**Chapter Thirteen**

**The Coming of the Civil War**

The political settlement between North and South designed by Henry Clay in 1850 lasted only four years. The issues it was supposed to resolve neither died nor faded away. Americans continued to migrate westward, and as long as slaveholders could carry their human property into federally controlled territories, northern resentment would smolder. Slaves continued to seek freedom in the North, and the Fugitive Slave Act did not guarantee their capture and return.

**The Slave Power Comes North**

The new fugitive slave law caused a sharp increase in the efforts of white southerners to recover escaped slaves. Something approaching panic reigned in the black communities of northern cities after its passage. Thousands of blacks, not all of them former slaves, fled to Canada, but many remained, and northerners frequently refused to stand aside when such people were dragged off in chains.

Shortly after the passage of the act, James Hamlet was seized in New York City, convicted, and returned to slavery in Maryland without being allowed to communicate with his wife and children. The New York black community was outraged, and with help from white neighbors it swiftly raised $800 to buy his freedom. In 1851 Euphemia Williams, who had lived for years as a free woman in Pennsylvania, was seized; her presumed owner also claimed her six children, all Pennsylvania born. A federal judge released the Williamses, but the case created more alarm in the North.

Abolitionists often interfered with the enforcement of the law. When two Georgians went to Boston to reclaim William and Ellen Craft, admitted fugitives, a "Vigilance Committee" hounded them through the streets shouting "slave hunters, slave hunters," and forced them to return home empty handed.

Such incidents exacerbated sectional feelings. White southerners accused the North of reneging on one of the main promises made in the Compromise of 1850, while the sight of harmless human beings being hustled off to a life of slavery disturbed many northerners who were not abolitionists. However, most white northerners were not prepared to interfere with the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act themselves. Of the 332 blacks put on trial under the law, about 300 were returned to slavery, most without incident. Nevertheless, enforcing the law in the northern states became steadily more difficult.

**Uncle Tom's Cabin**

Tremendously important in increasing sectional tensions and bringing home the evils of slavery to still more people in the North was Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852). Stowe was neither a professional writer nor an abolitionist, and she had almost no firsthand knowledge of slavery. Her conscience was roused by the Fugitive Slave Act, which she called a "nightmare abomination." She dashed her book off quickly; as she later recalled, it seemed to write itself. It was an enormous success: 10,000 copies were sold in a week, 300,000 in a year. Soon it was being translated into dozens of languages. Dramatized versions were staged in countries throughout the world.

Uncle Tom's Cabin avoided the self-righteous, accusatory tone of most abolitionist tracts and did not try to make readers believe in racial equality. Many of the southern characters were fine, sensitive people, and the cruel Simon Legree was a transplanted Connecticut Yankee. There were many heartrending scenes of pain, self-sacrifice, and heroism. The story proved especially effective on the stage: The slave Eliza crossing the frozen Ohio River to freedom, the death of Little Eva, Eva and Tom ascending to heaven-these scenes left audiences in tears.

Southern critics pointed out, correctly enough'. that Stowe's picture of plantation life was distorted and the black characters atypical. They called her a "coarse, ugly, long-tongued woman" and accused her of trying to "awaken rancorous hatred and malignant jealousies" that would undermine national unity.

Most northerners, having little basis on which to judge the accuracy of the book, tended to discount southern criticism as biased. In any case, Uncle Tom's Cabin raised questions that transcended the issue of its accuracy. Did it matter if every slave was not as kindly as Uncle Tom, or as determined as George Harris? What if only one white master was as evil as Simon Legree? No earlier white American writer had looked at slaves as people. Countless readers asked themselves as they put the book down: Is slavery just?

**"Young America"**

Clearly a distraction was needed to help keep the lid on sectional troubles in both North and South. Some people hoped to find one in foreign affairs. The spirit of manifest destiny explains this in large part; once the United States had reached the Pacific, expansionists began to think of transmitting the dynamic, democratic spirit of the United States to other countries by aiding local revolutionaries, opening up new markets, perhaps even annexing foreign lands.

To an extent this "Young America" spirit was purely emotional, a mindless confidence that democracy would triumph everywhere. At the time of the European revolutions of 1848, Americans talked freely about helping the liberals in their struggles against autocratic governments. However, the same democratic-expansionist sentiment led to dreams of conquests in the Caribbean area.

In 1855 a freebooter named William Walker, backed by an American company engaged in transporting migrants to California across Central America, seized control of Nicaragua and elected himself president. He was ousted two years later but made repeated attempts to regain control until, in 1860, he died before a Honduran firing squad. Although many northerners suspected them of engaging in dastardly plots to obtain more territory for slavery, men like Walker were primarily adventurers using the prevailing mood of buoyant expansionism for selfish ends.

The aggressive talk of the period was not all mere bombast. In 1850 Secretary of State John M. Clayton and the British minister to the United States, Henry Lytton Bulwer, negotiated a treaty providing for the demilitarization and joint Anglo American control of any future canal across Central America. As this area assumed strategic importance to the United States, the desire to obtain Cuba grew stronger.

In 1854 President Franklin Pierce instructed his minister to Spain, Pierre Soule of Louisiana, to offer $130 million for the island. The administration arranged for him first to confer in Belgium with the American ministers to Great Britain and France. Out of this meeting came the Ostend Manifesto, a confidential dispatch to the State Department suggesting that if Spain refused to sell Cuba, "the great law of self-preservation" might justify "wresting" it from Spain by force.

News of the manifesto leaked out, and it had to be published. Northern opinion was outraged by this "slaveholders' plot," and any hope of obtaining Cuba or any other territory in the Caribbean vanished.

The expansionist mood of the moment also explains President Fillmore's dispatching an expedition under Commodore Matthew C. Perry to try for commercial concessions in the isolated kingdom of Japan in 1852. Perry's expedition was a great success. The Japanese, impressed by American naval power, agreed to establish diplomatic relations. In 1858 an American envoy, Townsend Harris, negotiated a commercial treaty that opened six Japanese ports heretofore closed to foreigners to American ships. President Pierce's negotiation of a Canadian reciprocity treaty with Great Britain in 1854 and his unsuccessful attempt to annex the Hawaiian Islands are further illustrations of the assertive foreign policy of the period.

**The Little Giant: Stephen A. Douglas**

The most prominent spokesman of the Young America movement was Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois. Douglas was the Henry Clay of his generation. Like Clay at his best, Douglas was able to see the needs of the nation in the broadest perspective. He was born in Vermont in 1813 and moved to Illinois when barely 20. He studied law and was soon deep in Democratic politics, holding a succession of state offices before being elected to Congress in 1842. After two terms in the House, he was chosen United States senator.

Politics suited Douglas to perfection. Although very short, his appearance was so imposing that men called him the Little Giant. "I live with my constituents," he once boasted, "drink with them, lodge with them, pray with them, laugh, hunt, dance, and work with them. I eat their corn dodgers and fried bacon and sleep two in a bed with them." Yet he was no mere backslapper. He read widely, wrote poetry, financed a number of young American artists, served as a regent of the Smithsonian Institution, and was interested in scientific farming.

The foundations of Douglas's politics were expansion and popular sovereignty. He had been willing to fight for all of Oregon in 1846, and he supported the Mexican War to the hilt, in sharp contrast to his Illinois colleague in Congress, Abraham Lincoln. That local settlers should determine their own institutions was, to his way of thinking, axiomatic.

He believed arguments over the future of slavery in the territories were a foolish waste of energy and time because he was convinced that natural conditions would keep the institution out of the West. He believed slavery was "a curse beyond computation" for both blacks and whites, but he refused to admit that any moral issue was involved. He cared not, he boasted, whether slavery was voted up or voted down. This was not really true, but the slavery question was interfering with the rapid exploitation of the continent. Let the nation build railroads, acquire new territory, and expand its trade, Douglas urged.

Douglas's success in steering the Compromise of 1850 through Congress added to his already considerable reputation. In 1851, although only 38, he set out to win the Democratic presidential nomination. He reasoned that because he was the brightest, most imaginative, and hardest-working Democrat around, he had every right to press his claim. This brash aggressiveness proved his undoing, for his rivals combined against him, and he had no chance.

The 1852 Democratic convention, however, was deadlocked between Lewis Cass, inventor of popular sovereignty, and James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, who had a long record as congressman and diplomat. The delegates therefore settled on a dark horse, Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire. The Whigs, rejecting the colorless Fillmore, nominated General Winfield Scott. In the campaign both sides supported the Compromise of 1850. The Democrats won an easy victory, 254 electoral votes to 42.

So handsome a triumph seemed to insure stability, but in fact it was a prelude to political chaos. The Whig Parry was crumbling fast. The "Cotton Whigs" of the South, alienated by the antislavery sentiments of their northern brethren, were flocking into the Democratic fold. In the North, the radical "Conscience" Whigs and the "Silver Gray" faction that was undisturbed by slavery found themselves more and more at odds with each other. Congress fell overwhelmingly into the hands of proslavery southern Democrats, a development profoundly disturbing to northern Democrats as well as to Whigs.

**The Kansas-Nebraska Act**

Franklin Pierce was generally well liked by politicians. His career had included service in both houses of Congress. Drinking had become a problem for him, and in 1842 he had resigned from the Senate. But he overcame his alcoholism and restored his reputation by serving as a brigadier general during the Mexican War. Though his nomination for president came as a surprise, once it was made, it had appeared perfectly reasonable. Great things were expected of his administration, especially after he surrounded himself with men of all factions: To balance his appointment of a radical states' rights Mississippian, Jefferson Davis, as secretary of war, for example, he named a conservative northerner, William L. Marcy of New York, as secretary of state.

Only a strong leader, however, can manage a ministry of all talents, and that President Pierce was not. He could not control the extremists. The ship of state was soon drifting; Pierce seemed incapable of holding the helm firm.

