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This volume is the best history of the Confederate States; as a matter of fact, it is the only history that covers the many aspects of the efforts of the eleven states to establish their independence. All previous works have been heavily weighted in favor of military campaigns; Coulter has relegated that topic to one ably-written forty-page chapter. Perhaps, he has overly de-emphasized this phase, but in the final analysis he has helped to put military activities in the proper perspective. In justification of his apportionment, he points out that his work is a history of the South and not of the war principally, but indicates that since there was little not related to the war, "in these pages where the war is not, its shadows fall."

This is a true history of the Confederate States in that it tells how the nation came into being; what forces directed it; how it functioned; and, when it went to war, how it managed the many domestic problems attendant to the conflict; how the purely military matters were directed or misdirected; what the people did during the struggle; and what factors were most important in the failure of the nation to achieve its objective.

In examining the birth of the nation, Coulter probes into the many probable causes that have been advanced and concludes that although slavery was undoubtedly a potent factor, "more powerful than slavery was the Negro himself." After this acceptance of Phillips' "central theme of Southern history," the author says that it was "what lay back of the institution of slavery and was made possible by it which mattered most to Southerners—not simply the money value of slaves" (p. 11). What was made possible by the institution in this instance was the conservative way of life which the Southerners desired to protect against the "infiltration of Northern radicalism." Consolidation and concentration of government were more dreaded than disunion, and the revolt
of conservatism against the modernism of the North was the "normal reaction of an isolated landed civilization against the world currents of trade and industry" (p. 13). The South felt that equality and safety were no longer available in the Union, so she withdrew from those who seemed to delight in insulting her and celebrated this withdrawal as if a burden had been lifted. Coulter feels that secession was a counterrevolution rather than a revolution (p. 25), though later statements (i.e., p. 113) seem to modify his earlier conclusion. Whatever the war or the movement might be called, the discussion of the background of the Confederacy is clear, mature, and level-headed.

It is interesting to note, as Coulter carefully points out, that the individuals who had been so prominent in fanning the flames of secession—such men as Rhett, Ruffin, and Yancey—received no position of prominence in the new government, and though not happy about this they were not the greatest of the troublemakers. Davis and Stephens are depicted as men highly in keeping with the conservative nature of the Southern movement. The failure to submit the constitution to the vote of the people caused some dissatisfaction, but this is not considered a deliberate denial of the democratic processes: it was a necessary political expedient in order to face Lincoln on his inauguration with an established and functioning government. No simple answer is found to Lincoln's role in the Fort Sumter affair, but the conclusion is reached that between the election of November, 1860, and the firing on Fort Sumter Lincoln showed "less understanding of conditions in the South and gave less evidence of broad statesmanship than was ever again to characterize him" (p. 35).

The South neither wanted nor expected war; the few who desired conflict were not given positions in the government. The South was cognizant of the disparity between its resources and those of the rest of the Union, but were not its manpower, its area, its trade, and its potential greater than those of many of the more important nations? There was, then, an early wave of optimism and a high morale during the first days of the new nation. Morale is termed the "most potent weapon" the South had, but it began to sag in 1862, rumors took a toll, and propaganda—uncoördinated as it was —could not sustain it; the South "lost this weapon, and, therefore, the war" (p. 83).
The analysis of the government of the Confederate States is penetrating and critical. He points out that Davis tried to attend to too many details of administration, that he was not the type of person who could become a hero no matter how much he might be respected, that he had high ideals of office, and that no detail was too small to bring an attack by such powerful opponents as Toombs, Brown, Vance, Stephens, or by less important individuals or newspapers. Whatever weaknesses Davis had—and they were numerous—when he is compared with the other men during the course of the struggle, he “showed fewer . . . than any other” (p. 113). Also, while the Confederate Congress was disappointing in not maintaining the standards of statesmanship expected of it, much of the criticism was unreasoning and unwarranted. The military drew away much of the glory from the civilian agencies, and the Congress showed much boldness of imagination in handling unprecedented problems. One is struck by the vivid portrayal of the details of bureaucracy and the realization that the printing of stamps could cause as many or more headaches than the transformation of the Federal postal system into a Confederate one.

In his analysis of the policies of the Confederate States, Coulter follows a conclusion of the late Dr. Ramsdell that one of the most fundamental causes of the ultimate failure of the Confederacy was its “unwise financial policy.” He does feel, though, that Memminger’s plans for bonds, paper money, and taxes might have been made to work, but the Congress chose the easy way out by paying the debts in paper currency and bonds with no early comprehensive tax program. Coulter concludes, however, that it would have made no difference even if the money had been based on gold or cotton for it would have become worthless with defeat and that it was lack of faith or confidence in the ability of the government—among other factors—that affected the value of the money. It is worth noting that the comprehensive tax bill of April, 1863, contained many of the roots of the future tax structure of this country.

The diplomatic affairs of the new nation are admirably summarized, care being taken to emphasize that if the English and the French could be won over to recognition the attitude of the other nations made no difference. In this section there is one point open to serious debate: was the English
recognition of belligerency of the Confederacy of more benefit to the North than to the South because the North thereby gained the legal right to institute a blockade? The chronological order of the blockade and the recognition of belligerency, plus the fact that the United States government did nearly everything that she had protested as wrong in the years preceding the War of 1812, indicates that expediency quickly overcame any qualms concerning mere legality.

