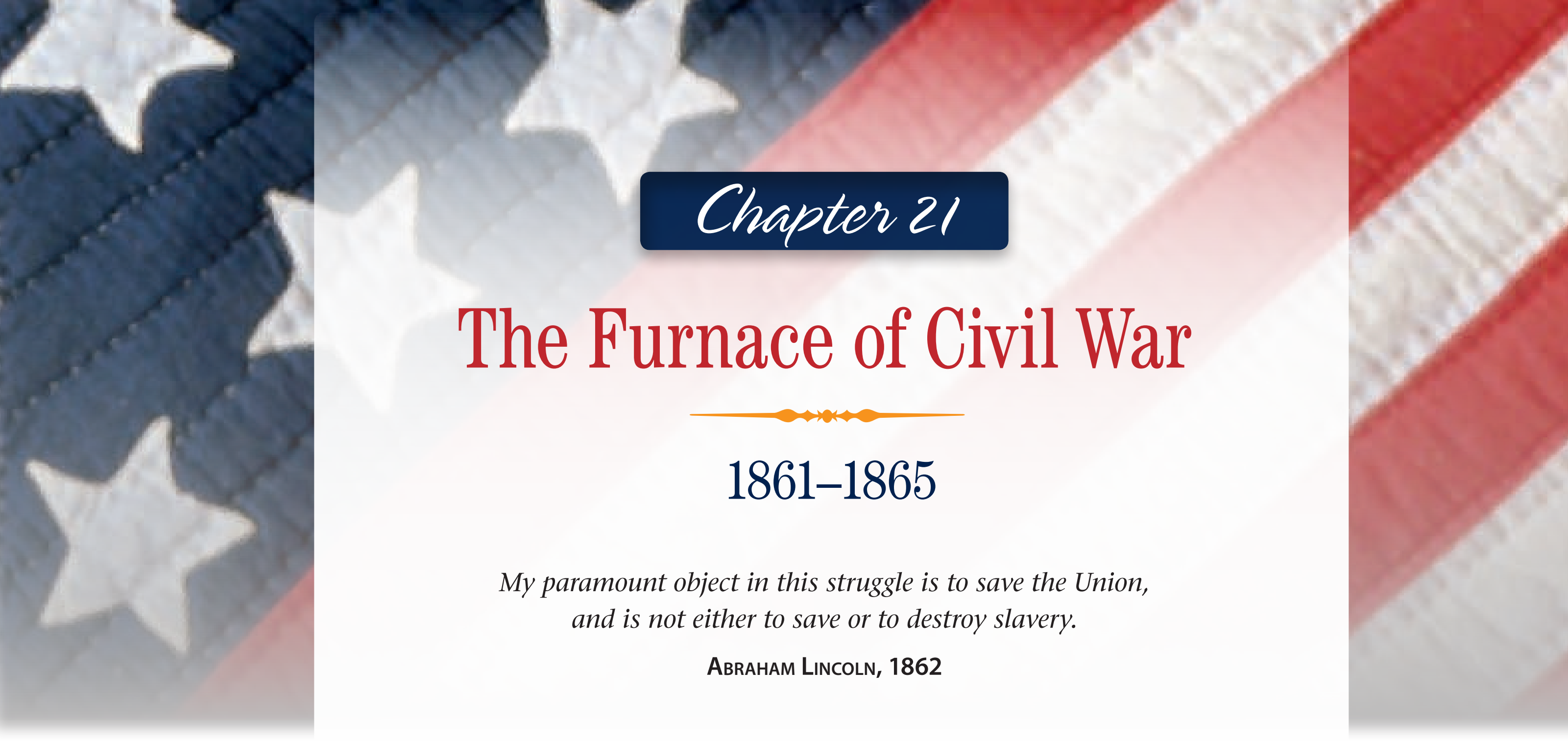

Chapter 21

The Furnace of Civil War

1861–1865

My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery.

Abraham Lincoln, 1862

When President Lincoln issued his call to the states for seventy-five thousand militiamen on April 15, 1861, he envisioned them serving for only ninety days. Reaffirming his limited war aims, he declared that he had "no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with slavery in the States where it exists." With a swift flourish of federal force, he hoped to show the folly of secession and rapidly return the rebellious states to the Union. But the war was to be neither brief nor limited. When the guns fell silent four years later, hundreds of thousands of soldiers on both sides lay dead, slavery was ended forever, and the nation faced the challenge of reintegrating the defeated but still recalcitrant South into the Union.

Bull Run Ends the "Ninety-Day War"

Northern newspapers, at first sharing Lincoln's expectation of a quick victory, raised the cry "On to Richmond!" In this yeasty atmosphere, a Union army of some thirty thousand men drilled near Washington in the summer of 1861. It was ill-prepared for battle, but the press and the public clamored for action. Lincoln eventually concluded that an attack on a smaller Confederate force at **Bull Run (Manassas Junction)**, some thirty miles southwest of Washington, might be worth a try. If successful, it would demonstrate the superiority of Union arms. It might even lead to the capture of the Confederate capital at Richmond, one hundred miles to the south. If Richmond fell, secession would be thoroughly discredited, and the Union could be restored without damage to the economic and social system of the South.

Raw Yankee recruits swaggered out of Washington toward Bull Run on July 21, 1861, as if they were headed for a sporting event. Congressmen and spectators trailed along with their lunch baskets to witness the fun. At first the battle went well for the Yankees. But Thomas J. ("Stonewall") Jackson's gray-clad warriors stood like a stone wall (here he won his nickname), and Confederate reinforcements arrived unexpectedly.

An observer behind the Union lines described the Federal troops' pell-mell retreat from the battlefield at Bull Run:

"We called to them, tried to tell them there was no danger, called them to stop, implored them to stand. We called them cowards, denounced them in the most offensive terms, put out our heavy revolvers, and threatened to shoot them, but all in vain; a cruel, crazy, mad, hopeless panic possessed them, and communicated to everybody about in front and rear. The heat was awful, although now about six; the men were exhausted—their mouths gaped, their lips cracked and blackened with powder of the cartridges they had bitten off in battle, their eyes staring in frenzy; no mortal ever saw such a mass of ghastly wretches."

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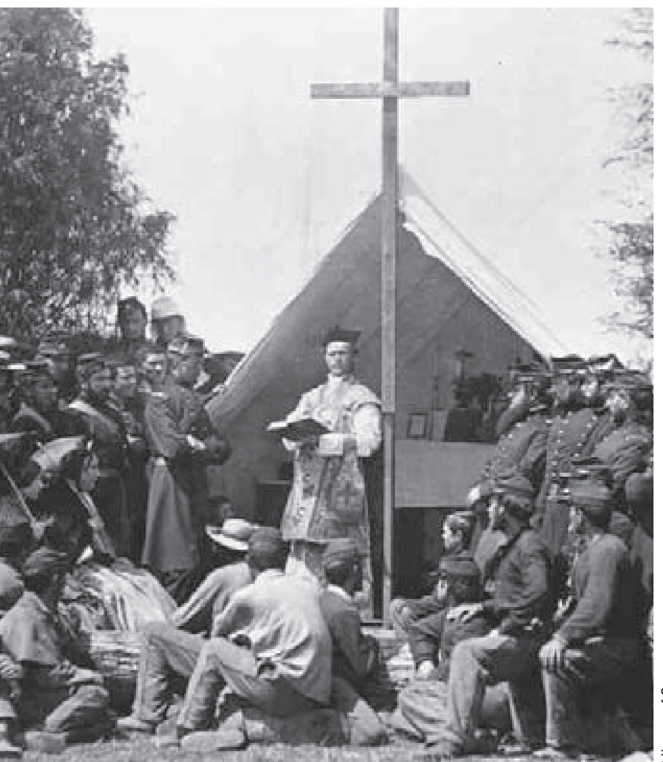
The Army of the Potomac Marching up Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C., 1861 In this painting Union troops parade before the Battle of Bull Run. Colorfully uniformed, they are a regiment of Zouaves, who adopted the name and style of military dress from a legendarily dashing French infantry unit recruited from Berber tribesmen in North Africa. But bright uniforms were not enough to win battles, and these troops were soon to be routed by the Confederates.

West Point Museum Art Collection, United States Military Academy



Library of Congress

Preparing for Battle These troops of the 69th New York State Militia, a largely Irish regiment, were photographed attending Sunday morning Mass in May 1861, just weeks before the Battle of Bull Run. Because the regiment was camped near Washington, D.C., women were able to visit.

Panic seized the green Union troops, many of whom fled in shameful confusion. The Confederates, themselves too exhausted or disorganized to pursue, feasted on captured lunches.

The "military picnic" at Bull Run, though not decisive militarily, bore significant psychological and political consequences, many of them paradoxical. Victory was worse than defeat for the South, because it inflated an already dangerous overconfidence. Many of the Southern soldiers promptly deserted, some boastfully to display their trophies, others feeling that the war was now surely over. Southern enlistments fell off sharply, and preparations for a protracted conflict slackened. Defeat was better than victory for the Union, because it dispelled all illusions of a one-punch war and caused the Northerners to buckle down to the staggering task at hand. It also set the stage for a war that would be waged not merely for the cause of Union but also, eventually, for the abolitionist ideal of emancipation.

"Tardy George" McClellan and the Peninsula Campaign

Northern hopes brightened later in 1861, when General George B. McClellan was given command of the Army of the Potomac, as the major Union force near Washington was now called. Red-haired and red-mustached, strong and stocky, McClellan was a brilliant, thirty-four-year-old West Pointer. As a serious student of warfare who was dubbed "Young Napoleon," he had seen plenty of fighting, first in the Mexican War and then as an observer of the Crimean War in Russia.

Cocky George McClellan embodied a curious mixture of virtues and defects. He was a superb organizer and drillmaster, and he injected splendid morale into the Army of the Potomac. Hating to sacrifice his troops, he was idolized by his men, who affectionately

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called him "Little Mac." But he was a perfectionist who seems not to have realized that an army is never ready to the last button and that wars cannot be won without running some risks. He consistently but erroneously believed that the enemy outnumbered him, partly because his intelligence reports from the head of Pinkerton's Detective Agency were unreliable. He was overcautious—Lincoln once accused him of having "the slows"—and he addressed the president in an arrogant tone that a less forgiving person would never have tolerated. Privately the general referred to his chief as a "baboon."

As McClellan doggedly continued to drill his army without moving it toward Richmond, the derisive Northern watchword became "All Quiet Along the Potomac." The song of the hour was "Tardy George" (McClellan). After threatening to "borrow" the army if it was not going to be used, Lincoln finally issued firm orders to advance.

A reluctant McClellan at last decided upon a waterborne approach to Richmond, which lies at the western base of a narrow peninsula formed by the James and York Rivers—hence the name given to this historic encounter: the **Peninsula Campaign** (see Map 21.1). McClellan warily inched toward the Confederate capital in the spring of 1862 with about 100,000 men. After taking a month to capture historic Yorktown, which bristled with imitation wooden cannon, he finally came within sight of the spires of Richmond. At this crucial juncture, Lincoln diverted McClellan's anticipated reinforcements to chase "Stonewall" Jackson, whose lightning feints in the Shenandoah Valley seemed to put Washington, D.C., in jeopardy. Stalled in front of Richmond, McClellan was further frustrated when "Jeb" Stuart's Confederate cavalry rode completely around his army on reconnaissance. Then General Robert E. Lee launched a devastating counterattack—the Seven Days' Battles—June 26–July 2, 1862. The Confederates slowly drove McClellan back to the sea. The Union forces abandoned the Peninsula Campaign as a costly failure, and Lincoln temporarily abandoned McClellan as commander of the Army of the Potomac—though Lee's army had suffered some twenty thousand casualties to McClellan's ten thousand.

