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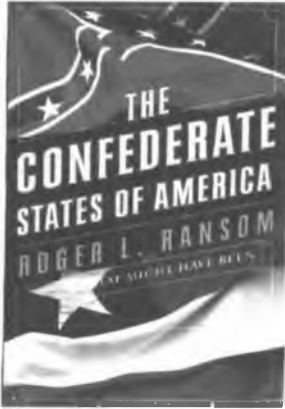
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The Confederate States of America: What Might Have Been

By Roger L. Ransom



In *The Confederate States of America: What Might Have Been*, Professor Roger L. Ransom of the University of California, Riverside, has produced a very interesting work that is a cross between straightforward Civil War/Reconstruction history and fantasy. The term used is “counterfactual history” which is another way of saying “might-have-been history.” Whatever it is, it is not a lament about the Lost Cause. But, at times, fact and fiction are so interwoven that the reader has to say, “Wait a minute. That’s not the way I remember it.” Fortunately, however, Ransom has provided ample and expansive endnotes when the story takes over from reality, which is often.

One of the things that make history fascinating to many of us is speculating about how a relatively minor change of events could have worked a major impact on larger issues. In the case of the Civil War, we are tempted to wonder what the effect would have been if Stonewall Jackson had survived his wounds at Chancellorsville. Likewise, we can speculate about how, if any at all, the outcome of the War would have been changed if Robert E. Lee had pursued the advantage gained by his army on the first day of the Battle at Gettysburg. Ransom gives us his answers to both these questions and several others. Surprisingly, he has nothing to say about what the effect would have been if President Lincoln had not gone to Ford’s Theater, and virtually nothing to say about Andrew Johnson.

It would be a shame to take all the mystery out of this very enjoyable book, but the best is saved until the last. Would you believe representatives of the administrations of Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson negotiating a peace treaty in 1918 after a brutal three-year war? If we think Reconstruction was bad, we have to wonder what it would have been like if it had been delayed until 1918.

This book was published by W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 2005. It has 246 pages and sells for \$25.95. The ISBN number is: 0-3932-05967-7.

Reviewed by Hartwell Lutz