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Leslie Howsam
University of Windsor

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ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE OR LITERARY GENRE?: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BOUNDARIES IN HISTORICAL WRITING

By Leslie Howsam

SERIOUS PRACTITIONERS OF THE HISTORICAL discipline in late nineteenth-century Britain mistrusted their culture's practice of framing the nation's contemporary greatness in terms of former glories. In the view of the new professional historians, it was essential to negotiate a boundary between their own professional work and that of amateurs, with science on one side and literature on the other. The stakes were high. John Robert Seeley thought the writings of men of letters, particularly Macaulay and Carlyle, had "spoiled the public taste," by being so delightful to read that "to the general public no distinction remains between history and fiction. . . . deprived of any, even the most distant association with science, [history] takes up its place definitively as a department of belles lettres" ("History and Politics" 292). He and others wanted a new generation of students whose work would appear in serious publications which would no more appeal to the general public than Newton's *Principia*. A scientific training would prepare historians not only to research, write, and teach British history properly, but also to encounter the work of their peers as critical readers and knowledgeable reviewers. The boundary between popular and professional history (or between narrative and scientific approaches to the past) was often invoked by people like Seeley. A sharp dichotomy made for a compelling rhetoric of modernization and improvement. Earlier histories had been written inaccurately though patriotically, by gentlemen of letters for the general reader. Macaulay's essays, for example, had first appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, and the great quarterlies continued to publish historical narratives that were unsatisfactory by modern standards. Equally unacceptable was the tradition of introducing children to their nation's past with such romanticized narratives as *Little Arthur's History of England*. Maria Callcott was the anonymous author of this much-reprinted and often-maligned work. Now, applying to the discipline the principles of Leopold von Ranke and a newly rigorous approach which resonated with the broader contemporary culture of science, history-writing was to be limited to trained professionals, so that it might be made precise, verifiable, and reliable, even at the expense of narrative appeal. One colleague paraphrased Seeley's views pungently: "To make sure of being judged by competent judges only, we ought to make history so dull and unattractive that the general public will not wish to meddle with it" (Freeman 326).

Publishers had no intention of depriving the general public of a genre that accounted for some twelve per cent of their trade's annual output (Eliot 47). History could be commercial, as well as literary, patriotic, or scientific, but as Alexander Macmillan once urged, "I don't think that *paying* things need to be done in a slovenly way. . . . Why should our school books that pay best not be done by men who *know* what they are talking about?" (EAF MSS 1/7/495, 23 March 1863). Faced with the new standards, publishers worked simultaneously to create and nurture a readership that would provide a market for the work of serious historians, and also to encourage the latter to write with clarity, if not panache. They tried to elicit, from rigorous scholars with impressive professional credentials, historical narratives that were scientific in the sense of being accurate and well-documented, but still compelling. Even more ambitiously, they hoped that in partnership with educators, historians and publishers could develop an audience of sophisticated readers of history. Convinced that an impenetrable boundary between the popular and the professional would be bad for business, they believed that a lively, readable historical periodical with academic credentials would be very good, as would an overhaul of the school history book.

Publishers like Macmillan, his rival Charles J. Longman, and their colleagues in the university presses have been left out of recent studies of the transformation in historical standards of the late nineteenth century, so that the books and journals they fostered seem to flow directly from the minds of scholars to those of their readers. The work of such historians as Doris Goldstein, John Kenyon, and Rosemary Jann focuses on the rhetoric of professionalization to the exclusion of its commercial context. They demonstrate that the development of history as an academic discipline was closely tied up with the foundation of the *English Historical Review* (*EHR*) in 1886: the inauguration of periodical publication of refereed articles and critical reviews, written by professional academics for their peers, was an essential aspect of professionalization. But discounting the agency of publishers has created a situation where a publication – the *EHR* – has been identified as a force for change without a thorough investigation of its publishing history.

The primary force for change was the inauguration of History as an academic discipline, both in Cambridge and Oxford and in newer institutions at London, Manchester, and elsewhere. As Reba Soffer has demonstrated, this was a complex phenomenon, involving tensions between tutors, whose students made history the core of a liberal education, and the professors whose protégés aspired to become full-time scholars. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the prestige of academic historians was great but their numbers were few. At Cambridge the new professionals included Seeley, who was Regius Professor of Modern History from 1875 to 1895 and Mandell Creighton, who had left Oxford for a chair in ecclesiastical history and the opportunity to write his *History of the Papacy*. Lord Acton followed Seeley from 1895 until 1902 and founded the *Cambridge Modern History*. At Oxford the most prominent of the scholars associated with the more rigorous standards was William Stubbs, who produced meticulous editions of constitutional documents and influenced a generation of younger historians even after he was made a bishop in 1883. His great friend Edward Augustus Freeman was fellow of an Oxford college and succeeded him as Regius Professor (Stubbs 1867–84; Freeman 1884–92); Freeman's specialty was the Norman Conquest. Another Oxford historian closely linked to Freeman and Stubbs was James Bryce, who not only wrote an account of the Holy Roman Empire but also became a Member of Parliament during his term as Regius Professor of Civil Law. Adolphus William Ward began his career at Owens College, Manchester in 1866

as a specialist in European history with an interest in Germany; he moved to Cambridge in 1900.

These proponents of a serious history and hence a dedicated journal were joined by other historians working outside the Universities, notably John Richard Green and William Hunt, both of whom supported themselves as clergymen while pursuing research on English history. For all these men, the compelling idea was a periodical devoted to brief, argument-driven accounts of contributions to historical knowledge derived from scholarly research in documentary sources. As Creighton observed to a Cambridge colleague, “Existing reviews will only publish popular and sketchy articles” (OB MSS [Creighton], 24 Feb 1883). A new publication, almost a new genre, seemed to be a necessary complement to archival discoveries and subsequent historiographical reconsiderations. Their collaboration on the project, however, masked substantial differences of approach to history as discipline, as literary art, and as a necessary part of the knowledge-base of general public and national elite alike. These differences became apparent when they came to argue about the appropriate print format for the imagined journal.

Jann has identified the “cult of original research” as central to the new professionalism, which “placed the demands of the discipline over those of the public at large” (1983, 126–27). Her work sensitively analyzes the writing styles and ideologies of a number of Victorian historians, deftly distinguishing the several aspects that make a popular-professional distinction too simplistic. Jann’s sources, however, remain the writings of her historian-protagonists, and the unspoken premise is that these men and women controlled every aspect of their own words, including not only composition, production, and distribution, but reception. Concealed behind the authorial debates and differences she presents are the publishers who mediated between her historians and the reading public. As Jann herself observes, citing Richard Altick’s *English Common Reader*, “in the same period that historical study was becoming professionalized, a rapidly expanding lower-middle class, educated in the Board schools and newly enfranchised, was becoming affluent enough to create a market for an accessible literature that could both entertain and further educate them” (1983, 130). The common reader with his or her board-school education was at the center of the late nineteenth-century’s flourishing print culture.

