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Book Reviews

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Military Memoirs of a Confederate. By E. P. Alexander, edited by T. Harry Williams. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962. 652 pp. Editor's introduction, notes, illustrations, index. \$7.95.)

This stout volume is a personal recollection of the eastern military campaigns of the Civil War. The author, Edward Porter Alexander, a Georgian who graduated from West Point, was a Confederate officer who served in those campaigns throughout the war. Advancing from signal officer under Beauregard to artillery commander for Lee, Alexander became "one of America's greatest artillerymen," according to the book's editor, T. Harry Williams.

The memoirs are well written and precise. The author's use of official records and memoirs of other participants adds to the book's dependability. Alexander analyzed carefully most of the battles and military movements in the eastern sector, describing in fine detail fortunes of the Confederacy. He explained that his purpose was to criticize each campaign as one would judge tactics in a chess game. This he accomplished. In fact, he was so successful that his unsparing mention of Confederate as well as Union errors brought severe censure from the South when the book was first published in 1907.

Alexander found cause to criticize most of the commanders and lesser officers of the Army of the Potomac as well as their counterparts in the Army of Northern Virginia, including Lee. He censured Joseph E. Johnston for giving poor orders; Beauregard for failing to pursue the enemy after its defeat at First Bull Run; Longstreet for bungling orders in the attack in the Seven Days Battle; Stonewall Jackson for his listless efforts in the latter campaign; and a number of other military leaders for their leisurely obedience of battle orders. He evaluated McClellan as a good organizer but incapable of leading an army to battle; Hood, as incompetent; Fremont, as timid in forcing battle; and Burnside and Hooker, as less than adequate as military commanders. Grant's tactics and strategy also suffer under Alexander's minute analysis. It is not to be supposed, however, that Alexander saw only the errors. He had high regard for leaders in both armies and gave credit where credit was due in particular battles and campaigns. He also makes a good case for an over-all military

policy for the utilization of interior lines to shuttle Confederate troops from east to west and back again to overcome the superior numbers of the Union armies.

Adding to the seemingly endless stream of books about the military aspects of the Civil War, Alexander's memoirs constitute an indispensable source for military historians. In his efforts to present information for the reader to follow his painstaking analysis, however, Alexander traces almost every skirmish and battle formation in such detail as to make reading difficult to all except the military historian. The introduction and explanatory notes by the editor have added greatly to the book's value, particularly to readers not so well acquainted with the strategy and action within the battles of the war. To all who tend to forget the human cost of the war or to deprecate the courage of those who fought it, the book stands as a reminder.

DURWARD LONG

Florida Southern College

Halleck: Lincoln's Chief of Staff. By Stephen E. Ambrose. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962. vi, 226 pp. Illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. \$5.00.)

This scholarly, sympathetic biography of Henry W. Halleck does much to rehabilitate Lincoln's "misunderstood, maligned and unappreciated" general-in-chief and chief of staff. In his defense of Halleck, the author makes it clear, however, that the General's contribution to the Union victories was as an administrator and not as a field commander.

While serving in the West, Halleck succeeded despite a lack of imagination and audacity because he was able "to supply eager, fighting generals with well armed and adequately provisioned troops to be used at the decisive points-Fort Donelson, New Madrid, Shiloh, and Pea Ridge." After being promoted to general-in-chief of the armies in 1862, he worked tirelessly on reforms designed "to eliminate politicians from the inner machinations of the army." Such changes took time and all were not completely achieved "but Halleck never relinquished his program. When the South finally conceded the struggle, she surrendered to the finest army the United States had ever put in the field. Halleck, as

much as anyone else, made the army." When Grant was moved east in 1864 to take over as supreme commander, Halleck was given the chief of staff's job. Even though this was a demotion for him, he accepted the new position without complaint. Acting as liaison between Lincoln and Grant and between Grant and his departmental commander, he performed burdensome administrative details and thereby helped free the general-in-chief for duty in field with the Army of the Potomac. As a manager of war "Old Brains" was certainly capable and in the words of the author: "A democracy waging a modern, total war requires a businessman-soldier to manage the war machine. This Halleck did."

This volume should be of interest to students of the Civil War, not only because it throws new light on Halleck, but also because it outlines Union strategy during the war and portrays the evolution of the modern command system. In addition, there is a discussion of Jomini's principles of war and how they were modified by Halleck, Sherman, and others, resulting in the total war philosophy.

