

remember the busy times along the New York Central and Pennsylvania Railroad lines that cut across the state will nod in agreement with much of this volume and in it will find an explanation for events and institutions that were a familiar part of everyday life only decades ago.

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Lee and Grant: A Dual Biography. By Gene Smith. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1984. Pp. xiv, 412. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$17.95.)

A dual biography of Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant is an exceptionally good idea. Very different in background, style, and personality, they became the principal military antagonists of the Civil War. As the author of this book suggests, in many ways each was typical of his cause: the aristocratic and anachronistic Old South, a strange mixture of gentility and brutality, versus the industrializing, rough-and-ready, egalitarian North. Admirably organized around the counterpoint suggested by its protagonists, the book traces their origins and careers. The author plays no favorites; an effort is made to characterize both men fully. A prolific and successful trade writer, Gene Smith writes very well. Granting all of these positive points, the book is significantly flawed.

In the first place, Smith relies entirely on secondary sources. Regardless of the general acceptability of this method, it appears that Smith has consulted them indiscriminately. (His imprecise method of footnoting adds to readers' doubts.) Thus, he has overlooked well-known authoritative historians (Bruce Catton and K. P. Williams, for example) and turned instead to such doubtful sources as W. E. Woodward and Sylvanus Cadwallader. The truth is that Smith is far from home in dealing with the military history of the Civil War. He has grabbed whatever was handy to advance his manuscript and apparently had neither the knowledge nor the time to evaluate his sources.

The author's research base shows up in a number of ways. For example, he accepts Cadwallader's account of Grant's binge during the Vicksburg campaign. Smith is presumably unaware of K. P. Williams's persuasive destruction of this story. He characterizes other Civil War personalities with dubious stereotypes. His treatment of General Henry Halleck, for example, shows that he has made no inquiry into the very complicated role of that very complex man.

Numerous outright errors about the war also appear, of which the following are simply examples: it is not accurate to say that Fort Donelson is "11 miles downstream from Fort Henry" (p. 113); Grant had not "committed his last reserves" on the first day at Shiloh (p. 121); it is not true that "almost as one man the right wing of Hooker's army turned and ran" at Stonewall Jackson's attack on the Eleventh Corps on May 2, 1863, at Chancellorsville (p. 160); Hooker did not "turn and run for it" on the morning after Jackson's stroke at Chancellorsville (p. 161)—there was fighting on May 3, 4, and 5, and the retreat took place on May 6; James Longstreet was not "Jackson's replacement" in any meaningful sense (p. 164); to state that Grant expected no great results from Benjamin F. Butler's 1864 campaign below Richmond (p. 188) is simply wrong; the "entire course of the war" did not devolve on the two forces opposed in the final Virginia campaign (p. 211), and the statement reflects and promotes a misunderstanding of the war; Lee did not "have to" invade Pennsylvania in 1863 (p. 163) and to say that he did moots a question that a biographer should address.

Each of the men was an enigma, and each is ultimately a tragic figure. Lee opposed slavery and secession; he was one of the few who foresaw the horrors of the war and its ultimate outcome. Somehow he converted his position of not *opposing* Virginia into the role of the slaving Confederacy's aggressive and bloody point man. He could write during the war that "the warmest instincts of every man's soul declare the glory of the soldier's death." In the name of his own honor, he clung to the war long beyond his own awareness of any practical possibility of success, although every day intensified the agony of his beloved Virginia and all the people, North and South. These undisputed facts make Lee a tragic hero. They also suggest his unique and anomalous place in American history. Other historical figures are evaluated with reference to the ultimate morality of their acts, but history is curiously neutral where Lee is concerned. Universally credited with purity of motive, he is somehow therefore absolved of the destructive and inhumane consequences of that motive. Grant has surely not enjoyed Lee's immunity from history's inquiries and judgments, but his tragedy appears in the aftermath of Appomattox when he exhibited his moral obtuseness in regard to postwar gifts from wealthy friends; his perception of the presidency as a "sinecure," a gift from the people because of his wartime service; and his role in "Grantism," the awful corruption of American politics during the Gilded Age.

In short, there is much to say about Grant and Lee, but, in view of its defects, this book poses the classic question: is there

validity to this kind of popular history? On the one hand, such works may be the general reader's only source of history. On the other hand, the commercial imperatives seem to require broad brush oversimplification, exaggerated and categorical characterization when the truth is highly uncertain, and the publishing of outright error—so that what the general reader gets is erroneous or distorted information.

The best seller lists notwithstanding, people who take their history seriously have cause to be disappointed with this book.

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The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant. Volume 11, June 1-August 15, 1864; Volume 12, August 16-November 15, 1864. Edited by John Y. Simon. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984. Pp. xxvi, xxv, 497, 520. Illustrations, notes, maps, indexes. \$45.00 per volume.)

The man who wrote the correspondence in these two volumes was described in 1864 as ordinary, scrubby-looking, with a slightly seedy look. This description does not fit the image of a successful military leader. In Ulysses S. Grant's case, appearances were deceiving. Grant was an outstanding military leader and the greatest American military strategist of the nineteenth century. Grant understood modern warfare as it developed in the Civil War. No longer could victory be obtained by checkmating the enemy army or capturing enemy cities. The opposing army had to be destroyed, and the will of the enemy populace subdued. These harsh goals could be achieved only by bringing all resources to bear on the enemy. Of all the major participants in the Civil War, only Grant, William T. Sherman, and Abraham Lincoln understood these concepts.

These two volumes document the period from June 1, 1864, to November 15, 1864. On June 1, 1864, Grant was at Cold Harbor, a battle which he regretted because of heavy Union casualties. These casualties so distressed Grant that on June 5, 1864, he wrote Robert E. Lee proposing that both sides send unarmed men between the skirmish lines to tend the wounded whenever the battle ceased. The North had superiority of men and matériel over Lee's Confederates. Since Lee could not replace men and matériel as fast as the North, such battles wore down the Confederacy's strength.

Grant's humor shows through in a letter to his wife, Julia, dated July 18, 1864, where he remarks that General William S. Rosecrans "never obeyed an order in his life that I have yet heard of." In addition, many letters to his wife illustrate Grant's great