From the standpoint of the historian of print culture, the debate over history can be heard to resonate through Victorian literary circles. The new scholarly standards affected the credibility of journalists and travel writers, and delimited the authority of historical novelists, but popular and narrative histories, traditional, revised and newly-written, continued to abound. This troubled people like Seeley, who pointed out that “in the rage for popularising knowledge it seems really to be forgotten that science is essentially difficult.” Newton’s *Principia* is not meant to amuse and delight the reader, but is nevertheless a great book. “There are then two sorts of books, and corresponding to these, there are two distinct publics – one large and general, the other small and select; and the distinction is so radical, that to the large public books written for the smaller public are as though they did not exist.” Serious science – and indeed serious history – could be popularized, but works written for “the aristocracy of students” would not attract “the loose democracy of readers” (Seeley, “A Historical Society” 46–47). But how was the aristocracy of students to be supplied with its materials, if not by the book trade? The kind of arid account envisioned by Seeley attracted few readers and generated minuscule royalties; such projects were unattractive to publishers in a period when even university presses had to attend to commercial considerations. And

who but those same students had the credentials to write for the loose democracy? As Seeley knew only too well, publishers were aware of a steady market for history, and anxious to work with any writer who could oblige with a saleable and readable narrative.

Although the *EHR* that was launched in 1886 became a specialist journal, efforts over the previous two decades to develop an academic review under that title had been focused on problems of readership and publishing viability. In book publishing, too, historical projects mitigated against a clear divide even within the discipline: one such was J. R. Green's scholarly but readable *Short History of the English People*, published by Macmillan in 1874 and generating profit for decades. Had Green edited the historical review that he and Macmillan planned in 1869, it would have been oriented to a more popular readership. Instead, seventeen years later the *EHR* appeared as a Longman journal, soon became strictly bounded by academic criteria, and was so unprofitable for the publisher it had to stop paying contributors within a few years. Alexander Macmillan's perspective combined the academic and the commercial. Strongly disapproving of older school histories, he not only published Green, but also commissioned and supported *A Historical Course for Schools*, a series of short histories of various nations edited by the Oxford don Edward A. Freeman.

The establishment of the boundary between history as academic discipline and literary genre was more contested than Goldstein and others have allowed. Troubled by the withdrawal into academic specialism, publishers sought ways to close the breach. Consulting their records and writing them into the debates allows us to see through the rhetoric of someone like Seeley, and to remember that one of his own books was designed to influence the general reader. *The Expansion of England* (1883) was not written for scholars, and was instigated by Macmillan's sense of the market for an account of the British empire (BL MSS Add 54789:29, 29 August 1882; 55074:24, 6 Sept. 1882). The agency of publishers was crucial in the composition and arrangement of history books, not just in commercial considerations. This point is demonstrated first by highlighting the prehistory of the *EHR* when it was conceived as something more like *History Today*, and then by depicting a serious attempt to teach school children the principles of Ranke. While writing almost daily to Green and Bryce about their ambitions for a historical review in 1870 and again in 1872, Freeman and Macmillan also discussed their pecuniary hopes for the school series and their joint aspirations in terms of pedagogical policy. Freeman's own *General Sketch of European History* would attempt to convey to his child readers the essentials of the newly scientific, document-based historiography, and these values were meant to permeate all ten planned volumes, especially, perhaps, the all-important histories of England and Scotland. Unwilling to entrust these to the men he knew as students and aspiring professionals at the universities, Freeman preferred to put them in the hands of young women protégées who were friends of his daughters. Having educated his household to the discipline's standards of scholarship and fidelity to truth, he preferred to "get the books done at home," rather than wrestle with the independent egos of his professional peers.

This account is based on research in the archives of publishers and of historians, and uses evidence drawn from their correspondence. It is part of a larger project, on the publishing history of history books between about 1850 and 1950, which is based on the premise that the methods and theory of book history are as relevant to the understanding of history-writing as they are to that of literary fiction and scientific writing. Here, two narratives of the 1870s and '80s usually kept separate are twisted together, first the well (though incompletely) documented events surrounding the founding of the *EHR* and then the hitherto unknown

story of an Oxford historian and his “historic harem.” Properly supervised, and recompensed, Freeman believed, even the new scientific history could be done at home.

“A Purely Historical Review”

GOLDSTEIN’S CENTENARY ARTICLE “The origins and early years of the *English Historical Review*” appeared in the eponymous journal, still published at that time by the Longman Group Limited, in 1986. Before detailing the events of 1885–86 and the first editorial and historiographical debates, she briefly sketches the background, “almost twenty years of sporadic discussion about the possibility of founding an historical journal in Britain,” beginning with the moment in 1867 when the idea “apparently occurred independently to both James Bryce and J. R. Green,” who together opened negotiations with Alexander Macmillan. Goldstein has consulted the extensive Bryce papers in the Bodleian Library, as well as the published correspondence of historians close to him such as Green, Freeman, and Creighton. The initial efforts, strongly supported by Freeman, continued until 1869 but failed, she concludes, “due chiefly to Green’s inability, because of illness, to undertake the editorship” (Goldstein 6). She finds evidence of a failed second attempt, this time involving Cambridge scholars (but not historians, and not the Cambridge University Press) in the early 1870s; then we hear of Green’s final decision in 1876 neither to pursue nor accept editorship of a Macmillan-published project; and of a fourth revival in 1882–83 when Bryce’s idea was turned down again, this time by the Cambridge University Press. Finally, in 1886, the historians’ ambition was realized. Mandell Creighton undertook to be the editor; Bryce was still involved, as was Frederick York Powell, an Oxford historian interested in Icelandic literature and culture. York Powell and Creighton had both worked with the house of Longman on historical projects, and they were able to secure a commitment from C. J. Longman.

The systematic pursuit of the relations between historians and their publishers, however, opens additional sources of evidence for the journal’s origins, and especially for the two decades of aspiration and frustration. From this perspective, the publishers’ archives are an obvious place to start, and the questions of anticipated readership and commercial sustainability become just as important as professional credentials. The Macmillan archive in the British Library contains rich files of correspondence with Green, Freeman, Hunt, and Bryce, all referring to the Historical Review idea. (The Longman archive, while extensive in terms of ledgers and publishing records, contains little correspondence; this was destroyed in the London blitz in 1940.) Similarly the archives of the Cambridge University Press, and the Freeman papers at the John Rylands Library of Manchester are illuminating. As early as 1868, the young Augustus Ward wrote from Manchester where he was founding the history school at Owens College, “What a pity it is that we have nothing in England like Sybel’s *Historische Zeitschrift*. I wish Macmillan would undertake something of the kind; as it is historical students are almost isolated from contact with their betters” (EAF MSS 1/7/779, 1 July 1868). As we have seen, Freeman, Bryce, and Green were already at work trying to convince Macmillan of this very thing. But an 1869 letter from Bryce to Macmillan adds a new name to the *dramatis personae* of the first round of negotiations, John Robert Seeley: “He has, I feel sure, a genuine interest in history for its own sake and not merely in politics, and might possibly be able to join in the Editorship. Green with whom I have had another long talk, quite coincides” (BL MSS Add 55086:21, 8 May 1869). Given their later differences over literary versus scientific history, Green’s approbation may seem unlikely, but in 1869

Seeley was just emerging from his identity as a University of London classicist to become Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, and the public strictures on history as a science date from later in his career. Deborah Wormell's biography of Seeley does not mention this or later involvement in *EHR* negotiations; nor does Green's endorsement of Seeley appear either in his *Life & Letters* edited by Leslie Stephen, or in Anthony Brundage's biography.