Lee had achieved a brilliant, if bloody, triumph. Yet the ironies of his accomplishment are striking. If McClellan had succeeded in taking Richmond and ending the war in mid-1862, the Union would probably have been restored with minimal disruption to the "peculiar institution." Slavery would have survived, at

Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865) treated the demands of George McClellan for reinforcements and his excuses for inaction with infinite patience. One exception came when the general complained that his horses were tired. On October 24, 1862, Lincoln wrote,

"I have just read your dispatch about sore-tongued and fatigued horses. Will you pardon me for asking what the horses of your army have done since the battle of Antietam that fatigues anything?"

MAP 21.1 Peninsula Campaign, 1862 © Cengage Learning

A Confederate soldier assigned to burial detail after the Seven Days' Battles (1862) wrote,

"The sights and smells that assailed us were simply indescribable . . . corpses swollen to twice their original size, some of them actually burst asunder with the pressure of foul gasses. . . . The odors were so nauseating and so deadly that in a short time we all sickened and were lying with our mouths close to the ground, most of us vomiting profusely."

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National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Behring Center

Civil War Scene (detail)
A Federal brigade repulses a Confederate assault at Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1862, as the Peninsula Campaign presses toward Richmond. General Winfield Scott Hancock commanded the troops. For his success in this action, Hancock earned the nickname "The Superb."

least for a time. By his successful defense of Richmond and defeat of McClellan, Lee had in effect ensured that the war would endure until slavery was uprooted and the Old South thoroughly destroyed. Lincoln himself, who had earlier professed his unwillingness to tamper with slavery where it already existed, now declared that the rebels "cannot experiment for ten years trying to destroy the government and if they fail still come back into the Union unhurt." He began to draft an emancipation proclamation.

Union strategy now turned toward total war (see Map 21.2). As finally developed, the Northern military plan had six components: first, slowly suffocate the South by blockading its coasts; second, liberate the slaves and hence undermine the very economic foundations of the Old South; third, cut the Confederacy in half by seizing control of the Mississippi River backbone; fourth, chop the Confederacy to pieces by sending troops through Georgia and the Carolinas; fifth, decapitate it by capturing its capital at Richmond; and sixth (this was Ulysses Grant's idea especially), try everywhere to engage the enemy's main strength and to grind it into submission.

The War at Sea

The blockade started leakily: it was not clamped down all at once but was extended by degrees. A watertight patrol of some thirty-five hundred miles of coast was impossible for the hastily improvised Northern navy, which counted converted yachts and ferryboats in its fleet. But blockading was simplified by concentrating on the principal ports and inlets where dock facilities were available for loading bulky bales of cotton.

How was the blockade regarded by the naval powers of the world? Ordinarily, they probably would have defied it, for it was never completely effective and was especially sievelike at the outset. But Britain, the greatest maritime nation, recognized it as binding and warned its shippers that they ignored it at their peril. Britain plainly did not want to tie its hands in a future war by insisting that Lincoln maintain impossibly high blockading standards.

Blockade-running was risky but profitable, as the growing scarcity of Southern goods drove prices skyward. The most successful blockade runners were swift, gray-painted steamers, scores of which were specially built in Scotland. A leading rendezvous was the West Indies port of Nassau, in the British Bahamas, where at one time thirty-five of the speedy ships rode at anchor. The low-lying craft would take on cargoes of arms brought in by tramp steamers from Britain, leave with fraudulent papers for "Halifax" (Canada), and then return a few days later with a cargo of cotton. The risks were great, but the profits would mount to 700 percent and more for lucky gamblers. Two successful voyages might well pay for capture on a third. The lush days

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MAP 21.2 Main Thrusts, 1861–1865 Northern strategists at first believed that the rebellion could be snuffed out quickly by a swift, crushing blow. But the stiffness of Southern resistance to the Union's early probes, and the North's inability to strike with sufficient speed and severity, revealed that the conflict would be a war of attrition, long and bloody. © Cengage Learning

of blockade-running finally passed as Union squadrons gradually pinched off the leading Southern ports, from New Orleans to Charleston.

The Northern navy enforced the blockade with high-handed practices. Yankee captains, for example, would seize British freighters on the high seas, if laden with war supplies for the tiny port of Nassau and other halfway stations. The justification was that obviously these shipments were "ultimately" destined, by devious routes, for the Confederacy.

London, although not happy, acquiesced in this disagreeable doctrine of "ultimate destination" or "continuous voyage." British blockaders might need to take advantage of the same far-fetched interpretation in a future war—as in fact they did in the world war of 1914–1918.

The most alarming Confederate threat to the blockade came in 1862. Resourceful Southerners raised and reconditioned a former wooden U.S. warship, the ***Merrimack***, and plated its sides with old iron railroad rails. Renamed the *Virginia*, this clumsy but powerful monster easily destroyed two wooden ships of the Union navy in the Virginia waters of Chesapeake Bay; it also threatened catastrophe to the entire Yankee blockading fleet. (Actually the homemade ironclad was not a seaworthy craft.)

A tiny Union ironclad, the ***Monitor***, built in about one hundred days, arrived on the scene in the nick of time. For four hours, on March 9, 1862, the little "Yankee cheesebox on a raft" fought the wheezy *Merrimack* to a standstill. Britain and France had already built several powerful ironclads, but the first battle-testing

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When news reached Washington that the Merrimack had sunk two wooden Yankee warships with ridiculous ease, President Lincoln, much "excited," summoned his advisers. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles (1802–1878) recorded,

"The most frightened man on that gloomy day . . . was the Secretary of War [Stanton]. He was at times almost frantic. . . . The *Merrimack*, he said, would destroy every vessel in the service, could lay every city on the coast under contribution, could take Fortress Monroe. . . . Likely the first movement of the *Merrimack* would be to come up the Potomac and disperse Congress, destroy the Capitol and public buildings."

of these new craft heralded the doom of wooden warships. A few months after the historic battle, the Confederates destroyed the *Merrimack* to keep it from the grasp of advancing Union troops.

The Pivotal Point: Antietam

Robert E. Lee, having broken the back of McClellan's assault on Richmond, next moved northward. At the **Second Battle of Bull Run** (August 29–30, 1862), he encountered a Federal force under General John Pope. A handsome, dashing, soldierly figure, Pope boasted that in the western theater of war, from which he had recently come, he had seen only the backs of the enemy. Lee quickly gave him a front view, furiously attacking Pope's troops and inflicting a crushing defeat.

Emboldened by this success, Lee daringly thrust into Maryland. He hoped to strike a blow that would not only encourage foreign intervention but also seduce the still-wavering Border State and its sisters from the Union. The Confederate troops sang lustily:

Thou wilt not cower in the dust,
Maryland! my Maryland!
Thy gleaming sword shall never rust,
Maryland! my Maryland!

But the Marylanders did not respond to the siren song. The presence among the invaders of so many blanketless, hatless, and shoeless soldiers dampened the state's ardor.

Events finally converged toward a critical battle at **Antietam** Creek, Maryland. Lincoln, yielding to popular pressure, hastily restored "Little Mac" to active command of the main Northern army. His soldiers tossed their caps skyward and hugged his horse as they hailed his return. Fortune shone upon McClellan when two Union soldiers found a copy of Lee's battle plans wrapped around a packet of three cigars dropped by a careless Confederate officer. With this crucial piece of intelligence in hand, McClellan succeeded in halting Lee at Antietam on September 17, 1862, in one of the bitterest and bloodiest days of the war.

Antietam was more or less a draw militarily. But Lee, finding his thrust parried, retired across the Potomac. McClellan, from whom much more had been hoped, was removed from his field command for the second and final time. His numerous critics, condemning him for not having boldly pursued the ever-dangerous Lee, finally got his scalp.

The landmark Battle of Antietam was one of the decisive engagements of world history—probably the most decisive of the Civil War. Jefferson Davis was perhaps never again so near victory as on that fateful summer day. The British and French governments were on the verge of diplomatic mediation, a form of interference sure to be angrily resented by the North. An almost certain rebuff by Washington might well have spurred Paris and London into armed collusion with Richmond. But both capitals cooled off when the Union displayed unexpected power at Antietam, and their chill deepened with the passing months.

Bloody Antietam was also the long-awaited "victory" that Lincoln needed for launching his **Emancipation Proclamation**. The abolitionists had long been clamoring for action: Wendell Phillips was denouncing the president as a "first-rate second-rate man." By midsummer of 1862, with the Border States safely in the fold, Lincoln was ready to move. But he believed that to issue such an edict on the heels of a series of military disasters would be folly. It would seem like a confession that the North, unable to conquer the South, was forced to call upon the slaves to murder their masters. Lincoln therefore decided to wait for the outcome of Lee's invasion.

Antietam served as the needed emancipation springboard. The halting of Lee's offensive was just enough of a victory to justify Lincoln's issuing, on September 23, 1862, the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. This hope-giving document announced that on January 1, 1863, the president would issue a final proclamation.

On the scheduled date, he fully redeemed his promise, and the Civil War became more of a moral crusade as the fate of slavery and the South it had sustained was sealed. The war now became more of what Lincoln called a "remorseless revolutionary struggle." After January 1, 1863, Lincoln said, "the character of the war will be changed. It will be one of subjuga-

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US Army Military History Institute

The Killing Fields of Antietam These Confederate corpses testify to the awful slaughter of the battle. The twelve-hour fight at Antietam Creek ranks as the bloodiest single day of the war, with more than ten thousand Confederate casualties and even more on the Union side. "At last the battle ended," one historian wrote, "smoke heavy in the air, the twilight quivering with the anguished cries of thousands of wounded men."

tion. . . . The [old] South is to be destroyed and replaced by new propositions and ideas."

A Proclamation Without Emancipation

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 declared "forever free" the slaves in those Confederate areas still in rebellion. Bondsmen in the loyal Border States were not affected, nor were those in specific conquered areas in the South—all told, about 800,000. The tone of the document was dull and legalistic (one historian has said that it had all the moral grandeur of a bill of lading). But if Lincoln stopped short of a clarion call for a holy war to achieve freedom, he pointedly concluded his historic document by declaring that the proclamation was "an act of justice" and calling for "the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God."

The presidential pen did not formally strike the shackles from a single slave. Where Lincoln could presumably free the slaves—that is, in the loyal Border States—he refused to do so, lest he spur disunion. Where he could not—that is, in the Confederate states—he tried to. In short, where he *could* he would not, and where he *would* he could not. Thus the Emancipation Proclamation was stronger on proclamation than emancipation.

