



Devil's Game: The Civil War Intrigues of Charles A. Dunham

Carman Cumming

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The first book-length study of one of the Civil War's most outlandish and mysterious characters, Devil's Game traces the amazing career of Charles A. Dunham, double agent. Dunham was a spy, forger, journalist, and master of dirty tricks. Writing for a variety of papers (including New York's Tribune, Herald, and World) under alternate names, he routinely faked stories, even writing contradictory accounts for different papers. Dunham also used his journalism to create new identities and then boldly cast himself to play the roles. With the help of his wife, Ophelia, he passed in and out of at least a half-dozen personae. His characters included the vicious "Colonel" Charles Dunham, under the command of General Early; Colonel James Watson Wallace, a wounded Virginian convalescing in Montreal; and Colonel George Margrave, "one of the most cool and reckless villains in the Confederacy." In the South, he was known as Isaac Haynes, with still more aliases for his Canadian travels. Dunham would reinforce his house of cards by going so far as to have the invented characters in his ersatz stories accuse each other of heinous crimes. Dunham achieved his greatest infamy at the war's end. Called to testify in Washington, he was the most notorious of the witnesses to swear that Lincoln's assassination had been plotted by conspirators in Montreal and Toronto, on orders from Richmond. These intrigues continued even from behind bars, as he worked tirelessly to build a network of evidence implicating President Andrew Johnson in the assassination. Although this testimony was later discredited, until now many parts of Dunham's wartime (and postwar) career have remained shadowy. Carman Cumming sheds new light on numerous escapades, including Dunham's effort to sell Lincoln on plans for a raid to capture Jefferson Davis and a complex effort in Canada to plan--and then betray--cross-border raids. Exhaustively researched and unprecedented in its depth, Devil's Game is a shocking portrait of a consummate chameleon. Drawing together all previous Dunham scholarship, Cumming offers the first detailed tour of Dunham's convoluted, high-stakes, international deceptions. A carefully crafted assessment of Dunham's motives, personality, and the complex effects of his schemes make Devil's Game an important and original work that will change some basic assumptions about the secret operations of the Civil War.

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