

**FROM JEFFERSON
TO LINCOLN**

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From Jefferson to Lincoln by William MacDonald

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BY

WILLIAM MacDONALD

PROFESSOR OF AMERICAN HISTORY IN BROWN UNIVERSITY



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PREFACE

To tell in brief compass, but with accuracy and clearness, the history of the United States in the eventful period from 1815 to 1860, necessitates the exclusion of nearly everything that relates mainly to the development of particular States, and of some topics which concern the growth of the nation as a whole. The present volume, accordingly, has been restricted chiefly to the exposition of three lines of development, namely, constitutional growth, the rise and progress of political parties, and slavery. Side by side with these dominating interests run the birth and expansion of a new sense of democracy; and of this, too, in the field of its political expression, I have sought to give a view.

To the long list of writers who have traversed this period, in whole or in part, every succeeding narrator is deeply beholden. To three of them, however, I gratefully acknowledge special indebtedness: to Mr. James Ford Rhodes, whose monumental *History* must long remain the definitive account of the period subsequent to 1850; and to Professor Theodore Clark Smith and the late Professor George P. Garrison, whose volumes in the *American Nation* series are works of notable insight.

WILLIAM MACDONALD.

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CHAPTER I

THE UNITED STATES IN 1815

THE War of 1812 has been called, for the United States, a "second war of independence." Although, like many figures of speech, the saying is neither wholly accurate nor sufficiently comprehensive, it nevertheless serves to call attention to one important outcome of the war. The United States had, indeed, been a free and independent nation since the treaty of Paris, in 1783, yet it had not been able at all times to assert its full authority, or to resist aggression, or to protect its citizens or their property. Discriminating duties on American commerce, scant courtesy in diplomatic relations, the impressment of American seamen, the search and seizure of vessels and their crews, were only the more striking examples of the injuries to which, because of its youth, weakness, and inexperience, the nation had been obliged to submit, and against which its dignified protests had commonly gone unheeded.

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With the ratification of the treaty of Ghent, however, in December, 1814, the long years of qualified dependence came to an end. To be sure, the treaty itself contained no reference to impressment, or the right of search, or arbitrary interference with American commerce, all of which Madison, in his war message of June 1, 1812, had adduced as sufficient grounds for a declaration of war; but it was generally understood that, though not formally renounced, none of these assumed rights would be exercised again. Nor was public opinion in this country disturbed by the fact that this renewed recognition of the complete independence which the United States had always claimed was due much less to England's failure in the war, than to the overthrow of Napoleon and the end of the gigantic European struggle which, to Englishmen at least, had seemed to make the conduct of Great Britain justifiable. It was enough that there had been a war, that the United States had won, and that now there was peace. As to the precise causes of the war, men might differ as long as they chose to debate, but there was general agreement, in England as well as in America, that those causes would never operate again.

The territory included within the limits of the United States in 1815 extended from the Atlantic Ocean to the Rocky Mountain

watershed on the west, and south to the Spanish provinces of East and West Florida. Portions of the northern boundary, from the mouth of the St. Croix River to the St. Lawrence, and from the western end of Lake Superior to the Rocky Mountains, were as yet undetermined notwithstanding several attempts to agree upon the line. The original area of 1783 had been more than doubled by the purchase of Louisiana, in 1803. Beyond the Rocky Mountains, where Spain still held possession, there was as yet no thought of ultimate American occupation; but the Florida provinces, possessing no natural land boundaries, yet at the same time blocking the natural expansion of the United States to the Gulf of Mexico, were already coveted and were destined shortly to be absorbed. Territorially, the country was a unit; expansion had followed natural lines, and the variety of soil and climate, the extent of coast line, and the control of the great Mississippi valley, made the area occupied by the United States preëminently fit for the home of a great nation.

The population had long been growing apace. The 3,900,000 inhabitants in 1790 had become 7,200,000 in 1810, and were to be 9,600,000 in 1820. Virginia, with a population of 974,000 in 1810, was the largest State, with New York second and