

in their factual and interpretative presentation. The editor, who is chairman of the Department of Speech and Theatre at Indiana University, and the contributors nonetheless deserve high praise for their achievement. The book is a valuable contribution to the story of the great national crisis.

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Commanders of the Army of the Potomac. By Warren W. Hassler, Jr. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962. Pp. xxi, 281. Illustrations, maps, bibliographical essay, index. \$6.00.)

In this book, Professor Hassler presents an exposition of the command careers of the generals who headed the Army of the Potomac. Taken chronologically, these men were McDowell, McClellan, Burnside, Hooker, and Meade. Chapters are also devoted to Pope, whose short-lived Army of Virginia was merged into the Army of the Potomac after Second Bull Run, and Grant, who was Meade's overshadowing superior during the final Virginia campaign.

The scheme and organization of the book are good. A well-written account of the conduct of each officer appears. This is followed by a Conclusion in which the men are compared and measured against such criteria as strategy, tactics, administrative skill, and use of naval power.

In his statements of objective *fact*, Professor Hassler is a sure teacher. The book is marked by careful basic scholarship. With one notable exception, the author's judgments of the men are the traditional ones, although—subject to the same exception—it sometimes seems that he is extravagant in his condemnations. Thus, in the case of the usual villains—Pope, Burnside, and Hooker—there is hardly a good word said, although at least Pope and Hooker had certain gifts despite their ultimate failings.

McDowell, Grant, and Meade are accorded "balanced" treatment. This reviewer had the impression that Dr. Hassler has no predilections about these men and therefore presents their stories thoughtfully. It is when McClellan is under discussion that the author seems to labor. He is a staunch defender of McClellan and his brief for him is the point of departure for the book as a whole. The impression is given that Dr. Hassler tends to view the other leaders from the vantage point of one championing McClellan. The analysis of these men seems colored by efforts to bolster McClellan.

Reasonable men may—or, in any event, *do*—differ about George B. McClellan. A reviewer has no right to reject an author's thesis simply because it defends McClellan. At the same time, certain things appear in this book which one would seem to have the right to question. Thus, the McClellan view of all of his celebrated controversies is invariably adopted and couched in "good guy-bad guy" terms inconsistent with scholarship. For example, the Radicals appear as unmitigated "bad guys," moving always to harm McClellan; the government was always "meddling" in McClellan's affairs; McClellan was right—or

almost right—and Lincoln was wrong about the defenses of Washington in 1862; McClellan was cautious, but he was not really slow; and his subordinates were at fault when he failed. Antietam, the one failure that McClellan's defenders have never been able to explain, is largely blamed on Burnside. McClellan's conduct—*before, during, and after* this unmatched lost opportunity—is explained on the ground that McClellan had been “informed” that Lee had 120,000 men and McClellan was, after all, “a circumspect man” (p. 85). Nothing at all appears to rationalize the corps-by-corps manner in which McClellan wasted his vastly superior manpower.

Beyond these basic issues, a number of other defenses of McClellan are offered. Thus, we are told that McClellan's custom of pressing on Lincoln his *political* views was “customary” among the generals of the period (pp. 28-29). But was it? It was not done by McDowell, Pope, or Burnside. More significant, it was not done by Grant, Meade, Sheridan, or Thomas. Professor Hassler also states that McClellan was “generally deferential and proper in his intercourse with his superiors [unless] he believed an error or injustice was being committed” (p. 39). This qualification successfully begs the question. McClellan was insolent and insubordinate to Lincoln, Stanton, and Halleck on a number of occasions simply because *he* believed that they were in error. Professor Hassler is also quick to downgrade even incidental figures who were at odds with McClellan. General Wadsworth—one of the men who believed that McClellan had left Washington insecure when he moved to the Peninsula—is called an “elderly political general” in 1862 (p. 41). It might also have been said that this “elderly” man ably led the First Division of the First Corps at Gettysburg, and was killed in action in the Wilderness in 1864. General Halleck is referred to as a “moral coward” (p. 54), surely an oversimplification of this complicated man. An inference is left to cloud the reputation of Stanton simply because he did not defend himself against McClellan's well-known hysterical letter which accused the Secretary of War of *intentionally* trying to sacrifice the army on the Peninsula (p. 50). In his affirmative case, Professor Hassler cites the chestnut that Lee said after the war that McClellan had been his ablest opponent (p. 249)—a “fact” based on multiple hearsay and not generally accepted by scholars. Finally, and most illuminating of Professor Hassler's comprehension of the military character of the war, is his statement that there was “too much ‘nursing’ of the Union infantry . . . too much lying down and firing at short range, and too little use of the bayonet charge, pressed home” (p. 245). It may be candidly said that no serious student of military tactics of the period—a period of *rifled* arms, earthworks, and effective anti-personnel artillery—shares this view. On the contrary, their criticism of Civil War tactics argues precisely the contrary. But this is the kind of thing that McClellan himself would have *said*, or, more likely, written in a letter to his wife.

It is generally conceded that McClellan had certain high qualifications. Even Professor Hassler grants that he also was not perfect. The interesting question is what made the difference between a great

commander and those who were not great. There is much to suggest that basic elements of character—*integrity* of personality in the classic sense—were decisive, especially in those days when military organization was not institutionalized and the *person* of the leader was so meaningful. It is in this respect that writers may appropriately consider McClellan. He had technical skills and understandings, to be sure, but he was also the man who, when defeated, could write to the Secretary of War: "I have seen too many dead and wounded comrades to feel otherwise than that the government has not sustained this army. . . . If I save this army now, I tell you plainly I owe no thanks to you or to any other persons in Washington. You have done your best to sacrifice this army" (p. 50). Even three weeks later, McClellan would say that this was all "quite true" (p. 50). And when finally removed from command, he could write, "Alas, for my poor country! I know in my inmost heart she never had a truer servant" (p. 93). A final glance at Burnside is worthwhile here. Regarding his own removal, that general wrote, "in view of the glorious results which have since attended the movements of this gallant army [the Army of the Potomac], I am quite willing to believe that my removal was for the best" (p. 125). The pity of it all was that such a man as Burnside lacked the technical skills of McClellan.

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The Cattle Kings. By Lewis Atherton. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961. Pp. xii, 308. End maps, illustrations, notes, index. \$6.95.)

Historians of the American West will find Professor Lewis Atherton's *The Cattle Kings* a stimulating and rewarding volume. Professor Atherton has applied some of the techniques and assumptions of business history to the cattleman's frontier. In this volume the cattleman and rancher stand in the place of the entrepreneur, the capitalist, and the railroad builder. Since the cattlemen and ranchers were the dominant figures in the cattle kingdom, they contributed more that was enduring and meaningful both to the American West and to American culture. To make these contributions clear, Professor Atherton analyzes the "group characteristics" of the better-known cattlemen and ranchers. Cowboys, to the relief of the reviewer but to the consternation of creators of such monuments as the Cowboy Hall of Fame, are dismissed as "hired hands on horseback who compromised with their environment at relatively low levels" and who "exerted little influence on the course of American history" (p. xi).

Diverse in origins, the cattlemen lived as they pleased and recognized that others had the same right. Even the wives of ranchers were expected to follow the same precept. Women, if respectable, were honored, and marriage was regarded as a permanent contract whether the spouse came from the Indian reservation or from the husband's social stratum. Formal religion played a less important role on the Great Plains than in the East. Charles Goodnight did not become a