

that are often disjointed and seem disconnected from his main argument. His effort to weave such tales into an explanation of how the North and South came to view each other as enemies is not entirely convincing. The book remains, however, a magnificent tool for instruction. Bowman's heavy reliance on secondary materials makes reading *At the Precipice* very much like attending an excellent graduate seminar on the subject. The book offers an insightful and fascinating contemplation of "what Americans on the eve of the Civil War

believe[d] about themselves and the world around them" (p. 12). *At the Precipice* should be on the shelf of every Civil War historian and certainly should be required reading for any graduate student with an interest in the subject.

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The Union War

By Gary W. Gallagher

(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011. Pp. 215. Illustrations, notes, acknowledgements, index. \$27.95.)

Discussing the role of slavery and emancipation in reshaping the meaning of the Civil War, Barbara Fields wrote in 1990 that "preserving the Union [was] a goal too shallow to be worth the sacrifice of a single life" ("Who Freed the Slaves?," in Geoffrey C. Ward, *The Civil War: An Illustrated History*, 1990). To Gary Gallagher, Fields's statement embodies a wider trend that began in the 1970s as historians' skepticism about American nationalism, combined with their increasing use of "race, emancipation and slavery" as explanatory tools, led them to ignore or undervalue the degree to which mid-nineteenth-century white northerners cherished a nation that they

considered synonymous to the hope of freedom (p. 78). Framing much of his analysis as a critique of recent scholarship—including the work of Walter McDougall, Orville Burton, Eric Foner, and David Williams among many others—Gallagher sets out to demonstrate that white northerners' Unionist sentiment, heavily infused with American exceptionalism, explains not only why they fought the war but also how they won it.

In his synthetic march over a broad terrain of historical and historiographical territory, Gallagher usefully concentrates readers' attention on the citizen armies that became a focal point for wartime republican

nationalism. Letters of soldiers and subsequent regimental histories (too often dismissed by academic historians as overly nostalgic and militarist) reveal that the paramount incentive for soldiers was, and always remained, preserving the Union. Here Gallagher departs from scholars who see the Emancipation Proclamation and Gettysburg Address as fulcrum points around which the war's moral meaning changed and the balance turned. Though some soldiers and Northerners (and certainly African Americans) may have "placed emancipation alongside Union as a principle goal," the majority of Gallagher's white soldiers and, by extension it seems, the Northern people for whom they fought, saw the end of slavery more as a useful tool in the greater goal of permanent reunification (p. 87). Gallagher believes that emancipation was a useful military tool; the majority of black soldiers in Federal service from Confederate states came from areas where the Union army maintained a long-term presence (p. 146). Yet he does not see emancipation as a determining factor in the war's outcome: "The United States could have achieved victory with slavery intact and no African American units in its armies" just as it "could have lost the war with emancipation on the table and black men composing 10 percent of all loyal forces" (p. 88). Gallagher repeatedly reminds the reader that victory, like the slaves' desires for freedom, rested primarily on the success of (most-

ly white) armies and on the skills of generals like U.S. Grant who led them deeper and deeper into the Confederacy.

The Union War offers an equally provocative companion to *The Confederate War*; Gallagher's useful synthesis of the much-discussed nature of Confederate nationalism. Together, the two volumes go far in helping to explain how two republican-minded peoples endured and understood a seemingly endless war. Both essays remind students of history that the analytical lenses through which we view the past need to comport with or at least acknowledge the ways that previous actors understood events. Like other good "new military histories," the volume reminds military historians of the need to think more broadly about their subjects while urging social, cultural, and political historians to remember that battles, and the people who fought them, matter. *The Union War* also raises some very important questions about the broader Civil War era. How did the foundation for such a deep commitment to the Union and the army develop, especially given the decentralized nature of federalism and the relatively small size of national institutions like the army prior to the war? If the war was less transformative of Northern views of slavery and race than previous scholars have supposed, does this suggest that Radical Reconstructionists' hopes were largely stillborn? How, then, do we explain the political transformation

from a pre-war Thirteenth Amendment that, if ratified, would have all but guaranteed slavery's permanency to a series of postwar amendments that not only ended the institution but expanded civil rights and the franchise to include freedmen? Answering these difficult questions requires an appreciation of the diverse methodologies and approaches needed to account for the complex intersections of racial ideas and the institution of slavery with republican institutions and political practices.

The Union War calls for a reassessment of some of the foundational assumptions that we bring to these and other questions.

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Beyond the Cabbage Patch
The Literary World of Alice Hegan Rice

By Mary Boewe

(Louisville, Ky.: Butler Books, 2010. Pp. xix, 411. Illustrations, sources, notes, index. \$34.95.)

Meticulously researched and written in a conversational style, *Beyond the Cabbage Patch* details forty years of the life and career of bestselling novelist Alice Hegan Rice, from the publication of her first and most famous novel *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* in 1901 to the suicide of her husband Cale Young Rice in 1943, one year after Alice's death. Biographer Mary Boewe provides summaries of Alice's nineteen books along with notes about their popular and critical receptions. Additionally, Boewe spends ample time discussing the work of Cale Young Rice, author of more than twenty plays and books of poetry. Cale's efforts to achieve international fame as a serious artist and his defensive arguments with review-

ers who criticized or ignored his work provide a tragicomic motif in the story of this prominent Louisville-based literary couple.

The work of both writers has fallen out of fashion—indeed, it was already unfashionable during their lifetimes, after the coming of Modernism to American letters (heralded by the publication of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* in 1922). Boewe explores this transitional moment, the shift from Victorian customs (and artistic styles) to the radical uncertainty of Modernism (and dramatic change of artistic styles) accelerated by World War I. Throughout the Modernist era, Alice continued to publish tragicomic stories about Louisville's tenement-dwelling poor and sentimental