Yet much unofficial do-it-yourself liberation did take place. Thousands of jubilant slaves, learning of the proclamation, flocked to the invading Union armies, stripping already run-down plantations of their work force. In this sense the Emancipation Proclamation was heralded by the drumbeat of running feet. But many fugitives would have come anyhow, as they had from the war's outset. One in seven Southern slaves ran away to Union camps. Their presence in the camps and their perseverance against all odds convinced many Northern soldiers of slavery's evils and helped put emancipation atop Lincoln's agenda. By issuing the proclamation, Lincoln addressed the refugees' plight and strengthened the moral cause of the Union at home and abroad. At the same time, Lincoln's proclamation clearly foreshadowed the ultimate doom of slavery (see Map 21.3). This was legally achieved by action of the individual states and by their ratification of the **Thirteenth Amendment** (see the Appendix) in 1865, eight months after the Civil War had ended. The Emancipation Proclamation also fundamentally changed the nature of the war because it effectively removed any chance of a negotiated settlement. Both sides now knew that the war would be a fight to the finish.

Public reactions to the long-awaited proclamation of 1863 were varied. "God bless Abraham Lincoln," exulted the antislavery editor Horace Greeley in his *New York Tribune*. But many ardent abolitionists

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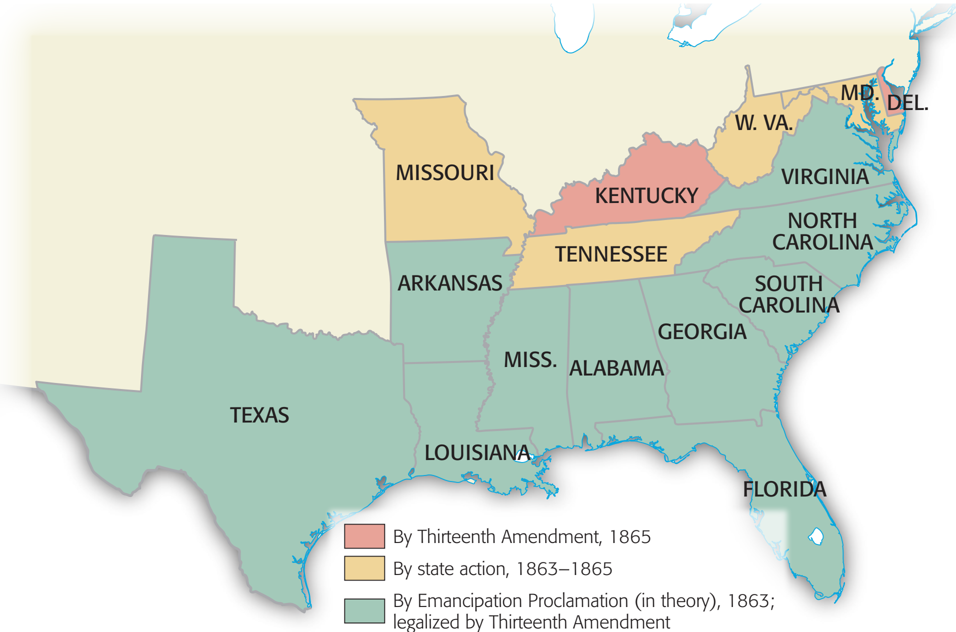

MAP 21.3 Emancipation in the South President Lincoln believed that emancipation of the slaves, accompanied by compensation to their owners, would be fairest to the South. He formally proposed such an amendment to the Constitution in December 1862. What finally emerged was the Thirteenth Amendment of 1865, which freed all slaves *without* compensation. © Cengage Learning

complained that Lincoln had not gone far enough. On the other hand, formidable numbers of Northerners, especially in the "Butternut" regions of the Old Northwest and the Border States, felt that he had gone too far. A cynical Democratic rhymester quipped,

Honest old Abe, when the war first began,
Denied abolition was part of his plan;
Honest old Abe has since made a decree,
The war must go on till the slaves are all free.
As both can't be honest, will some one tell how,
If honest Abe then, he is honest Abe now?

Opposition mounted in the North against supporting an "abolition war"; ex-president Pierce and others felt that emancipation should not be "inflicted" on the slaves. Many Boys in Blue, especially from the Border States, had volunteered to fight for the Union, not against slavery. Desertions increased sharply. The crucial congressional elections in the autumn of 1862 went heavily against the administration, particularly in New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Democrats even carried Lincoln's Illinois, although they did not secure control of Congress.

The Emancipation Proclamation caused an outcry to rise from the South that "Lincoln the fiend" was trying to stir up the "hellish passions" of a slave insurrection. Aristocrats of Europe, noting that the

Abraham Lincoln defended his policies toward blacks in an open letter to Democrats on August 26, 1863:

"You say you will not fight to free negroes. Some of them seem willing to fight for you; but, no matter. Fight you, then, exclusively to save the Union. I issued the proclamation on purpose to aid you in saving the Union."

Not everyone in the North welcomed Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, as this condemnation from the Cincinnati Enquirer *reveals:*

"The hundreds of thousands, if not millions of slaves [the act] will emancipate will come North and West and will either be competitors with our white mechanics and laborers, degrading them by competition, or they will have to be supported as paupers and criminals at the public expense."

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proclamation applied only to rebel slaveholders, were inclined to sympathize with Southern protests. But the Old World working classes, especially in Britain, reacted otherwise. They sensed that the proclamation spelled the ultimate doom of slavery, and many laborers were more determined than ever to oppose intervention. Gradually the diplomatic position of the Union improved.

The North now had much the stronger moral cause. In addition to preserving the Union, it had committed itself to freeing the slaves. The moral position of the South was correspondingly diminished.

In August 1863 Lincoln wrote to Grant that enlisting black soldiers

"works doubly, weakening the enemy and strengthening us."

In December 1863 he announced,

"It is difficult to say they are not as good soldiers as any."

In August 1864 he said,

"Abandon all the posts now garrisoned by black men, take 150,000 [black] men from our side and put them in the battlefield or cornfield against us, and we would be compelled to abandon the war in three weeks."

Blacks Battle Bondage

As Lincoln moved to emancipate the slaves, he also took steps to enlist blacks in the armed forces. Although some African Americans had served in the Revolution and the War of 1812, the regular army contained no blacks at the war's outset, and the War Department refused to accept those free Northern blacks who tried to volunteer. (The Union navy, however, enrolled many blacks, mainly as cooks, stewards, and firemen.)

But as manpower ran low and emancipation was proclaimed, black enlistees were accepted, sometimes over ferocious protests from Northern as well as Southern whites. By war's end some 180,000 blacks served in the Union army, most of them from the slave states, but many from the free-soil North. Blacks accounted for about 10 percent of the total enlistments in the Union forces on land and sea and included two Massachusetts regiments raised largely through the efforts of the ex-slave Frederick Douglass.

Black fighting men unquestionably had their hearts in the war against slavery that the Civil War had become after Lincoln proclaimed emancipation. Service also offered them a chance to prove their

The Fabled 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment This bas-relief by famed sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens stands today in front of the Massachusetts Statehouse in Boston. It commemorates the all-black volunteer regiment, led by the white Boston patrician Robert Gould Shaw, that suffered heavy casualties during the Union siege of Fort Wagner, South Carolina, in 1863. Nikki Kahn/AP Images

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The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Charles Stewart Smith, 1884 (84.12a, 84.12b, 84.12c) Photographs © 1991 The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource, NY

A Bit of War History: Contraband, Recruit, Veteran, by Thomas Waterman Wood, 1865–1866 This painting dramatically commemorates the contributions and sacrifices of the 180,000 African Americans who served in the Union army during the Civil War.

manhood and to strengthen their claim to full citizenship at war's end. Participating in about five hundred engagements, they received a total of twenty-two Congressional Medals of Honor—the highest military award. Their casualties were extremely heavy; more than thirty-eight thousand died, whether from battle, sickness, or reprisals from vengeful masters. Many, when captured, were put to death as slaves in revolt, for not until 1864 did the South recognize them as prisoners of war. In one notorious case, several black soldiers were massacred after they had formally surrendered at Fort Pillow, Tennessee. Thereafter vengeful black units cried "Remember Fort Pillow" as they swung into battle and vowed to take no prisoners.

For reasons of pride, prejudice, and principle, the Confederacy could not bring itself to enlist slaves until a month before the war ended, and then it was too late. Meanwhile, tens of thousands were forced into labor battalions, the building of fortifications, the supplying of armies, and other war-connected activities. Slaves, moreover, were "the stomach of the Confederacy," for they kept the farms going while the white men fought.

Involuntary labor did not imply slave support for the Confederacy. In many ways the actions of Southern slaves hamstrung the Confederate war effort and subverted the institution of slavery. Fear of slave insurrection necessitated Confederate "home guards," keeping many eligible young white men from the front. Everyday forms of slave resistance, such as slowdowns, strikes, and open defiance, diminished productivity and undermined discipline. When Union troops neared, slave assertiveness increased. As "intelligent contraband," slaves served as Union spies, guides, and scouts or provided shelter to escaped Northern prisoners of war. By war's end nearly half a million slaves took the ultimate risk of revolting "with their feet," abandoning their plantations. Many who remained, especially in the urban South, negotiated new working conditions in factories and on farms. Although they stopped short of violent uprising, slaves contributed powerfully to the collapse of slavery and the disintegration of the antebellum Southern way of life.

An affidavit by a Union sergeant described the fate of one group of black Union troops captured by the Confederates:

"All the negroes found in blue uniform or with any outward marks of a Union soldier upon him was killed—I saw some taken into the woods and hung—Others I saw stripped of all their clothing and they stood upon the bank of the river with their faces riverwards and then they were shot—Still others were killed by having their brains beaten out by the butt end of the muskets in the hands of the Rebels."

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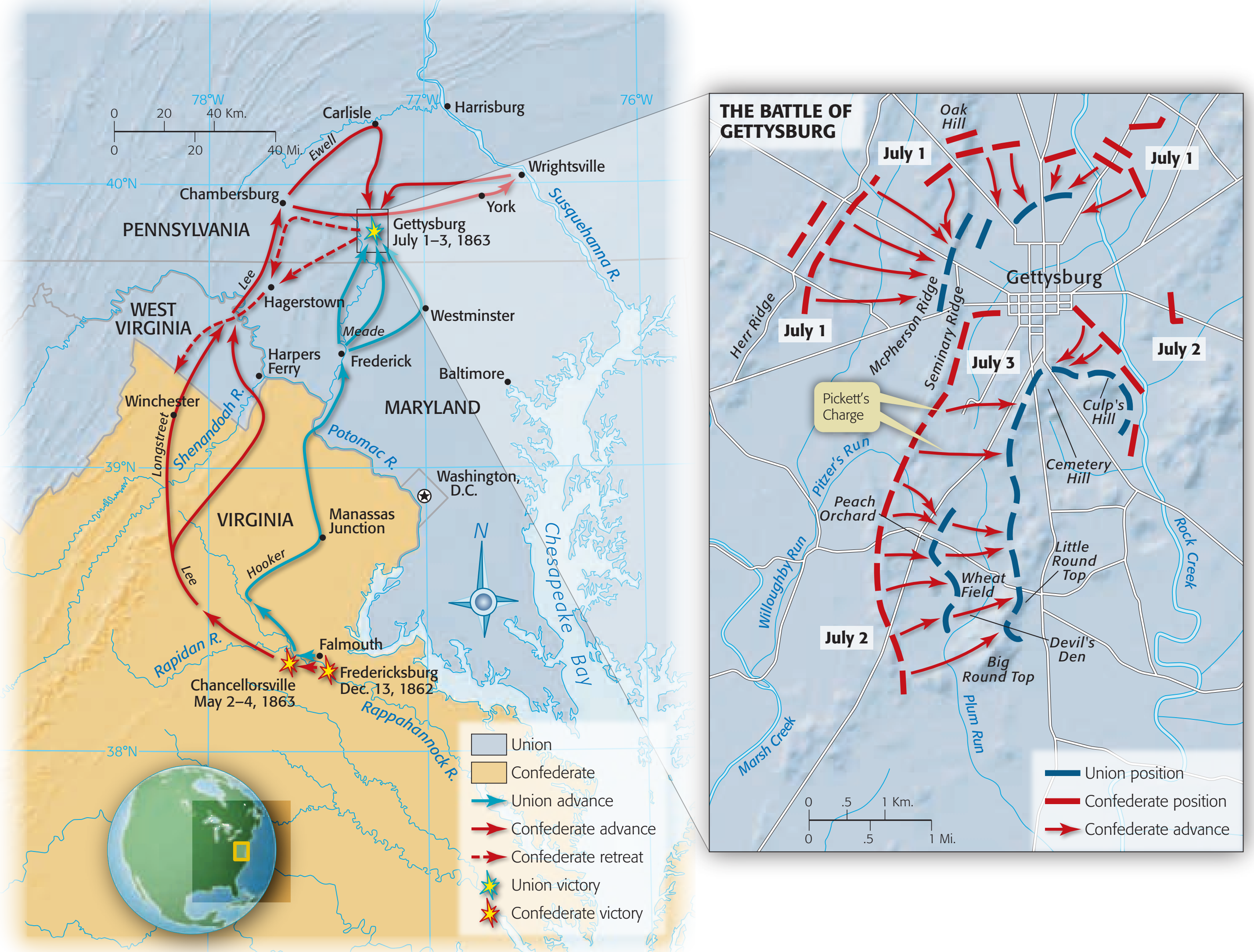

