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# Messenger and Visitor.

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## The War of 1812.\*

In his story of the war of 1812 just published, Mr. Hannay has made an important contribution to the historical literature of Canada. The author's main purpose has been to write of the war as it affected Canada and as the people of the British North American colonies—especially those of Upper Canada—were concerned and engaged in it. While therefore a general survey is presented of the cause of the war and all the considerable movements in connection with it, we have a more particular account of the conflict along the line of the international boundary, which was indeed the scene of the principal events of the war, and of the brave and effective fight which the people of Canada made in defence of their homes and in favor of British connection. The defence of Canada against the invading forces of the United States, as the author truly says in his preface, "could not have been successful but for the hearty cooperation of our ancestors, the people of Canada of that day," and accordingly, "this war ought to be regarded as Canada's first and greatest contribution to the work of empire building; for the fervent loyalty which, within a year or two, has sent so many of the sons of Canada to fight the battles of Great Britain in South Africa, received its first illustration on the battlefields of the war of 1812."

In 1812 the population of Upper and Lower Canada did not exceed 400,000, and little more than one-quarter was of British origin. Great Britain was then deeply engaged in Continental wars and could spare only a mere handful of regular troops for the defence of Canada, the number in Upper Canada during the first part of the war being less than 1500. The United States was then a nation of eight millions of people, correspondingly rich in resources, and dominated by political leaders who were filled with a grand ambition for the conquest of Canada, and determined, if possible, to drive the British flag from the northern part of the continent. The militia which supported the British regulars in the defence of Canada, was drawn principally from what is now Ontario, its population numbering then only about 80,000 souls. When these facts are considered, and the great extent of the international frontier is taken into account, it must be acknowledged that the successful defence of Canada during the war of 1812-14 deserves to be classed among the remarkable things of history. Seldom in the history of the world have a people exhibited greater bravery, persistence and resource in defending its land against invasion. Not only was the invasion repelled, but the war was carried into the enemy's country and some important successes achieved on the soil of the United States, especially the taking of Fort Niagara which was held until the end of the war.

The perusal of the records of the war of 1812 may well minister to the patriotic pride of the Canadians of this generation. Never have a people had a better justification for fighting than did the people of Canada in 1812, and seldom have men fought more bravely than did the men who contended for their liberties and their homes at Queenstown Heights, at Beaver Dams, at Stoney Creek, at Chateaugay, at Chrysler's Fields, Chippewa and Lundy's Lane. Every young Canadian ought to make himself as thoroughly acquainted as possible with this period in his country's history, and Mr. Hannay's book will give him important help in that direction.

It is somewhat difficult to understand why the American forces did not meet with a larger measure of success in the attempt to conquer Canada. The population and resources of the country would seem to have been ample for such an undertaking even had Canada's powers of resistance been twice as great as it actually was. One reason, doubtless, was that the public men of the United States who were so anxious to annex the British Provinces to the Union had little idea of the magnitude of the task involved. They thought that Canada was a ripe apple ready to fall into the lap of the Republic at the slightest shaking of the parent tree. "We can take the Canadas without soldiers," said Eustis, the United States Secretary of War, "we have only to send officers into the Provinces and the people, disaffected toward their own Government, will rally round our standard." Hon. Henry Clay said: "It is absurd to suppose we will not succeed

in our enterprise against the enemy's Provinces.

I am not for stopping at Quebec nor any where else; but I would take the whole continent from them and ask no favors. We must take the continent from them. I wish never to see peace till we do." It was a surprise, therefore, both to the politicians and to the soldiers of the Republic, that the people of the Provinces were prepared to stand for British connection with a sturdiness of courage and fighting ability scarcely surpassed in the annals of British warfare. But the people of the United States were by no means all of one mind in wishing to make war on Canada. Congress was far from being unanimous in the matter, and in New England especially, there was strong opposition to the prevailing policy of the nation. No doubt Dr. William Ellery Channing voiced the sentiments of many, when in Boston, on a day, in August 1812, appointed by President Madison as a day of fasting and prayer for the success of the American forces in the war, he denounced the war as "unjustifiable and ruinous." Josiah Quincy, of Massachusetts, too, on the floors of Congress, denounced the war in the strongest terms, as "a cruel, wanton, senseless and wicked attack upon an offending people bound to us by ties of blood and good neighborhood, undertaken for the punishment, over their shoulders, of another people 3,000 miles off, by young politicians, fluttering and cackling on the floors of that House, half hatched, the shell still on their heads and their pinions not yet shed—politicians to whom reason, justice, pity were nothing—revenge everything." It is probable that the soldiers of the American army—especially the militia—were more or less impressed by such sentiments and did not enter upon the business of conquering the Canadas with any great spirit. If the people of Canada, as the politicians declared, were tired of British connection and wanted to come into the Union, the American militia were of course willing to lend their presence to grace to occasion; but if they must fight the people of the Provinces to the death in order to persuade them to change their allegiance, that was another matter, and it is not to the discredit of the New York militia that they had little heart for it, or that at the battle of Queenstown they actually refused to cross the river to take part in the fight. However it may be explained, it seems undeniable as a general statement, that, neither in leadership nor in the fighting qualities of the troops, did the American forces employed in the attempt to conquer Canada in 1812, manifest the ability which has usually characterized American military operations.

