

doi:10.1017/mdh.2019.9

Janet Elizabeth Croon (ed.), *The War Outside My Window: The Civil War Diary of LeRoy Wiley Gresham, 1860–1865* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2018), pp. xxxvii + 440, \$34.95, hardback, ISBN: 9781611213881.

Dennis Rasbach, *I Am Perhaps Dying: The Medical Backstory of Spinal Tuberculosis Hidden in the Civil War Diary of LeRoy Wiley Gresham* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2018), pp. xix + 118, \$14.95, paperback, ISBN: 9781611214505.

The War Outside My Window and *I Am Perhaps Dying* are clearly companion volumes to the two-fold story of LeRoy Gresham, a teenager watching the sociopolitical war unfold before him at his Georgia home, and his personal war against a pernicious disease slowly sapping the strength and vitality from him. As such, they are quite properly treated together in one review.

Although Janet Elizabeth Croon, whose editorial skills shine forth in each page, and Dennis Rasbach, a senior physician who applies his considerable clinical and historical skills to the Gresham case, clearly deserve credit for these books respectively, the project as a whole is really the brainchild of publisher Theodore ‘Ted’ Savas, self-described as ‘a trained historian who has been studying the Civil War for a half-century’ (p. xiii). They all deserve credit for their commendable interest in this otherwise obscure boy living at 353 College Street, Macon, Georgia; but a recent search in WorldCat, the world’s largest union catalogue comprising 72 000 libraries, reveals 12 305 books on personal narratives of the American Civil War, which prompts the obvious question, do we really need two more? The answer in this case is yes and no, as will be explained shortly.

There are two good reasons for *The War Outside My Window*. First, it gives an account of the North/South conflagration from the perspective of a youth who was ailing but committed to the Confederate cause from behind the lines. While there are other accounts, such as William Warren Rogers Jr.’s *Confederate Home Front: Montgomery During the Civil War* (2001), Wallace Hettle’s *The Confederate Homefront: A History in Documents* (2017) and, closer to home, David William’s *Georgia’s Civil War: Conflict on the Home Front* (2017), Gresham’s youth and his enforced detachment from the proceedings make his somewhat unique. Second, of course, is the perspective of the war going on inside LeRoy’s body – his struggle against two common but lethal maladies.

Looking out from Gresham’s window it should not be surprising to find the youth a committed Confederate. After all, the conflict has often been characterised as a ‘rich man’s’ war, and his parents, John and Mary, were unquestionably wealthy with their two large plantations (Pineland and Oakwoods, totalling over 1 700 acres), not to mention their large College Street home. What is fascinating is LeRoy’s sustained faith in the Confederacy’s ability to win the war. As late as 5 February 1864, months after the cataclysmic severing of the South with the fall of Vicksburg and Lee’s unprecedented defeat at Gettysburg, Gresham writes, ‘I have an abiding Faith that we will yet be a free people’ (p. 285). Later that summer, in the face of Atlanta’s occupation by Union forces and the impending fall of the Confederate capital at Richmond, LeRoy disagrees with his father that both cities ‘are gone’. Finally, by April 1865, the truth sinks in and LeRoy writes, ‘The capitulation of Lee is believed to be true: if so Good Bye C.S.A.’ (p. 390). In two months (on 18 June 1865 to be exact) he would join his dead Confederacy at the age of seventeen, and thus ends his seven-volume diary running from mid-1860 to 9 June 1865 with the rather poignant sentence, ‘I am perhaps dying’ (p. 401) – the title of Dennis Rasbach’s medical account.

What exactly *did* LeRoy Gresham die from? According to Rasbach’s careful clinical analysis, he succumbed to pulmonary tuberculosis complicated by spinal tuberculosis

(Pott's disease, named after English surgeon Percival Pott [1714–1788], noteworthy for his work on spinal deformity). The diagnosis was a common one in this period, and until the discovery of streptomycin in 1943 and its effective therapeutic use in 1946, a virtual death sentence. Rasbach notes in his extremely useful 'Medical Afterword' to *The War Outside My Window* that pulmonary tuberculosis killed 'nearly one-half of the young Americans who died between the ages of 15 and 35' (p. 416). LeRoy's slow decline as witnessed in his debilitated weight of sixty-three pounds in November of 1863 shows in painful detail why this was often called the 'wasting' disease. Rasbach's carefully argued afterword will be of intense interest to readers of *Medical History*.

Having said this, it is questionable whether readers of this journal will find Rasbach's companion volume equally engaging. For one thing, after *The War Outside My Window*, it offers little new. The author explains that his reason for writing *I Am Perhaps Dying* is that LeRoy's illness runs like 'a separate dark thread . . . through the diary' (p. xiv). But the reader of the main volume cannot avoid this thread, and the lengthy 'Chronicle of Consumption' (pp. 55–109) consisting of extrapolations from LeRoy's diary seems superfluous. Medical historians will also find Rasbach's chapters on 'The Natural History of Tuberculosis', 'LeRoy's Doctors and Medical Care during the Civil War', 'LeRoy Gresham's Pharmacopoeia' and 'Proprietary or Patent Medicines' familiar ground. His discussion of 'Pott's Disease' is a useful contribution, but why couldn't this material simply have been added to the existing published diary? The substantive additions would have added another fifty pages or so. It seems hard to believe that such an expansion would send production costs soaring, and it would have removed a nagging question from the reader: why, after going through LeRoy Gresham's story (well worth the list price), should I now need to expend an additional \$14.95 on what amounts to largely a rehash? Why couldn't the publisher have added Rasbach's useful and interesting medical commentary to the afterword? It seems doubtful that a reader willing to spend \$35 on the diary would balk at spending \$40 on a slightly expanded version. Having the *complete* story told under one cover would have been a better approach.

As it stands, it simply looks like the publisher is trying to squeeze extra dollars from its customers, a strategy understandable enough, but certainly not appreciated by the public or by librarians having to deal with increasingly tight budgets. While Civil War aficionados and medical historians will appreciate this addition generally, the two-volume approach leaves a bad taste. Like the useless patent medicines Rasbach discusses that were bought to cure LeRoy's ailments, one feels this companion volume was produced more for opportunistic gain than edification. That should not detract from Rasbach's useful medical additions, only from his overzealous publisher. With helpful maps, illustrations of the diary itself and eight very nice black and white plates of the Gresham family (including LeRoy), one volume would have been enough.

Michael A. Flannery

University of Alabama at Birmingham, USA

doi:10.1017/mdh.2019.11

Douglas M. Haynes, *Fit to Practice: Empire, Race, Gender, and the Making of the British Medicine, 1850–1980* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2017), pp. vi + 246, £80, hardback, ISBN: 9781580465816.

As the United Kingdom faces an era of NHS staff shortages in the fallout from the Brexit vote and clampdowns on immigration, Douglas Haynes' volume on the regulation of