



How Few Remain

Harry Turtledove

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From the master of alternate history comes an epic of the second Civil War. It was an epoch of glory and success, of disaster and despair...

1881: A generation after the South won the Civil War, America writhed once more in the bloody throes of battle. Furious over the annexation of key Mexican territory, the United States declared total war against the Confederate States of America once again.

But this was a new kind of war, fought on a lawless frontier where the blue and gray battled not only each other but the Apache, the outlaw, the French, and the English. As Confederate General Stonewall Jackson again demonstrated his military expertise, the North struggled to find a leader who could prove his equal. In the Second War Between the States, the times, the stakes, and the battle lines had changed--and so would history...

How Few Remain Details

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From Reader Review How Few Remain for online ebook

gargamelscat says

Alternate history has been something I have, with some notable exceptions, shunned since its rise to prominence in the early '90s on the assumption that it lends itself to lazy writing: don't like the circumstances? just change the world to suit!

The exceptions prove the rule: Robert Harris' 'Fatherland' and Philip K. Dick's 'The Man in the High Castle'.

As Turtledove is the name most associated with the form I felt the need to read something by him to validate my assumptions.

The setting of the story is certainly interesting to anyone interested in history: 20 years after the C.S.A. won secession in the civil war hostilities are re-commenced by a U.S. seething at the humiliation.

The story is poorly told through multiple viewpoints of recognizable historical figures playing mostly minor roles. On the Confederate side Stonewall Jackson and Jeb Stuart are commanders, on the Union side Custer is a vainglorious general, Teddy Roosevelt a gung-ho rancher turned volunteer, with Sam Clemens a newspaper editor.

It is the depiction of Lincoln as a despised one term former president turned radical socialist politician that is the standout, bringing genuine pathos to the novel.

Similarly the Frederick Douglass character provides some meat, raising the question of what would have happened if the Emancipation proclamation had never been made.

However the novel is unsatisfactory as an (alternate) military or political history. These aspects are treated in a superficial manner leaving the story to be carried through very banal conversations.

For something more worthwhile dealing with actual attitudes to the Confederacy go read Tony Horwitz' entertaining 'Confederates in the Attic' instead.

Jessika says

I consider myself a Civil War history nut. One of the things that has always fascinated me is the fact that there are SO many "what-ifs." So many things happened, as if by chance, that if they wouldn't have occurred the way they did, the entire war might have ended differently. "What if Lost Order No. 191 was never lost?" and "What if Stonewall Jackson had lived?" are two big ones many people have wondered about.

Here Harry Turtledove examines what might have happened if the "Lost Order" was never lost, and I have to say it was very interesting.

"How Few Remain" is a very long & very detailed read. It is not a pageturner, and frankly, I don't think it was meant to be. You'll want to take your time with this one, so that you can ruminante over all the implications of this alternate history. That being said, I did take 2 months to read this, but truth be told, I

didn't really touch it at all for the month of January due to our move.

Anyway, back to the book. I cannot stress enough how pleasantly surprised I was. When my husband bought me this for Christmas, I was expecting some alt history stressing how the South should have won & how the South will rise again. I was SO wrong & I'm so glad to say I really loved this.

Part of what I loved was all of the different characters that the story followed. There really wasn't one that I disliked, although I did think Custer was an asshat. I think all the different perspectives really lent themselves to making the story unbiased, and I really appreciated that. Not only that, but each character's story was well-fleshed out & at least to me, entirely believable. Besides the characters, that was my favorite part of this book. If I didn't already have a pretty solid grasp of Civil War history, I could have almost sworn I was reading a historical narrative. Turtledove is crazy smart--he doesn't just tell you that history is different than what you know; he backs it up & fleshes it out & makes you believe it. Add to that the sprinkling of real history "easter eggs," and I just through this book was a blast book to read. My husband is a history nerd too, and I had so much fun discussing different plot points with him as I read.