This was the situation in January 1854 when Senator Douglas, chairman of the Committee on Territories, introduced what looked like a routine bill organizing the land west of Missouri and Iowa as Nebraska Territory. Because settlers were beginning to trickle into the area, the time had arrived to set up a civil administration. But besides his expansionist motives, Douglas also acted because a territorial government was essential to railroad development. As a director of the Illinois Central line and as a land speculator, he hoped to make Chicago the terminus of a transcontinental railroad. Construction could not begin, however, until the route was cleared of Indians and brought under some kind of civil control.

The powerful southern faction in Congress would not go along with Douglas's proposal as it stood. The railroad question aside, Nebraska would presumably become a free state, for it lay north of latitude 36 degrees 30 minutes in a district from which slavery had been excluded by the Missouri Compromise. Under pressure from the southerners, Douglas agreed first to divide the region into two territories, Kansas and Nebraska, and then-a fateful concession-to repeal the part of the Missouri Compromise that excluded slavery from land north of 36 degrees 30 minutes. Whether the new territories should become slave or free, he argued, should be left to the decision of the settlers in accordance with the democratic principle of popular sovereignty~ The fact that he might advance his presidential ambitions by making concessions to the South must have influenced Douglas too, as must the local political situation in Missouri, where slaveholders feared being "surrounded" on three sides by free states.

Douglas's miscalculation of northern sentiment was monumental. It was one thing to apply popular sovereignty to new territories in the Southwest, quite another to apply it to a region that had been part of the United States for half a century and free soil for 34 years. The news caused an indignant outcry in the North; many moderate opponents of slavery were radicalized. The unanimity and force of the reaction was like nothing in America since the days of the Stamp Act and the Intolerable Acts.

But protests could not defeat the bill. Southerners in both houses backed it regardless of party. Douglas pushed it with all his power. President Pierce added whatever force the administration could muster. As a result, the northern Democrats split and the bill became law late in May 1854. In this manner the nation took the greatest single step in its blind march toward the abyss of secession and civil war.

The repeal of the Missouri Compromise struck the North like a slap in the face-at once shameful and challenging. Presumably the question of slavery in the territories had been settled forever; now, it seemed without justification, it had been reopened.

After passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, nearly everyone opposed the return of fugitive slaves. When one fugitive, Anthony Burns, was captured in Boston, Massachusetts, abolitionists organized a protest meeting at which they inflamed the crowd into attacking the courthouse where Burns was being held. Federal marshals drove the attackers off and two companies of milita were rushed to Boston. It took these soldiers and a thousand policemen to hold back protesters while Burns was being taken back to slavery. A few months later, northern sympathizers bought Burns his freedom-for a few hundred dollars.

**Know-Nothings and Republicans**

The Democratic Party lost heavily in the North as a result of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. With the Whig Party already moribund, dissidents flocked to two new parties. One was the American, or "Know-Nothing," Party, so called because it grew out of a secret society whose members used the password "I don't know." Immigration was soaring in the early 1850s, and the influx of poor foreigners was causing genuine social problems. In addition, the fact that a large percentage of the immigrants were Irish and German Catholics also troubled the Know-Nothings because these immigrants favored public financing of parochial schools and opposed the prohibition of alcoholic beverages. Because these were divisive issues, the established political parties tried to avoid them; hence the development of the new party.

Northern Know-Nothings won a string of local victories in 1854 and elected more than 40 congressmen. But the parry was also important in the South. Most southern Know-Nothings adopted the dominant view of slavery there. Far more significant in the long run was the formation of the Republican Party, which was made up of former Free Soilers, Conscience Whigs, and "Anti-Nebraska" Democrats. The Republican Party was purely sectional. It sprang up spontaneously throughout the Old Northwest and caught on with a rush in New England. Republicans were not abolitionists, but they insisted that slavery be kept out of the territories. If America was to remain a land of opportunity, they argued, free white labor must have exclusive access to the West. Thus the party could appeal both to voters opposed to slavery and to those who wished to keep blacks-free or slave-out of their states. In 1854 the Republicans won over 100 seats in the House of Representatives and control of many state governments.

The Whig Party had almost disappeared in the northern states and the Democratic Party had been gravely weakened. The Know-Nothing Party had a nationwide organization, but where slavery was concerned, this was anything but advantageous. And many northerners were also troubled by the harsh Know-Nothing policies toward immigrants and Catholics. If the Know-Nothings were in control, said former Whig congressman Abraham Lincoln in 1855, the Declaration of Independence would read "all men are created equal, except negroes, and foreigners, and Catholics."

**"Bleeding Kansas"**

The furor might have died down if settlement of the new territories had proceeded in an orderly manner. But both North and South were determined to have Kansas. They made the territory first a testing ground and then a battlefield, thus exposing the fatal flaw in the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the idea of popular sovereignty. The law said that the people of Kansas were "perfectly free" to decide the slavery question. But the citizens of territories were not entirely free because territories were not sovereign political units. The act had created a political vacuum, which its vague statement that the settlers must establish their domestic institutions "subject ... to the Constitution" did not begin to fill. When should the institutions be established? Was it democratic to let a handful of early arrivals make decisions that would affect the lives of the thousands soon to follow?

More serious was the fact that outsiders, North and South, refused to allow Kansans to work out their own destiny. In the North, a New England Emigrant Aid Society was formed, with grandiose plans for transporting antislavery settlers to the area. It sent only a handful of New Englanders to Kansas, but it helped many Midwesterners to make the move.

In doing so, the society stirred white southerners to action. In November 1854 an election was held in Kansas to pick a territorial delegate to Congress. A large band of Missourians crossed over specifically to vote for a proslavery man and elected him easily. In March 1855 some 5,000 "Border Ruffians" again descended upon Kansas and elected a territorial legislature. A census had recorded 2,905 eligible voters, but 6,307 ballots were cast.

The legislature promptly enacted a slave code and laws prohibiting abolitionist agitation. Antislavery settlers refused to recognize this regime and held elections of their own. By January 1856 two governments existed in Kansas, one based on fraud, the other extralegal.

The proslavery settlers assumed the offensive. In May, 800 of them sacked the antislavery town of Lawrence. An antislavery extremist named John Brown then took the law into his own hands in retaliation. In May 1856, together with six companions (four of them his sons) Brown stole into a settlement on Pottawatornie Creek in the dead of night. They dragged five unsuspecting men from their rude cabins, and murdered them. The killers escaped and were never indicted for their crime.

This slaughter brought men on both sides to arms by the hundreds. Irregular fighting broke out, and by the end of 1856 some 200 persons had lost their lives. Exaggerated accounts of "Bleeding Kansas" filled the pages of northern newspapers.

Unquestionably, both northern agitators and unscrupulous Missourians were in the wrong. However, the main responsibility for the Kansas tragedy must be borne by the Pierce administration. Under popular sovereignty the national government was supposed to see that elections were orderly and honest. Instead, the president acted as a partisan. When the first governor of the territory objected to the manner in which the proslavery legislature had been elected, Pierce replaced him with a man who backed the southern group without question.

**Senator Sumner Becomes a Martyr for Abolitionism**

As counterpoint to the fighting in Kansas there rose an almost continuous cacophony in the halls of Congress. Red-faced legislators traded insults and threats. Epithets like "liar" were freely tossed about. Prominent in these angry outbursts was a new senator, Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. Sumner possessed great magnetism and was, according to the tastes of the day, an accomplished orator, but he suffered inner torments of a complex nature that warped his personality. He was egotistical and humorless. Reform movements evidently provided him a kind of emotional release; he became combative and totally lacking in objectivity when espousing a cause.

In the Kansas debates Sumner displayed an icy disdain for his foes. In the spring of 1856 he loosed a dreadful blast entitled "the crime against Kansas." Characterizing administration policy as tyrannical, imbecilic, absurd, and infamous, he demanded that Kansas be admitted to the Union at once as a free state. Then he began a long and intemperate personal attack on both Douglas and the elderly Senator Andrew P. Butler of South Carolina, who was not present to defend himself.

Sumner described Butler as a "Don Quixote" who had taken "the harlot slavery" as his mistress. Douglas shrugged off such language as part of the game, but because Butler was absent from Washington, Congressman Preston S. Brooks, his nephew, who was probably as mentally unbalanced as Sumner, assumed the responsibility of defending his kinsman's honor. Two days after the speech, Brooks walked up to Sumner in the Senate and rained blows on his head with a gutta-percha cane until he fell, unconscious and bloody, on the floor.

Both sides made much of this disgraceful incident. When the House censured him, Brooks resigned, returned to his home district, and was triumphantly reelected. A number of well-wishers even sent him souvenir canes. Northerners viewed the affair as illustrating the brutalizing effect of slavery on southern whites and made a hero of Sumner.

**Buchanan Tries His Hand**

Such was the atmosphere surrounding the 1856 presidential election. The Republican Party now dominated much of the North, where it stood not for abolition but for restricting slavery to areas where it already existed. It nominated John C. Fremont, "the Pathfinder," one of the heroes of the conquest of California during the Mexican War. Fremont fitted the Whig tradition of presidential candidates: a popular military man with almost no political experience. Republicans expressed their objectives in one simple slogan: "Free soil, free speech, and Fremont."

The Democrats cast aside the ineffectual Pierce and nominated James Buchanan, chiefly because he had been out of the country serving as minister to Great Britain during the long debate over Kansas. The American Party nominated ex-president Fillmore, a choice the remnants of the Whigs ratified. On election day Buchanan won only a minority of the popular vote, but he had strength in every section. He got 174 electoral votes to Fremont's 114 and Fillmore's 8.