The Indians of Canada fought against the invaders and in several engagements rendered important assistance to the British-Canadian cause. American historians have severely censured the British for their employment of the Indians as allies. But, as Dr. Hannay points out, the Indians had rights and interests to protect in Canada, as well as the whites. The Indians appear to have been well under the control of their brave chief Tecumseh, who was finally slain in battle, and generally to have abstained from acts of peculiar savagery. If in some instances they committed excesses they might plead the principle of retaliation, for the first man slain in the war was an Indian who was shot from ambush and scalped by a white man who boasted of his exploit. Nor did the Americans' horror of savage warfare prevent their employing Indians as their allies in the invasion of Canada. And it must be acknowledged that the American soldiers who cut strips of skin from the body of a dead Indian whom they supposed to be the chief, Tecumseh, to make razor strops of, did not require any lessons in the art of savage warfare.

It cannot be claimed that Mr. Hannay has written the story of the War of 1812 with cool impartiality. He is at no pains to conceal the fact that he writes as a Canadian and with keen sympathy for the Canadian cause. He has criticised and denounced with a free and trenchant pen whatever has seemed to him worthy of criticism and censure in the political policies, military operations and the personal qualities of the enemies of his country at that period. Without discussing the justice of the opinions which Mr. Hannay has expressed at many points, with regard to the Americans, we think that, as a matter of taste, he has permitted himself too much liberty in the direction indicated. The historical facts of his book have, we believe, been gathered with great pains and with conscientious regard for accuracy. It is therefore really a very valuable historical work and is written in the lucid and attractive style of which Mr. Hannay is master, and it seems a pity to prejudice the

historical character of the book in the minds of many—especially American—readers by remarks which will be interpreted as indicating the attitude of the prejudiced partisan and special pleader from whom trustworthy historical statements are not to be expected. It is to be said, however, that if the author has expressed a very poor opinion of many of the American leaders and actors in the events of 1812-14, he has expressed an equally poor opinion of some of those on the Canadian side. Especially is this true of Sir George Prevost, then Governor-General of Canada, to whose unreadiness and incapacity—to use no stronger terms—are attributed most of the disasters which befell the British-Canadian cause in the course of the campaigns. We cordially recommend Dr. Hannay's story of the War of 1812 to our readers as a work embodying much research and information presented in a form which—for Canadian readers at least—makes it as interesting as a romance.

## New Ontario.

The explorations of the past few years have demonstrated the existence of large agricultural, mineral and forest wealth in the northern region embraced within the limits of the Province of Ontario. The extent of this wealth had been scarcely suspected, but it is evidently to be reckoned as a very considerable item in the resources of Canada. There is also, we believe, much partially explored territory in northern Quebec, which may prove to be rich in timber and in mineral wealth. Reference has been made in these columns from time to time to the resources which are being brought to light, and to some extent developed, in what is coming to be called New Ontario. The following extract from the report for 1900 of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Hon. J. E. Davis, will give additional information in regard to this new region of country which is being opened up, and especially respecting its capabilities for supporting an agricultural population. The Commissioner says: "A tract of arable land has been found, stretching from the Quebec boundary across the districts of Nipissing, Algoma and Thunder Bay, comprising an area of 24,500 square miles, or 15,080,000 acres. The soil is clay or a clay loam, nearly all suitable for farming purposes, and the region is watered by the Moose River and its tributaries, the Ahitibi, Mettagami and Missinabi, and the Albany and its tributaries, the Kenogami and Ogoke. The climate of this region is reported to have no features which would prevent the ripening of grain or the growing of root crops. It lies for the most part south of the 50th parallel of latitude, which crosses the Province of Manitoba near Winnipeg, and its climate will not differ much from that of the latter province. Crops of grain, potatoes and other vegetables and even small fruits were found growing as far north as James Bay. A great pulp-wood forest has been located north of the height of land extending across the district of Nipissing, Algoma and Thunder Bay, with a depth in some places of 150 miles. The timber embraces all the common pulp woods, such as spruce, poplar, jack pine and balsam of gilead, as well as tamarac and cedar along the banks of the streams. In the district of Nipissing, south of the height of land, an extensive pine forest was explored and estimated to contain about three billions of feet, board measure."

The present prospects as to the crops in Manitoba and the Northwest appear to be remarkably good. According to reports being published in some quarters, they were "never brighter," and it seems to be taken for granted that the grain crop of the country will be the greatest in its history. This is to be hoped for, but it is too early yet to form positive conclusions, or even to forecast approximate results, but all indications up to the present are favorable and the good prospect seems to be quite generally shared by the whole Northwest country. From all points in Manitoba, it is said, from Toulon on the north to Emerson on the international boundary, there is the same gratifying report. In the stretch of country northwest of Portage La Prairie, from McDonald to Yorktown and in the region northward of Brandon there are reports equally favorable. In southwestern Manitoba and southwestern Assinibois, we are told, the prospect can scarcely be better. In the Edmonton district indications are excellent. The only complaint as to the weather is that in some sections there has been somewhat too much rain. The crop outlook in Great Britain is not very encouraging, in Spain it is much better, while in Central Europe the prospect is said to be good in the Adriatic region and bad on the shores of the Baltic.

\* HISTORY OF THE WAR OF 1812 BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, BY JAMES HANNAY, D. C. L., Author of the History of Acadia, Life and Times of Sir Leonard Tilley, etc. St. John, N. B. Printed by John A. Bowen, 1901.