That all being said, I now come to why this got a 4-star rating instead of 5-stars. I'm not quite sure how to explain this. I LOVE character driven stories, they are my favorite. But in this book about the "Second War Between the States," I got this feeling that the war took a backburner to the characters. When I look back on the book in its entirety, the "war" looks like one big battle/siege & a couple of minor British bombardments. Maybe I'm just comparing to the actual American Civil War, but it just wasn't satisfying, although I see how it sets up for the first World War. Which brings me to my next point, I'm not really content with the ending. I was until I saw that the next book in the series begins 30 years after this one ends. Here's hoping for some resolution in the next book, maybe.

All in all, I thought this was a fascinating book & I had a great time reading it. I would definitely recommend it to history fans that aren't opposed to alt history, but I don't think this book is for everyone. I'm looking forward to the rest of the series.

Joshua says

Alternate history is such a complicated but interesting field of writing. I love imagining the world as it might have been, and from Turtledove's more wild flights of fantasy (The World War II series where aliens invade in 1942, for instance) to his more pointed, alternate-for-the-sake-of-reading-historical-figures pieces (like the excellent "Guns of the South") he proves himself a thorough historian and an imaginative fiction writer.

I have my issues with the way Turtledove likes to write from so many perspectives, but appreciate the wide view it gives us, even if some very interesting characters seem to suffer for it. Poor Sherman in this novel - and perhaps even more tragic, poor General Grant (I am torn between his fate in the novel or in real life being worse). This is a book that reads history in a way that has the US building on the weaknesses it learned from the early years of the Civil War instead of the lessons it would learn in the latter years, once the army found its footing and more importantly, its general.

While some of the lines of history here dragged - specifically that of JEB Stuart toward the end, in my opinion - and while I have never really LOVED his portrayals of Lincoln, this story is competently written, with only the weaknesses of his somewhat jumpy storytelling to make me complain. I wish we would have had a greater sense of the larger war instead of such small, tantalizing pieces, but perhaps this is all we get.

The war itself is pondering, and perhaps that is why I feel the story is somewhat pondering at times too. The tension of a war desperately fought is absent, and the lack of soldier perspectives (which Turtledove so frequently uses in his other stories) leaves us largely outside of combat. The whole war is believable - just sometimes unsatisfying.

Still, Mark Twain is witty, Teddy Roosevelt is heroic, and Custer is a giant, blustering piece of shit. Frederick Douglass is desperate in a world where forward momentum against slavery is slow, and where the South is shored up by allies in Europe. The potential of this universe, so fully realized and researched, interests me the most. The Great War: American Front promises to be even more interesting, and perhaps my frustration with the Army of the Potomac will see some relief when Roosevelt gets old enough to fight like hell from the steps of the White house, and not just the empty fields of Montana circa 1881.

If you liked this book, Turtledove's "Guns of the South" is a must read; as are Bernard Cornwell's Arthur novels, as long as you like swords as much as you like muskets and tredegaris.

Lani says

I'm actually a little shocked that I hadn't read this before. Seriously? Revisionist history about if the South had won? Lincoln a Socialist? Custer a crazy person? Stonewall Jackson alive? FREAKING LONGSTREET FOR PRESIDENT?!?!?

So yeah, the book is pretty much right up my alley.

But the book is LOOOOOONG. And I read trashy fantasy, so I have a pretty high tolerance for lengthy books. Even I started to fade about 60% in (according to my Kindle). It's possible I just wasn't in the mood for such a grinding story, and fans of war books might not mind.

A couple things I found interesting:

* No one explains what happens to Lee. He's barely mentioned. I kept waiting for a big reveal - for example, Grant makes a brief cameo - and... nothing. It's sort of implied that he's dead, but little more than that is said. But it's not as if history was revised to the point that he wasn't a brilliant general because he's frequently cited as such by other characters.

* Longstreet was somewhat infamous for being a believer in the defensive war and lots and lots of entrenchments. In the book, it almost seems the opposite. Is this bad research, or purposefully showing that politicians can't allow a defensive war?

