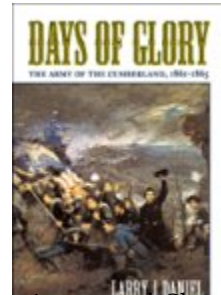


H-Net Reviews

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Larry J. Daniel. *Days of Glory: The Army of the Cumberland, 1861-1865*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004. xviii + 490 pp. \$44.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8071-2931-9.

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Larry Daniel has written a comprehensive account of the battles, strategies, and leadership of a major Federal army. In particular, Daniel, a Methodist minister from Murray, Kentucky, and prolific Civil War historian, focuses his study on the failures and occasional successes of Don Carlos Buell, William S. Rosecrans, and George H. Thomas. This most welcome volume is a useful complement to studies of the opposing Army of Tennessee by Thomas Connelly, Albert Castel, Richard McMurry, Steven Woodworth, and others.[1] The result of Daniel's work is that we now have a much more nuanced understanding of many of the western battles. No longer are the Confederate commanders the only people who were poorly organized and prone to make major tactical and strategic blunders. In fact, the casual reader might be forgiven for wondering how either side won any of the battles—and looking at Perryville and Stones River that conclusion might be correct.

This volume is strictly chronological, starting with the army's creation in the recruiting campaign in Kentucky that began while that state was officially neutral and ending after William T. Sherman dismembered the army after the battles around Atlanta in October 1864. The short early section deals with the organization of the army by Robert Anderson, hero of Fort Sumter, and the early effort to seize East Tennessee through eastern Kentucky. This latter campaign blunted a Confederate attack, but William T. Sherman, who had been promoted to overall command, lost his confidence and the army was unable to free the Unionists in East Tennessee. It was at this time that George Thomas emerged as a competent field commander.

Daniel reviews Buell's tenure as head of the Army of the Cumberland in a series of chapters that focus on the

major battles of Shiloh, the maneuvering around Chattanooga, chasing Bragg into Kentucky, and the Battle of Perryville. Daniel's grasp of the battlefield events is quite strong and his analysis is generally fair to all involved. There are few new revelations here, with Daniel concluding that Buell was not up to the job because of his limited-war strategies and his strategic ineptness. It is significant to note that Daniel points out that at this stage of the conflict, Thomas assumed a passive-aggressive stance toward Buell that would characterize Thomas's behavior toward superior officers for most of the rest of the war. When Buell failed to vigorously follow Bragg's retreat into Tennessee, the Federal leadership relieved him of command.

Rosecrans was imported from the Mississippi where he gave a good account of himself at Corinth. While Daniel views Rosecrans as more aggressive than Buell, the new commander proved to be very careful in his preparations for advancing on Bragg's army. Despite constant urging from his superiors in Washington, he refused to advance until he thought that he was sufficiently prepared. When he did move against Bragg, the result was the drawn battle of Stones River where the Army of the Cumberland proved its defensive prowess. After another substantial amount of time refitting, Rosecrans maneuvered Bragg out of Chattanooga and followed him into the mountains of north Georgia. Daniel is careful to note that this move was done with skill, but it was not the coup that it is generally credited to be. Rosecrans completely misjudged Bragg's intentions and only the latter's incompetence saved the Federal forces from overwhelming defeat. Daniel is at his best describing the fighting at Chickamauga. He describes in great detail why Thomas deserves some blame for the fatal gap in the Union line and credit for his stout defensive stand.

Rosecrans's subsequent departure and Thomas's elevation brought the Army of the Cumberland to its greatest point of effectiveness. Daniel is also at pains to point out that many other high ranking officers were also replaced. At the same time, the army was combined with a significant number of soldiers from the Army of the Potomac and the Army of the Tennessee, whose commander, William T. Sherman, took command of the overall force. The following Battle of Chattanooga concluded with the Army of the Cumberland's finest moment—the attack upon and seizure of Missionary Ridge. Daniel agrees with other historians that this heroic action was the work of lower-level commanders and the troops themselves.

The final section of the book is a detailed account of the Army of the Cumberland's contribution to the Atlanta campaign. Daniel, like all other scholars before him, takes note of Sherman's unwillingness to trust Thomas and his army with major tactical responsibilities for the campaign. Unlike some scholars, Daniel does find Sherman had legitimate reasons for his distrust. Daniel offers examples of Thomas's refusal to move offensively in similar circumstances. Despite Sherman's prejudices, the army of the Cumberland did attack Confederate positions on six separate occasions including New Hope Church and Kennesaw Mountain. These usually unsuccessful maneuvers only worsened the personal relations between Thomas and his commanders and Sherman. To counter Sherman's contention that the command problems were created largely by the Army of the Cumberland, Daniel carefully describes five specific instances of aggressive actions suggested by Thomas that Sherman rejected.

This valuable study has many strengths. Daniel has done a tremendous amount of research in published and unpublished sources. The result is that he is able to document the controversies that swirled through the highest levels of the Union command. This is a very useful addition to the literature. The historians of the Army of Tennessee have correctly bemoaned the internecine warfare among its leaders, but it now seems obvious that this same disease infected the opposing leadership as well. Daniel is also to be commended for pointing out the numerous personal and professional shortcomings of the officers in the Army of the Cumberland. As their courageous charge up Missionary Ridge demonstrated, the soldiers in the ranks were quality soldiers who deserved

better leadership. Finally, and equally important, Daniel writes clear and compelling prose that invites the reader to keep turning the pages of this long book.

There are two major disappointments that this reviewer took away from the volume. While quite understandable, the author's decision to focus on the high command means that there is relatively little about the soldiers in the ranks. This would have meant much additional research and text, or a restructuring of the entire manuscript. Since this is Daniel's book and not mine, I can only share my perspective. I also came away from the book disappointed that Daniel did not follow Thomas and the rump of the army into Tennessee and the battles of Franklin and Nashville. The latter battle, in particular, demonstrated Thomas's willingness to take the offensive. While neither of these limitations is crippling, their absence means that there is more of the story of this army left to tell. For those who take up these remaining tasks, Daniel has provided a sound foundation from which to work.

Notes

[1]. Albert Castel, *Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign of 1864* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991); Thomas L. Connelly, *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee, 1861-1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967); Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971); Richard McMurry, *Atlanta 1864: Last Chance for the Confederacy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000); McMurry, *John Bell Hood and the War for Southern Independence* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982); Steven Woodworth, *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); see also Peter Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die: The Battle of Stones River* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Cozzens, *The Shipwreck of Their Hopes: The Battles for Chattanooga* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); James Lee McDonough, *Chattanooga—A Death Grip on the Confederacy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984); McDonough, *Stones River: Bloody River in Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980); Kenneth W. Noe, *Perryville: The Grand Havoc of War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

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