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Editorial

SKILL AND BALANCE

Ng, Laura

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When I was in the third grade one of my friends convinced me that learning to walk with a book balanced on my head would be a valuable life skill and social asset. My friend was right. Contradictions permeate most aspects of life, and it is by aiming for balance that we reconcile them to ourselves, as is the case with this issue. We present works on virtue and infamy, battlefields and home fronts, as well as flesh-and-blood men and the legends that have grown up around them.

Harold Holzer leads the procession of principles with his review of **Lincoln's Virtues: An Ethical Biography** (Alfred A. Knopf, ISBN 037540158X, \$30.00, hardcover). Karen R Mehaffey reviews **My Brother's Keeper: Union and Confederate Soldiers' Acts of Mercy During the Civil War** (Stackpole, ISBN 0811709973, \$24.95, hardcover), a work that reminds us of the nobler aspects of humanity. Contrasting this is Lonnie Speer's exploration of the darker side of war with his review of **Elmira: Death Camp of the North** (Stackpole, ISBN 0811714322, \$26.95, hardcover). Together these pieces reveal both the triumphs and failings that mark us as wonderfully and painfully human.

And what is more human than conflict? James M. McPherson discusses Antietam's influence on the war and on American history in general in an exclusive interview. Kevin M. Levin frames conflict in a larger perspective in his review of George C. Rable's **Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg!** (University of North Carolina Press, ISBN 0807826731, \$45.00, hardcover). From the fire and smoke of contested ground, we turn to the warm glow of the hearth. Herman Hattaway reminds us that conflict was not limited to political realms and battlefields in his review of **Union Soldiers and the Northern Home Front: Wartime Experiences, Postwar Adjustments** (Fordham University Press, ISBN 0823221466, \$25.00, softcover). Jennifer Chiaverini seconds this notion of the powerful role of home in her novel **The Runaway Quilt** (Simon & Schuster, ISBN 0743222261, \$21.00, hardcover) reviewed by Floris Barnett Cash.

Military campaigns provide fertile grounds for the creation of legends. The life of Turner Ashby, private man and public persona, is a puzzle that Stephen D. Engle pieces together in his review of **Blood Image** (Louisiana State University Press, ISBN 0807127523, \$34.95, hardcover). Tracing the powerful century-spanning legacy of the Lincoln's iconic Gettysburg address is Robert Mann's review of **November: Lincoln's Elegy at Gettysburg** (Indiana University Press, ISBN 0253340322, \$29.95, hardcover). In a dual interview that touches on the concepts of public history and memory, Ron Maxwell and Jeff Shaara speak out on capturing war in fiction and film.

This note follows the theme of contradiction and balance also, for this one is both the easiest and hardest to write. I am sad to say that it is time for me to close my book and depart. Like many during Reconstruction I am going west to find my fortune. I have enjoyed my time here as editor and would like to take a moment to thank the readers and contributors for all of their kindness and insight. While I am excited about the future, I am sorry to go. To paraphrase Kahlil Gibran, friendship knows not its depth until the hour of separation. I know that our next editor will have a warm welcome from you as I have a farewell. Thank you and goodbye.