The general reader will find Forney's *Anecdotes* entertaining. The scholar will find this book useful more for what it tells about the thinking of the Gilded Age than for the stories it relates about historic personages.

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**Kenneth R. Nodyne**


"We have met the enemy and they are ours — two ships, two brigs, one schooner, and a sloop," wrote Commander Oliver Hazard Perry to General William Henry Harrison on September 10, 1813. Perry was referring to his signal victory over the British fleet on Lake Erie, one of the few bright spots for the United States during the frustrating War of 1812. John K. Mahon now provides a definitive history of that conflict, tracing in detail the significant battles on land and on water in *The War of 1812*.

Mahon does not deal with the causes of the war beyond noting a multiplicity of motives on the part of those favoring the contest, but he does insert a prologue wherein he recounts the events leading to war. Here the battle of Tippecanoe is detailed, a battle which Mahon regards as the opening battle of the war. Following the prologue, Mahon organizes his material topically by year. Thus, in the section for 1812 one finds such topics as "Reaction to the War," "William Hull," and "Naval Action on the Oceans." Also included is a final chapter on the negotiation of the Treaty of Ghent.

It should be noted that this book is more than a mere sterile treatment of military campaigns, for the operations of the war are placed within the context of politics and culture. In addition, Mahon's research is exhaustive, and his descriptions of battlefield maneuvers are superb and are easily understood. His narrations of naval battles are particularly outstanding. Whenever it is necessary for the author to use naval terms such as yaw, wear, or kedge, he provides a definition of the word at the bottom of the page. Another of the book's virtues is its balance. British sources are used, and the English point of view is given ample treatment. Moreover, proper proportion is allocated to the
many campaigns and battles fought in the Northwest and Southwest against the British and their Indian allies.

Mahon concludes that the United States was woefully unprepared for war with Great Britain. Although hostilities were imminent, Congress did not provide sufficient revenue to conduct the war. In addition, the nation had to rely heavily on ill-equipped, poorly trained militia, whose performance was, with a few important exceptions, something less than creditable. There was little effective coordination of the war effort from Washington; indeed this conflict is worth studying because it is an example of how a war should not be fought. Yet the exigencies of war prompted useful reforms which were completed in the years following the contest. Finally, Mahon asserts that the war struck a useful blow for national rights and served to reaffirm national independence.

Scholars will appreciate the book's large bibliography and the detailed index. Some will rue the placement of notes at the back of the book, but the text is heavily documented and researchers can follow the author's use of sources. Among the numerous illustrations are portraits of important figures, replicas of ships and battle scenes, and battlefield maps. This book provides an excellent blend of scholarship and readability; it is suitable reading for specialists, for students, and for interested laymen.

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PAUL F. LAMBERT

The Canals of Pennsylvania and the System of Internal Improvement.

With the completion of the Erie Canal, October 26, 1825, canal fever swept the United States. Before it subsided thousands of miles of canals were built in several states. Some of these canals are still in existence and operating today; others were doomed to failure at their birth.

The Main Line of Public Works of Pennsylvania, commonly called the Pennsylvania Canal, was one of the latter. Had it been a