

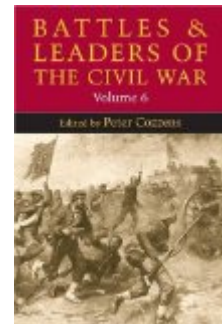
H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Peter Cozzens, ed. *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume 6*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004. xviii + 606 pp. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-252-02879-3.

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Their Own Words and Opinions

From 1884 to 1887, *Century Magazine* published a series of articles about the Civil War, written by major figures in the war. Editors Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel subsequently published those articles in the highly successful four-volume set *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*. In 2002, historian Peter Cozzens followed in the footsteps of Johnson and Buel in compiling a number of articles by participants in the Civil War and publishing them as *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume 5*. Now Cozzens has produced another volume, his second but the sixth in the named series. Like its predecessors, volume 6 presents first-person accounts that were previously published but have not hitherto be conveniently available to modern readers.

The volume contains forty-seven articles organized into nine parts, one for each of the five calendar years that saw wartime action, plus short parts on the prelude to the war, civilian and military leaders, a miscellaneous section entitled “Fireside and Field of Battle,” and an epilogue presenting several participants’ views on why the Confederacy lost the war. In coverage, the selection of articles is more or less typical of Civil War literature and probably reflects the availability of previously published materials. Of articles that could be classified as covering the eastern or western front, there are, by my count, twenty-one that deal with the smaller eastern theater and only fifteen that deal with the war in the West.

As in previous volumes, many of the articles in this one are frankly partisan in one way or another, as those who wrote them—officers mostly, and often high-ranking ones—strove to defend their reputations or set straight some perceived false account of the battles they fought. This, however, is to be expected in the published reminiscences of those who played important roles in major events. Some of these are more temperate and convincing than others. William S. Rosecrans’s primal scream against Grant contains a number of assertions that are demonstrably false. John Gibbon also wrote a strong though somewhat better grounded polemic in defense of George G. Meade’s performance at Gettysburg. In contrast is Oliver O. Howard’s fairly straightforward, less argumentative account of Grant during the Chattanooga campaign. John A. Cockerill’s matter-of-fact account of what he, a young musician, experienced at the Battle of Shiloh is outstanding. Yet even the polemics are useful to modern readers, who, like a jury hearing a case, may sort and sift the truth from the conflicting statements of opposing lawyers.

Cozzens has provided head notes for the various selections as well as full identification of persons mentioned, in brackets, and, otherwise, has wisely allowed the participants to tell their stories. This is a valuable volume that will make these vivid first-hand accounts far more accessible to both professional and amateur students of the Civil War.

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