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The Causes of the Civil War

Pelham G. Boyer

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distraction in a story written with rare credibility and enthusiasm.

This is a thorough and passionate look at the people, tactics, and equipment that shaped the world's first submarine campaigns and influenced submarine designs and operations well into the 1950s. It is a book for the serious naval historian or enthusiast.

CARLO O. SCHUSTER
Commander, U.S. Navy

short introductions that place each selection within the literature.

Inasmuch as in such a work the choice, truncation, arrangement, and introduction of the documents precondition what a reader can hope to take from them, the qualifications of the editor are crucial. Professor Stamp's, of course, are of the finest: the classic study of slavery, *The Peculiar Institution*, is only one of his many books, awards, and distinctions. Stamp as historian is represented here by a passage from that book, one that presents his own conviction of the centrality of slavery in the war's causes.

Stamp, Kenneth M., ed. *The Causes of the Civil War*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991. 255pp. \$10

"The Civil War," says Bernard de Voto in one of the selections in this collection, "is the crux of our history." Evidence of that fact is the number and variety of sources in this new third edition of Kenneth M. Stamp's *The Causes of the Civil War*, which first appeared in 1959. The book pulls together, in a way accessible to general readers, selections representing what appears to be the whole spectrum of opinion on the subject held by persons writing at the time or ever since. The present edition adds five new documents to the last (1974) version, for a new total of eighty-seven: primary and secondary, contemporary and subsequent. Stamp, as editor, provides a background summary (1787-1861), pithy comments on the study of historical causation in general, a list of recommended readings, an index, and, perhaps most usefully,

The editor sorts his documents among seven interpretive "prisms," or broad groupings of opinion as to those causes: that they lay in a conflict between a "Slave Power" and the "Black Republicans"; or, between states' rights and nationalism; or, between attackers and defenders of slavery; or, that this was fundamentally an economic matter; or, one of gross failure of leadership; or, a systematic failure of democracy to adjudicate internal contradictions.

Documents in all these sections are selected so as to address simultaneously, as if in a matrix, three related and overarching questions: Why had the sections been so mutually hostile before the war, and for so long? Why was secession the immediate response of the Deep South to Lincoln's election? Why were most Northerners unwilling simply to let the Southern states go? Professor Stamp offers no concluding assessment of these issues,

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but the readings, arranged chronologically within sections and reflecting nuances of opinion on each side of each issue, provide plenty of evidence as to what it might be.

One rewarding kind of analysis the editor leaves for the reader is the collecting of common threads. Such threads might be the importance of party politics (see Silbey, Boucher, and Benton); the Civil War—vice, presumably, the War of 1812—as the “second American Revolution” (the Beards, and others); and the fragility (Allan Nevens, cf. David Donald) of “an atmosphere in which every episode became a crisis.” There are curiosities in this entertaining book (like Hamilton J. Eckenrode’s view of Southerners as “Tropic Nordics”), and some memorable grotesqueries (Richard H. Shryock, in 1933, dismissing “Platonic abstractions like Union and Freedom” as matters for “sentimentalists”).

The Causes of the Civil War remains in this third edition an indispensable tool. It is a must-read for students of the period and a must-use for its teachers. The book is itself evidence of the urgency of the need, unabated for over 130 years, to revisit continually the sources and attempt to illuminate this crisis that could be resolved, in John Quincy Adams’s words, “only at the cannon’s mouth.”

PELHAM G. BOYER
Naval War College

Dudley, William S. *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, Vol. II. Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1992. 770pp. (No price given)

This second volume of William S. Dudley’s *The Naval War of 1812* continues his project of reviving an area of history long neglected by American scholars: the compilation of a reliable and comprehensive documentary naval history of that conflict. The standard collection of materials pertaining to the American side of the conflict was assembled less than a decade after the Treaty of Ghent by John Brannan, who edited *Official Letters of the Military and Naval Officers of the United States, during the War with Great Britain in the Years 1812, 13, 14, & 15*, published in 1823. Unfortunately, little has emerged since in this genre. On the other hand, British and Canadian historians have literally blown the Americans out of the water with the publication of significant documentary collections. Earnest Cruikshank, and later William Wood, set the standard with their multi-volumed collection of material relating to British and Canadian activities during the war, which may someday be utilized for a similar effort focusing on American documents.

Fortunately, American scholarship has begun to catch up, at least regarding the naval aspects of the war. Dudley and his colleagues at the Naval Historical Center have engaged in the long-needed project to produce a three-volume set of material relating