Buchanan was a bundle of contradictions. Dignified in bearing and by nature cautious, he could consume enormous amounts of liquor without showing the slightest sign of inebriation. A big, heavy man, he was nonetheless remarkably graceful and light on his tiny feet, of which he was inordinately proud. Over the years many strong men in politics had held him in contempt. Yet he was patriotic, conscientious, and anything but radical. Republican extremists called him a "Doughface" they believed he lacked the force of character to stand up against southern extremists-but many voters in 1856 thought he could steer the nation to calmer waters.

**The Court's Turn**

Before Buchanan could fairly take the Kansas problem in hand, an event occurred that drove another wedge between North and South. Back in 1834 Dr. John Emerson of St. Louis had joined the army as a surgeon and was assigned to duty at Rock Island, Illinois. Later he was transferred to Fort Snelling, in Wisconsin Territory. In 1838 he returned to Missouri. Accompanying him on these travels was his body servant, Dred Scott, a slave.

In 1846, after Emerson's death, Scott and his wife, Harriet, whom he had married while in Wisconsin, brought suit in the Missouri courts for their liberty with the help of a friendly lawyer. They claimed that residence in Illinois, where slavery was barred under the Northwest Ordinance, and in Wisconsin Territory, where the Missouri Compromise outlawed it, had made them free.

After many years of litigation, the case reached the Supreme Court. On March 6, 1857, two days after Buchanan's inauguration, the high tribunal ruled. Free or slave, the Court declared, blacks were not citizens. Therefore Scott could not sue in a federal court. Further, because the plaintiff had returned to' Missouri, the laws of Illinois no longer applied to him. His residence in Wisconsin Territory--this was the most controversial part of the decision-did not make him free because the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional. According to the Bill of Rights (the Fifth Amendment), the federal government could not deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. Therefore, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney reasoned, "an Act of Congress which deprives a person [in this case, Emerson] ... of his liberty or property merely because he came himself or brought his property into a particular Territory ... could hardly be dignified with the name of due process of law."

The Dred Scott decision has been widely criticized on legal grounds. Some critics have made much of the fact that a majority of the justices were southerners and proslavery northerners. It would be going too far, however, to accuse the Court of plotting to extend slavery. The judges were trying to settle the vexing question of slavery in the territories once and for all.

In addition to invalidating the Missouri Compromise, which had already been repealed, the decision threatened Douglas's principle of popular sovereignty. If Congress could not exclude slaves from a territory, how could a mere territorial legislature do so? Until statehood was granted, slavery seemed as inviolate as freedom of religion or speech or any other civil liberty guaranteed by the Constitution. Where freedom (as guaranteed in the Bill of Rights) was formerly a national institution and slavery a local one, now, according to the Court, slavery was nationwide, excluded only where states had specifically abolished it.

The irony of employing the Bill of Rights to keep blacks in chains did not escape northern critics. If this "greatest crime in the judicial annals of the Republic" was allowed to stand, northerners argued, the Republican Party would have no reason to exist: Its program had been declared unconstitutional! The Dred Scott decision convinced thousands that the South was engaged in an aggressive attempt to extend the "peculiar institution" so far that it could no longer be considered peculiar.

**The Lecompton Constitution**

Kansas soon provided a test for northern suspicions. Initially, Buchanan handled the problem of Kansas well by appointing Robert J. Walker governor. Although he was from Mississippi, Walker had no desire to foist slavery on the territory against the will of its inhabitants. The proslavery leaders in Kansas had managed to convene a

constitutional convention at Lecompton, but the Free Soil forces had refused to participate in the election of delegates. When this rump body drafted a proslavery constitution and then refused to submit it to a fair vote of all the settlers, Walker denounced its work. He hurried back to Washington to explain the situation to Buchanan. The president refused to face reality. His prosouthern advisers were clamoring for him to "save" Kansas. Instead of rejecting the Lecompton constitution, he asked Congress to admit Kansas to the Union with this document as its frame of government.

Buchanan's decision brought him head-on against Stephen A. Douglas, and the repercussions of their clash shattered the Democratic Party. Principle and self-interest (an irresistible combination) forced Douglas to oppose the leader of his party. If he stood aside while Congress admitted Kansas, he would not only be abandoning popular sovereignty, he would be committing political suicide. He was up for reelection to the Senate in 1858. Fifty-five of the 56 newspapers in Illinois had declared editorially against the Lecompton constitution; if he supported it, defeat was certain. He openly joined the Republicans in the fight. Congress rejected the bill.

Meanwhile, the extent of the fraud perpetrated at Lecompton became clear. In October 1857 a new legislature had been chosen in Kansas, the antislavery voters participating in the balloting. It ordered a referendum on the Lecompton constitution in January 1858. The constitution was overwhelmingly rejected.

**The Emergence of Lincoln**

These were dark days. Dissolution threatened the Union. To many Americans Stephen A. Douglas seemed to offer the best hope of preserving it. For this reason unusual attention was focused on his campaign for reelection to the Senate in 1858. The importance of the contest and Douglas's national prestige put great pressure on the Republicans of Illinois to nominate someone who would make a good showing against him. The man they chose was Abraham Lincoln.

After a towering figure has passed from the stage, it is always difficult to reconstruct what he was like before his rise to prominence. This is especially true of Lincoln, who changed greatly when power and responsibility and fame came to him. Lincoln was not unknown in 1858, but his public career had not been distinguished. When barely 25, he won a seat in the Illinois legislature as a Whig. He studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1836. However, he prospered only moderately. He remained in the legislature until 1842, displaying a perfect willingness to adopt the Whig position on all issues, and in 1846 was elected to a single term in Congress marked by his partisan opposition to Polk's Mexican policy. After that term his political career had petered out. He seemed fated to pass his remaining years as a typical small-town lawyer.

Even during this period Lincoln's personality was extraordinarily complex. His bawdy sense of humor and his endless fund of stories and tall tales made him a legend first in Illinois and then in Washington. Yet he was subject to periods of melancholy so profound as to appear almost psychopathic. In a society where most men drank heavily, he never touched liquor. In a region swept by repeated waves of religious revivalism, Lincoln managed to be at once a man of calm spirituality and a skeptic without appearing offensive to conventional believers. He was a party wheelhorse, a corporation lawyer, even a railroad lobbyist. Yet his reputation for integrity was stainless.

The revival of the slavery controversy in 1854 stirred Lincoln deeply. He was not an abolitionist and had always tried to take a "realistic" view of the problem. However, the Kansas-Nebraska bill led him to see the moral issue more clearly. "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong," he stated with the clarity and simplicity of expression for which he later became famous. Yet unlike most northern Free Soilers, he did not blame the white southerners for slavery. "They are just what we would be in their situation," he said.

The fairness and moderation of his position combined with its moral force won Lincoln many admirers in the great body of citizens who were trying to reconcile their low opinion of blacks and their patriotic desire to avoid an issue that threatened the Union with their growing conviction that slavery was sinful. Anything that aided slavery was wrong, Lincoln argued. But before casting the first stone, northerners; should look into their own hearts: "If there be a man amongst us who is so impatient of [slavery] as a wrong as to disregard its actual presence among us and the difficulty of getting rid of it suddenly in a satisfactory way ... that man is misplaced if he is on our platform." And Lincoln confessed:

If all earthly power were given to me, I should not know what to do as to the existing institution. But ... [this] furnishes no more excuse for permitting slavery to go into our free territory than it would for reviving the African slave trade.

Without minimizing the difficulties or urging a hasty and ill-considered solution, Lincoln demanded that the people look toward a day, however remote, when not only Kansas but the entire country would be free.

**The Lincoln-Douglas Debates**

In July Lincoln challenged Douglas to a series of seven debates. The senator accepted. The debates were well attended, closely argued, and widely reported, for the idea of a direct confrontation between candidates for an important office captured the popular imagination.

The candidates had completely different political styles, each calculated to project a particular image. Douglas epitomized efficiency and success. He dressed in the latest fashion, favoring flashy vests and the finest broadcloth. He was a glad-hander and a heavy drinker. Ordinarily he arrived in town in a private railroad car, to be met by a brass band and then to ride at the head of a parade to the appointed place.

Lincoln appeared before the voters as a man of the people. He wore ill-fitting black suits and a stovepipe hat-repository for letters, bills, scribbled notes, and other scraps-that exaggerated his great height. He presented a worn and rumpled appearance, partly because he traveled from place to place on day coaches, accompanied by only a few advisers. When local supporters came to meet him at the station, he preferred to walk with them through the streets to the scene of the debate.

Lincoln and Douglas maintained a high intellectual level in their speeches, but these were political debates. They were seeking not to influence future historians (who have nonetheless pondered their words endlessly) but to win votes. Both tailored their arguments to appeal to local audiences-more antislavery in the northern counties, more proslavery in the southern. They also tended to exaggerate their differences, which were not in fact large. Neither wanted to see slavery established in the territories or thought it economically efficient, and neither sought to abolish it by political action or force. Both believed blacks congenitally inferior to whites.

Douglas's strategy was to make Lincoln look like an abolitionist. He accused the Republicans of favoring racial equality and refusing to abide by the decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case. Lincoln tried to picture Douglas as proslavery and a defender of the Dred Scott decision. "Slavery is an unqualified evil to the negro, to the white man, to the soil, and to the State," he said. "Judge Douglas," he also said, "is blowing out the moral lights around us, when he contends that whoever wants slaves has a right to hold them."

However, he often weakened the impact of his arguments, being perhaps too eager to demonstrate his conservatism. "All men are created equal," Lincoln would say, on the authority of the Declaration of Independence, only to add: "I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races." He opposed allowing African Americans, to vote, to sit on juries, to marry whites, even to be citizens. He took a fence-sitting position on the question of abolition in the District of Columbia and stated flatly that he did not favor repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act.

In the debate at Freeport, a town northwest of Chicago near the Wisconsin line, Lincoln cleverly asked Douglas if, considering the Dred Scott decision, the people of a territory could exclude slavery before the territory became a state. Unhesitatingly Douglas replied that they could, simply by not passing the local laws essential for holding blacks in bondage. "The people have the lawful means to introduce or exclude it as they please, for the reason that slavery cannot exist ... unless it is supported by local police regulations."

