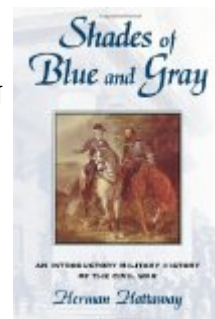


Herman Hattaway. *Shades of Blue and Gray: An Introductory Military History of the Civil War.* Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997. xii + 281 pp. \$29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8262-1107-1.



Reviewed by Gregory J. W. Urwin

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No other scholar active today has had more influence over the literature on the military aspects of the Civil War than Herman Hattaway, a professor of history at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. In *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War* (1983, co-authored with Archer Jones), Hattaway redefined the way historians approach the grand strategy of America's bloodiest war by stressing the importance of strategic planning and logistics. Hattaway's *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (1986, co-authored with Richard Beringer, Archer Jones, and William N. Still, Jr.) not only featured an impressive review of Confederate historiography, but also offered compelling new insights into the military, political, economic, and psychological factors that thwarted the white South's bid for independence. And now, when a master of Hattaway's proven stature publishes a one-volume overview of the Civil War, it is bound to be heralded as a major event by his peers.

Hattaway intends *Shades of Blue and Gray* as a "hook" to draw the uninitiated into Civil War studies and equip them with "a good grounding in

fundamental Civil War military history" (p. ix). Readers of Hattaway's previous work will find much that is familiar in *Shades of Blue and Gray*, but also much that is new. The book is a straightforward and concise account of the Civil War's military side, enlivened with vignettes that are both amusing and enlightening. Political and social questions are not wholly ignored, but they do not receive as much coverage as strategy, campaigns, and battles. As Hattaway traces the forces, ideas, personalities, and events that shaped the fight to save the Union, he generously acknowledges the contributions of other historians who have enriched his own thinking on the subject. In particular, Hattaway cites Mark Grimsley's examination of the development of a "hard war" policy by the Federal Army, Brooks D. Simpson's book on Ulysses S. Grant's surprising grasp of wartime politics, Albert Castel's detailed reconstruction of the Atlanta campaign, Reid Mitchell's penetrating look at the character of Civil War soldiers, and Lauren Cook Burgess's rediscovery of the conflict's female soldiers.

One of Hattaway's major achievements is to set the Civil War in its proper historical context--the evolution of warfare in the Western World throughout the nineteenth century. In an introductory chapter, Hattaway credits the Napoleonic Wars with the emergence of military professionalism in Europe, a development that even began to impact on the relatively isolated officer corps of the ante-bellum U.S. Army. At the same time, Hattaway surveys the breakthroughs in military technology that helped make the Civil War so big, so bloody, and so hard to win.

Hattaway retains this broad perspective as he recounts the high points of the Civil War. For instance, he links Robert E. Lee's foolhardy decision in ordering Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg with the Battle of Solferino, June 24, 1859, where Napoleon III's French infantry smashed through the Austrian center following heavy artillery preparation. In an intriguing epilogue, Hattaway argues that the Civil War's chief military lesson--the potency of the defense in the age of rifled weapons--was obscured by the Franco-Prussian War. If the Prussians had not made such short work of their poorly led French foes, the opposing forces in World War I might not have commenced hostilities with such outdated tactical doctrines.

Hattaway gives another memorable turn by challenging the conventional view that Gettysburg and Vicksburg represented the true turning points of the war. While these two Union victories significantly weakened the Confederacy, the rebel war effort "still retained a remarkable degree of viable potency" (p. 151), as demonstrated by Braxton Bragg's subsequent victory at Chickamauga.

In a work so broad in scope, some factual errors are to be expected. Hattaway is wrong when he says that Major General Philip Sheridan assisted Major General George Armstrong Custer at the battle of Waynesboro, Virginia, on March 2, 1865. Custer and his Third Cavalry Division routed the remnants of Lieutenant General Jubal A. Early's Confederate army before Sheridan could reach

the field and take charge. Likewise, the number of Indian warriors who defeated Custer at the Little Big Horn was closer to 2,500, and not Hattaway's figure of "between twelve and fifteen thousand" (p. 248).

Such gaffes are too few and too minor in character, however, to compromise Hattaway's triumph. *Shades of Blue and Gray* ranks as an excellent introduction to the art of war as practiced by the Union and Confederate armies from 1861 to 1865. Hattaway's sly, eccentric wit, his fine eye for pertinent detail, his command of his material, and his lists of recommended readings make this book a valuable resource for both new recruits and seasoned veterans of Civil War studies.

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