The discussions of the problems of building an army and supplying that army are superior to those found in many much more detailed works. Among the topics treated are manufactories; prices, profits, and labor; agriculture, subsistence, and Negroes; raising troops; trade, blockade-running, and the navy; and transportation and communication. The various problems encountered are pointed up; the achievements and shortcomings are analyzed; and the dissensions created (summarized in a later chapter) are noted. The reviewer wishes to raise a question in regard to two quotations from one of these chapters: “Had secession taken place in 1850, when the railroads in both sections were more nearly equal strategically, the South might well have established its independence” (p. 269) and “Had the railroads been efficient enough and had Lee possessed bold vision, part of his army in Virginia could have been sent to the relief of Vicksburg and the Gettysburg campaign would have been averted” (p. 281). This is pyramiding the nonexistent and the improbable into the unprovable.

The chapter on internal dissensions emphasizes the significance of state-rights dogma and personalities and the absence of a single goal or objective on the part of the great body of the southern population. What they were seeking was not only not clear to many of the civilians, but “Just what the Confederate soldier was fighting for stood out little more clearly in his mind than what most soldiers fight for in any war” (p. 449). In other chapters desertion, straggling, poor discipline, war heroism, decadence, “bread riots,” bickering, gambling, drinking, prisoners and prison camps, aid associations, monotony, ennui, disease, the specter of hunger and nakedness, and the Confederate Kilroy (“Bolivar Ward”) all come in for well-proportioned attention.

Of especial interest to many readers—because of the relative scarcity of monographic studies—will be the chapters
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on fine arts and the press and on literary activities, education, and religion. In the latter chapter the author shows how war seeped into, corroded, and captured the soul of the writing Southerners, making them turn their literary efforts to the support of the war. It was unthinkable that anyone who did not support “the cause” should be allowed to teach, but, try as they may, the Southerners were never able to convert education or religion to fanatical—or even powerful—morale purposes.

The book is well balanced in the space devoted to the several topics, and the author seems to have used just about everything that has ever been published on or about the Confederacy as well as a number of manuscript collections. From the latter and from the newspapers he has drawn many of his aptly-chosen quotations. His easy and flowing style, punctuated with his humor, adds to the attractiveness of the volume. This sense of humor, however, does not seem to extend to Alexander Stephens who might be criticized a bit too harshly. Again, the author appears a little too critical of the refusal of Davis to accept peace and Union at Hampton Roads in 1865.

There is something of a temporary unbalance in the treatment of the causes of the defeat of the Confederacy; when factors—or forces—such as money or conscription are discussed, each appears to have been the basic or underlying cause of the fall of the new government. But almost at the end these factors are tied together with the statement that the “forces leading to defeat were many but they may be summed up in this one fact: The people did not will hard enough and long enough to win” (p. 566). This will was strong in the beginning, but ruinous inflation, dissensions and fractionalism, conscription, and other forces caused it to wither and die. Just as the reader is prepared to say that one cannot win wars, or even battles, on will alone, Coulter says “But, of course, if enemy morale always exceeded what the Confederates could have mustered, then defeat was always inevitable; but there are reasons to believe that the Confederacy had within its being the potentialities of a stronger and more persistent will to win independence than the Federals had to save the Union. It is easy to argue in circles as to why the Confederacy did not win” (p. 567). He does not seem to deplore the failure of the Confederacy to capitalize on its potentialities;
nor does he pursue the circular argument.

The index is good; the critical essay on authorities is just that; and the book is a credit to the Louisiana State University Press. Historians, and the public in general, should be grateful to the editors, to the author, and to the sponsoring agencies for the best and the only really comprehensive history of the South from 1861 to 1865.

Indiana University Chase C. Mooney


In this compact and well-organized book, Professor Schultz has re-examined the slavery question in South Carolina during the 1850's. His thesis, boiled down to its least common denominator, is this: South Carolina politicians and statesmen were afraid of the abolitionists as a political force in national politics and preferred secession to domination by a federal government controlled by antislavery men. And by 1860, South Carolinians were rather certain that the antislavery group was going to control the North and that there was no longer any hope of maintaining friends or allies in the northern section. In support of this theory the Carolina leaders cited the Brooks assault, the nomination of Buchanan instead of Pierce, the slim margin of victory enjoyed by the Democrats in the election of 1856, the growing strength of the Republican party in Congress, the unreliable friendship of northern democratic leaders such as Douglas, Seward's "irrepressible conflict" speech of 1858, and finally John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry. They also declared that Helper's The Impending Crisis of the South was the beginning of a dangerous propaganda movement instigated by antislavery leaders in an attempt to array southern nonslaveholders against slaveholders. Consequently, throughout the decade of the fifties when there was a strong nationalistic feeling in the other Southern States, South Carolina, in thought, in speech, and in political action, manifested a strong disunion opinion.

The idea that secession was caused by the slavery issue