This argument saved Douglas in Illinois. The Democrats carried the legislature by a narrow margin, whereas it is almost certain that if Douglas had accepted the Dred Scott decision outright, the balance would have swung to the Republicans. But the "Freeport Doctrine" cost him heavily two years later when he made his bid for the Democratic presidential nomination. Southern extremists would not accept a man who suggested that the Dred Scott decision could be circumvented.

However, defeat did Lincoln no harm politically. He had more than held his own against one of the most formidable debaters in politics, and his distinctive personality and point of view had impressed themselves on thousands of minds. Indeed, the defeat revitalized his political career.

Elsewhere the elections in the North went heavily to the Republicans. In early 1859 even many moderate southerners were uneasy about the future. The radicals, made panicky by Republican victories and their own failure to win in Kansas, spoke openly of secession if a Republican was elected president in 1860. They demanded a federal slave code for the territories and talked of annexing Cuba and reviving the African slave trade.

**John Brown's Raid**

In October 1859 John Brown, the scourge of Kansas, made his second contribution to the unfolding sectional drama. Gathering a group of 18 followers-white and black-he staged an attack on Harper's Ferry, Virginia, a town on the Potomac river upstream from Washington. He hoped to seize weapons to arm a slave insurrection. The attack was a fiasco. Federal troops, sent quickly from Washington, trapped Brown's men in an engine house of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. After a two day siege in which the attackers picked off 10 of his men, Brown was captured.

No incident so well illustrates the role of emotion and irrationality in the sectional crisis as John Brown's raid. After his ghastly Pottawatomie murders it should have been obvious to anyone that he was both a fanatic and mentally unstable: Some of the victims were hacked to bits with a broadsword. Yet numbers of high-minded northerners, including Emerson and Thoreau, had supported him and his antislavery "work" after 1856. Some contributed directly and knowingly to his Harper's Ferry enterprise. After Brown's capture, Emerson, in an essay on "Courage," called him a martyr who would "make the gallows as glorious as the cross." Many white southerners reacted to Harper's Ferry with equal irrationality, some with a rage similar to Brown's. Dozens of hapless northerners in the southern states were arrested, beaten, or driven off.

Brown's fate lay in the hands of the Virginia authorities. Ignoring his obvious derangement, they charged him with treason, conspiracy, and murder. He was speedily convicted and hanged. And so a megalomaniac became to the North a hero and to the South a symbol of northern ruthlessness.

**The Election of 1860**

By 1860 the nation was teetering on the brink of disunion. Extremism was more evident in the South, and to any casual observer that section must have seemed the aggressor in the crisis. Yet even in demanding the reopening of the African slave trade, southern radicals believed they were defending themselves against attack. They felt surrounded by hostility. The North was growing at a much faster rate; if nothing were done, they feared, a flood of new free states would soon be able to amend the Constitution and emancipate the slaves. John Brown's raid, with its threat of an insurrection like Nat Turner's, reduced them to a state of panic.

When legislatures in state after state in the South cracked down on freedom of expression, made the manumission of slaves illegal, banished free blacks, and took other steps that northerners considered blatantly provocative, the advocates of these policies believed that they were only defending the status quo. Secession provided an emotional release-a way of dissipating tension by striking back at criticism.

Stephen A. Douglas was probably the last hope of avoiding a rupture between North and South, but when the Democrats met at Charleston, South Carolina, in April 1860 to choose their presidential candidate, the southern delegates would not accept him. Most of the delegates from the Deep South walked out. Without them Douglas could not obtain the required two-thirds majority, and the convention adjourned without naming a candidate.

In June the Democrats reconvened at Baltimore. Again they failed to reach agreement. The two wings then met separately, the northerners nominating Douglas, the southerners John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky, Buchanan's vice president.

Meanwhile, the Republicans had met in Chicago and drafted a platform attractive to all classes and all sections of the northern and western states. For manufacturers they proposed a high tariff, for farmers a homestead law providing free land for settlers. Internal improvements "of a National character," notably a railroad to the Pacific, should receive federal aid. No restrictions should be placed on immigration. As to slavery in the territories, the Republicans did not equivocate: "The normal condition of all the territory of the United States is that of freedom." Neither Congress nor a local legislature could "give legal existence to Slavery in any Territory."

In choosing a presidential candidate the Republicans displayed equally shrewd political judgment by selecting Abraham Lincoln. His thoughtful and moderate views on the main issue of the times and his formidable debating skills attracted many, and so did his political personality. "Honest Abe," the "Railsplitter," a man of humble origins (born in a log cabin), self-educated, self-made, a common man but by no means an ordinary man-the combination seemed unbeatable.

A few days earlier the remnants of the American and Whig parties had formed the Constitutional Union Party and nominated John Bell of Tennessee for president. "It is both the part of patriotism and of duty," they resolved, "to recognize no political principle other than the Constitution of the country, the union of the states, and the enforcement of the laws." Ostrich like, the Constitutional Unionists ignored the conflicts rending the nation. Only in the border states, where the consequences of disunion were sure to be most tragic, did they have any following.

With four candidates in the field, no one could win a popular majority, but it soon became clear that Lincoln was going to be elected. Breckinridge had most of the slave states in his pocket and Bell would run strong in the border regions, but the populous northern and western states had a large majority of the electoral vote, and there the choice lay between the Republicans and the Douglas Democrats. In such a contest the Republicans, with their attractive economic program and their strong stand against slavery in the territories, were sure to come out on top.

When the votes were counted, Lincoln had 1,866,000, almost a million fewer than the combined total of his three opponents, but he swept the North and West, which gave him 180 electoral votes and the presidency. Lincoln was therefore a minority president, but his title to the office was unquestionable. Even if his opponents could have combined their popular votes in each state, Lincoln would have won.

**The Secession Crisis**

Only days after Lincoln's victory, the South Carolina legislature ordered an election of delegates to a convention to decide the state's future course. On December 20 the convention voted unanimously to secede. By February 1, 1861, the other six states of the Lower South had followed suit. A week later, at Montgomery, Alabama, a provisional government of the Confederate States of America was established.

Why were white southerners willing to wreck the Union their grandfathers had put together with so much love and labor? No simple explanation is possible. The danger that the expanding North would overwhelm them was for neither today nor tomorrow. Lincoln had assured them that he would respect slavery where it existed. The Democrats had retained control of Congress in the election; the Supreme Court was firmly in their hands as well. If the North did try to destroy slavery, then secession was perhaps a logical tactic, but why not wait until the threat materialized?

One reason why the South rejected this line of thinking was the tremendous economic energy generated in the North, which seemed to threaten the South's independence. As one southerner complained at a commercial convention in 1855:

From the rattle with which the nurse tickles the car of the child born in the South to the shroud which covers the cold form of the dead, everything comes from the North. We rise from between sheets made in Northern looms, and pillows of Northern feathers, to wash in basins made in the North.... We eat from Northern plates and dishes; our rooms are swept with Northern brooms, our gardens dug with Northern spades ... and the very wood which feeds our fires is cut with Northern axes, halved with hickory brought from Connecticut and New York.

Secession, southerners argued, would "liberate" the South and produce the kind of balanced economy that was proving so successful in the North. The years of sectional conflict, the growing northern criticism of slavery, perhaps even an unconscious awareness that this criticism was well founded, had undermined and in many cases destroyed the patriotic feelings of white southerners. In addition, a Republican president might appoint abolitionists or even blacks to federal posts in the South. Fear approaching panic swept the region.

Although states' rights provided the rationale for leaving the Union, and white southerners expounded the strict-constructionist interpretation of the Constitution with great fervor and ingenuity. the economic and emotional factors were far more basic. The Lower South decided to go ahead with secession regardless of the cost.

In the North there was a foolish but understandable reluctance to believe the South really intended to break away permanently. In the South there was an equally unrealistic expectation that the North would not resist secession forcibly. President elect Lincoln was inclined to write off secession as a bluff designed to win concessions he was determined not to make. He also showed a lamentable political caution in refusing to announce his plans or to cooperate with the outgoing Democratic administration before taking over on March 4. As for President Buchanan, he claimed to be powerless. Secession, he said, was illegal, but the federal government had no legal way to prevent it.

Appeasers, well-meaning believers in compromise, and those prepared to fight to preserve the Union were alike incapable of effective action. A group of moderates headed by Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky proposed a constitutional amendment in which slavery would be "recognized as existing" in all territories south of latitude 36 degrees 30 minutes. Crittenden had a special reason for seeking to avoid a conflict. His oldest son was about to become a Confederate general, another son a Union general. The amendment also promised that no future amendment would tamper with the institution in the slave states and offered other guarantees to the South. But Lincoln refused to consider any arrangement that would open new territory to slavery. "On the territorial question," he wrote, "I am inflexible."

The Crittenden Compromise got nowhere. The new southern Confederacy set to work drafting a constitution, choosing Jefferson Davis as provisional president, seizing arsenals and other federal property within its boundaries, and preparing to dispatch diplomatic representatives to enlist the support of foreign powers. Buchanan bumbled helplessly in Washington. And out in Illinois, Abraham Lincoln juggled Cabinet posts and grew a beard.

**Chapter Fourteen**

**The War To Save the Union**

The nomination of Lincoln had succeeded brilliantly for the Republicans, but had his election been a good thing for the country? As the inauguration approached,

everyone waited tensely to see whether he would oppose secession with force. His inaugural address was conciliatory but firm. Southern institutions were in no danger from

his administration. Secession, however, was illegal. "A husband and wife may be divorced," Lincoln said, employing one of his homely and unconsciously risque metaphors, "but the different parts of our country cannot." His concluding words catch the spirit of the inaugural perfectly:

I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break, our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory ... will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

Border-state moderates found the speech encouraging. So did the fiery Charles Sumner. The Confederates, however, read Lincoln's denial of the right of secession as justifying their decision to secede.