The "historical review" idea in which Macmillan expressed interest off and on from 1867 to 1876 was closely tied up with his professional and personal relationship with Green, a clergyman with a strong interest in history and a weak chest. Green's health fluctuated throughout the period when his editorship was mooted, but his career and reputation rocketed. He left his London parish, and accepted an advance of £350 from Macmillan in 1869 to write what became the fabulously successful *Short History of the English People*. Brundage uses the Macmillan archive to evidence the publisher's recognition that Green's interest in social history and willingness to recount telling anecdotes might attract readers, and also notes Green's initial interest in the periodical. He envisaged a shilling monthly magazine, which would include commentaries on the historical roots of current events as well as biographies of contemporaries. Green's more academic colleagues, such as Freeman, "didn't take to that at all," nor to Macmillan's idea of an annual volume: they held out for a quarterly with substantial articles as well as book reviews, and robustly opined that "if it did not find a historic interest abroad it would create it" (JB MSS 73/11, 28 Jan. 1867). As we shall see, Macmillan had some sympathy with the notion of creating an audience for serious history, but he preferred to approach the problem indirectly.

Although Green's illness was a deciding factor for Macmillan, it also seems clear that the publisher was unwilling to proceed without him. Other proponents were focused on the idea of a dedicated historical periodical, but for Macmillan Green's participation was essential. By 1872 enough of the *Short History* was written for the publisher to be quite certain that he had found an author who could write for a popular audience, and who yet seemed to have retained the respect of his peers. Green did not fully agree, finally telling Macmillan in June 1876, "I do not possess that confidence of historic scholars which the editor of such an organ *must* possess. I should be looked upon [by them] . . . as the representative not of the scientific but of the non-scientific element within it" (Brundage 116).

Macmillan's conviction that Green's editorship could harness the labors of the new breed of scientifically rigorous historians to contribute to an annual volume, if not to a shilling monthly magazine, was never realized. Reluctantly, the historian proponents turned their minds to the university presses. Cambridge would have been inconceivable before 1875, since the Regius Professor was Charles Kingsley. The epitome of the unscientific narrative historian, Kingsley was best known as a historical novelist and much admired by the Prince Consort, who was influential in his appointment. Kingsley's scholarly reputation has recently been rehabilitated, but at the time Freeman was vociferous in denunciation, a view he shared with many (Chadwick). The rivalry probably explains why the Green-Bryce-Freeman team did not consider the Cambridge University Press when Macmillan demurred.

Oscar Browning appeared at Cambridge about the time that Kingsley died and Seeley was appointed Regius Professor in his place. Even more than Green, Browning blurs the boundary between popular and professional in historical research and writing. Living and working in Cambridge among such austere scholars as Seeley and Acton, he also lived by his pen, rather than by a private income or a University lectureship. A fellow of King's College from 1876 to 1909, Browning had begun as a schoolmaster at Eton College, where he was beloved by the

boys and admired by their parents, but eventually forced to depart in a cloud of controversy over his private relationships with some of the pupils. Wearing a protective coating of self-righteousness, Browning took up a fellowship at King's, gave the occasional lecture and tutored many history students. Because he badly needed to supplement his income by writing, Browning could not afford to join Seeley, Acton, and the others in embracing dullness along with precision, archival research, and a devotion to truth. But nor could he afford to alienate his intellectual circle: on one occasion a group of undergraduates told him they had seen his latest book, a *New Illustrated History of England* in the local booksellers' shop: he told them not to bother with it, that he had only written it "for grocers and cheesemongers" (Anstruther 105). His liminal position in the practice of history, combined with the survival of his extensive correspondence with a very wide range of publishers justifies Browning's emergence from the background to which that minor scholar has been relegated in most studies of his peers.

As we have seen, Goldstein notes a fourth attempt to develop the historical review idea in the early 1880s, this time focused on the Cambridge University Press, but she is unaware of the involvement of Browning and Seeley. It was the first time either of the ancient university publishers might conceivably have become involved. The Clarendon Press at Oxford was then just beginning to act as an independent academic publisher, rather than work through a London agent. From 1863 to 1880 they had maintained a formal association with Macmillan himself (Sutcliffe 24–25). Acting as their bookseller, he had consulted with the Delegates of the Oxford Press on the very few works of history they published during those years. Stubbs and Freeman had authored most of these, Freeman dividing his prolific output between the imprints of Macmillan and Oxford. He and his collaborators may never have considered Cambridge; both Green and Bryce were "Oxford men" as was William Hunt. These loyalties, as well as the problem of Kingsley's connection with Cambridge, had presumably kept the proponents focused on London. Five years had passed since Macmillan and Green had withdrawn from the project when Browning, working in collaboration with Ward and perhaps others, contacted Macmillan in May 1882, and was discouraged: "the great difficulty would be to make such a periodical self-supporting" (OB MSS [Macmillan], 26 May 1882). The leading London publisher had not changed his analysis. Unlike the earlier promoters, however, Browning was prepared to contemplate other possibilities. Browning was new to the project, and involving one or both university presses was a novel idea, coming at the time when the Clarendon Press had finally broken away from its Macmillan connection and there was a new Regius Professor in Cambridge.

Browning's eventual proposal to the Cambridge Syndics argued that "a university would not have the temptation, to which a [commercial] publisher is liable, of lowering the tone of a review to make it more popular and saleable" (CUP: UA.Pr.B.13.C.14, [Browning] 3 Feb 1884). During 1883 he had sounded out historians at both universities, and received encouragement from Creighton at Cambridge and from Charles Alan Fyffe at Oxford, neither of whom believed that publication at Cambridge would be an impediment to the participation of Oxford scholars (OB MSS [Creighton] 24 Feb. 1883. [Fyffe] 2 March 1883). Perhaps in the spirit of his own exceptional migration from Oxford to Cambridge, Creighton even imagined a triumvirate editorial group, with one man each from Cambridge, Oxford, and London. Then Bryce weighed in, to put his mark on the new scheme: such a journal, he told Browning, was "the chief literary desideratum in England, and . . . a vast deal of good historical matter [was] lost for want of such an organ." The matter, he said, was "too big to write about" and

he proposed a talk, perhaps because of the delicacy of his intentions, which seem to have been to manipulate Browning into bringing a modification of his own fifteen-year old plan to the Cambridge Syndics (OB MSS [Bryce], 10 March 1883).

Seeley was the prominent historian among the Syndics, and Browning apparently consulted him about Bryce's letter. Seeley had evidently received one too, full of suggestions that he regarded as impertinent. The main one, new in the annals of the foundation of the *EHR* as we know it, was apparently that the Oxford and Cambridge University Presses might work together on the journal. This was evidence of Bryce's naiveté about the politics of academic publishing, accustomed as he was to working with the London gentleman Macmillan, whose motives were commercial and not hampered by university rivalries. Seeley pointed out (to Browning) that the two publishers had been "at daggers drawn" since their enforced collaboration over the Revised Version of the Scriptures through the 1870s. "Our Syndics regard their Delegates as a most grasping, over-reaching, imperious body. . . . Of the two bodies, the Oxford Delegates are much the more pushing & ambitious. I believe therefore that to call them in would be in the end equivalent to putting the whole business into their hands." After urging Browning to seek the advice of people with publishing experience, he added a prescient comment: "My impression is that everything depends upon an editor, who will determine to make the thing a success; devote himself to it; if necessary give all his time to it; stick to it, & sacrifice himself to it. Particularly so if you publish at a University Press, because such a Press will put no energy into it." As for some of Bryce's other suggestions, Seeley was outraged. The anticipated large sale in America was all very well, but, given the copyright situation, would bring in no profit to the English authors or publishers. And the notion that Freeman was to be invited, and James Anthony Froude excluded (the scholarly enmity between these two was as notorious as Freeman's with Kingsley) made him "think that Bryce aims at getting the journal into the hands of the clique. The Oxford Press & Freeman (with his complete leisure & his energy) would soon make it a mere organ of the clique. No one wishes to exclude Freeman, but I think he must have nothing to do with the management. No one cares less than I do for Froude, but to begin by excluding him looks like beginning by an act of homage to Freeman" (OB MSS [Seeley], 17 March 1883).