JOHN G. BARRETT

Virginia Military Institute

"Beast" Butler, *The Incredible Career of Major General Benjamin F. Butler*. By Robert Werlich. (Washington: Quaker Press, 1962. 160 pp. \$3.95.)

Of Benjamin F. Butler (1818-1893), contemporaries John Hay and John G. Nicolay wrote: "In all the war no man was so severely criticized by his enemies or more warmly defended by his friends." (*Abraham Lincoln*, V, 276).

In this short account of the life of the lawyer, soldier, and politician who was among the most picturesque and controversial men of his age, Mr. Werlich sides decisively with Butler's enemies. So complete is his emphasis on the "Beast's" many faults and misdeeds, both real and rumored, that one must wonder whether this is a biography or an indictment. The voices of defense are indeed muted.

Mr. Werlich states in his foreword: "Many readers may not agree with this interpretation of General Butler's life, and will say that this writer has minimized his good points—all that can be

said in answer to this charge is that after thorough research the author firmly believes that Butler's few good points were so outweighed by the questionable aspects of his career as to be of little consequence and furthermore, that General Butler never did anything that was not meant for his personal advantage."

With this admitted prejudice, the author rips into his subject with a vengeance worthy of a direct descendant of William Mumford, the Confederate hanged by Butler for tearing down the flag at the U. S. Mint in New Orleans in 1862. Certainly Butler's career is subject to adverse comment and even to inspiring feelings of repugnance. But this treatment seems to add little if anything to an objective understanding of the person of whom his friend, President U. S. Grant, said: "Butler is a man fashionable to abuse, but he is a man who has done his country great service and who is worthy of its gratitude."

As Mr. Werlich's admitted lack of objectivity is regrettable, so is the absence of footnotes which would be important to the support of many of his conclusions.

EDISON B. ALLEN

Tulane University

Texas Under the Carpetbaggers. By W. C. Nunn. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962. 304 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$5.00.)

"The Era of Governor Edmund J. Davis: Texan Reconstructionist" would have been a more exact title for this study of Texas from 1869 to 1874. Davis was born in Florida in 1827 and had an exciting career on the Texas border after 1848. Serving as a state district judge in 1861, he opposed secession. Forced to flee to Mexico, he organized other Unionists and in time he was promoted to brigadier general despite an unsuccessful attempt to capture Laredo in 1864. While Davis became a leader of the "radical" Republicans in 1866, he was not a carpetbagger. Extremist that he had become, he advocated disfranchisement of farmer Confederates and full suffrage for all Negroes, even suggesting that Texas be divided into three states. Such a person could not be headed off by divided moderate Republicans and non-voting Democrats, and he served as governor from 1869 to January, 1874.

The first half of the book is a useful, factual account of the political stages of Reconstruction and should be read along with Charles Ramsdell's *Reconstruction in Texas*. Davis was most disliked for his use of Negroes as "state police." Author Nunn shows that mistakes were made by the administration, the police as individuals, and by local white men. A future governor, then a young newspaper man, James S. Hogg, has left several accounts of various militia-civilian frays and their publication attests to a degree of freedom of the press. Some evidence of how Davis began to lose control of his press was not used in this study. In fact, the major weakness is that this worthy dissertation, completed in 1938, was not revised in the light of research of the past twenty years. For example, there is no evidence of using Otis Singletary's *Negro Militia and Reconstruction* for comparative purposes. The last article referenced from a scholarly journal was published in 1925. Except for a few books, including the *Handbook of Texas* (1952), they are dated before 1936.

Section II discussed briefly such topics as ranching, farming, mining, manufacturing, commerce, transport, and state finance. In ten succinct pages he summarized the sorry picture of the growing state debt.

Section III is an adequate, brief summary of major Indian problems. Part of the state debt was for Ranger and Minute Men companies. Nearness to Indian Territory and to Mexico increased the danger of raids. Grievance petitions from 777 victims of raiders claimed over ninety millions for damages. Finally, Secretary of War Belknap and General Philip Sheridan visited the border and President Grant promised more cavalry. Floridians will understand the potential usefulness of Seminole Negroes (some of Wild Cat's band) who were used as scouts against the Kickapoo.

Section IV dealt with daily life, growth of cities, education, legislation of the period, based on careful use of documents but there is no overall evaluation of the reign of Governor Davis. The chief value of the book will be as a reference work to major legislation of the period, based on careful use of documents but weak on recent special areas. Credit is given to Seth McKay's master's thesis, "Texas under the Regime of E. J. Davis," (University of Texas, 1919).

ROBERT C. COTNER

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