The book did drag, but ultimately I enjoyed it. I'm not sure a non-Civil War nerd would care very much. I thought it did interesting things with the continuation of slavery in the South, the continued settlement of the West, industrialization of the countries, and the change to modern warfare - both the technology that was changing and the isolationist stance of America.

So the only 2 revised history books that I think I've read have been this one and Roth's The Plot Against America. I've enjoyed both of them, and would like to read some more if anyone has any recommendations.

Chen-song Qin says

This is the first book in Harry Turtledove's alternate history TL-191 (Timeline-191) series, which consists of this stand-alone volume, plus two further trilogies, the American Front series and the American Empire series.

The premise is that Special Order 191 (thus TL-191) by General Robert Lee was not lost as in actual history, but was put into action and caused the defeat of Union forces. Ultimately this caused the recognition of the Confederacy by Great Britain and France, creating two major American powers in North America.

The main narrative of the novel takes place almost 20 years after the American Civil War and Southern independence. The Confederate purchase of two Mexican provinces (Mexico is an empire under emperor Maximilian in this timeline and has provinces rather than states), which breaks the US lock on access to the Pacific Ocean, causes another war between the USA and the CSA. Various characters from actual history appear in the story, from Sam Clemens (a reporter in San Francisco) to Teddy Roosevelt (an enthusiastic volunteer soldier) to a disgraced Abraham Lincoln (now a socialist agitator) to an unscalped George Custer (still a cavalry officer). As the story flows on, new technologies and new alliances change the face of war and the continent.

This book is fairly typical Harry Turtledove. His grasp of history allows detailed descriptions of (changed) events and places, and the narrative covers both high level strategic decisions and everyday lives of regular people. Unlike some of his other works, the number of viewpoint characters is large enough to provide variety, but not so large that they become unwieldy. All in all, this is a good start to a classic series.

Kristen Schrader (Wenke) says

While well-written, deeply descriptive, and obviously thoroughly researched - the novel left me feeling just ho-hum. While the premise of the South winning the civil war, and then another war breaking out is intriguing and exciting, I feel this book doesn't live up to the potential.

I love the characters in this book. All are well-developed. The narrative is descriptive to the point that I can see it clearly in my mind.

However, it fails to live up to the grand scope that "second civil war" brings to mind. Really, it seems there are 4 battles in the whole "war". The biggest, longest, and bloodiest is clearly in Louisville. There's a short one in New Mexico, which is not so much a battle as it is the USA taking a licking. That develops into a skirmish between Mexico, the Apaches, and the CSA - which isn't really a part of the war. The action picks up when The British invade Montana (go get 'em Teddy Roosevelt!), and demolish San Francisco. It just feels like there's not enough.

Also, I felt there really needed to be a sizeable epilogue. What happened to Lincoln and his socialist party? Did Custer get the presidential nomination? What happened between the Apaches and Mexicans? What about the Mormons? I know there's a sequel that delves into World War I, but that's a whole generation ahead. I felt very unsatisfied with the book's ending.

Still, on the whole I liked it. Especially Teddy Roosevelt and his Unauthorized Regiment.

Carolyn Fitzpatrick says

Fun alternative history! Pivotal event is during the Civil War, just prior to Antietam, when an aide to Lee drops the battle plans for Union troops to find later. As a result, the North wins Antietam, England and France comes in on the Union side, and the South ultimately loses the war. In this version, those papers are NOT dropped, and the South wins the war in 1862. The major part of this book takes place in 1881, when the CSA purchases the states of Sonora and Chihuahua from Mexico, enabling their own transcontinental railroad. The US claims that the sale was invalid and goes to war, and a second Civil War is fought with weaponry that the US normally would not have seen until WWI. Historic characters include Stonewall Jackson, Lincoln, Geronimo, Teddy Roosevelt, Frederick Douglass, George Custer, Mark Twain (Sam Clemens here - he's a journalist not a novelist), and my favorite: Baron Von Schlieffen. The novel ends with the close of the war in 1882, and a setup for the sequel, which takes place in 1914. Can't wait to get that one!

