

was good, it was not "good enough." The army "had to operate strictly on its own."

An important factor was illness. "From the military viewpoint, the ailing soldier was just a nuisance." As medical difficulties multiplied, civilian effort rose to the task and "before the War Department quite knew what was happening its hospital system was being overhauled for it . . . [by] the . . . Sanitary Commission." The author adds: "The soldiers had reason to bless [its] every . . . member . . ."

The front, of course, was never fully detached from factors behind the lines. The "American political system" was not "wide enough to contain a civil war." In Indiana, with its rampaging anti-Lincoln politics, "reality blended with the outrageous shapes of Cloud-Cuckoo-Land itself," and Governor Morton had to deal sternly (and unconstitutionally) with a recalcitrant legislature and with the "invisible empire" of KGC, OAK, and similar groups. In Ohio the vigorous agitator Vallandigham posed for Lincoln a most serious problem of civil liberty in wartime. All this reacted upon pro-Union sentiment in the North to make it more savage and, as in the attack upon Fitz John Porter, to seek a hated symbol or scapegoat. Such factors, including inadequate recruiting, became too many for the governors; from 1863 on they found control slipping from their grasp.

Rich in its gleanings from regimental histories and soldier diaries, Mr. Catton's book is less concerned with high brass and "strategy" than with the sights, sounds, and smells of war: "that hellish [rebel] yell"; solid columns at Fredericksburg in a cohesive target, "of all formations, the one most vulnerable to enemy fire"; forty Confederates impaled on bayonets (also at Fredericksburg); "never a day . . . without . . . firing squads discharging their farewell volleys over new graves in the cheerless hills"; and over it all "the dauntless laughter of brave men who summon humor as a reinforcement. . . ." For each situation the author hits the bullseye with a telling phrase: "Washington was scandalized to the eyebrows" by the sequel of Sickles's killing of Philip Barton Key—not the murder justified by the unwritten law, but the husband's forgiving of his erring wife. For readability, penetration, and mastery of material Catton's second instalment fulfils the promise of the first, which is no faint praise.

Union Army Medicos

DOCTORS IN BLUE. By George Worthington Adams. New York: Henry Schuman. 253 pp. \$4.

By T. HARRY WILLIAMS

THE Civil War is our most written about war. More people know more about its battles and leading personalities than any of our other conflicts. But even with the hundreds of books that have been written about the Civil War, two areas of research within it have remained almost unexplored—ordnance and military medicine. Undoubtedly the technical knowledge a researcher would have to acquire to work these fields has caused scholars to shun them, but the result has been that even specialists in Civil War history know little about the weapons and the medical practices of the period.

Dr. (Ph. D.) G. W. Adams has competently filled a part of the gap in medical history with this medical history of the Union army. His book is the first modern comprehensive treatment of the subject. It ought to be welcomed and read by every student of the Civil War. Those who do read it will find terse and interesting accounts of Medical Department administration; of the great army surgeons, Hammond, Barnes, Letterman; of hospitals, ambulance systems, and nurses; of wounds, sickness, and disease; and of operations, the treatment of infections, and other medical practices of the Sixties. Although Mr. Adams cannot be said to have a sparkling literary style, he writes in a simple and readable manner and avoids the error of employing without explaining technical medical terms. When he talks about pyemia, for example, he tells the reader what it is. Consequently the reader understands what the doctors were trying to do when they treated it.

Most people who know something about the Civil War think that the organization of the Army medical service was primitive, that the medical practices of the time were medieval and ignorant, and that many Army doctors were incompetent or callous

T. Harry Williams, professor of history at Louisiana State University, is the author of "Lincoln and His Generals."

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practitioners who sawed off limbs at the slightest excuse and needlessly maimed or killed many soldiers. This opinion is derived partly from the official statistics showing that over twice as many men died of disease as were killed in battle and partly from gory contemporary accounts of operations in field hospitals, in which the writers remembered the quick knife, the screams of the sufferers, and the piles of stacked-up arms and legs.

There were great inadequacies in the organization of the Medical Department, especially at the beginning of the war. Many of the medical practices were medieval, because the war occurred at the very end of what Mr. Adams calls the medical Middle Ages and right before the advent of bacteriology and aseptic surgery. There were some incompetent doctors and some poorly trained ones and some callous ones—and also some who were skilled and humane. On the issue of amputations, Mr. Adams rightly stresses that many were necessary because of the lead bullet used in the war, which had a shattering impact on human bones. On the credit side of the medical ledger, great improvements were made in administration, particularly with the organization of ambulance field work and the Army Nurse Corps, and some progress was made in scientific knowledge, which would help improve military medicine in the future and would influence the casualty figures of World War I, the first war in which fewer Americans died of disease than in battle. "The medical and sanitary record of the Civil War," Mr. Adams writes correctly, "was on the whole a good one."

A Racial Trauma

THE NEGRO FREEDMAN: *Life Conditions of the American Negro in the Early Years After Emancipation.* By Henderson H. Donald. New York: Henry Schuman. 270 pp. \$4.

By C. VANN WOODWARD

THE shock of emancipation into a homeless, jobless, landless "freedom" left a deep scar on the mind of the American Negro. The experience might be described as a racial trauma from which a much abused people still suffer. It is of greatest importance to the Negro himself, to the people who live with him, and to the scholar who seeks to understand him to re-create accurately that historical experience of the 1860's and '70's.

Events have conspired to drop more than the ordinary number of veils of obscurity between us and the events concerned. The Southern white man dropped one such veil to justify a drastic reversal of history and conceal a painful memory. The Northern white man rang down another to hide a great failure and a shameful desertion. And the Negro hastily lowered a third upon the frustration, defeat, and humiliation that haunted him.

In the last two decades historians, with insights gained from anthropology and psychology, have been patiently lifting aside those veils and exploring what lies behind them. While a great deal remains to be done before the picture is anything like complete, these recent investigations

have uncovered much that is illuminating—enough to suggest an extensive revision of the conventional view of the freedman. That which has been discovered, however, is still known only to specialists. The time is ripe therefore for a popular synthesis of the new learning in preparation for new advances.

Professor Donald has not written such a synthesis. In fact he seems entirely unaware of scores of recent works that bear directly on his subject. He makes no reference to them, and his interpretation is wholly uninfluenced by them. He has written instead a synthesis of Reconstruction scholarship of one, two, or three generations past. The result is the old stereotype of the freedman as a serio-comic character, pathetic in his ineffectuality, touching in his naivete, and grotesque in his imitations of the white man and in his new role as a citizen. The men thought emancipation meant "freedom from work," and the women "soon became 'ladies'" and donned "showy jewelry, gaudy dresses, and brilliant bonnets." Many freedmen preferred "to continue living under conditions of slavery" rather than adjust to freedom. They had "no conception of personal responsibility for crime," showed an "utterly reckless disregard of their word," and quickly "lapsed into laziness."

Although Mr. Donald makes rather haphazard use of his sources, he reports his findings disappointingly, and they undoubtedly contain many truths. But they are largely worn-out truths and they are mixed with half-truths. What is most needed to round out the whole truth is the freedman's own views of his harrowing experiences. These are harder to come by than the white man's views. But they are now available in the massive records of the Freedman's Bureau in the National Archives, in the huge collection of Negro newspapers of that period lately microfilmed by one of the learned societies, and in a dozen manuscript collections of Southern universities. The author makes no reference to any of this rich and available material.

This book comes highly recommended by sociologists. This historian must regretfully file a dissenting opinion.

C. Vann Woodward, professor of American history at the Johns Hopkins University, is the author of "The Origins of the New South."



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