MAP 21.4 The Battle of Gettysburg, 1863 With the failure of Pickett's charge, the fate of the Confederacy was sealed—though the Civil War dragged on for almost two more bloody years. © Cengage Learning

Lee's Last Lunge at Gettysburg

After Antietam, Lincoln replaced McClellan as commander of the Army of the Potomac with General A. E. Burnside, whose ornate side-whiskers came to be known as "burnsides" or "sideburns." Protesting his unfitness for this responsibility, Burnside proved it when he launched a rash frontal attack on Lee's strong position at **Fredericksburg**, Virginia, on December 13, 1862. A chicken could not have lived in the line of fire, remarked one Confederate officer. More than ten thousand Northern soldiers were killed or wounded in "Burnside's Slaughter Pen."

A new slaughter pen was prepared when General Burnside yielded his command to Joseph ("Fighting Joe") Hooker, an aggressive officer but a headstrong subordinate. At Chancellorsville, Virginia, on May 2–4, 1863, Lee daringly divided his numerically inferior force and sent "Stonewall" Jackson to attack the Union flank. The strategy worked. Hooker, temporarily dazed by a near-hit from a cannonball, was badly beaten but not crushed. This victory was probably Lee's most brilliant, but it was dearly bought. Jackson was mistakenly shot by his own men in the gathering dusk and died a few days later. "I have lost my right arm," lamented Lee. Southern folklore relates how Jackson outflanked the angels while galloping into heaven.

Lee now prepared to follow up his stunning victory by invading the North again, this time through Pennsylvania. A decisive blow would add strength to the noisy peace prodders in the North and would also encourage foreign intervention—still a Southern hope. Three days before the battle was joined, Union general George G. Meade—scholarly, unspectacular, and abrupt—was aroused from his sleep at 2 a.m. with the unwelcome news that he would replace Hooker.

Quite by accident, Meade took his stand atop a low ridge flanking a shallow valley near quiet little **Gettysburg**, Pennsylvania (see Map 21.4). There his 92,000 men in blue locked in furious combat with Lee's 76,000

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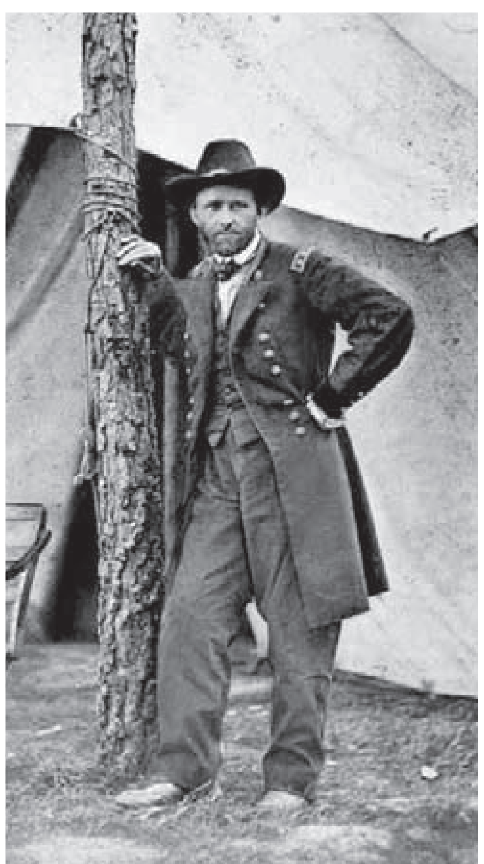
gray-clad warriors. The battle seesawed across the rolling green slopes for three agonizing days, July 1–3, 1863, and the outcome was in doubt until the very end. The failure of General George Pickett's magnificent but futile charge finally broke the back of the Confederate attack—and broke the heart of the Confederate cause.

Pickett's charge has been called the "high tide of the Confederacy." It defined both the northernmost point reached by any significant Southern force and the last real chance for the Confederates to win the war. As the Battle of Gettysburg raged, a Confederate peace delegation was moving under a flag of truce toward the Union lines near Norfolk, Virginia. Jefferson Davis hoped his negotiators would arrive in Washington from the south just as Lee's triumphant army marched on it from Gettysburg to the north. But the victory at Gettysburg belonged to Lincoln, who refused to allow the Confederate peace mission to pass through Union lines. From now on, the Southern cause was doomed. Yet the men of Dixie fought on for nearly two years longer, through sweat, blood, and weariness of spirit.

Later in that dreary autumn of 1863, with the graves still fresh, Lincoln journeyed to Gettysburg to dedicate the cemetery. He read a two-minute address, following a two-hour speech by the orator of the day, a former president of Harvard. Lincoln's noble remarks were branded by the London *Times* as "ludicrous" and by Democratic editors as "dishwatery" and "silly." The **Gettysburg Address** attracted relatively little attention at the time, but the president was speaking for the ages.

The War in the West

Events in the western theater of the war at last provided Lincoln with an able general who did not have to be shelved after every reverse. Ulysses S. Grant had been a



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General Ulysses S. Grant and General Robert E. Lee Trained at West Point, Grant (left) proved to be a better general than a president. Oddly, he hated the sight of blood and recoiled from rare beef. Lee (right), a gentlemanly general in an ungentlemanly business, remarked when the Union troops were bloodily repulsed at Fredericksburg, "It is well that war is so terrible, or we should get too fond of it."

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Examining the Evidence

Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

Political speeches are unfortunately all too often composed of claptrap, platitudes, and just plain bunk—and they are frequently written by someone other than the person delivering them. But Abraham Lincoln's address at the dedication of the cemetery at the Gettysburg battlefield on November 19, 1863, has long been recognized as a masterpiece of political oratory and as a foundational document of the American political system, as weighty a statement of the national purpose as the Declaration of Independence (which it deliberately echoes in its statement that all men are created equal) or even the Constitution itself. In just 272 simple but eloquent words that Lincoln himself indisputably wrote, he summarized the case for American nationhood. What were his principal arguments? What values did he invoke? What did he think was at stake in the Civil War? (Conspicuously, he made no direct mention of slavery in this address.) Another speech that Lincoln gave in 1861 offers some clues. He said, "I have often inquired of myself what great principle or idea it was that kept this [nation] together. It was not the mere separation of the colonies from the motherland, but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope to the world, for all future time."

John Hay Papers, Manuscript Division, The Libraryof Congress

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mediocre student at West Point, distinguishing himself only in horsemanship, although he did fairly well in mathematics. After fighting creditably in the Mexican War, he was stationed at isolated frontier posts, where boredom and loneliness drove him to drink. Resigning from the army to avoid a court-martial for drunkenness, he failed at various business ventures, and when war came, he was working in his father's leather store in Illinois for $50 a month.

Grant did not cut much of a figure. The shy and silent shopkeeper was short, stooped, awkward, stubble-bearded, and sloppy in dress. He managed with some difficulty to secure a colonelcy in the volunteers. From then on, his military experience—combined with his boldness, resourcefulness, and tenacity—catapulted him on a meteoric rise.

Grant's first signal success came in the northern Tennessee theater (see Map 21.5). After heavy fighting, he captured **Fort Henry and Fort Donelson** on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers in February 1862. When the Confederate commander at Fort Donelson asked for terms, Grant bluntly demanded "an unconditional and immediate surrender."

MAP 21.5 The Mississippi River and Tennessee, 1862–1863 © Cengage Learning

Grant's triumph in Tennessee was crucial. It not only riveted Kentucky more securely to the Union but also opened the gateway to the strategically important region of Tennessee, as well as to Georgia and the heart of Dixie. Grant next attempted to exploit his victory by capturing the junction of the main Confederate north-south and east-west railroads in the Mississippi Valley at Corinth, Mississippi. But a Confederate force foiled his plans in a gory battle at **Shiloh**, just over the Tennessee border from Corinth, on April 6–7, 1862. Though Grant successfully counterattacked, the impressive Confederate showing at Shiloh confirmed that there would be no quick end to the war in the West.

Lincoln resisted all demands for the removal of "Unconditional Surrender" Grant, insisting, "I can't spare this man; he fights." When talebearers later told Lincoln that Grant drank too much, the president allegedly replied, "Find me the brand, and I'll send a barrel to each of my other generals." There is no evidence that Grant's drinking habits seriously impaired his military performance.

Other Union thrusts in the West were in the making. In the spring of 1862, a flotilla commanded by David G. Farragut joined with a Northern army to strike the South a blow by seizing New Orleans. With Union gunboats both ascending and descending the Mississippi, the eastern part of the Confederacy was left with a jeopardized back door. Through this narrowing entrance, between **Vicksburg**, Mississippi, and Port Hudson, Louisiana, flowed herds of vitally needed cattle and other provisions from Louisiana and Texas. The fortress of Vicksburg, located on a hairpin turn of the Mississippi, was the South's sentinel protecting the lifeline to the western sources of supply.

General Grant was now given command of the Union forces attacking Vicksburg and in the teeth of grave difficulties displayed rare skill and daring. The siege of Vicksburg was his best-fought campaign of the war. The beleaguered city at length surrendered, on July 4, 1863, with the garrison reduced to eating mules and rats. Five days later came the fall of Port Hudson, the last Southern bastion on the Mississippi. The spinal cord of the Confederacy was now severed, and, in Lincoln's quaint phrase, the Father of Waters at last flowed "unvexed to the sea."

