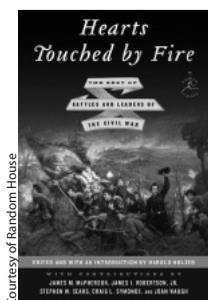


progress towards achieving the intellectual comfort that is commonly accepted as being part of peace.



Courtesy of Random House

New York: Random House, 2011

1,264 pages

\$38.00

## ***Hearts Touched by Fire: The Best of Battles and Leaders of the Civil War***

Edited by Harold Holzer

**Reviewed by COL (Ret.) Cole C. Kingseed**, former professor of history at the US Military Academy, writer and consultant

Originally conceived in 1883 by the editors of *The Century* magazine, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* appeared four years later and contained first-hand accounts from senior officers from both sides, documenting the significant battles and events of this nation's bloodiest conflict. Now, to coincide with the sesquicentennial of the war, editor Harold Holzer has compiled a new collection of the best writing from the original four-volume series with the stated purpose of creating an accurate account of the conflict. Assisting Holzer are some of the most renowned contemporary historians, including Pulitzer Prize winner James McPherson, James Robertson, Stephen Sears, Craig Symonds and Joan Waugh, each of whom provides a contextual introduction of a specific year of the Civil War.

Holzer brings impressive credentials to *Hearts Touched by Fire*. He is one of the country's leading authorities on the political culture of the Civil War era. Holzer is also a frequent guest on television programs such as *The Today Show*, *Charlie Rose*, Fox News, and the *NewsHour* with Jim Lehrer. In addition, he has authored, coauthored, and edited thirty-six books, including *The Confederate Image* (1987), *The Union Image* (1990), *Eyewitness to War: The Civil War* (1996), and *In Lincoln's Hand* (2009). Most recently, Holzer was awarded the National Humanities Medal and he currently serves as the senior vice president for external affairs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The original articles that appeared in *Battles and Leaders* were written by Union and Confederate generals who had commanded the engagements two decades earlier—"or, if he were not living," by "the person most entitled to speak for him or in his place." Consequently, a number of senior commanders immediately signed on to contribute to the project. Ulysses S. Grant, initially dismissive of the project, changed his mind when his personal economic fortunes precipitously declined. At Grant's urging, so did Generals William T. Sherman and Admiral David Dixon Porter, quickly followed by Confederate Generals Joseph E. Johnston and James Longstreet and a host of subordinate commanders. What Holzer hopes to accomplish in *Hearts Touched by Fire* is "a new cycle of public attention, with the best of *Battles and Leaders* again at its very core."

What makes this particular volume particularly informative are the introductions provided by current historians that place the contemporary essays into perspective. Craig Symonds examines the initial ten months of the

American Civil War—from Lincoln's inauguration in March to the beginning of the first wartime winter—a period of experimentation and adjustment for both combatants. The contemporary account of Sergeant James Chester, who worked tirelessly to prepare Fort Sumter for defense, reveals that, stunning as it was, the subsequent first shot was hardly a surprise to the garrison. Symonds notes that two essays on the First Battle of Bull Run are especially intriguing, more for what they reveal about the internal bickering in the upper echelons of Confederate leadership than the details of the engagement itself. Confederate Generals P.G.T. Beauregard and Joseph E. Johnston both sought to claim credit for the ensuing Confederate victory to the discredit of the other. Apparently, the road to Southern victory in the war's first major battle was not wide enough for two senior generals to walk abreast.

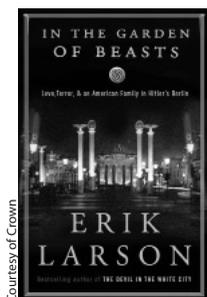
Of 1862, Stephen Sears writes that the year ended as it began, with the Union war effort seemingly stalled on dead center. "Our military condition I am sorry to say, does not appear as yet to improve," President Abraham Lincoln's secretary John G. Nicolay noted to a friend. Historian James McPherson picks up the story by opining that in early 1863, "Defeatism in the North was an anguish of the spirit caused by military defeat, while Southerners were buoyed up by military success but were suffering from hyperinflation and shortages." While Sears focuses on the contributions of the war's commanders, McPherson delivers a narrative account of the war in its most crucial year.