The other John says

I'm afraid I read this one out of order. Back last year, I happened to stumble across *The Great War: American Front*, which tells a tale of World War I in a world where the Confederate States of America is an actuality. The characters in the book referred, from time to time, about a second War between the States that had occurred in the 1880s and had served to create deeper divisions between the North and the South. I found myself wishing that I could also read *that* tale, foolishly unaware that it had already been written. *How Few Remain* is that tale, an enjoyable read in its own right. The year is 1881 and after almost 20 years of Democrats in the White House, the president is once again a Republican. He's itching to regain some lost glory, and when the Confederate States of America expand their territory by purchasing the states of Sonora and Chihuahua from Mexico, President Blaine considers it sufficient cause to start military action. The resulting war is told from the viewpoint of various characters. It's the same technique Mr. Turtledove uses in *The Great War*, but in this case, the featured characters are all famous characters from our own history--Gen. "Stonewall" Jackson, Frederick Douglass, Samuel Clemens and a disgraced ex-president, Abraham Lincoln, among others. Mr. Turtledove does a good job breathing life into these characters, sending me to the Wikipedia to scope out what these people were really like. And, of course, also sending me to the bookstore to hunt down the subsequent titles in this alternate history epic.

Nate says

RE-READ REVIEW: I'm not sure what motivated me to read this one again. As you can see by my review below, I was bored to tears by it the first time around. I guess I just had a nagging feeling I didn't approach it correctly or expected something different. Not hurting matters is the fact that I already bought the second book in the series and its concept (WW1 fought between the CSA and USA) is a great one. Well, it certainly was more of a fun read this time around.

It's just not really about action or excitement but exploring the alternative history of the series in an almost academic way while spending time with real historical figures like a pre-Mark Twain Sam Clemens, Stonewall Jackson, Frederick Douglass, and best of all, Abraham Lincoln (obviously Booth had no reason to kill poor Honest Abe in this timeline because the south won the civil war. To kind of digress a bit, how much

of a pussy move was assassinating Lincoln? It was like a boxer sucker punching his opponent after he's lost the match and the other guy has his back turned.) It's still not a fantastic read, but I'm glad I gave it another shot.

PS: I really didn't need to read and imagine a scene of Custer blowing a load on some woman's stomach, though. Honestly Turtledove, what the fuck.

ORIGINAL REVIEW: It really sucks when your relationship with a book devolves to the point of it sullenly dwelling in the loser's spot at the bottom of the stack on the nightstand, bookmark dwelling in the halfway point like a jilted lover unwilling to let go, just gathering dust...and I got pretty rapidly to that point with this one, which totally blows because I totally love the concept and already fuckin' bought the second book...honestly, how was I not supposed to. American WW1 fought between the Confederacy and US? I was basically obligated to. I still might read it, but this one was definitely a no-go for me. It committed the cardinal sin of a novel: it's boring. It stupefies me as to how a book centering around a bloody rematch between the States could be boring, but I swear by the Gods it is. It really is.

The characters are all historical figures, and while Turtledove has done his research and can cleverly throw in true traits of the character like Jackson and his lemons they just don't do entertaining stuff. Lincoln spends most of the book hanging out with Mormons...they get all rebel-y later on but it's not fun stuff. The war scenes were terminally dull, which is weird because all the shooting and explosions in *Guns of the South* were neat, vivid and gripping. It just wasn't good times for me. Also, Turtledove's Confederate hero worship is getting annoying. (view spoiler)

Yeah, I'm not really sure how many different ways I can say "this book was boring". There's certainly good stuff in here--Turtledove is nothing if not imaginative and his attention to detail and obvious research of the actual era clearly come through. It's certainly not a *bad* book, just not one that connected with me. I can see a lot of people liking this, Turtledove fans or not. Obviously people are into it, as he continues this alternate timeline for like fifteen books...I'm gonna give the next one a try and see if this one was a fluke. I like Turtledove enough to do that, easily. He's kind of weird but I like him. He's creative and the man is a Doctor. A Doctor of what, you ask? *Byzantine History*. There is nothing cooler than that. Nothing.

