

**SLAVERY AND THE MEXICAN WAR
1840-1860, VOL. VII: GREAT EPOCHS IN
AMERICAN HISTORY: DESCRIBED BY
FAMOUS WRITERS FROM COLUMBUS
TO ROOSEVELT; PP. 10-208**

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GREAT EPOCHS
IN AMERICAN
HISTORY

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FROM COLUMBUS TO ROOSEVELT

Edited, with Introductions and Explanatory Notes

By FRANCIS W. HALSEY

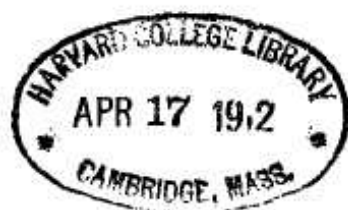
Associate Editor of "The World's Famous Orations"; Associate Editor of "The Best of the World's Classics"; author of "The Old New York Frontier," etc.

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INTRODUCTION

(Slavery and the Mexican War.)

Exactly twenty years had now gone by since the Missouri Compromise became a law. That famous instrument for promoting tranquillity between the North and South had been followed by internal peace as to slavery; but it has quite another distinction for services rendered to the Republic. More to it than to any other cause is probably due that long period of national repose in which undisturbed were ushered in western expansion, new and more expeditious transportation methods, manufacturing enterprises, the sewing-machine, the rotary printing-press, and machine implements for farming.

Coincident with these movements new problems of great peril to the peace of the States were soon to arise. Satisfied as the South had been with the Missouri Compromise when passed, it learned eventually that in the workings of the compromise the North was the chief gainer. This was in part because the North grew more rapidly, with its people small energetic farmers and small industrial

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producers, and its industries widely diversified; whereas in the South the people, by a costly system of slave labor, were large producers, and their sole industry was agriculture. With the opening of great highways westward, there had set in a development for the North that was not paralleled in the South. None in 1820 could have foreseen this, just as none foresaw the oncoming of the new age of mechanical inventions.

In such conditions was the assault made on those Mexican lands we now know as Texas. This was not wholly a movement by slaveholders seeking to extend slavery, but one also of land speculators who held scrip and desired their lands located. Moreover the North had plenty of room in which to expand; the South had little. Expansion in the South had to come; room had to be found for it, and when opposition was encountered from Mexico, and followed by a massacre in the Alamo, nothing could stay the enthusiasm with which the southwestern frontiersmen went into the Battle of San Jacinto, where was fixt the destiny of Texas as a future integral part of the Union open to slavery. The war with Mexico that followed as a consequence of the annexation of Texas was long fore-

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seen, and by the frontiersman, if not by the Federal administration, was desired. Its conclusion secured to the Union a vast country in the Southwest and Far West, out of which five States and parts of two others have since been created. Except for California, which did not come directly from the defeat of Mexico, that war added an enormous area which soon became open to slavery.

Almost coincident with these events came the final settlement of the Oregon boundary, with new emigration to Oregon, and in 1848 the organization of that country into a territory embracing a far greater area than what we now call Oregon. By this addition of non-slaveholding territory much was done to counterbalance the acquisition made by Southern interests in the Southwest. Political leaders in both sections however continued far from tranquil. Within two years from the conclusion of peace with Mexico, another compromise, the one which bears the name of Henry Clay, was put through Congress. This measure in the main would have been acceptable in the North but for the Fugitive Slave Law included in it. Under this law, enforcing the arrest and return of escaped slaves and immediately and aggressively put into

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effect, slaves were to be considered as any other lost or stolen property. Two notable outcomes of its enforcement ensued—one the “underground railway” by which Northern Abolitionists assisted escaping slaves to reach Canada, the other a book which, more than all the speeches of agitators and all the preaching from pulpits, made anti-slavery sentiment in the North a political rather than a social force—Mrs. Stowe’s “Uncle Tom’s Cabin.”

Four years later another act of Congress pushed headlong by further steps the inevitable conflict at arms—the famous Kansas-Nebraska bill, with its “squatter sovereignty” declaration, the contrivance of Stephen A. Douglas, by which the Kansas-Nebraska territory became open alike to slavery and to freedom under a local-option system, and into which the operation of the Fugitive Slave Law was extended. Out of this bill, which amounted to a repeal of the Missouri Compromise, came war in Kansas, with John Brown as a leader. Out of it also came the formation of a great party which for two generations was to dominate the affairs of the nation—that party first called “anti-Nebraska men” and afterward Republicans. These men planted themselves squarely on the principle