

It is a satisfaction to read the Riddle volume. With its close examination of sources, readable style, handsome format, illustrations, maps, appendix, and bibliography, it adds grace to Lincoln shelves and interest to the story of American politics.

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General Gage in America, Being Principally a History of His Role in the American Revolution. By John Richard Alden. (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1948, pp. xi, 313. Map, illustrations, bibliographical note, and index. \$4.00.)

Despite the limitation imposed by the title, this first book-length study of Thomas Gage (c. 1719-1787) is the nearest thing to a biography we are ever likely to see. Though the details of Gage's early life remain somewhat meager, Dr. Alden has used the Gage Papers at the Clements Library exhaustively, the family papers from Firle Place, Sussex, and the manuscripts of many of Gage's contemporaries. His knowledge of the printed sources on American colonial history is extensive, as has been demonstrated in his earlier work, *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier*.

The general who emerges from this intensive examination is a man of competence, moderation, good sense, and considerable penetration. If he was not in advance of his time as a thinker on imperialistic affairs, he was far from being an oppressive reactionary. But he almost constantly occupied an embarrassing or impossible position. Gage was continually bossed by willful and uncomprehending ministers who expected him to enforce their stupid policies, and by giving him discretionary power hoped to evade responsibility if those policies backfired. Gage was not to be caught in such traps and countered by insisting that ministers should make up their minds and deliver him orders.

He accurately assessed the problem of protecting the newly won West in 1763, but a dilatory and changing cabinet came to no decision until 1768. After war began, he sat tight in Boston because he was expected to subdue a rebellion with too few troops, but he suggested at the outset the only alternatives to defeat: a naval blockade of the

colonies, or an army equal in size to the rebel forces. When he returned to England late in 1775, after twenty years of service in America, the author declares "it was his hard lot simultaneously to be abused by his American enemies and to be deserted by his compatriots." Dr. Alden's summary analysis of the man forms a splendid commentary on colonial politics.

The author's interpretation of Gage includes correction of an earlier belief that he acted on his own initiative in ordering his troops to march to Concord in April, 1775. Gage's great popularity in New York, his headquarters for ten years, is made known, and it is denied that he accepted any interest in the Illinois Company. Alden takes issue with a more recent characterization of Gage's power and position in America as that of a viceroy. And in marking that Gage accurately prophesied what would be required to subdue the Americans, the author labels him "the Cassandra of the first British empire."

Dr. Alden's style shows great improvement, perhaps because the book was not written for a faculty committee. The new volume is highly readable. It has pace, smoothness, variety, and flashes of humor. There are enough footnotes to satisfy the most scrupulous scholar—rather more than might be expected after the author's declaration against making "a fetish of documentation." The book can be recommended to other investigators who have thought of preparing biographies of eighteenth-century characters. Louisiana State University Press is to be congratulated upon its enterprise in publishing this work. It has turned out an attractive and dignified volume at a reasonable price.

Indiana Historical Bureau

Howard H. Peckham

Agricultural Literature and the Early Illinois Farmer. By Richard Bardolph. Volume XXIX, Numbers 1 and 2, *Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences*. (Urbana, Illinois, The University of Illinois Press, 1948, pp. 200. Appendixes, bibliography, and index. \$3.00 clothbound, \$2.00 paperbound.)

One of our prominent social historians has observed that in dealing with agricultural history "there seems to be no substitute in first-class historical analysis for a high degree