Bob H says

An alternate history, the start of a multi-volume Harry Turtledove series based on this first one. The premise: a Confederate army message on the road to Antietam that didn't go missing in this time-line and a war that went in a different direction. It's now 1881, the USA and CSA are close to war again, and some figures that didn't survive our history are very much, vividly alive here and still going: George Armstrong Custer, still fighting Indians, and Stonewall Jackson, now leading the Confederate army under President James Longstreet. Other figures are in new lines of work: Abraham Lincoln, defeated in 1864 and now a Marxist orator, and Samuel Clemens, "Mark Twain" no longer, a newspaper editor in San Francisco. While Turtledove's later books in this series ("Timeline 191", being Special Order 191 that went astray during Lee's march on Antietam) may drag, through depression and two world wars, this first volume was promising, fast-paced, and vivid.

Jon says

I recently started listening to books on CD in my car. The second one I worked through is *How Few Remain*, which is an alternate history novel based on the assumption that the South won the Civil War. First of all, I have a problem with the plausibility of the premise. I don't think one minor event (as in the book) could have changed the course of the war -- I think the industrial might of the North pre-determined the outcome. I was glad to see an essay in the book *Alternate Gettysburgs* from a professional historian which supported this point of view. Still, it's interesting to think "What If?" (Warning, spoilers follow.)

This book is set in 1881, just after the USA has finally elected another Republican president. The Confederate States of America decide to purchase two Mexican provinces from the "Empire of Mexico." (Lack of a strong USA has let French interference in Mexico persist.) The USA, fearful of a stronger CSA stretching to the Pacific, declares war. The book is the story of the war told by looks at various famous people (Abraham Lincoln, George Custer, Samuel Clemens, Stonewall Jackson, Jeb Stuart, Teddy Roosevelt and a few more).

It was definitely well-researched, and I found it all very plausible, except for the whole idea that the North wouldn't wipe the floor with the South. Then again, with the CSA having English and French allies, the balance is tipped against the USA. One thing I noticed is that the author takes a lot of care only to include things that would follow from the premise --- nothing too unexpected ever happens. This is good for the believability, but takes something away from the excitement in the novel. Also, some of the details can be a little bit mind-numbing. Yes, Germans would be puzzled by American idioms. No, that doesn't need to be mentioned every time it happens. These flaws, however, are less of an issue for a book-on-CD, when I also have my fellow motorists to entertain me.

In my view, the major flaw was the sex scenes. Having a guy affecting a 19th century way of talking read you descriptions of Sam Clemens, George Custer and Teddy Roosevelt doing the wild thing is not an experience I recommend to you. Thankfully, that only occurred three times in the entire 21-CD book.

I did worry a little bit about potential pro-South bias in the book. (They were the ones with slaves, which in my mind makes them the bad guys.) I don't think there was any --- the author (also, I must admit, a professional historian) was following the original idea to its logical conclusion. The book did end with the CSA "winning" --- they got to keep part of Mexico, and the Brits annexed part of Maine. But that just made me want to read the next book so I could hear the USA get revenge (I hope). "Remember...Maine!"

Chris says

It's been a good many years since I've cracked a Turtledove book, and this one, like a lot of his work, has left me with mixed feelings.

First, it's most important to point out that this novel is the first in a longer series (the "Southern Victory" or "Timeline-191" series for which Turtledove is probably most widely known). The series is an attempt at a sort of overarching epic that spans 80-ish years of alternate history, and is as far as I know unique in the genre for its reach and popularity. I've previously read some of the series before (the American Empire trilogy) and liked it, so I thought I might go back to the beginning and get the complete picture.