**Fort Sumter: The First Shot**

While denying the legality of secession, Lincoln had in fact temporized. The Confederates had seized most federal property in the Deep South. Lincoln admitted frankly that he would not attempt to reclaim this property. However, two strongholds, Fort Sumter, on an island in Charleston harbor, and Fort Pickens, at Pensacola, Florida, were still in loyal hands. Most Republicans, Lincoln included, did not want to surrender them without a show of resistance. To do so, one wrote, would be to turn the American eagle into a "debilitated chicken."

Yet to reinforce the forts might mean bloodshed that would make reconciliation impossible. After weeks of indecision, Lincoln took the moderate step of sending a naval expedition to supply the Sumter garrison with food. Unwilling to permit this, the Confederates opened fire on the fort on April 12, 1861. After holding out against the bombardment of shore batteries for 34 hours, Major Robert Anderson and his men surrendered.

The attack precipitated an outburst of patriotic indignation in the North. Lincoln promptly issued a call for 75,000 volunteers. This caused Virginia, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Tennessee to secede. After years of crises and compromises, the nation chose to settle the quarrel between the parties by force of arms.

Southerners considered Lincoln's call for troops an act of naked aggression. They were seeking what a later generation would call the right of self-determination. How could the North square its professed belief in democratic free choice with its refusal to permit the southern states to leave the Union when a majority of their citizens wished to do so?

Lincoln took the position that secession was a rejection of democracy. If the South could refuse to abide by the result of an election in which it had freely participated, then everything that monarchists and other conservatives had said about the instability of republican governments would be proved true. This was the proper ground for Lincoln to take, both morally and politically. A majority of northerners would not have supported a war against slavery. Slavery was the root cause of secession, but the North's determination to resist secession resulted from the people's commitment to the Union.

**The Blue and the Gray**

In any test between the United States and the 11 states of the Confederacy, the former possessed tremendous advantages. There were 20.7 million people in the northern states (excluding Kentucky and Missouri, where opinion was divided), only 9 million in the South, of which about 3.5 million were slaves, whom the whites hesitated to trust with arms. The North's economic capacity to wage war was even more preponderant. It was manufacturing nine times as much as the Confederacy and had a far larger and more efficient railroad system. Northern control of the merchant marine and the navy made possible a blockade of the Confederacy, a particularly potent threat to a region so dependent on foreign markets.

The Confederates discounted these advantages. Many doubted that public opinion in the North would sustain Lincoln if he attempted to meet secession with force. Northern manufacturers needed southern markets, and merchants depended heavily on southern business. Many western farmers were still sending their produce down the Mississippi. Should the North try to cut Europe off from southern cotton, the powers, particularly Great Britain, would force open southern ports and provide the Confederacy with the means of defending itself forever. Moreover, the South provided nearly three-fourths of the world's cotton, essential for most textile mills. "You do not dare to make war on cotton," Senator Hammond of South Carolina had declared. "No power on earth dares to make war upon it. Cotton is king."

The Confederacy also counted on certain military advantages. The new nation, it was assumed, need only fight a defensive war, less costly in men and material and of great importance in maintaining morale and winning outside sympathy. Southerners would be defending not only their social institutions but their homes and families.

Both sides faced massive difficulties in organizing for war. The Union mustered its military, economic, and administrative resources slowly because it had had little experience with war, none with civil war. After southern defections, the regular army consisted of only 13,000 officers and men, far too few to absorb the 186,000 volunteers who had joined the colors by early summer, much less the additional 450,000 men who had volunteered by the end of the year. The hastily composed high command, headed by the elderly Winfield Scott, debated grand strategy endlessly while regimental commanders lacked even decent maps of Virginia.

The Whig prejudice against powerful presidents was part of Lincoln's political heritage; consequently he did not display the firmness of a Jackson or a Polk in his dealings with Congress. Fortunately, in the early stages of the war, Congress proved to be cooperative. But he proved capable of handling heavy responsibilities. His strength lay in his ability to think problems through, to accept their implications, and then to act unflinchingly. Anything but a tyrant by nature, he boldly exceeded the conventional limits of presidential power in the emergency, expanding the army without congressional authorization and even suspending the writ of habeas corpus when he thought military necessity demanded that action.

Lincoln displayed a remarkable patience and depth of character: He would willingly accept snubs and insults from lesser men in order to advance the cause. He kept a close check on every aspect of the war effort, yet he found time for thought too. His secretary, John Nicolay, reported seeing him sit sometimes for a whole hour like "a petrified image," lost in contemplation.

The Confederacy faced far greater problems than the North, for it had to create an entire administration under pressure of war, with the additional handicap of the states' rights philosophy to which it was committed. The Confederate Constitution explicitly recognized the sovereignty of the states and contained no broad authorization for laws designed to advance the general welfare. State governments repeatedly defied the central administration, located at Richmond after Virginia seceded, even with regard to military affairs.

Of course the Confederacy made heavy use of the precedents and administrative machinery taken over from the United States. The government quickly decided that all federal laws would remain in force until specifically repealed, and many former federal officials continued to perform their duties under the new auspices. The call to arms produced a turnout even more impressive than that in the North; by July 1861 about 112,000 men were under arms.

President Jefferson Davis represented the best type of slave owner. A graduate of West Point, he was a fine soldier and a planter noted for his humane treatment of his slaves. He was courageous, industrious, and intelligent, but rather too reserved and opinionated to make either a good politician or a popular leader. He devoted too much time to details, failed to delegate authority, and was impatient with dull-witted people, a type politicians often have to deal with. He fancied himself a military expert because of his West Point training and his Mexican War service, but unfortunately for the South, he was a mediocre military thinker. Unlike Lincoln, he quarreled frequently with his subordinates, held grudges, and allowed personal feelings to distort his judgment.

**The Test of Battle: Bull Run**

As summer approached, the two nations prepared for battle, full of pride, enthusiasm, and ignorance. The tragic confrontation was beginning. "Forward to Richmond!" "On to Washington!" Such shouts propelled the armies into battle long before either was properly trained. On July 21, at Manassas Junction, Virginia, which was 20 miles below Washington, on a stream called Bull Run, 30,000 men under General Irvin McDowell attacked a roughly equal force of Confederates commanded by the "Napoleon of the South," Pierre G. T. Beauregard. McDowell swept back the Confederate left flank. Victory seemed sure. But then the southerners counter-attacked, driving the Union soldiers back. As often happens with green troops, retreat quickly turned to rout. Panic engulfed Washington and Richmond exulted, both sides expecting the northern capital to fall within hours.

The inexperienced southern troops were too disorganized to follow up their victory. Casualties on both sides were light, and the battle had little direct effect on anything but morale. Southern confidence soared, while the North began to realize how immense the task of subduing the Confederacy would be.

After Bull Run, Lincoln devised a broader, more systematic strategy for winning the war. The navy would clamp a tight blockade on southern ports as part of General Scott's "Anaconda Plan" to starve the South into submission. In the West, operations designed to gain control of the Mississippi would be undertaken. Most important, a new army would be mustered at Washington to invade Virginia. To lead this army and to command all the Union forces, Lincoln appointed a 34-year old major general, George B. McClellan.

McClellan possessed a fine military bearing, a flair for the dramatic, the ability to inspire troops, remarkable talent as an administrator, and a sublime faith in his own destiny. He dreamed of striking swiftly at the heart of the Confederacy to capture Richmond, Nashville, even New Orleans. Yet he was sensible enough to insist on massive logistical support, thorough training for the troops, iron discipline, and meticulous staff work before making a move.

**Paying for the War**

By the fall of 1861 a real army was taking shape along the Potomac: disciplined, confident, and adequately supplied. Northern shops and factories were producing guns, ammunition, wagons, uniforms, and the countless other supplies needed to fight a war.

At the beginning of the war Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase failed to ask Congress for enough money to fight the war properly. In August 1861 Congress passed an income tax law (3 percent on incomes over $800, which effectively exempted ordinary wage earners) and assessed a direct tax on the states. Loans amounting to $140 million were authorized. As the war dragged on and expenses mounted, new excise taxes on every imaginable product and service were passed, and still further borrowing was necessary. In 1863 the banking system was overhauled.

During the war the federal government borrowed a total of $2.2 billion and collected $667 million in taxes, -about 20 percent of its total expenditures. These unprecedentedly large sums proved inadequate. Some obligations were met by printing paper money unredeemdable in coin. About $431 million in "greenbacks"-the term distinguished this fiat money from the redeemable yellowback bills-were issued during the conflict. Public confidence in paper money vacillated with each change in the fortunes of the Union armies, but by the end of the war the cost of living in the North had doubled.

The heavy emphasis on borrowing and currency inflation was expensive but not irresponsible. In a country still chiefly agricultural, people had relatively low cash incomes and therefore could not easily bear a heavy tax load.

**Politics as Usual**

Partisan politics was altered by the war but not suspended. The secession of the southern states left the Republicans with large majorities in Congress. Most Democrats supported measures necessary for the conduct of the war but objected to the way the Lincoln administration was conducting it. When slavery and race relations were under discussion, the Democrats adopted a conservative stance and the Republicans divided into Moderate and Radical wings.

As the war progressed, the Radical faction became increasingly powerful. In 1861 the most prominent Radical senator was Charles Sumner, brimful of hatred for slaveholders. In the House, Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania was the rising power. Sumner and Stevens were uncompromising. They demanded not merely abolition but the granting of full political and civil rights to blacks. Moderate Republicans objected to treating blacks as equals and opposed making abolition a war aim.

