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Sarah Emma Edmonds. *Memoirs of a Soldier, Nurse, and Spy: A Woman's Adventures in the Union Army.* DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1999. xxviii + 266 pp. $18.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-87580-584-9; $40.00 (library), ISBN 978-0-87580-259-6.

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Published on H-Minerva (January, 2003)

When Sarah Emma Edmonds published her tale of adventure and intrigue while serving in the Union Army, she was conscious of the thin line on which she was balanced. She had enlisted in the Union Army as a man, changing her appearance and her name. If discovered and publicly revealed, these acts were cause for dismissal from the service, as well as ridicule for abandoning her cultural perimeters as a nineteenth-century woman. Yet she was willing to pursue her military "adventures" for patriotic motives and for the sake of the men she cared for as a nurse. This clever admission was her saving grace, allowing her to operate in a man's world without drawing criticism for her actions. In many ways she became a shining example of Republican Womanhood. In spite of her behavior, she displayed a willing self-sacrifice which was highly regarded in Victorian America.

Edmonds's tale is striking in its style, being an enjoyable read. As anyone who is familiar with nineteenth-century literature knows, the language can be stilted and oftentimes unfamiliar to the modern reader. But Edmonds was able to write in a very informative and flowing fashion that drew me into her story. She also wrote with a sense of humor which was, at times, directed at herself. Although she was telling her own experiences as a nurse and a spy, she did not overtly elevate her actions above those of the men who fought around and beside her. In fact, she humbly dedicated the book to the sick and wounded of the Union Army (Army of the Potomac) with whom she served.

Elizabeth D. Leonard's introduction and endnotes to this edition help put Sarah Edmonds and her adventures in historical perspective. Many diaries and collections of women's writings fail to inspire us because no effort has been made to give them a cultural as well as historical significance. But Dr. Leonard does an outstanding job of helping us understand Sarah Emma Edmonds and her world. This edition would enhance an undergraduate or even high-school history class.

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Citation: Janet L. Bucklew. Review of Edmonds, Sarah Emma, *Memoirs of a Soldier, Nurse, and Spy: A Woman's Adventures in the Union Army.* H-Minerva, H-Net Reviews. January, 2003.

URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=7077

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