
David L. Lendt

The Limits of Dissent: Clement L. Vallandigham and the Civil War, by Frank L. Klement. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970. pp. xii, 351.

FRANK L. KLEMENT, THE NATION'S FOREMOST authority on the midwestern Copperhead movement, has devoted years of scholarly research to the life of the nation's foremost Copperhead, Ohio's Clement L. Vallandigham. The result is the second Vallandigham biography and the first untainted by the "halo complex" apparent in *A Life of Clement L. Vallandigham*, written by the subject's brother.

As in his earlier book, *The Copperheads in the Middlewest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.), Klement dispassionately assesses the Copperhead movement and its leader and concludes that both were out of step with political and social reality. He also probes the more pervasive question of the limits of dissent in a democracy at war and concludes that it remains unanswered even though it has been argued and tested from the Revolution to Vietnam.

Vallandigham's life, as presented by Klement, is a fully documented and interpretative case history of a dissenter who, for whatever reasons, consciously chose martyrdom as he denounced any limits on his freedom of expression as unconstitutional. It is the story of one unusual man, well educated, idealistic and zealously conservative, whose life is deftly portrayed against a backdrop of the events which make the Civil War—and the years surrounding it—the most intriguing and tragic in American history. Vallandigham and his followers, many of whom were to be found in Iowa, were social, political and economic conservatives who saw in the Civil War, and

the events leading to it, the burgeoning of a centralized federal government, the end of states' rights and a threat to their individual freedoms. They fought Lincoln and his prosecution of the war at every turn.

Even though Vallandigham never resorted to violent obstruction of the war effort, he was subjected to threats himself and his supporters' newspapers in Ohio were mobbed and burned. His speeches and writings were aimed only at a peaceful compromise and, although he could be criticized for myopia and wishful thinking, he was denounced as a traitor and "worse than Judas." Rumors generated by his political enemies labeled him as the leader of a secret and violent anti-war organization. No evidence has since been found to support the charges.

As Klement suggests, Vallandigham never learned the power of nationalism. In its name, he became all but lost in the debris of history.

Because it is a study of rampant nationalism, of smear tactics, of causes which overpower and compromise individual integrity and destroy individual liberties, Klement's book tells a timely story and one which lends proportion and perspective to contemporary events.

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Herbert J. Gilkey

Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon, by Clifford M. Drury. Glendale, California: The Arthur Clark Company, 1973. 2 Vols. pp. 911. \$38.50.

CLIFFORD M. DRURY EARLY RECOGNIZED that there was much in the history and background of the great Pacific Northwest

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