Even many of the so-called Radicals disagreed with Sumner and Stevens on race relations. Senator Benjamin Wade of Ohio, for example, was a lifelong opponent of slavery, yet he had convinced himself that blacks (he habitually called them "niggers") had a distinctive and unpleasant smell. He considered the common white prejudice against African Americans perfectly understandable. But prejudice, he maintained, gave no one the right "to do injustice to anybody." He insisted that blacks were as intelligent as whites and were entitled not merely to freedom but to political equality.

At the other end of the political spectrum stood the so-called Peace Democrats. These "Copperheads" (apparently the reference was not to the poisonous snake but to an earlier time when some hard-money Democrats wore copper pennies around their necks) opposed all measures in support of the war. Few were actually disloyal, but their activities at a time when thousands of men were risking their lives in battle infuriated many northerners.

Lincoln treated dissenters with a curious mixture of repression and tolerance, He suspended the writ of habeas corpus in critical areas and applied martial law freely, arguing that the government dared not stand on ceremony in a national emergency. His object, he explained, was not to punish but to prevent. Elections were held in complete freedom throughout the war. After the war, in Ex parte Milligan (1866), the Supreme Court declared illegal the military trials of civilians in areas where the regular courts were functioning, but by that time the question was of only academic interest.

The most notorious domestic foe of the administration was the Peace Democrat Congressman Clement L. Vallandigham of Ohio. Vallandigham was a zealot. "Perish life itself," he once said, "but do the thing that is right." In 1863, after he had made a speech urging that the war be ended by negotiation, Vallandigham was jailed by the military. Of course his followers protested indignantly. Lincoln ordered him released and banished to the Confederacy. Once at liberty Vallandigham moved to Canada, from which refuge he ran unsuccessfully for governor of Ohio. In 1864 he returned to Ohio. Although he campaigned against Lincoln in the presidential election, he was not molested.

**Behind Confederate Lines**

The South also revised its strategy after Bull Run. President Davis relied primarily on a strong defense to wear down the Union's will to fight. Although the Confederacy did not develop a two-party system, there was plenty of internal political strife. Davis made enemies easily, and the southern devotion to states' rights and individual liberty (for white men) caused endless trouble.

Finance was the Confederacy's most vexing problem. The blockade made it impossible to raise much money through tariffs. The Confederate Congress passed an income tax together with many excise taxes, but these taxes raised only 2 percent of the government's needs. The most effective levy was a tax-in-kind, amounting to one-tenth of each farmer's production. The South borrowed as much as it could ($712 million), even mortgaging cotton undeliverable because of the blockade in order to gain European credits. But it relied mainly on printing paper currency; over $1.5 billion poured from the presses during the war. When the military fortunes of the Confederacy began to decline, the bottom fell out, and by early 1865 a Confederate dollar was worth less than two cents in gold.

Because of the shortage of manufacturing facilities, the task of outfitting the army strained southern resources to the limit. Large supplies of small arms (some 600,000 weapons during the entire war) came from Europe, but as the blockade became more effective, it was increasingly difficult to obtain European goods.

The Confederates did manage to build a number of munitions plants, and they captured huge amounts of northern arms. No battle was lost because of a lack of guns or other military equipment, though shortages of shoes and uniforms handicapped the Confederate forces on some occasions.

Foreign policy loomed large in Confederate thinking, for the "cotton is king" theory presupposed that the Europeans would break any northern blockade to get cotton for their textile mills. Southern expectations were not realized, however. The attitude of Great Britain was decisive. The cutting off of cotton did not hit the British as hard as the South had hoped, and British crop failures necessitated the importation of large amounts of northern wheat. The fact that the mass of ordinary people in Great Britain favored the North was also important in determining British policy.

Nevertheless, the British government gave serious thought to recognizing the Confederacy. But the deteriorating military situation determined British policy; once the North obtained a clear superiority on the battlefield, the possibility of British intervention vanished.

**War in the West: Shiloh**

Northern superiority was achieved slowly and at enormous cost. After Bull Run, no battles were fought until early 1862. Then, while McClellan continued his deliberate preparations to attack Richmond, important fighting occurred far to the west. In March 1862, a Texas army advancing beyond Santa Fe clashed with a Union force in the Battle of Glorieta Pass. The battle was indecisive, but a Union unit destroyed the Confederates' supply train. They then retreated to the Rio Grande, ending the Confederate threat to the Far West.

Meanwhile, far larger Union forces led by a shabby, cigar-smoking West Pointer named Ulysses S. Grant invaded Tennessee from a base at Cairo, Illinois. Grant captured Forts Henry and Donelson, strong points on the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers. Next he marched toward Corinth, Mississippi, an important railroad junction.

To check Grant's invasion, the Confederates massed 40,000 men under Albert Sidney Johnston. On April 6 Johnston struck suddenly at Shiloh, 20 miles north of Corinth. Grant's men stood their ground, and in the course of the second day of battle the tide turned. The Confederates fell back toward Corinth, exhausted and demoralized.

Grant, shaken by the unexpected attack and appalled by his losses, allowed the enemy to escape. For this blunder he was relieved of his command and his battle tested army was broken up, its strength dissipated in a series of uncoordinated campaigns. A great opportunity had been lost.

Shiloh had other results. The staggering casualties shook the confidence of both belligerents. More Americans fell there in two days than in all the battles of the Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Mexican War combined. Union losses exceeded 13,000 out of 63,000 engaged; the Confederates lost 10,699, including General Johnston.

More accurate guns and more powerful artillery were responsible for the carnage. The generals began to reconsider their tactics and to experiment with field fortifications and other defensive measures. And the people-North and South stopped thinking of the war as a romantic test of courage and military guile.

**McClellan: The Reluctant Warrior**

In Virginia, General McClellan was finally moving against Richmond. Instead of trying to advance across the difficult terrain of northern Virginia, he transported his army by water to the tip of the peninsula formed by the York and James rivers in order to attack Richmond from the southeast.

McClellan's plan alarmed many congressmen because it seemed to leave Washington relatively unprotected. But it simplified the task of supplying the army in hostile country. However, McClellan now displayed the ' e weaknesses that eventually ruined his career. His problems were intellectual and psychological. He saw the Civil War not as a mighty struggle over fundamental beliefs but as a complex game (like chess with its castles and knights) that gentlemanly commanders played at a leisurely pace and for limited stakes. He believed it more important to capture Richmond than to destroy the army protecting it. The idea of crushing the South seemed to him wrong headed and uncivilized.

Beyond this, McClellan was temperamentally unsuited for a position of so much responsibility. Beneath the swagger and the charm he was a profoundly insecure man. He talked like Napoleon, but he did not like to fight. He knew how to get ready, but he was never ready in his own mind.

Proceeding deliberately, he floated an army of 112,000 men down the Potomac and by May 14 had established a base less than 25 miles from Richmond. A swift thrust might have ended the war quickly, but McClellan delayed, despite the fact that he had 80,000 men in striking position and large reserves. As he advanced slowly, the Confederates caught part of his force separated from the rest by the Chickahominy River and attacked it. The Battle of Seven Pines was indecisive, yet resulted in more than 10,000 casualties.

At Seven Pines the Confederate commander, General Joseph E. Johnston, was severely wounded; leadership of the Army of Northern Virginia then fell to Robert E. Lee. Although a most reluctant supporter of secession, Lee was a superb soldier. He was McClellan's antithesis: gentle, courtly, and entirely without McClellan's swagger and vainglorious belief that he was a man of destiny. McClellan seemed almost deliberately to avoid understanding his foes, acting as though every southern general was an Alexander. Lee, a master psychologist on the battlefield, cleverly took the measure of each Union general and devised his tactics accordingly. Where McClellan was complex, egotistical, perhaps even unbalanced, Lee was tactful, unassuming, and level headed. Yet on the battlefield Lee's boldness sometimes skirted the edge of foolhardiness.

To relieve the pressure on Richmond, Lee sent General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson on a diversionary raid in the Shenandoah Valley, west of Richmond and Washington. In response, Lincoln dispatched 20,000 reserves to the Shenandoah to check Jackson-to the dismay of McClellan, who wanted the troops to attack Richmond from the north. But after Seven Pines, Lee ordered Jackson back to Richmond. While Union armies streamed toward the valley, Jackson slipped stealthily between them.

Jackson's troops gave Lee a numerical advantage. On June 26 he launched a massive surprise attack. For seven days the battle raged. McClellan, who excelled in defense, fell back, his lines intact, exacting a fearful toll. Under difficult conditions he transferred his troops to a new base on the James River. Again the losses were terrible: northern casualties totaled 15,800, those of the South nearly 20,000.

**Lee Counterattacks: Antietam**

McClellan was still within striking distance of Richmond, in an impregnable position with secure supply lines and 86,000 soldiers ready to resume the battle. Yet Lincoln, exasperated with McClellan for having surrendered the initiative, reduced his authority by placing him under General Henry W. Halleck, who ordered him to move his army to the Potomac, near Washington. A great opportunity had been squandered. Had the Union army made any aggressive thrust, Lee would not have dared to move from the defenses of Richmond. When it withdrew, Lee, with typical decisiveness and daring, marched north. Late in August, after some complex maneuvering, the Confederates drove confused troops commanded by General John Pope from the field. It was the same ground, Bull Run, where the first major engagement of the war had been fought.

Thirteen months had passed since the first failure at Bull Run, and despite the expenditure of thousands of lives and millions of dollars the Union army stood as far from Richmond as ever. Dismayed by Pope's incompetence, Lincoln turned in desperation back to McClellan, who regrouped the shaken army.

Despite his successful defense of Richmond, Lee believed that unless some dramatic blow was delivered on northern soil to persuade the people of the United States that military victory was impossible, the South would be crushed in the long run by the weight of superior resources. He therefore marched rapidly northwestward around the defenses of Washington.

