of ever-closer union remains very much unfilled. The perspectives offered in the volume are limited by the very specific cases studies on which they are based, but provide interesting though hardly far-reaching empirical evidence the significance of which can be variously interpreted.

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To grow up in Canada in the 1960s was to grow up surrounded by reminders of British military history. While my village had neither a Haig nor a Kitchener Street (the city of Kitchener was an easy drive away), it did have Raglan, Nelson, and Elgin; I lived on Wellington Street. Later, my son attended Earl Kitchener School in Hamilton; my children went on to Lord Roberts School in London but had we stayed in Hamilton, they would have gone to Allenby School. More recently, I noticed a sign on Highway 403 in south-western Ontario that would make any military historian do a double-take: Earl Haig Fun Park. Locals know that the park is named after a high school, but how many know who the high school commemorates? Probably not one in a hundred could tell you. That trajectory, from meaning to meaninglessness, is the subject of Stephen Heathorn’s fascinating book on two of the greatest figures in modern British military history.

The story starts in death—Kitchener’s in the sinking of HMS Hampshire in 1916 and Haig’s of a heart attack in 1928. Beginning with a discussion of state funerals and official mourning, Heathorn elucidates how the remembrance of each man was appropriated for different purposes by different groups, and how that appropriation yielded varying representations. In doing so, he ranges from the usual (traditional monuments erected as tributes by a grateful nation) to the bizarre (the conspiracy theories that followed Kitchener’s loss). In Heathorn’s view, each man became a lieu de memoire, a “reference point of remembrance that conveys meaning for many people regardless of what actual knowledge about the subject they may have” (p. 147). Kitchener’s contribution to the First World War was pushed to the background as the attention of a post-colonial world focused on his deeds, or misdeeds, as an imperial soldier. This process comes out especially clearly in a splendid analysis of the removal in 1959 of Kitchener’s statute from Khartoum, where it had become an embarrassment to the government. Haig, despite his tireless work on behalf of veterans in the 1920s, became a kind of short-hand for all that was wrong with the First World War. Historians have gone to battle over the field marshal’s reputation, but he has become even more of a lightning rod for people who know little about history. They know that Haig is bad, even if they know nothing about him or his war.
The book’s greatest weakness is in the unevenness of its coverage. In the section on Kitchener, there is wonderful detail about private, commercial, and international commemoration of the general, but there is nothing similar in the analysis of Haig. One assumes that he was commodified after his death in the same way that Kitchener was, but it is not discussed. And there is very little on monuments to Haig beyond the official equestrian memorial in Whitehall; the Edinburgh memorial is mentioned only in passing, although it is featured on the book’s dustjacket. In the very fine chapter on Kitchener and Haig in material and visual culture, a chapter that is highlighted by a survey of the recycling in various unconnected contexts of the famous “Your Country Needs You” poster, Heathorn notes that his approach is pointillist rather than systematic and that he has not attempted to provide an overarching analytical framework to draw everything together. But what works in a single chapter is less effective in a book as a whole, and the reader is often left wondering why certain manifestations of remembrance have been addressed for one general but not the other and what insights more direct comparisons might offer. There is an interesting section on people, places, and institutions around the British Empire that were named for Kitchener but nothing similar for Haig, beyond a brief mention of children named Douglas (116). A few minutes on a major genealogy website reveals the popularity of the names “Douglas Haig” with new parents in the 1910s and 1920s. What are we to make of that fact that thousands of couples across the British Empire, including (it must be assumed) more than a few veterans, chose to name a child after the hated butcher of the Somme—especially in light of British prime minister David Lloyd George’s comment that “talk about the admiration, trust and affection felt by the men in the trenches for their leaders is utter nonsense” (p. 196)?

Although the author has not been well served by his publisher (the index is truly dreadful and the text is riddled with typographical errors, something that is unacceptable from a major press), the generals have been well served by their historian. Heathorn shows us that Kitchener and Haig have been, since their deaths, both more and less than great commanders in the collective remembrance; both came to symbolize far more in death than they did in life. But as the years since the First World War pass, both men are becoming more and more like caricatures, agglomerations of assumed meaning that grow ever more estranged from the historical events that created them. Perhaps, a century on, the Earl Haig Fun Park isn’t such a strange notion after all.

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