The Union victory at Vicksburg came the day after the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg. The political significance of these back-to-back military successes was monumental. Reopening the Mississippi helped to quell the Northern peace agitation in the "Butternut" area of the Ohio River valley. Confederate control of the Mississippi had cut off that region's usual trade routes down the Ohio-Mississippi River system to New Orleans, thus adding economic pain to that border

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In the southern tier of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, sympathy for the South combined with hostility to the Northeast to stimulate talk of a "Northwest Confederacy" that would itself secede from the Union and make a separate peace with the Confederacy. These sentiments were fueled by economic grievances stemming from the closure of the Mississippi River to trade, and they gained strength after Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Warned one Ohio congressman in January 1863,

"If you of the East, who have found this war against the South, and for the negro, gratifying to your hate or profitable to your purse, will continue it . . . [be prepared for] eternal divorce between the West and the East."

Another Ohio congressman, giving great urgency to the Union effort to reopen the Mississippi River, declared,

"The erection of the states watered by the Mississippi and its tributaries into an independent Republic is the talk of every other western man."

section's already shaky support for the "abolition war." The twin victories also conclusively tipped the diplomatic scales in favor of the North, as Britain stopped delivery of the Laird rams to the Confederates (see p. 425) and as France killed a deal for the sale of six naval vessels to the Richmond government. By the end of 1863, all Confederate hopes for foreign help were irretrievably lost.

Sherman Scorches Georgia

General Grant, the victor of Vicksburg, was now transferred to the east Tennessee theater, where Confederates had driven Union forces from the battlefield at Chickamauga into the city of Chattanooga, to which they then laid siege. Grant won a series of desperate engagements in November 1863 in the vicinity of besieged Chattanooga, including Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain (the "Battle Above the Clouds"). Chattanooga was liberated, the state was cleared of Confederates, and the way was thus opened for an invasion of Georgia. Grant was rewarded by being made general in chief.

Georgia's conquest was entrusted to General William Tecumseh Sherman. Red-haired and red-bearded, grim-faced and ruthless, he captured Atlanta in September 1864 and burned the city in November of that year. He then daringly left his supply base, lived off the country for some 250 miles, and weeks later emerged at Savannah on the sea. A rousing Northern song ("Marching Through Georgia") said,

> *"Sherman's dashing Yankee boys will never reach the coast!"*
> *So the saucy rebels said—and 't was a handsome boast.*

But Sherman's hated "Blue Bellies," sixty thousand strong, cut a sixty-mile swath of destruction through Georgia. They burned buildings, leaving only the blackened chimneys ("Sherman's Sentinels"). They tore up railroad rails, heated them red-hot, and twisted them into "iron doughnuts" and "Sherman's hairpins." They bayoneted family portraits and ran off with valuable "souvenirs." "War . . . is all hell," admitted Sherman later, and he proved it by his efforts to "make Georgia howl." One of the major purposes of **Sherman's march** was to destroy supplies destined for the Confederate army and to weaken the morale of the men at the front by waging war on their homes (see Map 21.6).

Sherman was a pioneer practitioner of "total war." His success in "Shermanizing" the South was attested by increasing numbers of Confederate desertions. Although his methods were brutal, he probably shortened the struggle and hence saved lives. But there can be no doubt that the discipline of his army at times broke down, as roving riffraff (Sherman's "bummers") engaged in an orgy of pillaging. "Sherman the Brute" was universally damned in the South.

After seizing Savannah as a Christmas present for Lincoln, Sherman's army veered north into South Carolina, where the destruction was even more vicious. Many Union soldiers believed that this state, the "hellhole of secession," had wantonly provoked the war. The capital city, Columbia, burst into flames, in all probability the handiwork of the Yankee invader. Crunching

A letter picked up on a dead Confederate in North Carolina and addressed to his "deer sister" concluded that

"it was "dam fulishness" trying to "lick shurmin." He had been getting "nuthin but hell & lots uv it" ever since he saw the "dam yanks," and he was "tirde uv it." He would head for home now, but his old horse was "plaid out." If the "dam yankees" had not got there yet, it would be a "dam wunder." They were thicker than "lise on a hen and a dam site ornerier."

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MAP 21.6 Sherman's March, 1864–1865 © Cengage Learning

northward, Sherman's conquering army had rolled deep into North Carolina by the time the war ended.

The Politics of War

Presidential elections come by the calendar and not by the crisis. As fate would have it, the election of 1864 fell most inopportunely in the midst of war.

Political infighting in the North added greatly to Lincoln's cup of woe. Factions within his own party, distrusting his ability or doubting his commitment to abolition, sought to tie his hands or even remove him from office. Conspicuous among his critics was a group led by the overambitious secretary of the Treasury, Salmon Chase. Especially burdensome to Lincoln was the creation of the **Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War**, formed in late 1861. It was dominated by "radical" Republicans who resented the expansion of presidential power in wartime and who pressed Lincoln zealously on emancipation.

Most dangerous of all to the Union cause were the Northern Democrats. Deprived of the talent that had departed with the Southern wing of the party, those Democrats remaining in the North were left with the taint of association with the seceders. Tragedy befell the Democrats—and the Union—when their gifted leader, Stephen A. Douglas, died of typhoid fever seven weeks after the war began. Unshakably devoted to the Union, he probably could have kept much of his following on the path of loyalty.

Lacking a leader, the Democrats divided. A large group of "War Democrats" patriotically supported the Lincoln administration, but tens of thousands of "Peace Democrats" did not. At the extreme were the so-called **Copperheads**, named for the poisonous snake that strikes without a warning rattle. Copperheads openly obstructed the war through attacks against the draft, against Lincoln, and especially, after 1863, against emancipation. They denounced the president as the "Illinois Ape" and condemned the "Nigger War." They commanded considerable political strength in the southern parts of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.

Notorious among the Copperheads was a sometime congressman from Ohio, Clement L. Vallandigham. This tempestuous character possessed brilliant oratorical gifts and unusual talents for stirring up trouble. A Southern partisan, he publicly demanded an end to the "wicked and cruel" war. The civil courts in Ohio were open, and he should have been tried in them for sedition. But he was convicted by a military tribunal in 1863 for treasonable utterances and was then sentenced

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Sherman's March to the Sea, engraving after E.O.C. Darley. Photo by Ben Lourie. Collection of David M. Sherman, Washington, D.C./Picture Research Consultants & Archives

Sherman's March to the Sea, 1863–1864 Sherman's army inflicted cruel destruction along its route, an early instance of a tactic that came to characterize modern warfare, in which civilians are considered legitimate targets.

to prison. Lincoln decided that if Vallandigham liked the Confederates so much, he ought to be banished to their lines. This was done.

Vallandigham was not so easily silenced. Working his way to Canada, he ran for the governorship of Ohio on foreign soil and polled a substantial but insufficient vote. He returned to his own state before the war ended, and although he defied "King Lincoln" and spat upon a military decree, he was not further prosecuted. The strange case of Vallandigham inspired Edward Everett Hale to write his moving but fictional story of Philip Nolan, ***The Man Without a Country*** (1863), which was immensely popular in the North and which helped stimulate devotion to the Union. The fictional Nolan was a young army officer found guilty of participation in the Aaron Burr plot of 1806 (see p. 214). He had cried out in court, "Damn the United States! I wish I may never hear of the United States again!" For this outburst he was condemned to a life of eternal exile on American warships.

The Election of 1864

As the election of 1864 approached, Lincoln's precarious authority depended on his retaining Republican support while spiking the threat from the Peace Democrats and Copperheads.

Fearing defeat, the Republican party executed a clever maneuver. Joining with the War Democrats, it proclaimed itself to be the **Union party** (see Figure 21.1). Thus the Republican party passed temporarily out of existence.

Lincoln's renomination at first encountered surprisingly strong opposition. Hostile factions whipped up considerable agitation to shelve homely "Old Abe" in favor of his handsome nemesis, Secretary of the Treasury Chase. Lincoln was accused of lacking force, of being overready to compromise, of not having won the war, and of having shocked many sensitive souls by his ill-timed and earthy jokes. ("Prince of Jesters," one journal called him.) But the "ditch Lincoln" move

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A Study in Black and White Soldiers of the 7th Tennessee Cavalry pose with their slaves—whose bondage the Confederacy fought to perpetuate.

Daguerreotype courtesy of Tom Farish

collapsed, and he was nominated by the Union party without serious dissent.

Lincoln's running mate was ex-tailor Andrew Johnson, a loyal War Democrat from Tennessee who had been a small slaveowner when the conflict began. He was placed on the Union party ticket to "sew up" the election by attracting War Democrats and the voters in the Border States, and, sadly, with no proper regard for the possibility that Lincoln might die in office. Southerners and Copperheads alike condemned both candidates as birds of a feather: two ignorant, third-rate, boorish, backwoods politicians born in log cabins.

Embattled Democrats—regular and Copperhead—nominated the deposed and overcautious war hero General McClellan. The Copperheads managed to force into the Democratic platform a plank denouncing the prosecution of the war as a failure. But McClellan, who could not otherwise have faced his old comrades-in-arms, repudiated this defeatist declaration.

The campaign was noisy and nasty. The Democrats cried, "Old Abe removed McClellan. We'll now remove Old Abe." They also sang, "Mac Will Win the Union Back." Union party supporters shouted for "Uncle Abe and Andy" and urged, "Vote as you shot." Their most effective slogan, growing out of a remark by Lincoln, was "Don't swap horses in the middle of the river."

Lincoln's reelection was at first gravely in doubt. The war was going badly, and Lincoln himself gave way to despondency, fearing that political defeat was imminent. The anti-Lincoln Republicans, taking heart, started a new movement to "dump" Lincoln in favor of someone else.

But the atmosphere of gloom was changed electrically, as balloting day neared, by a succession of

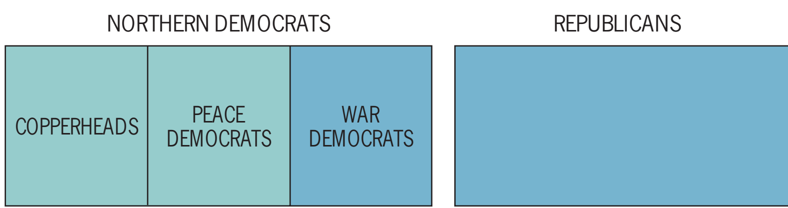

FIGURE 21.1 Union Party, 1864 The blue area represents the Union party. © Cengage Learning