Seeley's parochialism was reciprocated at Oxford, where a thorough scan of the Letter Books of the Oxford University Press in the OUP Archives for the period has revealed no reference to any proposal to co-publish a historical review. But the friendship between Bryce and Freeman, extending, as we shall see, to their wives and daughters, would have made the exclusion of Froude non-negotiable.

Bryce had Browning's ear, however, and Browning Seeley's, and Seeley was a Syndic of the Cambridge University Press. Bryce made another attempt three months later, offering to Browning (for reporting onwards) a revised six-part proposal. It was the kind of thing that Macmillan had identified as too expensive – a paid sub-editor and "market payment for articles at [the] rate of not less than £1 per page," including Green's idea of a summary of contemporary history and his own pet project of a concentration on United States history. Blithely he noted that the publisher would have to be "content without profit for (say) three years . . . after that, we ought to earn something – & go on swimmingly" (OB MSS [Bryce], 28 June 1883). Browning dutifully pushed all this forward to Seeley who put the case at a February 1884 meeting of the Press Syndicate, but to no avail. The cautious men at Cambridge were used to books, not periodicals. Moreover and more seriously, they regarded

history as “connected with politics, and the Press ought to be neutral in politics. We should have responsibility, & yet we could never exert any effective control, so as to prevent articles from appearing that might not be ‘creditable’ to the University.” Essays were particularly “dangerous” (CUP: UA. Pr.B.13 [Browning], 3 Feb. 1884; OB MSS [Seeley], 12 Feb. 1884). The caution of the Syndics is particularly ironic in view of Seeley’s (and indeed Freeman’s) insistence upon identifying the interests of history as being indissoluble from those of politics. As a commercial, rather than academic publisher, Macmillan had no objection to a leavening of controversial politics, but he was terrified of the “dullness and overspecialisation” that almost immediately became the hallmark of the *EHR*.

Bryce was persistent, too, and his moment finally arrived in 1885. Longmans’ neutrality as a London commercial publisher did permit both Oxford and Cambridge scholars to participate on level ground, but Creighton soon acknowledged the editorial burden, telling Seeley: “I am not over sanguine about the Historical Review. Its besetting danger is dullness & overspecialisation. I can only use such material as I get & the best writers are busy on their books. But my hope is that they find the Review useful for their own purposes.” Lord Acton was being helpful, and “O. Browning has been more than excellent.” Bryce and others would also participate, and “as to publishing arrangements, Longmans have undertaken the publication for a year;” with modest payments to the contributors and sub-editor (JRS MSS [Creighton] 2 August 1885). Creighton’s published correspondence further evidences his continuing efforts to include essays attractive to the general reader. Kenyon (200–03) has commented that the quality of the contributions was poor and Creighton’s editorial standards confused, but this is to underestimate the fact that Creighton was working with a commercial publisher and still undertaking to pay contributors. Such payments didn’t last long. The kind of authorship the *EHR* published was remunerated indirectly; it did not really need a financial subvention. On the other hand, the kinds of authors who depended upon a financial return for their writing were now shut out of the long-awaited “purely historical review.”

Only to a historian committed to the whiggish notion that history unfolds progressively towards the present, would the *EHR*’s eventual format and market niche – as a highly respected, limited-circulation, quarterly, refereed journal publishing both reviews of record and seminal articles – seem inevitable, and the attempts by Green and Bryce to give it a popular flavor misguided. In this light their status as outsiders to the development of history-teaching in the Universities is significant: people on the inside like Creighton, Seeley, and Acton “knew” that subvention by way of university appointments was imperative because, for them, the boundary between popular narrative and professional rigor meant that small sales were inevitable. But the cultural historian sees things differently: we now “know” that boundary was under construction in those men’s own time, subject to the values, circumstances and personalities of the people involved. On one side of the line we can reconstruct the convictions of those who believed that history could be accurate and trustworthy, but still readable and broadly appealing to an intelligent citizenry in their guise as a reading public. On the other sit the winners, the scholars whose certainty that good history and good writing are almost always mutually exclusive led them to seek a haven where academic professionals could flourish. But the boundary, so sharp from the perspective of the college common-room, looked different through the window of a London publishing house. C. J. Longman was less cautious than Alexander Macmillan, but his older colleague was proved correct: the dedicated history journal imagined by Bryce, Freeman, Seeley, Browning, and Creighton was neither popular nor profitable.

From their experience with books, both publishers were persuaded that history could be academically respectable without sacrificing literary qualities: they had experience with commissioning, publishing, and profiting from histories that were widely read, influential both in the classroom and outside it, and the source of comfortable incomes for authors and publishers alike. The project for a popular historical journal that failed in the 1870s and again in the early 1880s would have taken its place beside a range of good work that the publishers were calling into being. Macmillan was the dominant publisher of history in London. For him, the boundary that mattered lay between one title that languished in the warehouse and another that appeared in multiple editions and formats over the course of decades, and he perceived scholarly and literary qualities to be intertwined.

“A Series of Baby Histories”

ALEXANDER MACMILLAN WAS not only a sincere Christian and a hard-headed businessman, he was also genuinely interested in historical scholarship. In all these capacities he hoped to promote the appearance of a renaissance in the study of history – but not in the universities among the handful of scholars who might read, purchase, and write for the *EHR*. For him the emphasis was rather in the schools, among the millions of children whose consumption of history in print was generously subsidized by the state. In 1870 an Education Act had been passed, allowing school boards to be established and new schools built, and an 1880 Act made school compulsory for children aged five to ten. Most of the publishing houses in London and Edinburgh took notice of this legislation and someone like Browning, who lived by his pen, found himself contributing to primers, readers, and historical series under a variety of imprints. Both Mandell Creighton and his wife Louise were authors and editors of Rivington’s *Epics* and other introductory series. Macmillan was particularly anxious that the quality of the new school histories should improve on the old. For decades, children had been introduced in the nursery to their nation’s past by the Little Arthur books or by Elizabeth Penrose writing as “Mrs. Markham” (Mitchell 70–71). In school they had encountered the works of William Pinnock or of the team of Ince and Gilbert. Such books were either inaccurate or tedious, sometimes both: Macmillan shared with the professional historians a distaste for promulgating such myths as the story of King Alfred burning the cakes, while hoping that other equally strong narratives, that could be proved really to have happened in the past, would inspire and educate a new generation of English children. In February of 1870, interspersed with letters to Green and Freeman about the historical review project, Macmillan asked the latter “Do you know Pinnock’s & Ince & Gilbert’s books on History? A series something like them was what I thought of. But I am not sure if you would think it possible or proper.” The same Freeman who could not countenance a shilling monthly *Historical Review* for his peers apparently had no qualms, and a few weeks later Macmillan spoke more confidently: “I shall greatly like to have a good talk with you about the series of Baby History books. The Ince & Gilberts & Pinnocks are doing great harm. You can only alter the result by changing the course” (BL MSS Add 55390:689; 845, 17 Feb.; 4 April 1870). The resulting series, edited by Freeman over the ensuing decade, sought to “change the course” by instilling in children the newly rigorous and scientific principles of scholarship he himself had recently absorbed from Ranke via Stubbs. It might be represented as an attempt to create the popular readership for the *English Historical Review* of which Green, Macmillan, and Freeman dreamed.