Acting with his usual boldness, Lee divided his army of 60,000 into a number of units. One, under Stonewall Jackson, descended upon weakly defended Harper's Ferry, capturing more than 11,000 prisoners. Another pressed as far north as Hagerstown, Maryland, nearly to the Pennsylvania line. McClellan pursued with his usual deliberation until a captured dispatch revealed to him Lee's dispositions. Then he moved a bit more swiftly, forcing Lee to stand and fight on September 17, 1862, at Sharpsburg, Maryland, between the Potomac and Antietam Creek.

On a field that offered Lee no room to maneuver, 70,000 Union soldiers clashed with 40,000 Confederates. When darkness fell, more than 22,000 lay dead or wounded on the bloody field. Although casualties were evenly divided and the Confederate lines intact, Lee's position was perilous. McClellan, however, did nothing. For an entire day, while Lee scanned the field in futile search of some weakness in the Union lines, he held his fire. That night the Confederates slipped back across the Potomac into Virginia.

The invasion had failed, Lee's army had been badly mauled, the gravest threat to the Union in the war had been checked. But McClellan had let victory slip through his fingers. Soon Lee was back behind the defenses of Richmond, rebuilding his army. Once again, this time finally, Lincoln dismissed McClellan from his command.

**The Emancipation Proclamation**

Antietam gave Lincoln the excuse he needed to take a step that changed the character of the war. As we have seen, when the fighting started, only a few radicals wanted to free the slaves by force. However, pressures to act against the South's "peculiar institution" mounted steadily. Slavery had divided the nation; now it was driving northerners to war within themselves. Love of country led them to fight to save the Union, but fighting roused hatreds and caused many to desire to smash the enemy. Sacrifice, pain, and grief made abolitionists of many who had no love for blacks-they sought to free the slave only to injure the master. To make abolition an object of the war might encourage the slaves to revolt. Lincoln disclaimed this objective; nevertheless the possibility existed.

Lincoln would have preferred to see slavery done away with by state law, with compensation for slave owners and federal aid for all freed slaves willing to leave the United States. He tried repeatedly to persuade the loyal slave states to adopt this policy, but without success. He moved cautiously. By the summer of 1862 he was convinced that for military reasons and to win the support of liberal opinion in Europe, the government should make abolition a war aim. He delayed temporarily, fearing that a statement in the face of military reverses would be taken as a sign of weakness. The "victory" at Antietam gave him his opportunity, and on September 22 he made public the Emancipation Proclamation. After January 1, 1863, it said, all slaves in areas in rebellion against the United States "shall be then, thence forward, and forever free."

No single slave was freed directly by Lincoln's announcement, which did not apply to the border states or to those sections of the Confederacy, like New Orleans and Norfolk, Virginia, already controlled by federal troops. But henceforth every Union victory would speed the destruction of slavery.

Some of the president's advisers thought the proclamation inexpedient and others considered it illegal. Lincoln justified it as a way to weaken the enemy. Southerners considered the proclamation an incitement to slave rebellion-an "infamous attempt to incite flight, murder, and rapine ... and convert the quiet, ignorant, dependent black son of toil into a savage." Most antislavery groups approved but thought it did not go far enough. Foreign opinion was mixed: Liberals tended to applaud, conservatives to react with alarm or contempt.

As Lincoln anticipated, the proclamation had a subtle but continuing impact in America. Its immediate effect was to aggravate racial prejudices. Millions of white Americans disapproved of slavery yet abhorred the idea of equality for African Americans. In 1857 the people of Iowa rejected Negro suffrage by a vote of 49,000 to 8,000. To some people, emancipation threatened an invasion of the North by blacks who would compete with them for jobs, drive down wages, commit crimes, spread diseases, and-eventually-destroy the "purity" of the white race.

The Democrats tried to make political capital of these fears and prejudices. So strong was the antiblack feeling that most of the Republican politicians who defended emancipation did so with racist arguments. Far from encouraging southern blacks to move north, they claimed, the ending of slavery would lead to a mass migration of northern blacks to the South. When the Emancipation Proclamation began actually to free slaves, the government pursued a policy of "containment," that is, of keeping the freedmen in the South. Panicky fears of an inundation of blacks then subsided.

**The Draft Riots**

In March 1863, volunteering having fallen off, Congress passed a conscription act drafting men between 20 and 45. However, the law allowed draftees to hire substitutes or even to obtain exemptions for $300, which was obviously unfair to the poor. In addition, conscription represented an enormous expansion of governmental authority over the citizenry, and it was bitterly resented.

Widespread rioting broke out, the most serious occurring in New York City in July 1863. Most of the New York rioters were poor Irish laborers who resented both the local blacks who competed with them for work and the middle-class whites who seemed sympathetic to the blacks. Public buildings, shops, and private residences were put to the torch. Blacks were hunted down and killed without reason. They in turn fought back with equal ferocity. By the time order was restored more than a hundred people had lost their lives.

Northern hostility to emancipation rose from fear of change more than from hatred of African Americans. Liberal disavowals of any intention to treat blacks as equals were in large measure designed to quiet this fear. To a degree the racial backlash reflected the public's awareness that a change, frightening but irreversible, had occurred.

Most white northerners did not surrender their comforting belief in black inferiority, and Lincoln was no exception. Yet Lincoln was evolving. He talked about deporting ex-slaves to the tropics, but he did not send any there. And he began to receive black leaders in the White House and to allow black groups to hold meetings on the grounds.

**The Emancipated People**

To blacks, both slave and free, the Emancipation Proclamation served as a beacon. Even if it failed immediately to liberate one slave or to lift the burdens imposed by white prejudice from one black back, it stood as a promise of future improvement. "I took the proclamation for a little more than it purported," Frederick Douglass recalled in his autobiography.

After January 1, 1863, whenever the "Army of Freedom" approached, slaves laid down their plows and hoes and flocked to the Union lines. "We-all knows about it," one black confided to a northern clergyman. "Only we darsen't let on. We pretends not to know." Such behavior came as a shock to slave owners. "[The slaves] who loved us best-as we thought-were the first to leave us," one planter mourned.

A revolutionary shift occurred in white thinking about using black men as soldiers. Although they had fought in the Revolution and in the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812, a law of 1792 barred blacks from the army. During the early stages of the rebellion, despite the eagerness of thousands of free African Americans to enlist, the prohibition remained in force. By 1862, however, the need for manpower was creating pressure for change. After the Emancipation Proclamation specifically authorized the enlistment of blacks, the governor of Massachusetts organized a black regiment, the famous Massachusetts 54th. Swiftly thereafter, other states began to recruit black soldiers, and by the end of the war one soldier in eight in the Union army was black. This changed the war from a struggle to save the Union to a kind of revolution. "Let the black man ... get an eagle on his button and a musket on his shoulder," wrote Frederick Douglass, "and there is no power on earth which can deny that he has won the right to citizenship."

Black soldiers were segregated and commanded by white officers. But they soon proved themselves in battle; of the 180,000 who served in the Union army, 37,000 were killed, a rate of loss about 40 percent higher than that among white troops. Their bravery-21 were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor-convinced thousands of northern white soldiers that blacks were not by nature childish or cowardly.

Southerners were another matter. Black soldiers were cruelly mistreated in Confederate prison camps. Still worse, many black captives were killed on the spot. Lincoln was tempted to order reprisals, but he and his advisers realized that this would have been both morally wrong (two wrongs never make a right) and likely to lead to still more atrocities. "Blood can not restore blood," Lincoln said in his usual direct way.

**Antietam to Gettysburg**

To replace McClellan, Lincoln chose General Ambrose E. Burnside, known to history for his magnificent side-whiskers, ever after called sideburns. Unlike McClellan, Burnside was aggressive-too aggressive. He planned to ford the Rappahannock River at Fredericksburg. Lee concentrated his army in impregnable positions behind the town. Burnside should have called off the attack when he saw Lee's advantage; instead he he sent his troops across the river over pontoon bridges and occupied Fredericksburg. Then, in wave after wave, they charged the Confederate defense line while Lee's artillery riddled them from nearby Marye's Heights. They were stopped with frightful losses.

On December 14, the day following this futile assault, Burnside, tears streaming down his cheeks, ordered the evacuation of Fredericksburg. Shortly thereafter General Joseph Hooker replaced him.

Hooker proved no better than his predecessor, but his failings were more like McClellan's than Burnside's. By the spring of 1863 he had 125,000 men ready for action. Late in April he forded the Rappahannock and concentrated at Chancellorsville, about 10 miles west of Fredericksburg. His army outnumbered the Confederates by more than two to one; he should have forced a battle at once. Instead he delayed, and when he did, Lee sent Stonewall Jackson's corps (28,000 men) across tangled countryside to a position directly athwart Hooker's unsuspecting flank. At 6 P.m. on May 2, Jackson attacked.

Completely surprised, the Union army crumbled. If the battle had begun earlier in the day, the Confederates might have won a decisive victory; as it happened, nightfall brought a lull, and the next day the Union troops rallied and held their ground. Heavy fighting continued until May 5, when Hooker retreated in good order behind the Rappahannock.

Chancellorsville cost the Confederates dearly, for their losses, in excess of 12,000, were almost as heavy as the North's and harder to replace. They also lost Stonewall Jackson, struck by the bullet from one of his own men while returning from a reconnaissance. Nevertheless, the Union army had suffered another fearful blow to its morale.

Lee now took the offensive. With 75,000 soldiers he crossed the Potomac again, a larger Union force dogging his right flank. By late June his army was in southern Pennsylvania, 50 miles northwest of Baltimore, within 10 miles of Harrisburg, the capital of the state.

On July I a Confederate division looking for shoes in the town of Gettysburg clashed with two brigades of Union cavalry northwest of the town. Both sides sent out calls for reinforcements. Like iron filings drawn to a magnet, the army of Northern Virginia and the Army of the Potomac converged.

