

HIRAM'S HOPE: THE RETURN OF ISAIAH

The Sequel to *Hiram's Honor: Reliving Private Terman's Civil War*

Max R. Terman, Tesa Books, Hillsboro, Kansas. Copyright 2014 by Max R. Terman.

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Review by Dan Reigle, CCWRT. A review of *Hiram's Honor* is also located on the CCWRT website.

Hiram's Hope is a riveting account of two young Ohio soldiers in the Civil War who endured seemingly endless misery and danger, with death always present, from their capture at Gettysburg through long imprisonments and their attempts to return home. This is not a nostalgic or sentimental story; it has the "feel" of reality introduced through the many characters with whom Hiram Terman and Isaiah Rinehart come in contact, and the many twists and turns as events unfold. Nor is this a simplistic story of the "two sides" in the war, but a complex story brought to life in these characters and the story's events. These include African-Americans contributing to the Union war effort in any way they could as they struggled to come to grips with the war's earth-shaking changes; white civilians from both northern and southern states caught in the tide of events; people who behaved with unexpected kindness and people who were viciously and sadistically cruel; people who suffered undescrivable grief and others who caused unnecessary grief.

The author has done an excellent job of capturing the misery and endurance that were the experience of Hiram and Isaiah as prisoners in Richmond and Andersonville. They struggled with the winter cold and summer heat, with inadequate or non-existent shelter from rain and snow, with filth, disease, and hunger ... always hunger. Some of their captors struggled with the same problems; some treated their prisoners as human beings, some did not. Even after release, there were unexpected challenges for former prisoners: Hiram's homecoming "reception" is still shocking to me.

Hanging over every page in this book is the presence of death, in staggering numbers. "Blood is the first cost. History is not melodrama, even if it usually reads like that. It was real blood, not tomato catsup or the pale ectoplasm of statistics." (Robert Penn Warren, *The Legacy of the Civil War*, 50). The death in this book is not glorious, as exemplified by the accounts of sleeping in the dead house, switching toe tags and identities, and the grieving parents of a substitute killed in action.

Hiram's Hope is built upon the author's excellent base of historical research, including William Marvel's work on Andersonville; James W. Elliott on the movement of prisoners from Andersonville to Vicksburg; and Chester Berry, Alan Hoffman, Jerry Potter, and Gene Eric Salecker on the *Sultana*. For those familiar with Andersonville, POWs, and the *Sultana*, *Hiram's Hope* is historically credible, and deepens our understanding of these major events, in this reader's opinion. For those readers not familiar with these subjects, the book is an outstanding account of important questions and themes that may lead to interest in further study of topics such as: (1) "what has the loss of blood meant, if anything in the development of the country?" (Warren, 50); or (2) why were the "old" Andersonville prisoners kept there so long?

Walt Whitman left us with a warning that the “real war will never get into the books ... the fervid atmosphere and typical events of those years are in danger of being totally forgotten.” (*Walt Whitman’s Civil War*, 293) As an avid reader of Civil War and other history, I welcome *Hiram’s Hope* as an excellent effort to offer a glimpse into some of the “reality” of the war, while also reminding us of how little we know of the real experience. As a new generation of American veterans try to explain to us what they experienced in Iraq and Afghanistan, that is an important reminder for all of us, whether history students or not. “To accept one’s past---one’s history---is not the same thing as drowning in it; it is learning how to use it.” (James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, 81)

[The Warren and Baldwin citations were brought to my awareness in David Blight’s outstanding book written for the Sesquicentennial: *American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era*, Cambridge MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011.]