Freeman has been described by Kenyon as “a man of violent prejudices” which included being a “rampant Teutonist” and an antisemite, unable to admit to being wrong. As we have seen he despised Kingsley, and his antipathy to Froude stood in the way of any involvement in the English Historical Review project on the part of the popular but notably inaccurate Tudor historian. Freeman habitually referred to Froude as “the father of lies.” But even Kenyon admits that “repulsive as he was in most respects, Freeman had a great gift for friendship, just as he had a great gift for enmity” (159–64). If the enmity hampered the progress of the *EHR* for twenty years, the friendship was the basis for another important project of contemporary historical culture. Macmillan’s idea for “Baby Histories,” which Freeman preferred to call “Little Books” became a series of eight monographs (projected as ten or more) entitled *A Historical Course for Schools*, published by Macmillan and edited – very closely edited – by Freeman.

Freeman was born in 1823 to wealthy parents who died when he was a toddler, leaving him to be raised by grandparents and educated by private tutors before going up to Oxford. Kenyon attributes to these circumstances the fact that “in his make-up there was always a great deal of the spoiled child,” but in view of the way he valued family life, especially the way he constructed relationships both intellectual and emotional with his daughters and their friends, he might more charitably be described as someone deprived of the opportunity to develop his personality to maturity in the context of a healthy childhood. He was, of course, hardly the only Victorian in that situation. As his daughters began to grow up, Freeman set about writing a book for them. The eldest, Margaret, would have been in her early teens, with four siblings behind her, and her father forty in 1863 when Freeman expressed his rivalry with Kingsley in an early letter to Macmillan: “I see Kingsley has a History of England for Boys, which I am sorry for, as it may stand in the way of what I am slowly writing for my Girls” (BL MSS Add 55049:6, 16 Oct. 1863). This manuscript was eventually published as *Old English History for Children*, in 1869.

Kingsley had already published *Westward Ho!* (1855), a fiction set at the time of the Armada; his *Hereward the Wake* (1866) was another novel set this time in the Anglo-Saxon period, the same one covered by Freeman’s *Old English History for Children*. It was those pre-Conquest years he regarded as being especially in need of correction: “For later times the common histories may be used by correcting particular errors as you go along. It is in the early part that they are irretrievably rotten, so that no correction can mend them.” The object of the book, Freeman told Macmillan later, was

to give children accurate and scientific views of history from the very first, to teach them to call things by their right names, to distinguish history from legend, to know what the sources of history are, and to distinguish the different values of different writers. I can only say that, with my own children it thoroughly succeeds. To many people I dare say it would seem hard, what they would call over-learned. The truth is that the scientific way of doing anything is puzzling to those who have learned some other way, and who are called on to unlearn. It is not puzzling to a child who has learned nothing; quite the contrary, because the scientific way is really the easiest because the clearest. (BL MSS Add 55049:31; 39, 23 Oct. 1864; 1 Dec. 1865)

Here Freeman shows a fine disregard of the boundary constructed by his peers, between the apprentice historians at Oxford and Cambridge sitting at the feet of Stubbs or Acton and painfully learning to practice history as a science, and the general reading public. Anyone

can learn the scientific way, and the younger the better. This democratic attitude towards the abilities of the reading public appears throughout Freeman's correspondence with Macmillan.

In the same letter, Freeman disregarded another of those invisible boundary-lines so unmistakable to his academic peers. The Regius Professorship of Modern History at Oxford was coming open because the incumbent, Goldwin Smith, had resigned. Hoping to be a serious candidate Freeman thought it would be desirable "that I should put out some substantive work on (what they call) *modern* history almost directly." His *Federal Government* would take too long to complete, but he might collect some of his Historical Essays first published in various reviews, "or there is my little Early History of England." Freeman was prepared to stake his claim to one of the most prestigious historical posts in the nation upon a book avowedly written for children – not even for public schoolboys, as a primer or textbook, but a narrative prepared for young girls and boys absorbing their education from print in the home schoolroom. Not surprisingly, both Bryce and Smith advised against this course and in the end the Chair went to Stubbs. Smith proposed that Freeman get to work on the Norman Conquest, and this big book – eventually six volumes – went forward henceforth alongside the little one. Macmillan anticipated that the latter would "help to create in the younger generation a real taste . . . for the *facts* in history," and even that Freeman was setting his own successors on the first steps of their career paths (JB MSS 9/82, 2 Dec. 1865. BL MSS Add 55049:42, 4 Dec. 1865, 55390:10, 14 Sept. 1869). The commercial success of the children's history made him urge Freeman to begin organizing the plan for a series to supplant the Pinnock/Ince & Gilbert versions of the Western past.

Nor did Freeman insist on professional credentials for historical writing under his own auspices. At about the same time he was working hard to launch the "purely historical review" – edited by Green or Bryce, or perhaps Ward – in substantial quarterly format with lengthy articles, authoritative reviews and updates on new books both British and foreign. And yet he was unwilling to enlist any of these men in Macmillan's scheme for a Historical Course for Schools. He intended to write an overview volume on the history of Europe, a *General Sketch*, to be filled in by subordinate writers working under his direction, and his accustomed male colleagues struck him as much too independent for this new project.

The boundary of gender has hitherto been inviolable in this narrative, and was nearly so in serious historical work of any kind in the 1860s. Some of the despised books for children had been written by women, and many women were prolific biographers (Maitzen; Mitchell 140–69). Oxford, Cambridge, and London Universities were devoid of women historians, but Mary Anne Everett Green was at work on another kind of history, ably editing for the Public Record Office forty-one volumes of *Calendars of State Papers (Domestic)* between 1855 and 1895 (see Krueger). It would be about twenty years before the first women historians emerged in the English universities, initially under the patronage of male mentors. Meanwhile the wives and daughters of historians organized their research notes and made their indexes, while also providing domestic comforts. A few, such as Alice Stopford Green and Louise Creighton, also wrote their own books and found a welcome from their husbands' publishers. Similarly Margaret Freeman, the historian's eldest daughter, and two of her contemporaries, Edith Thompson and Margaret Macarthur, benefited from Freeman's patronage and he from their labors. If Macmillan were serious about sponsoring a series of "little books," Freeman said "I have no doubt that I could set two or three pair of hands to work, and be Duke or Bishop (in Ruskin's sense) over them myself." In a similar spirit, Green teased Freeman about his "new historic school of manual writers . . . Macmillan says they are ladies, which

presents you in a novel & fascinating light. ‘The Pacha of History surrounded with his historic harem!’” (BL MSS Add 55049:131, 18 Feb. 1870; JB MSS 7313, June 1870).

