

Banners to the Breeze: The Kentucky Campaign, Corinth, and Stones River. By Earl J. Hess. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. Pp. xiv, 252. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$32.00.)

Without a doubt, Earl J. Hess's *Banners to the Breeze* is one of the finest Civil War campaign histories ever written. Hess has the uncanny ability to meld the complexities of politics (domestic and international), extended campaign logistics, public sentiment, commanders' squabbles, and tactics into a thoughtful and readable history. More importantly, Hess reminds us of the tremendous difficulties in western theater operations in a very large, geographically diverse terrain, with multigauge rail lines and oppressive heat and humidity.

Taking the war into the deep South in the early months of 1862 proved to federal commanders that campaigning there would require a shift in military thought and training from conquer-and-occupy to swift movement and foraging off the land. Hess argues convincingly that "Westerners would have to learn to become hardy campaigners as well as tough fighters on the battlefield, for their part of the war was won as much by moving over vast distances as by slugging it out with their enemy on a small field of battle" (p. 5). He demonstrates that western federal soldiers (predominantly men from the Old Northwest states and Kentucky) far exceeded their eastern comrades in this respect.

The western rebel armies also learned these lessons and were significantly different from their eastern counterparts. Hess could have explored further why western Confederate commanders did not exploit their geographical advantages more than they did. Nevertheless, he astutely places the three rebel offensives of late summer 1862 into their proper political and historical contexts. Confederate defeats at Antietam, Perryville, and Corinth, combined with the importance of the Emancipation Proclamation—a document that changed the course of the Civil War and that has not been adequately studied by historians—combined to spell certain doom for the rebellion.

Perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of this book is the author's ability to tell a good story and to write it clearly. Academicians' writings are often plagued with a stilted vocabulary aimed at lay historians with the cruel intent to intimidate them. Hess has rejected this attitude and given us a very readable history supported by quotations from figures of all ranks, from presidents to privates. *Banners to the Breeze* is a welcome addition to the Great Campaigns of the Civil War series and necessary reading for a thorough understanding of the importance of the western theater to the defeat of the Confederacy.

ROGER C. ADAMS is assistant professor and rare books librarian at Hale Library, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas. He is a past president of the Perryville Civil War Round Table and a consultant to the Perryville Battlefield State Historic Shrine.