

Private Stanley, I Presume?': An Intrepid British Adventurer Soldiered For Both Sides

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Review

'PRIVATE STANLEY, I PRESUME?'

An intrepid British adventurer soldiered for both sides

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Hughes, Nathaniel C. *Sir Henry Morton Stanley, Confederate*. Louisiana State University Press, 2000-10-01. ISBN 807125873

Many volunteers from the British Isles, whatever their motives, took sides in the American Civil War. One of these was Henry Morton Stanley, who became famous largely as a result of his later adventures in Africa, and the books he wrote about the Dark Continent. He chronicled his wartime experiences as well, which editor Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, Jr., has culled from Stanley's Autobiography (1909) to present in **Sir Henry Morton Stanley, Confederate**.

Stanley, Welsh-born and American-adopted, was originally a journalist working for a New York paper, but he truly made his mark after meeting David Livingstone at Lake Tanganyka in 1871. This autobiography, however, relates how he came to be a soldier in the Confederate army, and then a sailor in the Federal navy later in the Civil War.

The account begins by describing how an illegitimate and unloved child grew into a young man who worked his passage to New Orleans. There he met Henry Hope Stanley, who eventually adopted him. He had left home to make his own way in the world. Just prior to secession, we find Stanley working in a general store at Cypress Bend, Arkansas, on the Arkansas River, where he learns to deal with the rough and touchy characters that he meets first in his everyday life, and then later in the army.

Most of the autobiography concerns itself either with Stanley's early career or with the writer's experiences in the War Between the States. He writes with the benefit of hindsight, many years after the events described, but the narrative shows clearly the way that his mind and attitudes were shaped by the War.

The descriptions he gives of the rigors of the campaign, the lack of care generally shown the private soldier, and the horrors of Shiloh, as well as Stanley's capture and subsequent treatment at Camp Douglas in Illinois, enable one better to understand the trials he faced. After reading the description of the prison camp's disease and neglect, Stanley's decision to accept an offer of freedom on condition he joined the Federal artillery becomes understandable. The account ends in August 1862, although Stanley's wartime experience did not.

Hughes has edited Stanley's prose into a very readable book that Civil War buffs should find of great interest. One or two maps to illustrate the progress of the 6th Arkansas, in which Private Stanley served, would have been helpful. Nevertheless thoroughly recommended.

Alec Hasenson, M.D., is author of The Golden Arrow (1970) and The History of Dover Harbour (1980).