In a more serious letter, Green praised the scheme of the Historical Course for Schools and also the *Old English History for Children* (“the boldness of your introduction of your children into the whole criticism of authorities etc. . . . I should never have dreamt of doing it”), and in the same breath remarked that “Bryce is keeping our Review programme in the vain hope of finding another word for ‘scientific’ which he hateth.” Freeman meanwhile sought Bryce’s advice about contributors to his series while lamenting that Green’s poor health meant that the scholarly journal must be put on hold. Macmillan, he confided, “wants to give me some brethren to mid-workers but I prefer sistren unless haply Hunt” (JB MSS 73/19, ca summer 1870; 73/264, 23 Oct. 1870). Hunt, recently down from Oxford and installed in a Somerset vicarage, was, as we have seen, implicated with Green in the EHR scheme while working on various works of Church history. Apart from him, Freeman preferred to enlist women contributors.

While anticipating that his twenty-year-old daughter Margaret would write the book on Greece, he pinned his greatest hopes on her friend Edith Thompson, the daughter of a lawyer and granddaughter of the Hull antislavery leader Thomas Perronnet Thompson. Apart from this connection with a celebrated figure, Freeman was attracted to Thompson by the intelligence of a letter she wrote to Margaret about some historical matters. This he found so arresting that he sent it to Bryce, who promptly lost it. Freeman enlisted Thompson to compose the most important (and most likely to be profitable) book in his new series, the history of England. They were both conscious of the problem of space, which she dealt with by starting at both ends, and drafting the central eighteenth-century material (“a George or two . . . got into as little room as might be”) as an exercise in concision. As Freeman admitted to Macmillan, “the Georges must be dull; Macaulay himself could only have saved them by bits here and there” (BL MSS Add 55049:194; 198, 21 May; 2 July 1871). Bryce, consulted on the manuscript, worried that it might be too concise but he judged that “the young lady has a vigorous pen.” The correspondence between the intelligent young woman living at home with her parents in the London suburb of Blackheath, and the senior historian with his Oxford and London reputations is spirited and mutually respectful. Freeman told Thompson’s mother, “I believe I love her and Johnny [Green] more than most people, partly because they bully me the most” (Stephens 2: 50, 14 June 1871).

Another friend of the family, Margaret Macarthur, would take Scotland. Freeman unsuccessfully tried to get Kate Bryce, sister of the Oxford law professor, to join in, and decided to “do Rome” himself – but who would “do Germany”? Eventually this was assigned to an unknown called James Sime and Hunt ended up with Italy. But despite having enlisted these two men, and another apparently prepared “do Spain,” Freeman was uneasy about recruiting young male contributors and would have preferred “another really able woman.” Failing that, he would take anyone from Oxford who was “not a stuck-up Balliolik, . . . but some decent fellow who at once understands his subject and would have some decent respect for those who understood it before he was born” (BL MSS Add 55049:154; 160, 29 July; 11 August 1870. JB MSS 5/258, 7 August 1870; 5/290, 30 Dec. 1871).

With Macmillan warming to the project, and with both Freeman’s *General Sketch* and Thompson’s *England* in proof, Green became more enthusiastic, even suggesting that Bryce and himself might have been asked to contribute, but as Freeman replied “it never came into my head to ask such swells as either of you. Even Hunt I asked with an apology.”

Green now took on the history of France and Bryce was consulted for the name of “some fit man at Oxford,” perhaps his own brother Annan Bryce, for Greece, since Margaret was ill. Macmillan was becoming concerned about the looseness of arrangements and perhaps about the credentials of the proposed contributors; he urged Freeman to secure someone for Greece, suggesting either Ward or Edwin A. Abbot, a classicist at the City of London School. He was anxious to get the first three books in print, and to have France or Germany ready to follow the *Sketch, England, and Scotland*. Freeman’s reply was engagingly frank:

My difficulty in asking [Ward] is the same as it would have been in asking Bryce or Johnny [Green]. If I am to have the direction and responsibility of the whole series, the other writers must be people who will knock under to me, people whom I can decently ask to knock under to me. Now I can’t ask this of a man like Ward. If he differs from me on any point, he has as good a right to his opinion as he has to mine. . . . if Ward had taken Germany I should defer much more to special knowledge than I should in the case of England or Greece, where I feel myself a bit of an oracle. (JB MSS 5/280, 4 Oct. 1871. BL MSS Add 55049:222, 28 Dec. 1871; 55050:5, 19 Jan. 1872)

This is not the place for a detailed comparison of Freeman’s editorial style with that of Lord Acton two decades later as the latter supervised the egos of the contributors to the Cambridge Modern History, but the difficulties of getting the practitioners of a supposedly replicable, because scientific, discipline to come up with the same views as their editor are strikingly similar (Althoz, Clark). Acton’s letter to contributors, which anticipated an account of Waterloo acceptable equally to Belgian, French, German, and British readers, was to set the tone for the whole series; in Freeman’s case, he hurried to complete the early-modern chapters of his *General Sketch* so that they could be circulated among the other authors as a model. Working with Macmillan, though, Freeman had a solution unavailable to Acton, who would be tied to using contributors with standards and reputations acceptable to the Cambridge University Press. He told Bryce, “I still believe that a clever woman is best. Both Edith & Miss Macarthur have caught my idea better than any of my he-flock” (BL MSS Add 55049:216, 17 Nov. 1871. JB MSS 7, 2 Feb. 1872). As Green acidly remarked after Freeman had finally decided not to let him write the book on France, “You want ‘hacks’ for your driving, and rather secretaries than authors – people who will simply write *your* little histories *for you*” (EAF MSS1/7/279, 12 Nov. 1873; 1/8/18, 5 Nov. 1873).

The book on Spain never appeared. For a time it was assigned to Mary Arnold, who was introduced to Freeman by Macmillan, though she was also a good friend of Green. Arnold was newly engaged to be married to Humphry Ward, enjoying the scholarly flavor of Oxford, and interested in the culture of Spain. Green was as constructively critical of his friend’s bride as he was of Edith Thompson: a possible primer for his own series, on English literature, did not meet his standards, and nor did her efforts on Spain (BL MSS Add 55392: 79, 16 Jan. 1872; Brundage 135–36; 150). She may have returned the favor by basing her character Robert Elsmere on Green. For his part, Freeman regretted Mary Arnold’s commitment to fiction over history, telling Edith Thompson that she, Kate Norgate (Green’s protégée) and “the neglected side of Mrs. Ward” were the three historians who did women’s scholarship the most credit (Stephens 2: 391, 25 Dec. 1888).

In addition to his references to “sistren” or “hen-swans,” and denigrations of the “he-flock,” Freeman’s gendered analysis of history-writing centered on a distinction between

history written at home and elsewhere. He consulted Macmillan “about little Greece and little France, whether either of them is really to be done at home. I care more about Greece than France . . . and I almost begin to think that Florence [his younger daughter] might do it.” Macmillan approved this plan, but then Annan Bryce seemed interested after all, and Florence retreated (BL MSS Add 55050:181, 19 July 1874). Not every young woman, it seems, was as tough-minded – or as talented – as Edith Thompson. Paternalistic and patronizing though it undoubtedly was, Freeman’s policy of having the histories “done at home” did encourage a few women’s scholarly authorship at a time when even the male historians were moving out of their own homes and into University rooms. Furthermore, by acting as their agent with Macmillan, Freeman was able to help Thompson and Macarthur with problems of composition and casting a text at the right level for a particular audience. Other professional historians often floundered for lack of this sort of assistance. Other professional authors, however, were experts at writing within the confines of an established genre, and Freeman’s next effort to recruit a “she-body” would present him with a less docile contributor, in Charlotte Mary Yonge.

