

stories. After Seligman's death Alger in the 1880s peppered his fiction with anti-Semitic stereotypes. By 1883, however, he was employed as tutor to Albert Cardozo's children and tutored in other prominent Jewish households as well. These contradictions are not adequately analyzed by the authors.

Scharnhorst's book reveals a sadness no less than irony in Alger's third-rate career as a writer. Twentieth century critics who point to his popularity in the nineteenth century and his post-World War II revival as a defender of capitalism misunderstand his ethic and are unaware of the unfavorable reviews and the condemnation of his themes and literary style by the 1880s when some libraries banned his books. Historians have also inflated his gross sales. *Ragged Dick* (1868) was his only best-seller. Alger never did achieve the success he hungered for among adult readers.

The authors offer a perceptive "Afterword" on the abridged reissues of Alger's novels, between 1899 and 1920, that turned upside down the original moral thrust of the books. After 1920 Alger was canonized as a "success Mythmaker" (p. 152), although his books fell into obscurity. In sum, this book is a fine piece of scholarship and presents a useful case study and reminder to all who read and write history about past failures in historical method.

Northeastern Illinois University,
Chicago

Salme Harju Steinberg

Books and Libraries in Camp and Battle: The Civil War Experience. By David Kaser. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984. Pp. xiii, 141. Notes, illustrations, pictures, maps, bibliography, index. \$27.95.)

In this brief but stimulating study of the role of reading among Civil War soldiers, David Kaser sees the war as a watershed in the history of reading and the history of leisure in America. To Kaser, the Civil War not only brought about a significant change in what, why, and how Americans read but it also altered dramatically the nature and character of certain American institutions, especially public libraries and the publishing industry.

Though by the middle of the nineteenth century America had a high literacy rate and a plentiful supply of reading matter, it still lacked, according to Kaser, one major commodity necessary for large-scale readership, namely, leisure time. Long hours on the job and a Christian ethic that regarded large blocks

of discretionary time as spiritually dangerous discouraged all but "serious" reading.

The Civil War changed all this. It provided millions of American soldiers on both sides with the time to read. Like their counterparts in wars before and after, Civil War soldiers spent considerably more time in camp than in battle. Reading, therefore, became a principal means to combat the endless hours of idleness, rivalling even card playing as the soldier's favorite diversion. Kaser wisely avoids speculating as to which activity dominated the other, however.

Soldiers pursued four kinds of reading: purposeful reading, religious reading, reading of newspapers and magazines, and reading for escape. Kaser examines each of these. The first included good literature, as well as vocational, professional, and military publications. Shakespeare, apparently, was popular even among the rank and file. Religious reading included more than Bibles and Testaments, and Christian organizations, especially the United States Christian Commission, developed impressive and successful ways to deliver reading matter to soldiers. By 1864 the commission alone was responsible for distributing 570,000 Bibles and Testaments, 490,000 hymnals, 8,346,000 religious papers and magazines, more than 13,600,000 pages of tracts, and some 4,326,000 other volumes. Kaser does not disguise his admiration for the work of this organization, and little wonder!

Newspapers and magazines, however, provided the chief source of reading matter for Civil War soldiers. While the latter were more likely to be read by the better educated, the former were devoured by all. In 1863 the Union Army negotiated a franchise with a news agency to deliver newspapers to the troops for a nickel apiece. Kaser considers this action perhaps the single most important measure taken by the military to improve the opportunity for soldiers to read. Newspapers were so popular and in such great demand that the practice of swapping newspapers even with the enemy was almost universal. Then as now controversy surfaced regarding the freedom of the press to report troop movements and other military intelligences that could give the enemy some tactical advantage.

Reading for entertainment signaled the most abrupt change with antebellum reading practices. Despite the best efforts of chaplains and some officers, soldiers gobbled up publisher James Redpath's *Books for the Camp Fires* and Beadle Brothers dime novels. These and other cheap novels provided soldiers many hours of relief from the boredom of camp and prison life.

The increase in reading gave impetus to the growth of libraries for soldiers. Libraries and reading rooms were established in hospitals, in many rear echelon areas, and even in some camps. Most, notes Kaser, were sponsored by religious groups, and their contents, not surprisingly, seldom reflected the expanded interests of the soldiers. Nevertheless, they did provide a great service to the troops, and following the war the army proved "much more hospitable to having post and garrison libraries for the use of troops than it had been earlier" (p. 122).

The Civil War also had a dramatic impact on the public library movement. Following the conflict new tax-supported and often free public libraries sprang up in unprecedented numbers. The war affected the nature of these libraries and the character of their collections. The increased interest in reading also provided a tremendous boost to the publishing industry, which enjoyed great prosperity during and following the war. Time to read, asserts Kaser, "was a principal cause of this prosperity" (p. 97).

The story of reading and libraries in the Civil War was not an altogether uplifting one. Kaser briefly touches upon the "wanton and thoughtless wholesale destruction of books and libraries, private or public . . . during the war (p. 89). Sherman's march to the sea took a particularly heavy toll on libraries. At one plantation in South Carolina, Audubon plates were used for kindling fires. But despite this darker side of the history of books and libraries in the Civil War, the picture that emerges from Kaser's study is on the whole a very bright one.

It is difficult to find serious fault with this book, except for its price. At \$27.95 it is unlikely to end up on many private library shelves, and this is a pity. Civil War buffs, however, may want to dig deep. This is different from the usual Civil War fare and may prompt further research and interest in a number of areas touched upon by Kaser. It is well written, contains some interesting illustrations, and provides an excellent bibliography. Kaser also makes a number of references to Indiana soldiers and regiments. The book is delightful, and if readers cannot afford it, they should make sure that their library orders a copy.

Indiana Historical Society,
Indianapolis

Robert K. O'Neill

Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery: Prostitutes in the American West, 1865-90. By Anne M. Butler. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985. Pp. xx, 179. Notes, illustrations, bibliographical note, index. \$16.95.)

Anne M. Butler's history of western prostitution is a provocative and sensible book that undermines the old folktales about