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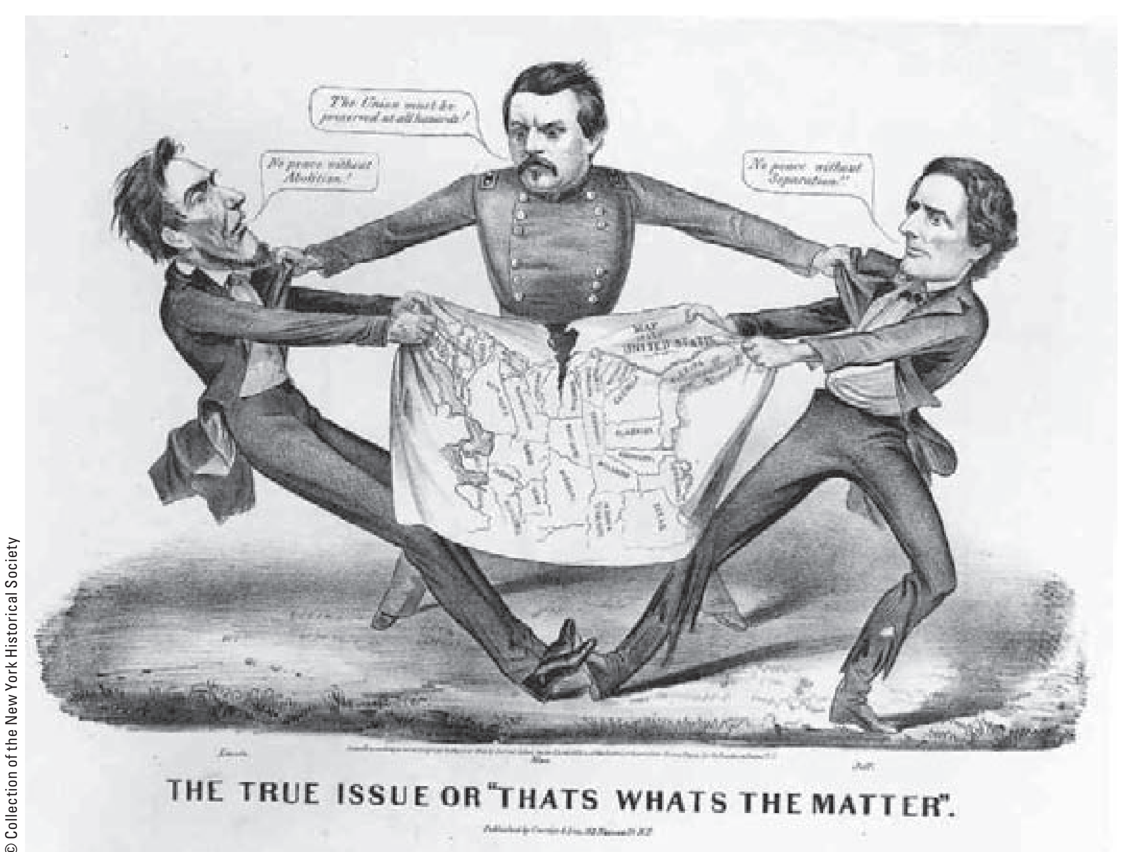

© Collection of the New York Historical Society

McClellan as Mediator, 1865 This 1864 poster shows Presidents Lincoln and Davis trying to tear the country in half, while former general George McClellan, the candidate of the Democratic party, attempts to mediate.

Northern victories. Admiral Farragut captured Mobile, Alabama, after defiantly shouting the now-famous order, "Damn the torpedoes! Go ahead." General Sherman seized Atlanta. General ("Little Phil") Sheridan laid waste the verdant Shenandoah Valley of Virginia so thoroughly that in his words "a crow could not fly over it without carrying his rations with him."

The president pulled through, but nothing more than necessary was left to chance. At election time many Northern soldiers were furloughed home to support Lincoln at the polls. One Pennsylvania veteran voted forty-nine times—once for himself and once for each absent member of his company. Other Northern soldiers were permitted to cast their ballots at the front.

Lincoln, bolstered by the "bayonet vote," vanquished McClellan by 212 electoral votes to 21, losing only Kentucky, Delaware, and New Jersey (see Map 21.7). But "Little Mac" ran a closer race than the electoral count indicates. He netted a healthy 45 percent of the popular vote, 1,803,787 to Lincoln's 2,206,938, piling up much support in the Southerner-infiltrated states of the Old Northwest, in New York, and also in his native state of Pennsylvania.

One of the most crushing losses suffered by the South was the defeat of the Northern Democrats in 1864. The removal of Lincoln was the last ghost of a hope for a Confederate victory, and the Southern soldiers would wishfully shout, "Hurrah for McClellan!" When Lincoln triumphed, desertions from the sinking Southern ship increased sharply.

Grant Outlasts Lee

After Gettysburg, Grant was brought in from the West over Meade, who was blamed for failing to pursue the defeated but always dangerous Lee. Lincoln needed a general who, employing the superior resources of the North, would have the intestinal stamina to drive ever forward, regardless of casualties. A soldier of bulldog tenacity, Grant was the man for this meat-grinder type of warfare. His overall basic strategy was to assail the

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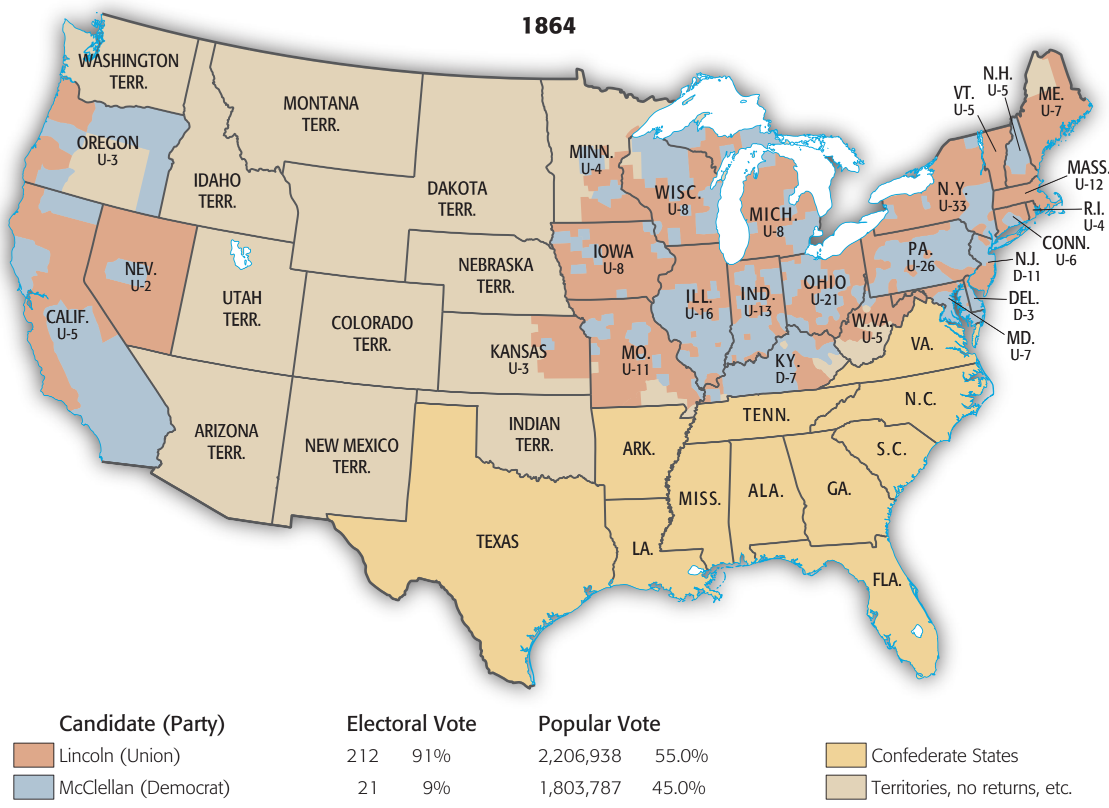

MAP 21.7 Presidential Election of 1864 (showing popular vote by county) Lincoln also carried California, Oregon, and Nevada, but there was a considerable McClellan vote in each. Note McClellan's strength in the Border States and in the southern tier of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois—the so-called "Butternut" region. © Cengage Learning

enemy's armies simultaneously, so that they could not assist one another and hence could be destroyed piecemeal. His personal motto was "When in doubt, fight." A grimly determined Grant, with more than 100,000 men, struck toward Richmond. He engaged Lee in a series of furious battles in the Wilderness of Virginia, during May and June of 1864, notably in the leaden hurricane of the "Bloody Angle" and "Hell's Half Acre." In this **Wilderness Campaign**, Grant suffered about 50,000 casualties, or nearly as many men as Lee commanded at the start. But Lee lost about as heavily in proportion (see Map 21.8).

In a ghastly gamble, on June 3, 1864, Grant ordered a frontal assault on the impregnable position of Cold Harbor. The Union soldiers advanced to almost certain death with papers pinned on their backs bearing their names and addresses. In a few minutes, about seven thousand men were killed or wounded.

Public opinion in the North was appalled by this "blood and guts" type of fighting. Critics cried that "Grant the Butcher" had gone insane. But Grant's reputation was undeserved, while Lee's was overrated. Lee's rate of loss (at one casualty for every five soldiers) was the highest of any general in the war. By contrast, Grant lost one of ten. Grant had intended to fight battles out in the open, a tactic he had perfected in the West. It was Lee, not Grant, who turned the eastern campaign into a war of attrition fought in the trenches. With fewer men, Lee could no longer seize the offensive, as he had at Chancellorsville or Gettysburg. Lee's new defensive posture in turn forced Grant into some brutal arithmetic. Grant could trade two men for one and still beat the enemy to his knees. "I propose to fight it out on this line," he wrote, "if it takes all summer." It did—and it also took all autumn, all winter, and a part of the spring.

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MAP 21.8 Grant's Virginia Campaign, 1864–1865 The Wilderness Campaign pitted soldier against desperate soldier in some of the most brutal and terrifying fighting of the Civil War. "No one could see the fight fifty feet from him," a Union private recalled of his month spent fighting in Virginia. "The lines were very near each other, and from the dense underbrush and the tops of trees came puffs of smoke, the 'ping' of the bullets and the yell of the enemy. It was a blind and bloody hunt to the death, in bewildering thickets, rather than a battle." © Cengage Learning

In February 1865 the Confederates, tasting the bitter dregs of defeat, tried desperately to negotiate for peace between the "two countries." Lincoln himself met with Confederate representatives aboard a Union ship moored at Hampton Roads, Virginia, to discuss peace terms. But Lincoln could accept nothing short of Union and emancipation, and the Southerners could accept nothing short of independence. So the tribulation wore on—amid smoke and agony—to its terrible climax.

The end came with dramatic suddenness. Rapidly advancing Northern troops captured Richmond and cornered Lee at **Appomattox Courthouse** in Virginia, in April 1865. Grant—stubble-bearded and informally dressed—met with Lee on the ninth, Palm Sunday, and granted generous terms of surrender. Among other concessions, the hungry Confederates were allowed to keep their horses for spring plowing.

Tattered Southern veterans—"Lee's Ragamuffins"—wept as they took leave of their beloved commander. The elated Union soldiers cheered, but they were silenced by Grant's stern admonition, "The war is over; the rebels are our countrymen again."

Lincoln traveled to conquered Richmond and sat in Jefferson Davis's evacuated office just forty hours after

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The Burning of Richmond, April 1865 The proud Confederate capital, after holding out against repeated Union assaults, was evacuated and burned in the final days of the war.

the Confederate president had left it. "Thank God I have lived to see this," he said. With a small escort of sailors, he walked the blasted streets of the city. Freed slaves began to recognize him, and crowds gathered to see and touch "Father Abraham." One black man fell to his knees before the Emancipator, who said to him, "Don't kneel to me. This is not right. You must kneel to God only, and thank Him for the liberty you will enjoy hereafter." Sadly, as many freed slaves were to discover, the hereafter of their full liberty was a long time coming.

The Martyrdom of Lincoln

On the night of April 14, 1865 (Good Friday), only five days after Lee's surrender, Ford's Theater in Washington witnessed its most sensational drama. A half-crazed, fanatically pro-Southern actor, John Wilkes Booth, slipped behind Lincoln as he sat in his box and shot him in the head. After lying unconscious all night, the Great Emancipator died the following morning. "Now he belongs to the ages," remarked the once-critical Secretary Stanton—probably the finest words he ever spoke.

