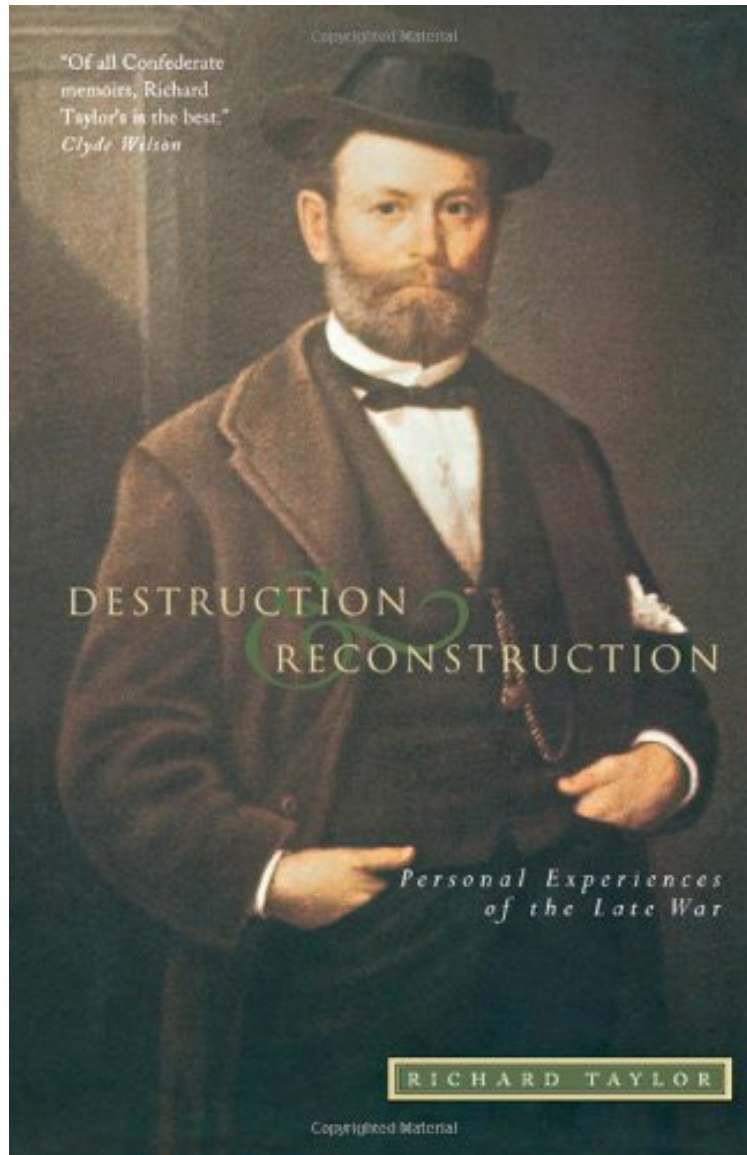


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## Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War (Southern Classics Series)

*Richard Taylor*

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**Richard Taylor : Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War (Southern Classics Series)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War (Southern Classics Series):

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating and fair memoir from one of the South's best, and least known, generals. By Ipy This memoir by Confederate General Richard Taylor is usually considered one of the best and least biased by a general officer. I can attest that it lives up to this reputation and that it is, overall, an very informative and enjoyable read. Taylor had a gift for writing and, if you tolerate his frequent classical and historical references, your time will not be wasted reading it. His service began as a brigade commander in the east and this is highlighted by his lengthy account of the Valley campaign. He also wrote very memorable, and often cited, descriptions of his fellow officers, including Ewell and Jackson. Taylor is then promoted to command of the Department of Louisiana west of the Mississippi. This is the best section of the book and is full of excellent details regarding this little known theater, though I recommend consulting a map when reading. Of particular interest are his musings on the vulnerability of Federal gunboats, the material and geographical difficulties of operations in the theater, and the repeated ingenuity shown by his men to overcome them. Taylor brilliantly recounts the battles at Mansfield and Pleasant Hill and is very critical of Kirby Smith for allowing Banks and Porter to escape from the Red River. Taylor later takes command in Alabama and Mississippi during the closing months of the war and surrendered the last major Confederate force east of the Mississippi. His insights on seeing the Confederacy fall from his position in an out of the way theater is fascinating. The last part of the book recounts Reconstruction under both Johnson and Grant. This section is easily the most biased and least valuable, though it does contain some interesting information. I suspect the passions of that period had not cooled like those of the war itself. The work is full of considered analysis on both the strategy of the war and the personalities of his fellow officers. Taylor is always fair in his criticism and seems to have no real scores to settle. While he makes little mention of his own talents, his tactical brilliance and strategic insight does shine through. Many contemporaries said Richard Taylor was one of the best soldiers of the war, but he is comparatively little known due to his posting to peripheral theaters. While he was a man of his time, the work (with the exception of some of his Reconstruction writings) is much less tainted by Lost Cause polemics than most Confederate memoirs. I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in the Civil War, especially the operations in Trans-Mississippi Louisiana. 30 of 31 people found the following review helpful. Not just an academic curiosity. By William S. Grass At the time I write this review I am surprised to find there are only two others before me, and they are both from Louisiana, the state in which Richard Taylor resided at the outbreak of the war and which he so tirelessly strove to defend from Union depredations. A complex man, Taylor could be a stern martinet one moment, and then wax eloquent, displaying an artistic appreciation of life the next. Early on we see him ordering the execution of two of Wheat's Tigers for insubordination. Later, we see him transfixed by a flying bluebird the morning of First Winchester. Taylor's memoir deserves to be preserved not just as an academic curiosity, but because it is the expression of a now extinct class of men who, regardless of their lofty status in society, considered it their personal responsibility to put themselves into harm's way, to lead from the front instead of sending young men out to die while they remain safely at home. As a memoir of war Destruction and Reconstruction is non pareil, due to its flourishes of erudition and vivid accounts of the battles and personalities described therein. The biblical, mythological, historical and literary references are legion and display an education unlike any in the nineteenth century South. Some graduate student should make a project of cataloging and footnoting these references for an expanded edition. Be sure to mention me in the acknowledgements. I strongly encourage anyone wanting to read Destruction and Reconstruction to first obtain and read Parrish's bio on Taylor, for a broader background in understanding Taylor and where he came from but also for the maps which are absent from the memoir. 8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. One of the best! By dive1tom If your needing a really good review of Civil War history this is the book. From the beginning to the end of the Civil War and after. Tell's why the South fought and lost. Personal opinions of other southern generals are expressed by Taylor. Taylor would have taken New Orleans back! Taylor's love of the South and of Louisianan is put together marvelously.

This highly literate account by the son of President Zachary Taylor follows the author's Confederate commands in all three major theatres of the war, and provides a unique view of the Reconstruction period. "Taylor possessed literary art that approached the first rank."—Douglas Southall Freeman.

About the Author Richard Taylor, the only son of President Zachary Taylor, was born at his father's plantation, Springfield, outside Louisville, Kentucky in 1826. He graduated from Yale in 1845, and spent most of the succeeding years in Mississippi and Louisiana, where he became a sugar planter and earned a reputation as politician, gentleman-scholar and raconteur. A delegate to the Democratic convention in 1860, he worked there to avert the disruption of the Northern and Southern wings.