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theless, it suggests that a relatively expensive hardcover is not the best means of capturing the current state of the field. Despite this limitation, any serious scholar commencing a study of British or Canadian experiences on the Western Front in 1914-1915 will find this volume to be a gold mine of useful and often obscure sources.

Nikolas Gardner

University of Salford
Salford, England, United Kingdom

Haig's Generals. Edited by Ian F. W. Beckett and Steven J. Corvi. Barnsley, U.K.: Pen and Sword Military, 2006. ISBN 1-84415-169-7. Maps. Photographs. Notes. Bibliographies. Appendixes. Index. Pp. 217. £19.99.

It is difficult to recall a group of British generals who have been subjected to such intense vilification as those on the western front during the Great War. In truth the bad reputation they have inherited is on the whole undeserved. Their roles have not been properly understood, in part because of the dearth of recent academic biographies. In the last few years some military historians in the U.K. have begun to challenge the “lions led by donkey” stereotype which places the blame for the needless slaughter of British troops squarely at the feet of incompetent and callous commanders.

This book follows the revisionist view of drawing away from sterile polemics and presents a more balanced assessment of Haig's generals. It consists of a brief but useful introduction, plus nine essays, written by a team of well-established scholars. The better known generals include Edmund Allenby (essay by Matthew Hughes), William Birdwood (John Lee), Julian Byng (Nikolas Gardner), Hubert Gough (Gary Sheffield and Helen McCartney), Herbert Plumer (Peter Simkins), Henry Rawlinson (Ian F. W. Beckett), and Horace Smith-Dorrien (Steven J. Corvi). The remaining two, Henry Horne (Simon Robbins) and Charles Monro (John Bourne), are less prominent. The chapters vary in style and depth of analysis, but such variety is not necessarily a bad thing. Each essay contains new information. I found the piece on Horne, about whom little is known, to be quite informative. No less engaging was Simkins's well-written article confirming Plumer's standing as a sound, methodical, tactician who deserves considerable credit for his contribution to the BEF's “learning curve.”

All of the essays conform to a common theme. At the request of the editors, the contributors examined their subject's background, personality, experience, and command style, as well as his relations with his subordinates and Haig himself. The essays are carefully balanced, revealing both the weaknesses and strengths of their subjects. The chapters conclude with a close analysis of a particularly significant battle conducted by each general.

British army leaders had no training for the daunting technical and organizational challenges of modern warfare and were compelled to learn as they went along. Not surprisingly, their inexperience led to poor performances during the first two years of the war. But, learning from their mistakes, they improved and introduced new methods and gradually developed a doctrine

of combined arms and an operational style of attack that turned defeat into victory. Most of the generals discussed in this book rose to the challenge of command.

Smith-Dorrien, whose career was virtually ended in the spring of 1915 by the egregious Sir John French, then commander-in-chief, may have been the most gifted of the group. Still not all the individuals come off well as battlefield commanders. As Sheffield and McCartney rightly observe, Gough's rapid promotion and elevation to high command was not justified by the level of his competence. Monro did not engage in a major battle before he left the western front to become commander-in-chief of the Indian army. Although he proved to be a keen and talented administrator there is no evidence to suggest that he was anything but a limited field general.

There is much of value in this book. The authors have based their findings on a wide range of archival and published sources.

Scholars doing research in the field would do well to examine the interpretations and consult the copious endnotes. Besides specialists, the book deserves to be read by anyone interested in the contribution made by Haig's generals to the defeat of Germany.

George H. Cassar

Eastern Michigan University
Ypsilanti, Michigan

Gunning for the Red Baron. By Leon Bennett. College Station: Texas A&M University Press. 2006. ISBN 1-58544-507-X. Photographs. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliographic essay. Index. Pp. viii, 207. \$29.95.

Starting with the difficulties World War I fighter pilots faced in shooting down enemy aircraft, Leon Bennett offers an analysis of the evolution of aircraft gunnery and why some fliers were better able than others to handle the strengths and weaknesses of their machines. The work offers good explanations of technical issues in layman's terms, but its occasional meanderings over the course of nine chapters as well as a limited source base weaken this contribution to our understanding of World War I aviation.

Bennett first charts the fantasy and reality of shooting at aircraft, noting that the notion of the hunt was quickly dispelled once young gunners, including Manfred von Richthofen, discovered how hard it was to actually hit a flying target. Suggestions from commanding officers, such as the use of tracer bullets, proved a failure. Systematic studies by engineers and physicists helped resolve some of the issues (including speed, gravity effect, and the placement of guns), but as Bennett notes, costs were associated with what kind of aircraft a pilot favored. Maneuverability meant reduced speed; and luck and experience also depended on what one's adversary flew and how (perhaps an obvious point nowadays, but one learned in the Great War, as Bennett shows nicely in a selection of air battle episodes). He concludes with a minutious reconstitution of the battle that led to the Red Baron's death.

In his last chapter, Bennett suggests that it was theoretically possible for a pilot to reach 120 victories, but that factors ranging from the theater of engage-