Readers of *Parameters* will relish the revelations of some of the war's more controversial commanders. Union Second Corps commander Major General Darius N. Couch provides insight into the divisions within the Union high command of the Army of the Potomac after the Battle of Chancellorsville, after Major General Joseph Hooker decided to abandon the field. Couch attributed the Federal defeat to Hooker's mistaken impression that Robert E. Lee would fall back without risking battle. Finding himself mistaken, "Hooker assumed the defensive, and was outgeneraled and became demoralized by the superior tactical boldness of the enemy."

Lee's I Corps commander General Longstreet writes an equally provocative account of his chieftain's restructuring of the Army of Northern Virginia following Stonewall Jackson's demise on 10 May 1863. Longstreet views Lee's reorganization of the Confederate army as a direct result of Lee's desire to have a second and third corps under the command of fellow Virginians. Lee's decision to elevate Generals Richard Ewell and Ambrose P. Hill to corps command (in Longstreet's opinion) overlooked "the claims of other generals, most notably Longstreet protégés John Bell Hood and Lafayette McLaws, who had been active and very efficient in the service."

Such candid assessments by Generals Couch and Longstreet suggest that a lack of harmony characterized the senior echelons in virtually every Civil War army. Many of the Confederate writers are sharply critical of Jefferson Davis's leadership for "drift[ing], from the beginning to the end of the war" while a few Union writers remain equally condemnatory of Lincoln, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, and General-in-chief Henry Halleck. In the final

analysis, however, the sixty-two essays by the war's most illustrious commanders, coupled with five year-by-year introductions by America's most esteemed historians, make *Hearts Touched by Fire* indispensable reading for any student of this country's bloodiest conflict.



New York: Crown,  
2011

448 pages

\$26.00

## ***In the Garden of the Beasts: Love, Terror and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin***

by Erik Larson

**Reviewed by Henry G. Gole**, now writing the biography of Colonel Truman Smith, Military Attaché in Berlin, 1935-1939

Erik Larson, an experienced and highly successful writer, has done it again: *In the Garden of the Beasts* is near the top of *The New York Times* bestseller list. Briskly told in short chapters, it focuses on Ambassador William E. Dodd and his twenty-four-year-old daughter Martha in Berlin. Rich in detail reflecting extensive research, it begins with their arrival in July 1933 and ends on 30 June 1934, the Night of the Long Knives, when Hitler purged his party of insufficiently obedient elements by having Ernst Roehm and other old SA (*Sturmabteilung*, the brown-shirted Nazi paramilitary army) Kameraden murdered. While at it, he also eliminated other political enemies, among them two army generals. Appalled at the barbarism, Dodd never again spoke to Hitler and had as little contact with top Nazis as possible. He had earlier refused to attend the Party Days in Nuremberg that celebrated Hitler and the Nazis, an admirable stance. But how useful is an ambassador who refuses to speak to the government to which he is accredited?

The Dodd family—four members, but wife Mattie and adult son Bill are minor figures in the book—remained in Berlin for four and a half years. Larson explains: “It is their first year that is the subject of the story to follow, for it coincided with Hitler’s ascent from chancellor to absolute tyrant.” What was it like to dine, dance, and joke with Goebbels and Goering? Larson attempted to recreate what it was like to have witnessed that year firsthand, and he has succeeded.

Dodd was not the first choice of newly inaugurated President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s to be Ambassador to Germany. In fact, Larson writes, “No one wanted the job.” When approached by Roosevelt to take up the post, Dodd asked for time to think about it. He was reluctant to accept, dubious about his own effectiveness, and, at best, willing to give Hitler and his gang benefit of the doubt. These facts had to be considered: he was not rich; he had little political influence; he was associated with deceased President Woodrow Wilson’s internationalism, anathema to isolationists; he was professor of history at the University of Chicago and designated as President of the American Historical Association; his priority was completing another volume of his *Old South*, a history, and was in his middle sixties; he was a devoted family man concerned with the futures of his adult children. On the other hand, he had access to