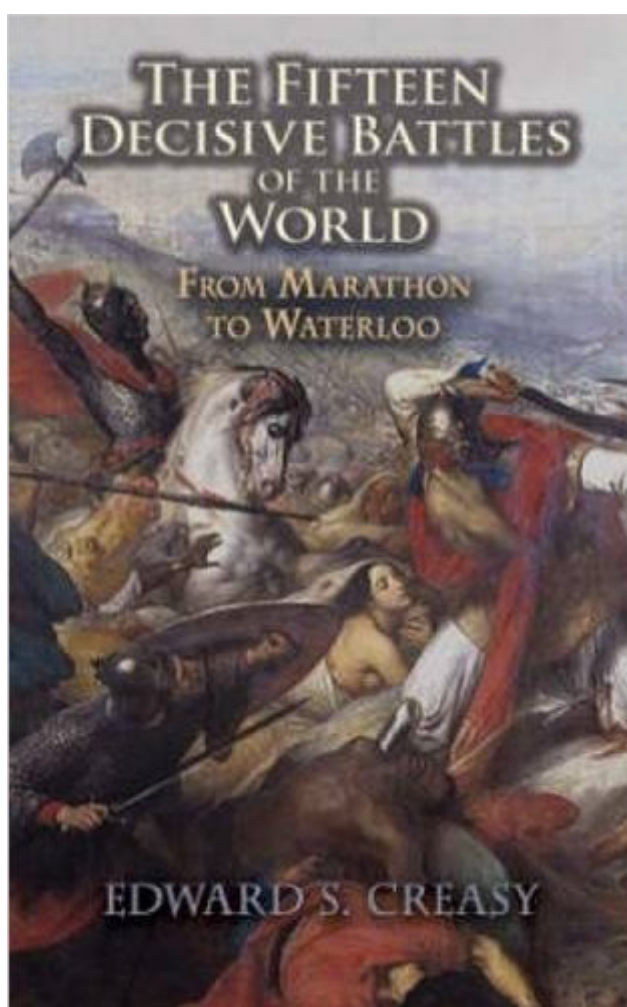


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# The Fifteen Decisive Battles Of The World: From Marathon To Waterloo (Dover Military History, Weapons, Armor)



## Synopsis

Ranging from Marathon to Waterloo, this classic of military history chronicles battles that changed the course of history. Originally published in 1851, at the zenith of British imperial power, it found an eager audience of readers who wanted to understand how Britain had achieved its tremendous influence and how long it would last. Since then, these chronicles of ancient and modern military confrontations have informed and inspired generations of students and armchair historians. Educated at Eton College and the University of Cambridge, Sir Edward Shepherd Creasy was called to the Bar in 1837, appointed to the faculty of the University of London in 1840, and served as Chief Justice of Ceylon from 1860 to 1870. Creasy's scholarship and literary skill are complemented by his judicial attitude, which endows this book with a fair-minded, nonpartisan approach. He prefaces each battle with an introduction that explains the circumstances surrounding the war, as well as an afterword that considers how history might have changed had victory gone to the other side. Linking passages offer valuable insights into historical events that occurred between the major encounters. Influential and ever-popular, this book offers authoritative and entertaining analyses of the conflicts that shaped world history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

No less an authority than John Keegan has given this book his blessing, so don't be misled by negative reviews. This book is a classic in the field of military history. No history is unbiased. History is an art not a science. And it is a great art. It can move and inspire as well as instruct us about

human nature. Historical writers who can weave myth and symbolism in to their writing carry forward important ideas and concepts for the collective. This is precisely what Creasy has done in his book, organizing his material around the idea that war is productive of something. He influenced every writer of military history who followed. That in itself is enough to promote the book. "15 Decisive Battles" is an excellent introduction to general military history, a perspective often missing in college history courses. I read it many years ago and have since read many different treatments of these basic 15 battles. Ultimately one picks one's preferred viewpoint. Creasy is a generalist but for that very reason, this a good book to start with. Incidentally, I challenge the reviewer who questions the description of the Battle of Teutoburger Wald. I have read the Latin version in Latin and the German version in German and they are absolutely consistent with this British version. I was quite amazed, so try it and see for yourself. I love this book and I really want to recommend it to you. I give it 5 stars and no, I am not queasy on Creasy.

