



A Politician Turned General: The Civil War Career of Stephen Augustus Hurlbut

Jeffrey Lash

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A Politician Turned General offers a critical examination of the turbulent early political career and the controversial military service of Stephen Augustus Hurlbut, an Illinois Whig, Republican politician, and Northern political general who rose to distinction as a prominent member of the Union high command in the West during the Civil War. Though traditionally there are two different characterizations of those who exercised command during the Civil War; "soldier-politician" and the "political generals"; Hurlbut was viewed as a "military politician." This book provides an important study of another friend and/or political supporter of Lincoln who rose to general during the war and gained important appointments after the war. This first biography of Hurlbut chronicles the early life and the Civil War career of one of Abraham Lincoln's foremost military appointments. Through exhaustive research of primary and secondary sources, author Jeffrey N. Lash identifies and evaluates the successes and failures of Hurlbut's generalship and combat leadership, both as a field commander in Missouri in 1861 and as a division commander at the Battles of Shiloh and Hatchie Bridge in 1862. Featuring new and original research material and rare photographs of Hurlbut, Lash addresses why Hurlbut succeeded for so long and then finally failed as a military politician. He provides motives for Hurlbut's corrupt official conduct as a post commander in occupied Memphis and New Orleans from 1863 to 1865 and explains his highly erratic and unstable personal behavior, particularly in view of his habitually heavy drinking. Civil War scholars and military historians will find this a welcome addition to the literature of the War, Reconstruction, and postwar diplomacy.

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