"How Few Remain" is set twenty years into the alternative history world of Timeline-191, with a second war between the United States and the independent Confederate States. Through some politicking and relying on strong international allies, the Confederate States makes a move to purchase two northern Mexican states from the ailing Empire of Mexico, to which the United States responds by declaring war. The USA, despite being much larger than its opponent in terms of population and economy, finds itself overwhelmed; the army is understaffed and woefully mismanaged (seriously, Turtledove writes his American generals as if they're complete idiots), and the country is surrounded on all sides by enemies (the CSA to the south; the British and Canadians to the north; and the Royal Navy along the Pacific coast).

Anyway, on to the pros and cons of the novel:

PRO's:

-Turtledove is a decent writer, and he does a good job of adopting a sort of "slice of life" perspective in his novels. Particularly in this series, Turtledove chooses a large amount of "viewpoint" characters that he bounces between, providing the reader (generally) with a good understanding of what this timeline looks like from different perspectives. **HOWEVER**, I get the feeling this novel in particular is the weakest of his in this regard, as all of the viewpoint characters in this one are historical. Granted, he does a great job at characterizing some of them (the Lincoln and Roosevelt chapters are particularly good, I think), but unlike some later books in the series, the viewpoint that you tend to get from this book is very much from the perspective of the elites of the time. It's generals, politicians, and newspapermen all the way down. This isn't really a pro or a con, it just is (though I prefer the viewpoint of his later books focusing on fictional people from all walks of life).

-The timeline gets a lot of flak for being unrealistic, but as far as alt-hist goes it's probably one of the most plausible. Let's face it, any timeline in which the Confederates won the Civil War is already so wildly outlandish that it's impossible to craft an entirely plausible narrative around it.

CON's:

-Why did we need a sex scene with George Custer? It serves absolutely no purpose in the story, and one wonders if Turtledove didn't write it just to fulfill the stereotype of alt-hist novels including cringey sex scenes. It disturbs the flow of the story and just feels skeezy.

-The book succeeds in making war boring. The best parts of the novel are those that have relatively little to do with the front lines (Lincoln, Clemens, Douglas, most of Roosevelt). The timeline's major epic battle (Louisville) is a rough read just because of how yawn-worthy it makes the entire affair.

-Let's face it; in the post-November 2016 world, reading a novel which puts slaveholding "heroes" of the Confederate States in anything resembling a positive light is just tremendously hard to read. I am so vehemently ideologically opposed to half of the viewpoint characters in this novel that I find it often hard to digest. I don't think Turtledove personally harbors any reprehensible views (then again I barely know anything about the guy), but he seems to have far too great an interest in presenting a slaveholding society in a way that is far too positive than it deserves.

In short, would I recommend this book? I... dunno. If you're a completionist and want to read the entire series and explore this world that Turtledove has crafted, then sure. If you're a Civil War buff who wants a "what if" of the same flavor, you might enjoy it (though only if you're the type of person who is maybe a bit too into the whole Lost Cause bullshit). If you're into the idea of seeing historical figures doing ahistorical things (and specifically if you're into the idea of exploring what Lincoln's life might have looked like if he wasn't assassinated), then it's worth a read.

All in all I'll give it a generous 3/5. It wasn't a slog for me (despite its length), but that is partially because Turtledove's chapter structure makes it easy to take a small bite out of the novel here and there, nibbling

away at it on train rides or grabbing a few chapters before bed. I'm looking forward to continuing the series, not because this novel was particularly strong, but because I know some of what is coming up is going to be worth it.

Stephen says

1.5 stars. Pretty well written, but DRY as a desert. Great setting for the future novels but this book was a SLOG, SLOG, SLOG to get through. I will probably read the next book in the series at some point because I love the premise (and I am obviously a glutton for punishment) but I did not really like this one.