Lincoln expired in the arms of victory, at the very pinnacle of his fame. From the standpoint of his reputation, his death could not have been better timed if he had hired the assassin. A large number of his countrymen had not suspected his greatness, and many others had even doubted his ability. But his dramatic death helped to erase the memory of his shortcomings and caused his nobler qualities to stand out in clearer relief.

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The New York Herald *editorialized on April 16, 1865, that the South had the most to lose from Lincoln's assassination:*

"In the death of President Lincoln we feel the pressure of a heavy national calamity; but the great and irrevocable decree of the loyal States that Union must and shall be preserved will lose nothing of its force, but will be immensely if not terribly strengthened. In striking Abraham Lincoln and his kindly disposed Secretary of State the assassins struck at the best friends in the government to the prostrate rebels of the South."

The full impact of Lincoln's death was not at once apparent to the South. Hundreds of bedraggled ex-Confederate soldiers cheered, as did some Southern civilians and Northern Copperheads, when they learned of the assassination. This reaction was only natural, because Lincoln had kept the war grinding on to the bitter end. If he had only been willing to stop the shooting, the South would have won.

As time wore on, increasing numbers of Southerners perceived that Lincoln's death was a calamity for them. Belatedly they recognized that his kindliness and moderation would have been the most effective shields between them and vindictive treatment by the victors. The assassination unfortunately increased the bitterness in the North, partly because of the fantastic rumor that Jefferson Davis had plotted it.

A few historians have argued that Andrew Johnson, now president-by-bullet, was crucified in Lincoln's

Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library

President Lincoln's Funeral Procession, New York City, 1865 Lincoln's body traveled by train to lie in state in fourteen cities before arriving at his final resting place of Springfield, Illinois. In New York City, 160,000 mourners accompanied his hearse as the funeral procession slowly made its way down Broadway. Scalpers sold choice window seats for four dollars and up. Blacks were barred from participating, until the mayor changed his mind at the last minute—but only if they marched at the rear.

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Thinking Globally The Era of Nationalism

The American Civil War was rooted in America's "peculiar institution" of slavery as well as uniquely American controversies about westward expansion. But it was also part of a wider phenomenon that transformed many parts of the world in the mid-nineteenth century: nationalism. To be sure, some ancient societies, such as the Greeks and the Hebrews, had a sense of themselves as distinct peoples who shared a common culture and history. But the creation of robust nation-states with strong central governments ruling over large populations that considered themselves part of an enduring community was of decidedly modern origin. Nationalism was anchored in the French and American Revolutions, with their emphasis on popular sovereignty and on a government that expressed the will of a population that saw itself not just as a random assembly of persons, but as a distinctive and coherent "people," often bonded by religion and language. Nationalism also owed much to modern technologies like the steamship, railroad, and telegraph, which extended both the emotional range of fellow feeling and the geographical reach of centralized authority. The convergence of these several nineteenth-century developments, intellectual as well as material, made possible the creation of the "virtual communities" called nations.

In the early nineteenth century, only Britain and France could claim to be nation-states in the modern sense. Central Europe remained a patchwork of major and minor principalities. Italy, in the words of the Austrian diplomat Klemens von Metternich, was merely "a geographic expression," as several small duchies and overgrown city-states uneasily coexisted on the Italian peninsula. Canada, a scattering of disconnected provinces, was more a mapmaker's convention than a functioning political entity. Both Spain and Japan looked united on the map, but both notoriously lacked internal cohesion. And in the United States, sectional and state loyalties continued to compete with notions of a *national* identity.

But within just a dozen years, between 1859 and 1871, Prince Otto von Bismarck created modern Germany; Count Camillo di Cavour united Italy ("We have made Italy; now we must make Italians," quipped one Italian wit); a new Meiji emperor launched Japan on a dramatic program of rapid modernization; the British North America Act of 1867 forged a unified Canada; and the American Civil War, in Abraham Lincoln's words, gave the United States "a new birth of freedom" as a unified country, as well as a significantly invigorated federal government. Before the Civil War, it was said, the United States *were*; after the Civil War, the United States *was*.

Count Camillo di Cavour (1810–1861)

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Prince Otto von Bismark (1815–1898)

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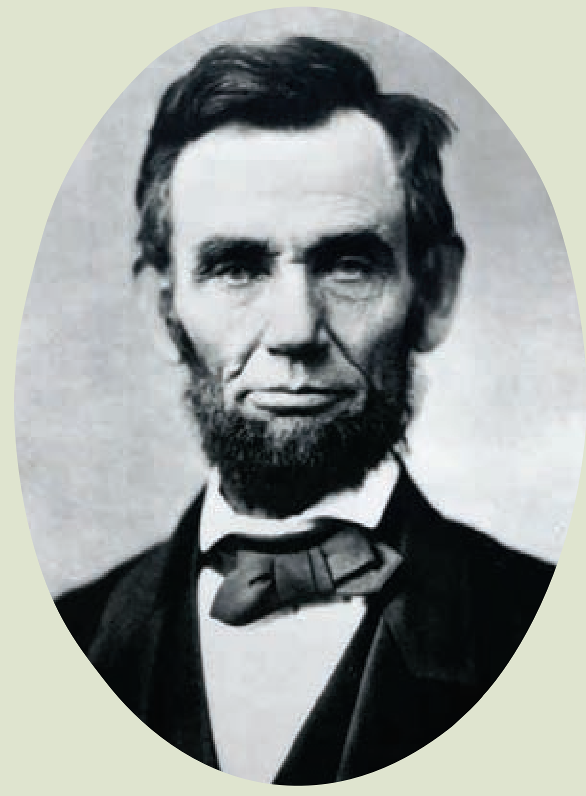
These several consolidations created the model for modern states that has prevailed ever since. The rise of nationalism fostered the growth of unprecedentedly powerful governments able to command deep loyalty from millions of people and consequently to marshal enormous economic and military resources—for good or ill. Nationalism was everywhere accompanied by some degree of political democratization and the expansion of public services, as freshly created or reinvigorated central governments sought to secure the loyalty of peoples newly brought under their sway. Bismarck, for example, supported universal suffrage and social insurance for German workers (establishing precedents that would much later be adopted in the United States). The new Italy and Meiji Japan adopted fairly liberal voting laws and programs for universal education. Britain's Reform Bill of 1867 enfranchised 1.5 million adult, male, urban householders, effectively doubling the British electorate.

In the United States, Civil War–era constitutional amendments at least nominally guaranteed the right to vote to adult African American males, while the federal government adopted ambitious plans to facilitate the construction of transcontinental railroads, distribute public lands under the Homestead Act, and support higher education under the Morrill Land-Grant College Act. The Civil War defined a historic pivot in the role of federal power. Of the twelve amendments to the Constitution passed before 1865, eleven were designed to *limit* the authority of the federal government. Of the fifteen amendments passed since the Civil War, nine contain the phrase "Congress shall have the power to *enforce* this article by appropriate legislation."

The words *nation* and *native* derive from the same Latin root, denoting birth or birthplace. Nationalism is at bottom a sentiment of common feeling or shared identity, generally among people born in the same place. It therefore implies boundaries, territorial as well as psychological. It defines who is included as well as who is excluded. ("No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind," writes one scholar of nationalism.) It can breed exclusionary and nativist pathologies, as well as chauvinism, jingoism, and imperialism. The United States was no exception to these patterns. Nativists mounted increasingly effective anti-immigrant campaigns in the post–Civil War era, beginning with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and culminating in the highly restrictionist National Origins Act of 1924. As Germany and Italy acquired colonies in Africa and Japan tightened its grip on Taiwan, Korea, and parts of Manchuria, the United States also joined the imperial scramble, annexing the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Guam, and Samoa before the century's end.



Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865)

Library of Congress

Three Nation Builders: Count Camillo di Cavour (1810–1861), Prince Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898), and Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865) While the two European aristocrats Cavour and Bismarck were creating the new nations of Italy and Germany, respectively, the lowborn Lincoln was preserving American nationhood.

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stead. The implication is that if the "rail-splitter" had lived, he would have suffered Johnson's fate of being impeached by the embittered members of his own party, who demanded harshness, not forbearance, toward the South.

The crucifixion thesis does not stand up under scrutiny. Lincoln no doubt would have clashed with Congress; in fact, he had already found himself in some hot water. The legislative branch normally struggles to win back the power that has been wrested from it by the executive in time of crisis. But the sure-footed and experienced Lincoln could hardly have blundered into the same quicksands that engulfed Johnson. Lincoln was a victorious president, and there is no arguing with victory. In addition to his powers of leadership refined in the war crucible, Lincoln possessed in full measure tact, sweet reasonableness, and an uncommon amount of common sense. Andrew Johnson, hot-tempered and impetuous, lacked all of these priceless qualities.

Ford's Theater, with its tragic murder of Lincoln, set the stage for the wrenching ordeal of Reconstruction.

The Aftermath of the Nightmare

The Civil War took a grisly toll in gore, about as much as all of America's subsequent wars combined. Over 600,000 men died in action or of disease, and in all over a million were killed or seriously wounded. The number of dead, amounting to 2 percent of the entire nation's population, greatly exceeded the number of Americans killed in World War II. The modern equivalent would be a loss of some 6 million American lives. To its lasting hurt, the nation lost the cream of its young manhood and potential leadership. In addition, tens of thousands of babies went unborn because potential fathers were at the front.

Direct monetary costs of the conflict totaled about $15 billion. But this colossal figure does not include continuing expenses, such as pensions and interest on the national debt. The intangible costs—dislocations, disunities, wasted energies, lowered ethics, blasted lives, bitter memories, and burning hates—cannot be calculated.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Frank B. Porter, 1922 (22.207). Photograph © 1995 The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Prisoners from the Front, by Winslow Homer, 1866 This celebrated painting reflects the artist's firsthand observations of the war. Homer brilliantly captured the enduring depths of sectional animosity. The Union officer somewhat disdainfully asserts his command of the situation; the beaten and disarmed Confederates exhibit an out-at-the-elbows pride and defiance.

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Photo courtesy of Anne M. Cady

Grave of William H. Johnson, 1864 Johnson was a free black man who worked as Lincoln's personal valet in Springfield and accompanied him to Washington, D.C. when he assumed the presidency. When lighter-skinned mulatto White House staffers rejected him for his dark skin, Lincoln helped Johnson find other employment in the Treasury and Navy Departments, writing "The bearer of this card, William Johnson (colored), came with me from Illinois, and is a worthy man, as I believe. A. Lincoln." In November 1863 Lincoln requested that Johnson accompany him to deliver his famous address at Gettysburg, where they both contracted smallpox. Lincoln recovered in a few days; Johnson, with a more severe case, died in January 1864. Lincoln arranged for him to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery and wrote the one-word epitaph for his tombstone: "Citizen," a succinct and stinging rebuke of the racist reasoning of the Dred Scott decision.

The greatest constitutional decision of the century, in a sense, was written in blood and handed down at Appomattox Courthouse, near which Lee surrendered. The extreme states' righters were crushed. The national government, tested in the fiery furnace of war, emerged unbroken. Nullification and secession, those twin nightmares of previous decades, were laid to rest.

Beyond doubt the Civil War—the nightmare of the Republic—was the supreme test of American democracy. It finally answered the question, in the words of Lincoln at Gettysburg, whether a nation dedicated to such principles "can long endure." The preservation of democratic ideals, though not an officially announced war aim, was subconsciously one of the major objectives of the North.

