

# Civil War Book Review

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## One Last Volley

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## Editorial

### ONE LAST VOLLEY

**Knull, Morgan**

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This summer marks *Civil War Book Review's* second anniversary, which I might allow to pass unmentioned but for the fact that this issue is my final one. I might close our association on these pages by recalling how several visitors to the South during the Civil War perceived the terrain. For much like them, I have been an extended guest in Civil War circles and want to summon a few words about such odysseys.

If adventurer Richard Burton, disguised as an Afghani doctor in the middle of Mecca, set a standard for traveling incognito, his fellow Victorian Arthur James Lyon Fremantle cut a different figure during his sojourn in America. The culmination of Fremantle's three-month trek through the shrinking C.S.A. was watching Gettysburg alongside Longstreet and Lee. Although sympathetic to viewing Southerners as a "gallant race" after being feted by them in Natchez, Charleston, and Richmond, Fremantle's initial travel through Texas and Louisiana exposed him to frontier hardships. And in due time he was introduced to the ways of Yankee commercialism. Encountering some hostile Pennsylvanians during the Gettysburg campaign, Fremantle recorded his reaction: "The sight of gold, which I exchanged for their greenbacks, brought about a change, and by degrees they became quite affable" (*The Fremantle Diary*).

French aristocrat Camille de Polignac was only 29 when he obtained a commission from Jefferson Davis. Before war's end, he had received a promotion to major general and an introduction to American culture. Near Corinth, Mississippi, he observed a shunpike that allowed travelers to skirt paying the turnpike toll. "How very American!" he exclaimed. Jeff Kinard's Polignac biography, *Lafayette of the South*, recalls other anecdotes: Polignac charming Richmond society; enduring an impromptu piano recital in North Louisiana; winning the respect of his scrappy Texas brigade by leading them into battle with the cry, "Come on boys, come on, these things do make a hell of a noise but don't hurt much!"

But some visitors were resistant to southern comfort. Francis Springer, a Lutheran minister and Republican activist from Springfield, Illinois, who served as a Union army chaplain throughout the Trans-Mississippi, entered his reflections in a field journal (*The Preacher's Tale*). "The eulogists of Chivalry are heard to say, the Yankees are a money-loving, grasping tribe; while the southerners are free-hearted & liberal," he wrote. "Is such praise of the one & sneer at the other justified by the facts?" He would entertain no illusions about the gracious manners of slaveholders and secessionists.

Similarly Jean-Charles Houzeau, a Belgian naturalist and progressivist who edited the black daily New Orleans Tribune between 1864-68, witnessed the infamous riot of July 1866 and loathed the decadence of the white Creole population. "The European quarter of New Orleans is a disgrace for a civilized city," he confided in a letter. "What a contrast with the severity of the Anglo-Saxons, who are without doubt cold, but who control themselves" (*My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune*).

Each traveler departed the South under different conditions-Fremantle prophesying Confederate victory, Polignac on a desperate diplomatic bid to France, Springer reveling in Union victory, Houzeau in despair over Reconstruction's failure. In common, however, all were transformed by their travels, sometimes despite themselves. And, in turn, the accounts they left behind transform readers like us.

If your local public or university library does not already carry *Civil War Book Review*, please consider asking the staff to purchase a subscription. I cannot think of a better housewarming gift that our readers could offer my successor.