Germany, meanwhile, became a problem: unlike the unexceptionable work from Thompson and Macarthur, which they were willing to revise until it met Freeman’s standards, Sime, a suitably subaltern contributor, had prepared a manuscript that was initially unsatisfactory. Perhaps Ward would take it after all, “As Green takes France, it can no longer be thought beneath Ward to take Germany.” In the end, Ward acted as supervisory editor, correcting Sime’s prose and verifying his judgments. Hunt’s *Italy*, John A. Doyle’s *America*, and Edward J. Payne’s *European Colonies* were completed without much distress for series editor and publisher. None of them, however, was expected to compete in the educational market like the *General Sketch* of Europe and Thompson’s *England*. Another book that might be expected to do well commercially, and like Germany was of central importance historiographically, was the history of France. Green’s intention to write this was foiled by his poor health, by the demands of his own *Short History* manuscript, and also by his recognition that the series editor would interfere unacceptably with any account he would write (BL MSS Add 55050:39; 152, 22 August; 19 Sept. 1873). In the end, Freeman decided to abandon the commission.

While worrying about a contributor to write the history of Greece, Freeman had told Bryce, “I believe a she-body is best of all, but I have none ready for that particular work, unless Miss Yonge would take it up.” A year and a half later, Freeman still hoped “little France” might “be done at home,” but in the absence of a compliant daughter the task was finally assigned to Charlotte Yonge (JB MSS 6/16, 17 Nov. 1872. BL MSS Add 55050:179, 3 July 1874). At the age of forty-nine, Yonge was a successful novelist and children’s writer, best known for *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853) and *The Daisy Chain* (1856) and for the periodical *The Monthly Packet*, which she edited from 1851 to 1890. To Alexander Macmillan she was a valued author and editor; he was not her only publisher, and nor was fiction her only genre. The first of “Aunt Charlotte’s Stories of History for the Little Ones” – in this case English history – had recently appeared; her work sat comfortably in the nursery history tradition (Mitchell 248-59). Although the boundary between “nursery history” and “school history” seems not to have presented any problem to Yonge, it did to Freeman and to Macmillan. There was a major conflict brewing, because Charlotte Yonge had learned her history in her own home, not in that of E. A. Freeman. Despite her gender, and despite a pleasant apologetic manner, she was an experienced and established writer,

who could no more be compelled to “knock under” to Freeman’s direction than a young don in Oxford.

Although she freely admitted that “I suppose I am fitter to dwell on character than sum up political history,” Yonge wouldn’t even read Freeman’s *General Sketch*, let alone follow its thinking about how the history of France fit in with that of Europe and its colonies. “It is,” he lamented, “so below the level of the others.” She had few authorities on her study bookshelf and was unconcerned if they were out of date. And although “Miss Yonge is better than anybody else for taking rebuke & taking trouble . . . it is so weak by the side of all the others. Correct all the positive mistakes, & it is still poor and thin. All the rest have power, grasp, go, more or less; she has none.” And again,

she never catches any of the points, never brings out the great landmarks, all oh, oh, oh & such sentences. O how long! All political matters are simply confused; she seems to understand nothing. . . . I shall be thoroughly ashamed to see my name as Editor of such stuff – specially as she has made no attempt to do what all the others have done, to work on the lines of my *General Sketch* – and I should think all the others will be ashamed, of their yokefellow.

His contributor was very patient, as Freeman kept repeating, the “very goodest of all Aunt Charlottes.” But she had, “an almost miraculous gift for missing all the main points and driving without stopping over the “Landmarks” of history” (BL MSS Add 54921:40, 22 Nov. 1877. 55051:57; 111; 138, 12 Nov. 1876; 20 Aug. 1877; 28 April 1878.).

It is important to temper Freeman’s so pungently expressed views, first by remembering Charlotte Yonge’s great popularity with Victorian readers young and old, and recognizing Macmillan’s respect for her, as well as the continuing scholarly interest in her writing into the twenty-first century. Although not a serious historian by *EHR* standards, she was a serious writer, taken seriously then and, in a critical sense, taken seriously again now (see Simmons 7–26, 600–01). Also, more directly to the point, Green, who was producing a series of “Historical Primers” for Macmillan at the same time, and who knew Freeman’s weaknesses as well as his strengths, observed that her writing and editing – of the primer on France for his own series – were not nearly so bad as Freeman made out (BL MSS Add 55058:168, ca August–Sept. 1878).

The correspondence about the Historical Course for Schools demonstrates how historians and publishers were negotiating the cultural boundaries, of gender and of scholarship, through the 1870s and 1880s when the same people were contemplating the publication of a periodical that would set the disciplinary boundary of academic credentials and the commercial boundary of a popular reading audience. At the same time, a third, historiographical boundary was under discussion: at what point in the distant past of humankind should an historical series begin?

Like “scientific” history, anthropology was a product of nineteenth-century thought and practice. One of its founders was Edward Burnett Tylor, for whom the question of racial difference was one part of the purview of a discipline that studied non-western cultures, and also included aspects of biblical and medieval scholarship. As Ludmilla Jordanova comments, “over the nineteenth century, anthropology became a self-conscious discipline. . . . In so far as it mapped exotic cultures, often figured as ‘primitive,’ while historians were examining their own societies, the two fields diverged” (72). But if the Oxbridge historians were more and more certain of the distinction between anthropology and history, the same could not be

said for Alexander Macmillan, and it was his check-book that might well decide where the line was to be drawn in terms of book series for a popular readership. Macmillan was courting Tylor in the 1870s, when the titles to be included in Freeman's series were being negotiated; at the same time he had T. H. Huxley editing a series of Science Primers. Macmillan told Tylor, "I hope your little book about Race is getting on. Freeman has quite finished his 'General Sketch' . . . We would be very glad if it were possible to announce it [yours] as one of the Series, when we announce it as ready. Are you prepared to let us do so?" On the other hand, "You hinted once that you thought your book would perhaps better come into the 'Science Primer' series . . . are you not just on the border line – if there is one – where you become human & historically human? But if you feel a yearning to the other side pray say so soon. On either side your book will have great interest & value" (BL MSS Add 55392:79; 707, 16 Jan., 1 July 1872). From the publisher's commercial perspective, the boundary-line between history and anthropology was more fluid than from the scholarly perspective of the document-bound historian.

It is difficult to imagine that Tylor's contributions on pre-history would have fit comfortably into the Revised Code schoolroom. Throughout the Historical Course correspondence there is a vein of uncertainty about whether these are school books or brief general histories for adult consumption. Macmillan wanted them to sell in schools, and indeed some did. He told Thompson: "I want the series to be emphatically school books," and the whole scheme had grown out of Macmillan's challenge to Freeman to improve upon the status quo. When *General Sketch* appeared, Macmillan hoped that both "the intelligent public" and "the schoolmaster in all shades" were "eagerly waiting to buy." But as Bryce observed, writing for children was easier said than done: "I differ a good deal from your view as to the difficulty of the undertaking. To me it seems harder to write an elementary book for children than an elaborate one for grown up people" (BL MSS Add 55391:472, 15 April 1872. 55392:925, 11 Sept. 1872. JB MSS 9/177, 1 May 1872). Moreover, there was competition from other publishers, both for writers and for readers. By 1876 both Longmans and Rivingtons had launched series (Epochs and Handbooks respectively) which were appearing in a spate, some of them edited or authored by the same men (and in Creighton's case their wives) who worked on the Historical Review project (Covert 155–58, 204–05; BL MSS Add 55078:5, 10 Nov. 1876).