Victory for Union arms also provided inspiration to the champions of democracy and liberalism the world over (see "Thinking Globally: The Era of Nationalism," pp. 458–459). The great English **Reform Bill of 1867**, under which Britain became a true political democracy, was passed two years after the Civil War ended. American democracy had proved itself, and its success was an additional argument used by the disfranchised British masses in securing similar blessings for themselves.

The "Lost Cause" of the South was lost, but few Americans today would argue that the result was not for the best. The shameful cancer of slavery was sliced away by the sword, and African Americans were at last in a position to claim their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The nation was again united politically, though for many generations still divided spiritually by the passions of the war. Grave dangers were averted by a Union victory, including the indefinite prolongation of the "peculiar institution," the unleashing of the slave power on weak Caribbean neighbors, and the transformation of the area from Panama to Hudson Bay into an armed camp, with several heavily armed and hostile states constantly snarling and sniping at one another. America still had a long way to go to make the promises of freedom a reality for all its citizens, black and white. But emancipation laid the necessary groundwork, and a united and democratic United States was free to fulfill its destiny as the dominant republic of the hemisphere—and eventually of the world.

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Varying Viewpoints

What Were the Consequences of the Civil War?

With the end of the Civil War in 1865, the United States was permanently altered, despite the reunification of the Union and the Confederacy. Slavery was officially banned, secession was a dead issue, and industrial growth surged forward. For the first time, the United States could securely consider itself a singular nation rather than a union of states. Though sectional differences remained, there would be no return to the unstable days of precarious balancing between Northern and Southern interests. With the Union's victory, power rested firmly with the North, and it would orchestrate the future development of the country. According to historian Eric Foner, the war redrew the economic and political map of the country.

The constitutional impact of the terms of the Union victory created some of the most far-reaching transformations. The first twelve amendments to the Constitution, ratified before the war, had all served to limit government power. In contrast, the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery, and the revolutionary Fourteenth Amendment, which conferred citizenship and guaranteed civil rights to all those born in the United States, marked unprecedented expansions of federal power.

Historian James McPherson has noted still other ways in which the Civil War extended the authority of the central government. It expanded federal powers of taxation. It encouraged the government to develop the National Banking System, print currency, and conscript an army. It made the federal courts more influential. And through the Freedmen's Bureau, which aided former slaves in the South, it instituted the first federal social welfare agency. With each of these actions, the nation moved toward a more powerful federal government, invested with the authority to protect civil rights, aid its citizens, and enforce laws in an aggressive manner that superseded state powers. A recent book by Drew Gilpin Faust, *Republic of Suffering* (2008), goes further, suggesting that Civil War era experiences with death and tragedy were key to the modernization of America, in terms of both scientific advancement and private belief.

Yet some scholars have disputed whether the Civil War marked an absolute watershed in American history. They correctly note that racial inequality scandalously persisted after the Civil War, despite the abolition of slavery and the supposed protections extended by federal civil rights legislation. Others have argued that the industrial growth of the post–Civil War era had its real roots in the Jacksonian era, and thus cannot be ascribed solely to war. Thomas Cochran has even argued that the Civil War may have retarded overall industrialization rather than advancing it. Regional differences between North and South endured, moreover, even down to the present day.

Even so, the argument that the Civil War launched a modern America remains convincing. The lives of Americans, white and black, North and South, were transformed by the war experience. Industry entered a period of unprecedented growth, having been stoked by the transportation and military needs of the Union army. The emergence of new, national legal and governmental institutions marked the birth of the modern American state. All considered, it is hard to deny that the end of the Civil War brought one chapter of the nation's history to a close, while opening another.

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Chapter Review

KEY TERMS

Bull Run (Manassas Junction), Battle of (435)
Peninsula Campaign (437)
Merrimack (439)
Monitor (439)
Bull Run, Second Battle of (440)
Antietam, Battle of (440)
Emancipation Proclamation (440)
Thirteenth Amendment (441)
Fredericksburg, Battle of (445)
Gettysburg, Battle of (445)
Gettysburg Address (446)
Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, Battle of (448)
Shiloh, Battle of (448)
Vicksburg, siege of (448)
Sherman's march (449)
Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War (450)
Copperheads (450)
The Man Without a Country (451)
Union party (451)
Wilderness Campaign (454)
Appomattox Courthouse (455)
Reform Bill of 1867 (461)

PEOPLE TO KNOW

Thomas J. ("Stonewall") Jackson
George B. McClellan
Robert E. Lee
John Pope
A. E. Burnside
Joseph ("Fighting Joe") Hooker
George G. Meade
George Pickett
Ulysses S. Grant
William Tecumseh Sherman
Salmon Chase
Clement L. Vallandigham
John Wilkes Booth

CHRONOLOGY

1861 First Battle of Bull Run

1862 Grant takes Fort Henry and Fort Donelson
Battle of Shiloh
McClellan's Peninsula Campaign
Seven Days' Battles
Second Battle of Bull Run
Naval battle of *Merrimack* (*Virginia*) and *Monitor*
Battle of Antietam
Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation
Battle of Fredericksburg
Northern army seizes New Orleans

1863 Final Emancipation Proclamation
Battle of Chancellorsville
Battle of Gettysburg
Fall of Vicksburg
Fall of Port Hudson

1864 Sherman's march through Georgia
Grant's Wilderness Campaign
Battle of Cold Harbor
Lincoln defeats McClellan for presidency

1865 Hampton Roads Conference
Lee surrenders to Grant at Appomattox
Lincoln assassinated
Thirteenth Amendment ratified

1867 Reform Bill expands British electorate

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TO LEARN MORE

William Blair, *Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861–1865* (1998)

David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee* (1989)

Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (2008)

Joseph Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers* (1990)

Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (2004)

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Robert R. Mackey, *The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861–1865* (2004)

Reid Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home* (1993)

Scott Reynolds Nelson and Carol Sheriff, *A People at War: Civilians and Soldiers in America's Civil War, 1854–1877* (2007)

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A complete, annotated bibliography for this chapter—along with brief descriptions of the People to Know—may be found on the American Pageant website. The Key Terms are defined in a Glossary at the end of the text.

Go to the CourseMate website at **www.cengagebrain.com** for additional study tools and review materials—including audio and video clips—for this chapter.

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AP* Review Questions for Chapter 21

1. How did the Battle of Bull Run affect the beginning of the Civil War?
   (A) It showed the might of the Union army.
   (B) It forced the North to take the prowess of the Southern military seriously.
   (C) It gave the South an exaggerated sense of confidence.
   (D) It was a draw.
   (E) It hinted that the war would not be over quickly.

2. Union general George McClellan is best remembered for his
   (A) brilliant sense of timing in battle.
   (B) unwillingness to risk the lives of his men.
   (C) slowness to act.
   (D) preference for attacking by water.
   (E) lightning-fast attacks.

3. The outcome of the Peninsula Campaign to take Richmond in 1862 is significant because it
   (A) was the first Southern victory.
   (B) prolonged the war and began to attach slavery to the cause.
   (C) was among the most violent conflicts of the war, taking 10,000 Union soldiers' lives and 20,000 Confederates'.
   (D) was McClellan's shining moment.
   (E) inspired Union leaders to shift their expectations from a short battle to a long and bloody war.

4. Which of the following was NOT part of Union military strategy against the South?
   (A) Cause havoc by liberating the slaves
   (B) Blockade Southern seacoasts
   (C) Capture the Mississippi
   (D) Seize Richmond
   (E) Grind the Confederacy to dust by sending troops through Maryland and Virginia

5. The battle at Antietam is considered a decisive moment in the Civil War for all of the following reasons EXCEPT that
   (A) the display of Union military might kept France and England from attempting to intervene.
   (B) McClellan's success was based on discovery of Lee's battle plans.
   (C) it gave Lincoln the confidence to issue the Emancipation Proclamation.
   (D) it marked the advent of iron-clad ships.
   (E) it changed the character and goals of the war.

6. The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863
   (A) freed all slaves throughout the United States.
   (B) freed slaves in Confederate and border states.
   (C) was a symbolic statement of justice.
   (D) officially and permanently ended slavery.
   (E) was meant as an appeal to now former slaves to serve in the Union army.

7. How did Southerners manage their slave population during the Civil War?
   (A) They established home guards to protect against insurrection and flight.
   (B) They enlisted slaves in the army.
   (C) They kept potentially unruly slaves in shackles or prisons for much of the war.
   (D) They used slaves as spies against approaching Union troops.
   (E) They offered slaves money and better working conditions as incentives to aid the Confederate effort and prevent slave uprisings.

8. The 1863 Battle of Gettysburg
   (A) ended the Civil War.
   (B) was considered the "high tide of the Confederacy."
   (C) was a decisive win for the South.
   (D) marked General Ulysses S. Grant's first Union victory.
   (E) enabled Union troops to claim the life of the masterful Confederate general Stonewall Jackson.

9. Which of these battles proved to be General Grant's greatest showing in the war?
   (A) Shiloh
   (B) Port Hudson
   (C) Gettysburg
   (D) Fort Donelson
   (E) Vicksburg

10. General William Tecumseh Sherman is most remembered for his
    (A) rejection of the concept of total war.
    (B) well-disciplined troops.
    (C) march to the sea.
    (D) capture of North Carolina.
    (E) destruction of Chattanooga, Tennessee.

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11. Initially in doubt, Lincoln's reelection was ultimately secured as voting day neared in 1864 by
    (A) a lack of strong competition for the presidency.
    (B) the solid backing of the Copperheads.
    (C) his choice of the popular Andrew Johnson as his running mate.
    (D) a series of Union military victories.
    (E) support from Peace Democrats.

12. What was the Wilderness Campaign?
    (A) Grant's combat strategy focusing on man-to-man confrontations in the Virginia countryside
    (B) Lee's effort to turn the tide of the war back in the South's favor by fighting on familiar terrain
    (C) A series of battles culminating in the fighting at Gettysburg
    (D) Battles between Union forces and Indians on the western frontier
    (E) Grant's strategy to focus on trench warfare

13. Before the war actually ended, initial attempts for a negotiated peace broke down because
    (A) Southerners reviled Lincoln.
    (B) Lincoln was assassinated.
    (C) Jefferson Davis insisted on a place in the reformed Union government.
    (D) the Union insisted that the South bear the entire financial cost of the war.
    (E) the South wanted to retain its independence.

14. Which of the following was NOT an outcome of the Civil War?
    (A) Secession and nullification were put to rest.
    (B) Relationships with Britain and France were stressed.
    (C) A pro-South fanatic shot and killed the president.
    (D) Champions of liberalism and democracy around the world were inspired to further those aims for themselves.
    (E) Slavery, at home and beyond, was ultimately abolished.

15. All of the following opposed the Lincoln administration during the Civil War and the election of 1864 EXCEPT
    (A) Copperheads.
    (B) the Union party.
    (C) Peace Democrats.
    (D) the Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War.
    (E) General McClellan.

16. The Gettysburg Address and the Declaration of Independence followed a similar line of reasoning because both
    (A) listed grievances against the opposition.
    (B) discussed the permanence of the Union.
    (C) memorialized the men that died for their cause.
    (D) relied on the idea that all men are created equal.
    (E) became landmark documents in American history.

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