

as the works of some other European visitors, but neither is it so biased as some others. Its publication adds an enjoyable item to the social history of the late nineteenth century.

*Butler University*

Emma Lou Thornbrough

*General Edmund Kirby Smith, C. S. A.* By Joseph H. Parks.  
(Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1954,  
pp. viii, 537. Illustrations, bibliography, and index.  
\$6.00.)

This very interesting biography by Joseph Parks deals with a Confederate general for whom no real biography has been previously attempted. In many ways Kirby Smith was one of the most dramatic as well as controversial figures of this trying period in the development of American democracy. Obviously a lost cause is productive of controversial figures. Those who lead victorious armies, or their component parts, are more likely to be glorified, than censured for mistakes. The Kirby Smith who helped turn the tide for the South in the first battle of Manassas and who spear-headed what might have proved a successful Southern invasion of Kentucky and of the West found his star dimming when he faced the problems, as general in command, of that portion of the Confederacy known as the Trans-Mississippi. This was particularly true after the surrender of Vicksburg cut the Confederacy in two and isolated that area.

Kirby Smith was a native Floridian whose roots were deep in Connecticut soil. Like many other natives of the area north of the Mason-Dixon line, his parents had transplanted themselves to a southern state and came to love it, even though memories of childhood persisted.

In addition to the Connecticut background this particular Smith family had an army background, which made them, as it were, to the manner born. This means that Kirby Smith had a number of army connections as well as friends of various degrees of intimacy who were in some large measure helpful in forwarding his career in the Army.

Like many other West Pointers of his day, General Kirby Smith received his baptism of fire, in his training for the War for Southern Independence, in the Mexican War where he gave a good account of himself and emerged as a breveted

captain. Following his Mexican War service Smith had a rather long period of service on the Western plains in Indian wars or near-Indian wars.

As Parks interestingly explains, Kirby Smith aligned himself with the Southern cause rather readily and most of his family joined him. However, the author notes the fact that Smith continued loyal to the Union, even to the extent of refusing to surrender Camp Colorado to Confederate demands, and until he had resigned his commission in the United States Army. Like many of his fellow army officers, once the die was cast, his advancement was rapid in the Confederate Army to the extent that when the fighting began he had reached a brigadier-generalship. This advancement continued, culminating when President Jefferson Davis, one of his old friends, made him a full general.

As Parks carries Kirby Smith through the vicissitudes of his career as a Confederate leader, he aptly notes Smith's conflicts with other commanders and his consequent poor opinion of some of them. Of those who did not meet his approval we find Generals Robert E. Lee and Braxton Bragg, and particularly Bragg, who failed to follow through on the Kentucky invasion. Later events obviously justified his appraisal of Bragg. His difficulties with subordinate generals in the Trans-Mississippi were undoubtedly aggravated by problems of supply and by his own status of command, cut off as he was from the central command of the Confederacy in Richmond. Parks does not hesitate to suggest some of Smith's own failings as he dealt with these problems.

It is noteworthy that our author gives us phases of Kirby Smith's life that add color to his biography. These have to do with Smith's cultural interests as exemplified by those things that appealed to him as he travelled through Europe in 1858, a few years before the War, and particularly in the thrill that he found in the art and cultural centers of the Old World. This side of his life is further indicated by his interests in botany and kindred subjects. Parks gives further touches that help to explain Smith's character: the pleasant relations that the young Army officer had with the Mexican population, the understanding and appreciation that persisted between him and his former friends who were officers in the Union Army, his attitude toward his own family slaves and negroes generally, and his deep religious convictions.

Not much fault can be found with Parks' appraisal of Kirby Smith. He perhaps gets caught up in the intricacies of Smith's handling of the cotton business in Texas and his attempt to use it as a source of monetary supply. Perhaps the greatest disappointment to the reader will come from the short space given to the quarter of a century of Kirby Smith's life after the surrender of his Trans-Mississippi Army. Like many of his fellow officers of the Confederacy, General Kirby Smith rendered one of his greatest services to the Southland on the college campus. There, like General Robert E. Lee, he taught the young manhood of the South loyalty to a reunited country and an enthusiasm for serving that country. The stature of Kirby Smith grew on the mountain top at the University of the South, better known as Sewanee. It is of further interest to note that in his native Florida the chief monuments to Kirby Smith are the Kirby Smith School in Jacksonville and the Kirby Smith School in Gainesville, the University City.

One may well wish that Parks had made somewhat greater use of official records to which he had access. He leaned somewhat too heavily on family papers but these undoubtedly added spice to his narrative. Errors seem to be few and largely excusable, such as a footnote on the bottom of page 115 when the date should be 1861 instead of 1860. The author leaves us somewhat up in the air as to what became of 26,000 stand of small arms which were badly needed by General Kirby Smith's Trans-Mississippi Army. We lose these arms on page 352 and they do not show up again.

On the whole, Parks has made a notable contribution to the Southern Biography Series, started and developed by Fred C. Cole and Wendell H. Stevenson in the best tradition of excellent scholarship.

*University of Florida*

Freeman H. Hart

*The Chicago Renaissance in American Letters: A Critical History.* By Bernard Duffey. (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State College Press, 1954, pp. viii, 285. Bibliography and index. \$6.50.)

"Find me a writer who is indubitably an American and who has something new and interesting to say, and who says