Despite ten years of agonizing, Little Greece and Rome were never written at all and Little France, Germany, and Italy made only a modest impact among readers or school teachers. Along with Freeman's *General Sketch*, Thompson's "Little England" survived the longest of all the Historical Course for Schools series, and sold very well. He told her with some chagrin in 1874 that "Your History is a wonderful success; it quite flogs me. That is to say, you are in *five figures* [over 10,000 copies], I only about half way in four [about 5000 *General Sketch*]" (Hull MSS DX/9:48, 6 June 1874). This was after two years in the marketplace. Nine years later he proudly reported that a curate had been overheard to recommend "a little book by Edith Thompson" to those seeking accuracy on matters of dates, and was vastly amused to hear that boys at the City of London School were apt to say "Where's my Edith? I have lost her" (Hull MSS DX/9:109, 17 June 1883). "Edith" had become a schoolroom classic. Thompson noted in 1891 that while Macmillan was proudly advertising Green's *Short History* with over 160,000 copies sold after seventeen years, her own book had achieved 237,000 after nineteen. She lived long enough to address the firm through "that weird instrument, the telephone" in 1900, and to experience the carnage of the First World War. As a woman

in her seventies, she came bitterly to regret, as well as to revise: in 1923 she wrote “I want to cut myself loose from the Aryan race theory of Mr. Freeman, but it is difficult to do this without complete recasting.” She could only hope that had Freeman experienced the Kaiser’s war, he too might have rethought the lessons he had taught her about the Teutonic roots of the English “race” (BL MSS Add 55078: 49; 56; 106, 4 Oct. 1891, 16 Dec. 1900, 22 April 1923).

Thompson’s book outlived the series in which it had been embedded, and she gradually liberated herself from the constraints of the relationship with her irascible mentor.¹ Freeman’s objective that all ten writers pull together as “yokefellows” became irrelevant when the other books went out of print. It remains, however, as part of what Gerard Genette calls the “paratext” of her book, retrievable from the surviving evidence of correspondence, just as the series format remained part of the physical evidence when there was no more *Historical Course for Schools* to contain it (Howsam 1992, Bell). Later in life Thompson contributed extensively to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but as Amanda Capern observes, she has not been part of the revival of interest in women writers of the nineteenth century; nor does she come into the view of scholarship on women historians (Krueger, Maitzen, Mitchell 140–69). She had little in common with the Strickland sisters and other writers of popular narratives, but neither would she likely have encountered Mary Anne Everett Green in the Public Record Office. Her professional network was limited to Freeman’s family and friends. Thompson’s historical writing, neither strictly academic nor blatantly popularizing, is hidden when the focus is on the universities or archives, or on works that influenced later scholars, but when the research begins with the records of history-writers in the Macmillan archive, she stands out immediately, demanding recognition.

WHAT LINKS THE “SERIES OF BABY HISTORIES” to the “purely historical review” is not merely the fact that so many of the same people were involved in both projects, while some (notably the women writers) were ruthlessly excluded from one while being essential to the other. They are also connected by the idea that it was possible and desirable to cultivate a popular reading public for the new dedicated periodical, to eliminate the boundary between popular and professional by making books that would develop the capacities of readers. This idea is more easily recognized when the perspective is publishing rather than professionalization.

In a commercial print culture like that of nineteenth-century Britain, books appeared in multiple copies of a single text; successful books also re-appeared in the successive replications we call editions (Secord 126–27). Periodicals worked somewhat differently but the principle of multiplication remained. Once the fixed costs of production were covered, the more copies that were printed, the less each one cost and the greater the potential profit. The lesson of selling large numbers of cheap books, rather than small numbers of expensive ones had been learned by the publishers around mid-century. This essay has suggested that publishers like Macmillan and Longman were dismayed by the implications of a scholarly discourse that anticipated only a minuscule readership for works of scientific history. The discourse took for granted, for the most part, that writers would be paid for their contributions; that was how the print culture functioned in the world these people inhabited. But by dismissing a popular audience for a popular genre, the historians were threatening to disrupt the economics of the publishing trade. No wonder Macmillan tried to prod a reluctant Green into somehow bending his own attractive style toward an editorial mentoring role that might

somehow transfer to his peers. And no wonder that Green refused as soon as he could afford to do so.

Later on would develop the system that has now become familiar: cooperation between university-based historians and university presses to sponsor the publishing of academic work. Of the people promoting a historical review in the 1870s and '80s, only Oscar Browning saw this possibility and he was rebuffed from both sides. Even he thought first of Macmillan, the commercial London-based publisher. Macmillan, however, had been aware of the difficulty for two decades and had sought a means to solve it in a way that made sense to him, by working with a historian who employed the rhetoric of scientific history but was also attracted by two other elements of the discipline. Freeman was interested in augmenting his income by royalties from successful publishing ventures; and he enjoyed imparting his wisdom to his children and their friends and by extension to readers of his "little" books. He and Macmillan were ambitious enough to believe they could close the gap between historians and their readers, by developing the latter as much as by editing the former. Like Green, Freeman was valued by his publishers because he possessed the knack of "writing a text that any thoughtful person might care to read, and satisfying the most exacting scholar in the notes" (BL MSS Add 55049:45, 10 May 1866). He believed anyone should be able to "write simply" when called upon to do so, but as Bryce recognized, it was not a common skill. Nor were most trained historians prepared to "knock under" to editorial injunctions in this direction. Macmillan and other publishers knew this too. They courted, nurtured, and gambled upon the few who could and would try to eradicate the boundary between history as a literary genre and history as an academic discipline, the half-forgotten Freemans, Brownings, and Greens, and their entirely obscure daughters, protégés, and friends.

University of Windsor

NOTES

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1. First edition 1873 (reprinted 3 times in 1874) 1875; 1876; 1877 (5 times); 1878 (twice). Second edition [with maps added] 1878 (July); 1879 (3 times); 1881; 1883 (twice); 1885; 1886; 1888; 1889; 1891; 1893; 1895; 1897. Third edition (described as "reprinted with additions") 1901; 1903. Reprinted with corrections, Globe 8⁰ edition 1907; 1908. New [4th] Edition 1923. There were further reprints in Canada and other countries. The 1878 printing has a note by Thompson about Freeman's sanction for adding maps (useful in schools). The 1901 edition includes a lavish description of Prince Albert which Freeman had deleted from her first text because he could not abide "Albert worship." The 1923 edition has Freeman's preface and Thompson's 1878 note, plus a note dated 1923, stating that she cannot obtain the sanction of the late Mr. Freeman or "benefit by his kind and thorough supervision. I cannot even venture to assert that his view of recent events would be that which I have taken" – nevertheless she trusted he would not disown her book.

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 E. A. Freeman Archive, John Rylands Library of Manchester. Cited as EAF MSS.
 Macmillan Archive, British Library, BL MSS Add 54786-56035.
 J. R. Seeley papers, University of London. Cited as JRS MSS.
 Letters to Edith Thompson from E. A. Freeman (Hull MSS DX/9), University of Hull.

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