

Book Reviews

and scholarly work. What emerges from their endeavors, then, is an interesting composite of information, analysis, and particulars associated with the life of Elliot Coues through which both the brilliant and petty sides of Coues come to light, as do his satisfying and brooding moments. Thus the reader can gain not only an appreciation for Coues' achievements but also a view of Coues the chain smoker of cigarettes who had an eye for the ladies and who finally found happiness in his private life in his third marriage.

In any biography, of course, there will be gaps. No biographers can ever discover or discuss every detail in their subjects' lives, nor can they hope to please every critic. Cutright and Brodhead, moreover, made their undertaking doubly hard, for their purpose was "to make more available to the general reader and the professional scientist and historian alike the life story of this colorful and influential American scientist" (p. xi). Nonetheless, drawing on a wealth of sources and their personal expertise, they essentially met their goal. They have produced a good study for which they should be commended.

MARSHALLTOWN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

THOMAS BURNELL COLBERT

Victims: A True Story of the Civil War, by Phillip Shaw Paludan. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981. Bibliographical references, appendix, index. \$11.95.

Civil war is a particularly nasty version of a nasty business, but we tend to think of the American Civil War in romantic terms (phrases such as the "lost cause" come to mind). Dr. Paludan has injected a note of sober realism into the literature of the Civil War.

This book describes an atrocity that occurred in the North Carolina mountains in 1863. Thirteen supposed Union guerrillas were shot by Confederate soldiers without benefit of a trial or civil due process. It was a small incident, not affecting the outcome of the war. However, the author uses the incident as a vehicle for probing the nature of atrocity in general. *Victims* probably would not have been written before Vietnam. In fact, the author draws analogies between Vietnam and the incident chronicled in this book.

Dr. Paludan is a professor of history at the University of Kansas at Lawrence. He has also held a concurrent position as a fellow of the Harvard Law School. This blend of expertise has served him well in writing *Victims*. He explains clearly what an atrocity is under international law and why the killings were considered so, even by Confederate authorities.

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

Much of the book is a literary, psychological, and sociological exploration of the southern mountaineers and their place. As background it is invaluable. One gets a feel for the people involved. An understanding that is as close as possible for a modern reader to get of a people so far removed by time and place. In the same manner the author delves into the backgrounds of the principal Confederate officers involved. Psychological motives of men who died long ago are difficult to ascertain at best. However Dr. Paludan never seems to stray from solid ground even though most of the evidence is circumstantial. While he is sympathetic toward the victims, his discussion of all concerned is even-handed and never shrill. The net effect of this approach is that the reader understands not only what occurred but also how it came to occur. After all of the background information, the description of the actual incident is almost anticlimactic. It is described briefly, but perhaps that is the best way to present it.

Dr. Paludan writes with a clear and easy style; *Victims* is eminently readable. He has gathered a mass of documentation, much of it from obscure and little-used sources. He has even interviewed descendants of the murdered men. A spot check of his bibliographical references indicates careful scholarship. The index is adequate and an appendix discusses conflicting dates for the occurrence of the atrocity.

Victims does lack illustrative material. Given the psychological and literary approach of much of the book, pictures of the principals would have helped fix their personalities more forcefully for the reader. Granted that photos or pictures of many of the principals do not exist; this reviewer nonetheless was able to find a photograph of one of the Confederate officers (General Henry Heth) without too much difficulty. The lack of portraits may have been an editorial decision. More troubling is the lack of even an elementary map. Much of the action in *Victims* took place in remote areas of Appalachia. These are areas that are not well known even today. A map would contribute greatly to comprehending the complex of actions and travels that made up the incident.

Generally *Victims* is to be recommended. It illuminates a little-investigated part of the Civil War, the guerilla warfare in the southern mountains. Many atrocities occur in a war and they cannot all be considered. *Victims* brings this one incident into focus on an intimate scale. In that context it fosters understanding of the human condition under wartime strains. *Victims* is a multifaceted book that is worth reading.

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