ever, by painting a picture of sectional conflict with such broad strokes, the author is also able to make some telling points, especially about the tangled meanings of liberty for various groups and individuals.

On more conventional topics such as the territorial question, the breakdown of the second American party system, and the politics of slavery of the 1850s, Levine is often sketchy, episodic, and predictable. An exception is his skillful analysis of nativism and, curiously enough, his basic rejection of ethnocultural explanations for political behavior in the two decades before the Civil War. Again, he is especially good at examining reactions of northern working people to the political upheaval of the era.

As a new synthetic treatment of the "roots of the Civil War," *Half Slave and Half Free* adds a few new twists to a familiar story. The attempt to bring cultural and social themes into the analysis is ambitious and laudatory but not entirely successful. Useful for both general readers and undergraduates, especially for introducing important ideas from the most recent scholarship, Levine's book in many ways reflects both the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary erudition.

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Civil War buffs and historians need little introduction to General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain. His defense of the left flank of the Union army on Little Roundtop at Gettysburg, together with the chivalrous manner in which he formally received the Confederate surrender at Appomattox Court House, are legendary. A volunteer who rose to the rank of major general and never officially commanded more than a brigade, Chamberlain has since overshadowed many of his superior officers who commanded divisions and corps. His figure has graced the pages of numerous histories of the Army of the Potomac, most notably John Pullen's *The Twentieth Maine* (1957), Willard M. Wallace's *Soul of the Lion*, and Chamberlain's own numerous writings. Nevertheless, the full story of Joshua Chamberlain has never really been told until now.

*In the Hands of Providence*, by the late Indiana author Alice Rains Trulock, is, quite simply, the definitive biography of the modest professor-turned-soldier. Writing with a poetic prose that is reminiscent of Bruce Catton, Trulock recounts Chamberlain's life in microscopic detail, from childhood through his four postwar
terms as governor of his native Maine. Trulock details how Chamberlain's character was shaped, in part, by his demanding father, who taught him perseverance; and how it was tempered in the forge of battle, which, Chamberlain believed, was "a test of character; it makes bad men worse and good men better" (p. 340).

Chamberlain's Civil War service, of course, is the heart of the book. Trulock's knowledge of the Civil War and deep understanding of Chamberlain is evident as she follows her subject through the travail of battle. Her description of Chamberlain at Gettysburg and on the White Oak Road before Petersburg are among the most vivid descriptions of combat that this reviewer has read.

It is unfortunate that Civil War enthusiasts will hear no more from Alice Rains Trulock, as she died shortly before her book was published. Yet with *In the Hands of Providence*, she has provided one of the finest Civil War biographies ever written—a book that will stand as a monument to a great man and as a memorial to a fine writer.


Well, it is about time! Someone has finally produced a book to guide the unsuspecting neophyte onto the foreboding plains where George Armstrong Custer played out his destiny. Paul Andrew Hutton was clearly the person for the job. A recognized authority on the Indian wars, he has also dedicated a significant part of his career to the study of popular culture. Those two interests intersect spectacularly at a place, south central Montana on the banks of the Little Big Horn, at a time, June 25, 1876, and in a man, George Armstrong Custer.

*The Custer Reader* is a carefully compiled collection of scholarly articles and firsthand accounts that together comprise the cream of the vast amount of literature on Custer and his times. In addition, photographic essays and maps add additional spice to the mix. The book is intended for the beginner and should be featured as a "Best Buy" at any place stocking Custeriana.

Anyone who has been exposed to the arcane world of Custer literature can attest to the fact that the mix of sense and nonsense, truth and fancy that comprise that literature is heady and addictive. Hutton has assembled in 585 pages all the information one needs to know about Custer, his times, and his battle. Once those pages have been read, the reader knows all any sensible person