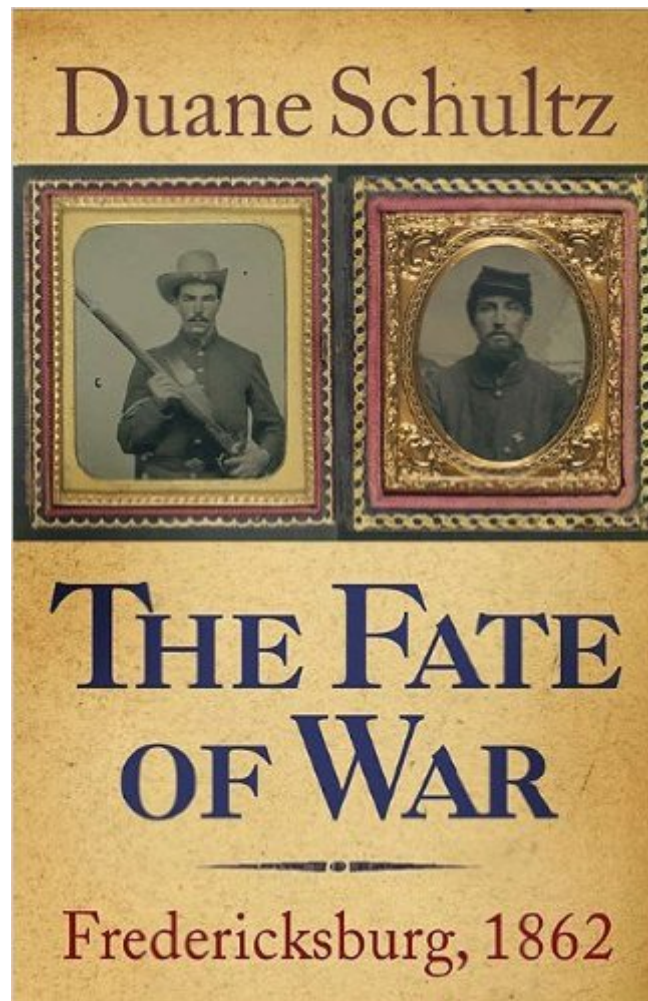


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The Fate Of War: Fredericksburg, 1862



Synopsis

An Exploration of the Human Experience in One of the Civil War's Most Important and Devastating Battles

The Union assault on the critical Confederate stronghold of Fredericksburg, Virginia, along the Rappahannock River in December 1862 was one of the most significant and storied battles of the Civil War. It was fought in order to secure confidence in the North for Lincoln's administration after 18 months of Confederate victories, Union setbacks, and directionless Northern leadership. The result was a complete and stunning Confederate victory and one of the bloodiest losses for the Union Army. Federal General Ambrose E. Burnside and his Army of the Potomac planned to overrun Fredericksburg and move on to Richmond, the Confederate capital. The opposing general, Robert E. Lee, and his Army of Northern Virginia prepared Fredericksburg's defense. Thousands of Union troops were able to successfully cross the Rappahannock River despite withering small arms fire and proceeded to brutally sack the city, terrorizing its remaining civilian inhabitants while the Confederates fell back to a line of heights to the west. Burnside soon ordered his generals to attack with the intention of flanking the Confederate defenders. Unable to dislodge or go around the enemy, Burnside was forced to withdraw without a victory after suffering appalling casualties.

In *The Fate of War: Fredericksburg, 1862*, historian and professional psychologist Duane Schultz uses this key moment in Civil War history to address how soldiers and civilians react to the stress of war. Rather than a traditional military history "and there are a number of excellent accounts of troop movements and strategy at Fredericksburg" *The Fate of War* explores the human element in battle; the motivations, passions, and emotions of the people who fought on both sides. Using letters, diaries, and memoirs, including those of Clara Barton and Walt Whitman, Schultz reveals what individuals can force themselves to do in the name of duty, patriotism, and dedication to a cause, or the ultimate fear of letting down their friends. Schultz's account, grounded in careful research, is a record of the triumph and failure, courage and cowardice, compassion and cruelty of the people "the ordinary and high-ranking, soldier and civilian, men and women" who came together one terrible day.

Book Information

Hardcover: 306 pages

Publisher: Westholme Publishing; 1 edition (October 20, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1594161453

ISBN-13: 978-1594161452

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.1 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars See all reviews (4 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #2,901,714 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #70 in Books > History >

Americas > United States > Civil War > Campaigns & Battlefields > Fredericksburg #26786

in Books > History > Military > United States #63775 in Books > History > Americas > United

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Customer Reviews

The book; "The Fate of War", starts off with this account of one man at the beginning of the battle at Fredericksburg in 1862: On Saturday, December 13, 1862, Sgt Thomas Plunkett of the 21st Massachusetts Infantry lost his arms. Only minutes before, the regiment had calmly dressed ranks and formed a straight line, prepared to charge the Confederates. The Northerners knew what they were facing. They had watched wave after wave of their fellow soldiers attempt to dislodge the rebels from their heavily defended position at Fredericksburg's stone wall. Each successive attack had failed. Now it was up to the men from North Oxford, Massachusetts. The North Oxford men moved out. Rebel artillery opened fire. A Confederate shell decapitated one man. His body remained upright for an instant while blood spurted from his neck; his head bounced to the ground like a ball. As wounded men fell, those remaining closed ranks, surging toward the Confederate line with Sergeant Plunkett waving the regimental banner. A shell exploded overhead, killing three men near him. Plunkett's arms were crushed, mangled, and he swayed on his feet, clinging to the flagstaff. To drop the colors would be to dishonor them. He anchored the base of the wooden pole on the ground, propped it against one of his feet, and held the banner aloft with the bleeding stump of his right arm. "Don't let it fall boys!" he shouted. "Don't let it fall." Straight as a ramrod amid the rain of shells and bullets Plunkett held the flag high until another soldier eased it from him..... The book then allows us to follow soldiers like Plunkett and others from both sides along with Generals like Burnside, Meade, Hooker, Lee, Longstreet and many more in the build up to this frightful battle.

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