to be forced to fly for their lives.

A terrified settler wrote to the king, 'all the papists in the kingdom are conspired against us…. We cannot resist such force.'[10]

Like all spontaneous risings against alien oppressors—from Nat Turner's Rebellion to Mau Mau—the Irish Rebellion was not without its

excesses. Settlers were murdered, or else cast out naked to die in the cold and rain of winter. 'I saw the miserable destruction of 120 men, women and children by sword, famine and many diseases, amongst whom fell my mother Elizabeth, and my youngest brother, Joseph', wrote a survivor who caught a boat from Ireland in the nick of time (only to be captured by Algerian pirates and sold into slavery).[11] Sir William Parsons, a Lord Justice of Ireland, had to hide in a hen house. The Bishop of Killala and his family were found barely alive, dressed in rags, cringing in a snow-drift. Babes were reported impaled on pikes, or cut from their mothers' wombs, children were roasted on spits, daughters were raped—all as parents and spouses were forced to watch. According to *Treason in Ireland for blowing up of the King's English Forces with 100 Barrels of Gunpowder* (1642, T2077) (a pamphlet whose title aroused memories of Guy Fawkes), at Rockoll, accompanied by bagpipes which 'they played exceedingly loud,' the rebels 'cruelly murdered' an English family. At Nassey they slew Henry Orell, his wife and daughter 'in the most barbarous manner that ever was known'. At Athy they hanged an English woman by her hair from her door, and boiled a maidservant alive in a vat of beer. At Kilkenny they raped Mrs Atkins, who was heavy with child, before ripping open her womb and tossing mother and child into a fire. In County Tyrone sixteen Scots children were purportedly hanged alive, and a fat Caledonian killed and rendered into candles. The rebels tied another victim to a tree, slit open his belly, pulled out his intestines to see if 'a dog's or Scotchman's guts were the longer'.[12]

Such atrocity stories lost nothing in the telling as they crossed the sea to England, particularly when they were brought by thousands of terrified refugees. Illustrated by cheap woodcuts they can still turn modern stomachs hardened by photographs of Belsen or Cambodia (see plates 15 and 16). Numbers of the dead were grossly exaggerated twenty, thirty, perhaps fortyfold. The Reverend Devereux Spratt, a clergyman from Tralee, thought that the papists had massacred a hundred and fifty thousand Protestants, while both Richard Baxter and Lucy Hutchinson put the figure at two hundred thousand.[13]

It would be hard to exaggerate the effect the Irish Rebellion had on opinion in the rest of the British Isles.[14] Four days after its outbreak, Secretary of State Nicholas wrote from London to the king that 'the alarm of popish plots amaze and fright the people here more than anything.'[15] 'O what fears and tears, cries and prayers, day and night, was there then in many places, and in my dear mother's house in particular!' remembered Joseph Lister of Bradford, 'I was about twelve or thirteen years old, and though I was afraid of being killed, yet I was weary of so much fasting and praying.'[16] Looking back, Richard Baxter agreed that 'the terrible massacres in Ireland, and the threatening of the rebels to invade England were the chief reasons why the nation moved to a state of war'.[17] Clarendon