Nominee: Nebula Award for Best Science Fiction Novel (1999)

Beth Cato says

A highly-enjoyable and thoroughly-researched alt history jaunt that explores the repercussions of a Confederate victory during the Civil War. The book jumps between perspectives on both sides of the conflict, and is wonderfully nuanced. People are people, and are complex creatures... though Custer is the easiest one to hate, no question. I do wish there had been some female perspectives as well, but I understand why there were not because of the tight military and political focus, mostly on men who survived the previous conflict--or on rising stars, such as Theodore Roosevelt. Since I wrote about Roosevelt in my own alt-history series, I especially enjoyed Turtledove's take on the impetuous young civilian using his wealth and charisma to gather a volunteer troop almost twenty years in advance of when he actually assembled his Rough Riders.

Ronnica Z. says

At first I was disappointed that the book focused almost exclusively on historical people, because I was interested in imagining what life would be like for the common person if the South had won the Civil War. But I soon realized that the people who were made famous in our history weren't necessarily rising to fame in this alternative history. Where would Mark Twain be without a defeated South? A newspaper editor in San Francisco. Where would Lincoln be if the North hadn't defeated the South? Alive and disgraced, trying to redirect the attention of the Republican party.

Apart from the unnecessary sex scenes (who cares, anyway?), I find this to be an intriguing concept pulled off in a realistic way.

Ali Thompson says

Fantastic book. Unfortunately, Harry Turtledove's writing style as well as themes do get repetitive. However, this is more than made up for by his spectacular glimpses into what-if. I recommend the entire 11 book saga.

The Great War: American Front The Great War: Walk in Hell The Great War: Breakthroughs Blood & Iron
The Center Cannot Hold The Victorious Opposition Return Engagement The Grapple Drive to the East In at the Death

Melissa says

This book really made me think. I'd read one of his other novels, *Guns of the South*, in which time travellers bring the AK-47 to the Confederacy, allowing them to win the Civil War.

This novel was quite different. It starts with a simple premise; what if Lee's orders hadn't been lost and recovered by the North? In Turtledove's eyes, it allowed the South to pull off a win, and backed by the recognition of the British and French governments, were able to establish and solidify the Confederate States of America.

This novel begins with the Empire of Mexico making an offer of land to the CSA, which the USA opposes. The CSA's acceptance of the offer is what strikes off the Second War between the States, or what would be the Mexican American war. Many familiar historical figures appear in the novel; Teddy Roosevelt as a young man in the Montana territories, George Custer, the ousted former President Lincoln, Frederick Douglas and others.

What really made me think in this novel was the roll of aggressor and defender nations. The USA strikes first against the CSA, responding to a land deal they don't agree with for geo-political reasons. As much as I disagree with some of the policies of the CSA (namely Slavery), I was much more sympathetic to the plight of the CSA than I expected going into the novel, because it appeared to me, that the USA was interfering in a matter that they had no business really getting involved in.

Of course, throughout the course of the novel are other sub-plots. The Mormons in Utah stir up trouble while the USA government is distracted. Sam Clemens in San Francisco sits back and editorializes. Lincoln becomes a more outspoken proponent of worker's rights and tries to stir up some Socialist movements through his lectures as part of an effort to revitalize the Republican party, suffering due to two lost wars at the end of the novel.

If alternative history appeals, I'd recommend this book. The politics are interesting enough to allow someone to reconsider some of their moral views, as I did. There's also plenty of action though not much romance, though there are several mentions of sexual relationships.

Dan says

All fiction asks "what if?" (What if a boy named Huck Finn ran away with a slave named Jim and sailed the Mississippi?) Science Fiction and Fantasy do this to an even greater extent (What if a scientist was able to re-animate a human corpse using lightning?) Within Sci-Fi & Fantasy the sub-genre of Alternative History takes actual events from History and asks what if they had happened differently (What if Hitler's Germany had won World War II?) Harry Turtledove is considered the master of Alternative History and in this novel he asks: "What if The North rises again - in the stunning saga of the Second Civil War?"