The Battle of Waterloo in 1815 was still a living memory when this book was written. It was a bestseller in Victorian England in 1851, rivaling Darwin's Origin of The Species. It was reprinted 38 times before the turn of the 20th century that obviously appealed to British sensibilities. The background and context of the battle, the personalities involved, the grisly action, the aftermath and historical importance are superbly written. If writing about combat while respecting history can be said to be literature, this book is it. This book started a trend in making war books about battles popular. The selection of battles has stood the test of time. Every library of military history should have this classic. It might even be purchased for the beautiful Victorian English. The 15 battles are: (1) Battle of Marathon, 490 B.C. (2) Defeat of Athenians at Syracuse, 413 B.C. (3) Battle of Arbela, 331 B.C. (4) Battle of the Metaurus, 207 B.C. (5) Victory of Arminius over the Roman legions under Varus, A.D. 9 (6) Battle of Chalons, A.D. 451 (7) Battle of Tours, A.D. 732 (8) Battle of Hastings, A.D. 1066 (9) Joan of Arc's victory over the English at Orleans, A.D. 1429 (10) Defeat of the Spanish Armada, A.D. 1588 (11) Battle of Blenheim, A.D. 1704 (12) Battle of Pultowa, A.D. 1709 (13) Victory of the Americans over Burgoyne at Saratoga, A.D. 1777 (14) Battle of Valmy, A.D. 1792 (15) Battle of Waterloo, A.D. 1815

If you enjoy reading history this one is a must. Written long ago, it necessarily omits more recent military candidates, but it vividly captures 15 moments when history stood at a cusp (perhaps Marathon and Waterloo in particular). The free version contains no maps, which are really necessary, so you might consider paying a little extra to get them. I first read this book decades ago,

and it's still a classic of style and erudition.

It's difficult to rate this book, since it depends on one's purposes in reading it. As history, Sir Creasy's book is of uneven quality, with many essays decently crafted and a few basically tripe; but as historiography, it's a rare and fascinating window into the Victorian mindset and worldview. Creasy published his book during the apogee of the British Empire, in the 1850s, when the country's rule over distant lands was both incredibly expansive after nearly a century of settling and warring, and seemingly secure 35 years after Napoleon's ignominious defeat in the fields of Waterloo. He is at his best especially in describing the ancient battles for which it is easier to maintain a scholarly distance; the battles of Marathon and Arbela, for example, are both well-researched and, overall, admirably portrayed. He is a first-rate wordsmith with an extraordinary command of the art of prose, with an evocative ability to build an image of a battle and its belligerents-- it's the kind of heroic fluff that we so often find suffusing the collective memory that Victorian authors put down on paper, only better in its stylistic and rhetorical aspects. One of the book's most useful characteristics, indeed, is the degree and manner in which it utilizes primary sources; it's a bibliographical treasure in this regard. But Creasy makes not even a furtive attempt to hide his biases and inclinations, especially in regard to events perceived to be antecedent to the British Empire that he so lauds at every turn. To be fair, he's not a blind nationalist. He does, for example, provide one of the most measured and detailed evocations of the extraordinary changes wrought by Peter the Great and the resultant rise of Russia in his description of the Battle of Poltava. He acknowledges the unparalleled contribution of Britain's erstwhile rival, the French, to civilization in his essay on Joan of Arc and the Battle of Orleans. But in many essays the book comes off as basically a panegyric that extols the Anglo-Saxon nation, freely interpolating editorial comments and boasting an unabashed triumphalism, at times even gleefully twisting facts and analysis to suit the proto-Kiplingesque notions of the empire on which no one believed the sun would ever set. The essay on the Teutoberger Wald battle of 9 A.D. frankly made me cringe. Not only are their numerous omissions, tenuous stretches of logic and dubious, clearly biased interpretations (for which an objective analysis would cast serious doubt over his choice of this battle at all in terms of actual significance)-Creasy displays a distressingly outspoken nationalism that seems overwrought even by the standards of his own time. His essay on the Spanish Armada is similar in its chest-thumping, to the extent it entirely neglects to mention the 16-year naval war (and the Spanish victories therein) that transpired after the 1588 battle; the essays on Blenheim and Valmy suffer from the same ailment. The essay on the Battle of Poitiers pitting the Franks against the Moslem forces in 732

comes off as an encomium to the Frankish leader rather than a historical examination, though admittedly Creasy's use of various primary sources and his consideration of some of the battle's details are exemplary. His study of Hastings is even-handed and remarkably detailed. Possibly the most fascinating composition concerns the Battle of Saratoga in the American Revolution, glimpsed through British eyes; one gets a sense of the bitterness and despair that the British defeat induced for the nation that could have so easily possessed quite a jewel in her empire! Basically, as history, Creasy's book is somewhat spotty-it doesn't even pretend to be objective, and there are more than a few oversights and misconstruances. But many of the essays are of high quality from any standpoint, and you can't fault Creasy for the detail, writing style, and especially the lucid use of primary sources that he brings to his book; if a reader is careful to document sources and check facts, it's possible to learn a good deal. The book's greatest value, however, lies in the fact that it enables a reader to peer into the thought processes that drove a Victorian writer upon rising in the morning; it's rare to have such an opportunity to actually gauge how people of a previous era \*thought\* as well as acted, and undoubtedly for this the book is quite useful.

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