

**GREAT EPOCHS IN AMERICAN
HISTORY: DESCRIBED BY
FAMOUS WRITERS FROM
COLUMBUS TO ROOSEVELT;
VOL. V**

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Great Epochs in American History: Described by Famous Writers from Columbus to Roosevelt;
Vol. V by Francis W. Halsey

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FRANCIS W. HALSEY

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GREAT EPOCHS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

DESCRIBED BY FAMOUS WRITERS
FROM COLUMBUS TO ROOSEVELT

Edited, with Introductions and Explanatory Notes

By **FRANCIS W. HALSEY**

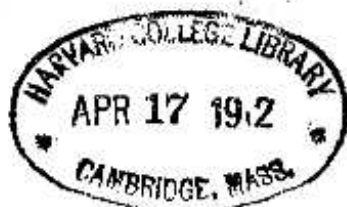
Associate Editor of "The World's Famous Orations"; Associate Editor of "The Best of the World's Classics"; author of "The Old New York Frontier," etc.

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Vol. V
THE WAR OF 1812 AND AFTER
1812—1828

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The P. W. Shaw

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INTRODUCTION

(The War of 1812 and After)

The second war with England had been long foreshadowed—in 1793, when aggressions were committed on our commerce; in 1807, when an embargo was forced upon us as the only alternative, and thereafter almost uninterruptedly until the formal declaration was made in 1812. These foreshadowings also pointed to war with France, whose offenses against our commerce had been equally exasperating, and in one period, under Napoleon, much greater than those of England. Diplomacy had been tried in vain. Six years of protest against Orders in Council restricting our trade had led only to futile results. Retaliation by non-intercourse acts and an embargo had resulted in greater harm to ourselves than to the offenders.

The young Republic, threatened as it so often had been with disintegration, now by the Federalists, now by the Republicans; with a periodical deficit in its treasury, and with 3,000 miles of ocean separating it from the offenders, was in no

INTRODUCTION

condition to wage an aggressive war against Napoleon, the conqueror of Europe. It chose instead to join issue with England, the determining factor being an opportunity to make the scene of war a near neighbor—Canada. At the beginning, the war was popular throughout the country, except with New England shipmasters. Congress voted for it by 79 to 49 in the House and 19 to 13 in the Senate. With the war as a chief issue Madison was handsomely reelected. A new country of 8,000,000 people, widely scattered, and poor in credit, went to war with 20,000,000 of people who had recently driven the French navy from the sea and Napoleon's army out of Spain.

Operations began on our northern frontier. Two expeditions were dispatched to Canada, one by way of Niagara, one by Detroit. The first failed to gain possession of the country beyond a few frontier forts, the second ended in a disastrous retreat by Governor Hull, and the loss of Detroit, Fort Dearborn (Chicago), and Mackinac Island. These events, combined with hostilities from the Indians, who had long been troublesome, and were now cooperating with the British, put in peril the whole Northwest Territory—that region secured to

INTRODUCTION

the colonies by George Rogers Clark in 1779, and out of which great States have since been carved. But this calamity was averted by the splendid victory of Perry on Lake Erie, and the work of our land forces at Chippewa and Lundy's Lane.

More memorable still were the victories won by our ships on the sea. On August 19, 1812, England's chief offender in making searches of American ships, the *Guerrière*, was captured by the *Constitution*; then the *Frolic* was captured by the *Wasp*; the *Macedonian* by the *United States*, the *Java* and other ships by the *Constitution*. Later came Macdonough's splendid victory on Lake Champlain. Six months of naval warfare led to American successes that astonished Europeans who remembered Nelson's victories at Copenhagen, Aboukir Bay and Trafalgar. One notable defeat came to us—that of Lawrence, with the *Chesapeake* lost to the *Shannon*. American privateers took up the war in 1813, and captured 400 prizes.

In spite of all these successes our merchant-ships had suffered badly. Altogether the English captured more than 1,600, so that, by the end of the war, the American flag had almost ceased to float on merchant ships. The war lasted nearly

INTRODUCTION

three years. Its total cost has been reckoned as \$100,000,000, not counting the loss in ships and other properties, and about 30,000 lives. The losses to our shipping bred growing discontent which found a voice in 1814 in the Hartford Convention of December that year. This convention was generally expected to recommend to New England an act of secession, and it did result in a declaration that, unless New England could retain the duties collected at her ports, she would withdraw from the Union. But nothing more was ever heard from that disloyal threat. One victory came to American arms after the articles of peace were signed—the battle of New Orleans, in which Andrew Jackson, with his frontier riflemen, swept away the Peninsular veterans of Paekenhem.

Jackson's victory and the naval victories of Perry on Lake Erie, of the *Constitution*, and Macdonough, became our chief benefits from this war. Peace left matters between us and England very much where they were in 1812. The advantages to us lay in the great and new prestige won for us in Europe by "Old Hickory" and "Old Ironsides." After 1814 our population increased rapidly. The revenues at the close of the war had fallen to