Lopez and Herbert survey Franklin's domestic relationships in considerable detail and present their findings in an engaging narrative. One wishes, however, that they had drawn more conclusions from their evidence. Franklin remains something of an enigma, a complex character wrapped in contradictions. For example, he lavished money and attention on his son, the illegitimate William, but paid little attention to his daughter, Sally. He was openly loving and protective to one grandson but rather cool and ungenerous to another. He could demonstrate great tenderness, as in his lifelong warm relationship with his sister, Jane. But he could also be quite insensitive, as in his refusal to return home to his wife when she was dying, and unkind, as in his unforgiving coldness toward his son for remaining loyal to England during the Revolution.

Nonetheless The Private Franklin draws a balanced impression of this intriguing figure, avoiding both the excessive praise of admirers such as Carl Van Doren and the excessive faultfinding of critics such as D. H. Lawrence and William Carlos Williams. And, although the authors do not attempt a bold psychological analysis, they create a convincing biography of Franklin as a man who compensated in part for the pressures of public life by taking an active role as paternal lord of an extended family.

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The battle at Charlestown, encouraging the Americans and leaving lasting psychological scars on the British (conspicuously, on General William Howe), had an importance far transcending its tactical outcome. It has also been a favorite subject for patriotic mythmakers, so that the roles of several key participants and the details of the action have been distorted, misrepresented, and misunderstood. Colonel
Elting, who writes with the advantage of a background as a historical scholar and a professionally schooled soldier, dispels the myths and brings out the practical military realities.

Perhaps his greatest contribution is in his treatment of the British side of the episode.

General Thomas Gage, whom most American historians have treated sympathetically, is exposed as having more political influence than military competence, with a record of questionable performance in combat. Admiral Samuel Graves, who has been criticized and condemned as inefficient and lacking in initiative, is convincingly portrayed as having his faults but being a far-seeing, energetic officer working desperately to accomplish all he could despite the constraints of inadequate materials and a dilatory Gage.

Regarding the battle itself, Elting clearly explains the practical considerations which compelled the British to abandon any plan to assault the apparently vulnerable neck of the Charlestown peninsula — a decision which has been much criticized by less perceptive analysts. He explodes the tradition of American marksmanship and British inaccuracy, documenting the marksmanship training British soldiers in Boston received. At the same time, he points out that large contingents of recruits had diluted the quality of Gage's regiments, substantially reducing the differential in quality conventionally attributed to the British. He shows that, contrary to tradition, the British were not overloaded; their uniforms did not differ greatly in weight and discomfort from the Americans' clothing; they did not make three senseless frontal assaults against Breed's Hill; not only did they not outnumber the Americans, but their effective ratio of strength was further reduced by the inherent disadvantage faced by any force assaulting prepared defenses; and the Americans did not run out of ammunition before the final attack.

None of this belittles American accomplishments. On the contrary, in many ways it emphasizes them. The Battle of Bunker's Hill is by no means an exercise in debunking. However, it does explore and explain the completely rational and justifiable decisions which in the past have tended to be ascribed to British stupidity or arrogance and American inexperience. Of course, both sides made errors; but apart from the Americans' provocative action in fortifying the wrong hill, thereby insuring an attack for which they were ill prepared, and their failure to accompany that provocation with at least a token diversion, these errors are more visible with hindsight than they would have been at the time.
Inevitably, this book will be compared with Richard M. Ketchum's recent *Decisive Day: The Battle of Bunker Hill* (Garden City, N. Y., 1974). Ketchum's book has even better maps and, facilitated by its 282-page length, is lavishly illustrated. On the other hand, much of its length is used for prolonged treatments of events leading up to and following the battle. Elting puts the battle in appropriate historical perspective but keeps the focus where it belongs. It is thus a more precisely informative study and, where it specifically differs with Ketchum, is (in this reviewer's opinion) much more convincing.

In sum, this is an excellent book — too good, in fact, for the reader to do himself the disservice of being put off by its misprints, misspelled (and sometimes misused) words, and grammatical errors, which occur with regrettable frequency. Despite these flaws, it is readable. It is a soldier's account, but expressed in terms which are clearly understandable to a civilian reader. Historically and militarily, it provides genuine enlightenment on a highly important episode.

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Richard H. Kohn has written an interesting and widely acclaimed book, because militarism, as a political issue, has never been thoroughly treated for the early years of the republic. He explains what took place down to March 1802, when Jefferson, often considered an opponent of military establishments, implemented a system much like the one suggested by the militarists of 1783. The future army would be small, but very competent.

It was an axiom of the times that peacetime standing armies must always destroy liberty. A group of veteran Revolutionary officers, however, favored a professional force. Their attitude was based, in part, on personal fascination, but they also argued that a body of regulars was more efficient than the alternative — reliance on state militia. Kohn believes that the effectiveness of militia had been declining over the previous hundred years. Refining an interpretation he has expressed elsewhere, Kohn argues that the failure of the New-