It's been a generation since the South defeated the North in the Civil War, and a disgraced Abraham Lincoln now roams the United States preaching the gospel of socialism. Meanwhile, the Confederate States have purchased territories from the Empire of Mexico. This would extend the CSA's rule from the Atlantic to the Pacific and the United States decides that they should not be allowed to expand, and thus begins the Second Civil War. Many familiar names appear as the story unfolds: George Armstrong Custer patrols the frontier of Kansas using the new fangled Gatling guns against the Indians; General Stonewall Jackson is the supreme military commander of the Confederate forces and directs the Battle of St. Louis; Frederick Douglass is a journalist from Rochester, New York who travels to the dangerous border covering the war; J.E.B. Stuart leads the CSA forces in the newly annexed south-west territories; and Samuel Langhorne Clemens is the editor of a newspaper in San Francisco with a loving wife and two children. The characters are all as vivid as one could hope for and the action of the war - both on and off the battlefield - moves the story along keeping the reader wondering what "happened" next.

I'm a huge Sci-Fi & Fantasy reader, but have never been much into Alternative History for some reason. Also, I must admit that I have been reluctant to try Mr. Turtledove due to my own preconceived notions. You see, being from the North, I was never very interested in a story in which the South won the Civil War. I now freely admit how wrong I was - this novel was thoroughly enjoyable! If you like Historical Fiction, then chances are good that you'll enjoy Harry Turtledove's exploration of "what if" there were a second Civil War in the 1880s. I listened to this book on audio, and while it took me a while to finish it (21 CDs), I enjoyed listening to the talented and prolific George Guidall. (As of this writing, there's even an excerpt from this audio book on George's website!)

One of the hallmarks of great fiction (speculative, or otherwise) is that it makes you stop and think – and maybe even reconsider what you thought – about the given subject. *How Few Remain* certainly made me reconsider my views of the historical figures and events surrounding the Civil War.

Alexander Seifert says

The first piece of Turtledove I've ever read, and--I would argue--still one of my favorites.

I think Turtledove is his best when he combines historical and non-historical characters. Furthermore, I appreciate when he gives a little more variability to those he selects as viewpoint characters. In this work, we have Abraham Lincoln, the disgraced former President, and Frederick Douglass, to provide the reader with two immensely unique views. I think I enjoy it more because, by actually telling the story through historical figures, we can see Turtledove at his best, when he is flawlessly taking what we know and giving it an intelligent new spin.

Even if you don't go on to read the 10 books that follow this one, I would recommend this novel for anyone who enjoys fiction, military or otherwise. The man is at his best here.

Arsalan Khan says

As a person who enjoys history, this book is an absolute treat. I started getting into Alternate History a while back and slowly I started discovering the genre from the 'The Man in the High Castle.' However, my passion for alternate history solely focused on either TV series, movies or even small YouTube videos. In no way, I

would have considered dedicating my time towards reading something as a hobby. Neither did I consider 'historical fiction' was a genre.

I must give Harry Turtledove credit for inspiring within me to explore this genre in this beautiful and well-crafted world in 'How Few Remain.' Even though I am a history buff, I, unfortunately, did not have as much knowledge of the American Civil War as I should. However, going through Turtledove's book invigorated my curiosity to research on that part of history as well. When I initially started the book, it was with the intention of gaining some context for the next book and its time-period of the First World War, which was my main focus. Sufficient to say, that I have not only gained some context for the next novel but have also increased my knowledge about another historical event (The American Civil War), the people involved and its consequence which is truly valuable, apart from getting the usual entertainment and literature value.

Since I am not an avid Novel reader (this being the second novel that I read in my entire life), I cannot comment professionally on the language, tone or the style of the author. However, what I can say, is the scenario and the research on all characters done is extensive. The only shortcoming I would say this book would have is in building the plot, reaching up to the war. Although it provided good context, it was boring. I would also say most of Samuel Clemens dedicated time was boring (though not all). However, once the war kicked off, it was hard to keep down. Every chapter ended in a cliff-hanger, wanting you to go on.

Overall, I would say this is a beautiful piece of work, and I cannot wait to get started on the next installment of Turtledove's Southern Victory series. For all those who are fans of 'Alternate History' and 'Historical Fiction', would highly recommend, especially if you are trying to get into the genre.
