

1965

## Verdun

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BOOKS

Larrabee, Harold A. *Decision at the Chesapeake*. New York: Potter, 1964. 317p.

For the student of sea power this is interesting reading, indeed. It has been written: 'The Battle of Chesapeake Bay was one of the decisive battles of the world. Before it, the creation of the United States of America was possible; after it, it was certain.' The author sets out to explore this thesis, and brings together from many sources—some of them obscure—most of what is known about this battle of the American Revolution. War, certainly, can and must be viewed from many perspectives, and the author is not unmindful of this. Accordingly, he goes to some length to set the stage properly, and succeeds in giving the reader sufficient background to enable him to draw his own conclusions. The first third of the book is devoted to sketching the actors, both on the stage and behind the stage. Then follows a discussion of why and how Cornwallis got to Yorktown in the first place. Next, attention is directed to de Grasse in the West Indies and his decision to come north. Then the author describes the sea battle off the Virginia Capes, and finally, the land battle at Yorktown, where we find Washington stating to de Grasse: 'You will have observed that, whatever efforts are made by the land armies, the Navy must have the casting vote in the present contest.'

F.A. BALDWIN  
Captain, U.S. Navy

Blond, Georges. *Verdun*. New York: Macmillan, 1964. 250p.

For the person who likes to read about the gory details of trench warfare, and unbelievable mistakes in tactics of field commanders when such tactics are compared to modern concepts, this book will be a treat. This narrative is considered an excellent effort to follow the development of the Battle of Verdun—the attempt of the Germans to break through the center of the strong defensive position of the French during World War I. Altogether, it appears to make a special effort to avoid presenting a case against any of the responsible and highly recognized commanders. Coverage begins with the troop build-up on the German side and then depicts additional preparation and the conduct of the Battle of Verdun, primarily during the

period February-July 1916. The author in great detail and clarity describes this battle. One with little military experience is prone to conclude quickly that no lessons were learned from earlier major conflicts—such as General Pickett's charge at Gettysburg. The offensive was on the side of the Germans—artillery preparation followed by infantry frontal attacks against well-prepared French positions. The French countered with a strong defense in place: 'Die rather than yield a single inch of ground' was an order and belief, and a high percentage of the fighters did just that. Throughout, the frontal attacks were contained by last-ditch resistance and desperate local counterattacks. As reported, the latter were generally badly executed by the French and resulted in extreme loss of life. Provided in this document is an excellent account of the horrors of the battle under the tactics mentioned before—poisonous gas, mass artillery preparation, hand-to-hand combat, wounded left on battlefield for days without treatment, dead neither identified nor buried, and a continuous lack of water and food for the front line troops. The book comes to a close with the Germans realizing that in early July 1916, they had lost the battle for Verdun and their decision was to adopt the defensive. Thereafter, there is a brief description of preparation for the counteroffensive by the French, as well as some observations obtained by visits to the battle area. One extreme difficulty to the reader of this book is the lack of a clear sketch map which would be of considerable assistance in following this important struggle which must be considered as a major turning point in favor of the French and their allies in the First World War.

E. C. DAMERON  
Colonel, U.S. Army

Kaufmann, William W. *The McNamara Strategy*. New York: Harper & Row, 1964. 339p.

The author is an ardent supporter of the 'McNamara strategy.' At least this is the impression one gets from reading the book. This work is designed primarily to inform the public of the McNamara and Kennedy-Johnson Administration views on defense in the nuclear age. As such, the book draws largely on the words of the Secretary of Defense (Congressional testimony, press conferences, and speeches) and those of his civilian associates in the Department of Defense. Mr. Kaufmann covers in detail Secretary McNamara's strategy of flexible response from nuclear war to counterinsurgency; his dialogue with NATO over his new policy; the B-70, Skybolt, and the four-ocean navy