The Confederates won control of the town, but the Union army, now commanded by General George G. Meade, took a strong position on Cemetery Ridge, just to the south. Lee's men occupied Seminary Ridge, a parallel position. On this field the fate of the Union was probably decided.

For two days the Confederates attacked Cemetery Ridge. During General George E. Pickett's famous charge, a handful of his men actually carried the Union lines, but reserves drove them back. By nightfall on July 3 the Confederate army was spent and bleeding, the Union lines unbroken. For the first time Lee had been clearly bested on the field of battle.

**Lincoln Finds His General: Grant at Vicksburg**

On Independence Day, far to the west, Union soldiers won another great victory. When General Halleck was called east in July 1862, Ulysses S. Grant reassumed command of Union troops in the area. Grant was by then one of the most controversial officers in the army. At West Point he had compiled an indifferent record, ranking 21 in a class of 39. During the Mexican War he served well, but when he was later assigned to a lonely post in Oregon, he took to drink and was forced to resign his commission.

The war gave him a second chance. His reputation as a ne'er-do-well and his unmilitary bearing worked against him, as did the heavy casualties suffered by his troops at Shiloh. Yet the fact that he knew how to manage a large army and win battles did not escape Lincoln.

Grant's major aim was to capture Vicksburg, a city of tremendous strategic importance. Vicksburg sits on a high bluff overlooking a sharp bend in the Mississippi River. So long as it remained in southern hands, the trans-Mississippi region could send men and supplies to the rest of the Confederacy.

When Vicksburg proved unapproachable from either west or north, Grant crossed to the west bank of the Mississippi and slipped quickly southward. Recrossing the river below Vicksburg, he abandoned his supply lines and in a series of engagements his troops captured Jackson, Mississippi, cutting off the army of General John C. Pemberton, defending Vicksburg from other Confederate units. Turning next on Pemberton, Grant won two decisive battles and drove him inside the Vicksburg fortifications. By mid-May the city was under siege. Grant applied relentless pressure, and on July 4 Pemberton surrendered. With Vicksburg in Union hands, federal gunboats could range the entire length of the Mississippi. Texas and Arkansas were isolated and for all practical purposes lost to the Confederacy.

Grant's victory had another result: Lincoln gave him command of all federal troops west of the Appalachians. Grant promptly took charge of the fighting in south-central Tennessee. Shifting corps commanders and bringing up fresh units, he won another decisive victory at Chattanooga. This cleared the way for an invasion of Georgia. Suddenly this unkempt, stubby little man, who looked more like a tramp than a general, emerged as the military leader the North had been so desperately seeking. In March 1864 Lincoln summoned him to Washington, named him lieutenant general, and gave him supreme command of the armies of the United States.

**Economic and Social Effects, North and South**

Though much blood would yet be spilled, by the end of 1863 the Confederacy was on the road to defeat. Northern military pressure, gradually increasing, was eroding the South's most precious resource, manpower. An ever-tightening naval blockade was reducing its economic strength. Shortages developed that, combined with the flood of currency pouring from the presses, led to a drastic inflation. By 1864 an officer's coat cost $2,000 in Confederate money, cigars sold for $ 10 each, butter was $25 a pound, and flour $275 a barrel. Wages rose but not nearly so rapidly. The southern railroad network was gradually wearing out; the major lines maintained operations only by cannibalizing less vital roads. Imported products such as coffee disappeared; even salt became scarce. Efforts to increase manufacturing were only moderately successful because of the shortage of labor, capital, and technical knowledge.

In the North, after a brief depression in 1861 caused by the uncertainties of the situation and the loss of southern business, the economy flourished. Government purchases greatly stimulated certain lines of manufacturing; the railroads operated at close to capacity and with increasing efficiency; the farm machinery business boomed because so many farmers left their fields to serve in the army; a series of bad harvests in Europe boosted agricultural prices.

Congress passed a number of economic measures long desired but held up in the past by southern opposition: (1) the Homestead Act (1862) gave 160 acres to any settler who would farm the land for five years; (2) the Morrill Land Grant Act of the same year provided the states with land at the rate of 30,000 acres for each member of Congress to support state agricultural colleges; (3) various tariff acts raised the duties on manufactured goods to an average rate of 47 percent in order to protect domestic manufacturers from foreign competition; (4) the Pacific Railway Act (1862) authorized subsidies in land and money for the construction of a transcontinental railroad; and (5) the National Banking Act of 1863 gave the country, at last, a uniform currency. Under this last act, banks could obtain federal charters by investing at least one-third of their capital in United States bonds. They might then issue currency up to 90 percent of the value of those bonds.

All these laws stimulated the economy and added to public confidence. Whether

the overall economic effect of the Civil War on the Union was beneficial is less clear.

Although the economy expanded, it did so more slowly during - the 1860s than in the

decades preceding and following. Prices soared beginning in 1862, averaging about

80 percent over the 1860 level by the end of the war. As in the South, wages did not

keep pace. This condition did not make for a healthy economy-nor did the fact that

there were chronic shortages of labor in many fields, shortages aggravated by a sharp

drop in the number of immigrants entering the country. The war undoubtedly hastened industrialization. It posed problems of organization and planning, both military and civilian, that challenged the talents of creative persons and thus led to a more complex and efficient economy. The mechanization of production, the growth of large corporations, the creation of a better banking system, and the emergence of business leaders attuned to these conditions would surely have occurred in any case, for industrialization was under way long before the South seceded. Nevertheless, the war greatly speeded all these changes.

Civilian participation in the war effort was far greater than in earlier conflicts. In North and South, church leaders took the lead in recruitment drives and in charitable activities supporting the armed forces. They raised the money and coordinated the personnel needed to provide soldiers with Bibles, religious tracts, and other books, along with fruit, coffee, and spare clothing.

**Women in Wartime**

Many southern women took over the management of farms and small plantations when their menfolk went off to war. Others became volunteer nurses, and some served in the Confederate medical corps. Quite a few southern women worked as clerks in newly organized government departments. Southern "ladyhood" was another casualty of the war. The absence or death of husbands or other male relations changed attitudes toward gender roles. When her husband obeyed a military order to abandon Atlanta to the advancing Union armies, Julia Davidson, about to deliver, denounced the "men of Atlanta" for having "run and left Atlanta" and their homes, Such women learned to fend for themselves. "Necessity," Davidson later wrote her husband, would "make a different woman of me."

On the other side, large numbers of northern women also contributed their share to the war effort. Farm women went out into fields to plant and harvest crops, aided in many instances by new farm machinery. Many others took jobs in textile factories; in establishments making shoes, uniforms, and other supplies for the army; and in government agencies. Besides working in factories and shops and on farms, northern women, again like their southern counterparts, aided the war effort more directly. Elizabeth Blackwell, the first American woman doctor of medicine, helped set up what became the United States Sanitary Commission, an organization of women dedicated to improving sanitary conditions at army camps, supplying hospitals with volunteer nurses, and raising money for medical supplies. Additionally, over 3,000 northern women served as army nurses during the conflict. The "proper sphere" of American women was expanding, another illustration of the modernizing effect of the war.

**Grant in the Wilderness**

Grant's strategy as supreme commander was simple and ruthless. He would attack Lee and try to capture Richmond. General William Tecumseh Sherman would drive from Chattanooga toward Atlanta, Georgia. Like a lobster's claw, the two armies could then close to crush all resistance. Early in May 1864 Grant and Sherman commenced operations, each with more than 100,000 men.

Grant marched the Army of the Potomac into the tangled wilderness south of the Rappahannock, where Hooker had been routed. a year earlier. Lee, having only 60,000 men, forced the battle in the roughest possible country, where Grant found it difficult to maneuver his larger force. For two days (May 5-6) the Battle of the Wilderness raged. When it was over, the North had sustained 18,000 casualties, far more than the Confederates.

But unlike his predecessors, Grant did not fall back after being checked. Instead he shifted his troops to the southeast, attempting to outflank the Confederates. Lee rushed his divisions southeastward and disposed them behind hastily thrown up earthworks around Spotsylvania Court House. Grant attacked. After five more days, which cost the Union army another 12,000 men, the Confederate lines were still intact. Grant remained undaunted. He was certain that the war could be won only by grinding the South down beneath the weight of numbers. He could replace his losses, Lee could not. When critics complained of the cost, he replied doggedly that he intended to fight on in the same manner if it took all summer. Once more he pressed southeastward in an effort to outflank the enemy. At Cold Harbor, nine miles from Richmond, he found the Confederates once more in strong defenses. At dawn on June 3 he attacked and was thrown back with frightful losses.

Sixty thousand casualties in less than a month! The news sent a wave of dismay through the North. There were demands that "Butcher" Grant be removed from command. Lincoln, however, stood firm. Although the price was high, Grant was gaining his objective. At Cold Harbor, Lee had not a single regiment in general reserve, whereas Grant's army was larger than at the start of the offensive. When Grant next swung round his flank, striking toward Petersburg, Lee had to rush his troops to that city to hold him.

Grant put Petersburg under siege. Soon both armies had constructed breastworks and trenches running for miles in a great arc south of Petersburg. Methodically the Union forces extended their lines, seeking to weaken the Confederates and cut the rail connections supplying Lee's troops and the city of Richmond. By late June, Lee was pinned to earth. Moving again would mean abandoning Richmond tantamount, in southern eyes, to surrender.

**Sherman in Georgia**

The summer of 1864 saw the North submerged in pessimism. The Army of the Potomac held Lee at bay but appeared powerless to defeat him. In Georgia, General Sherman inched forward against the wily Joseph E. Johnston, but when he tried a direct assault at Kennesaw Mountain on June 27, he was thrown back with heavy casualties. Huge losses and the absence of decisive victory were taxing the northern will to continue the fight.

In June Lincoln had been renominated on a National Union ticket, with the staunch Tennessee Unionist Andrew Johnson, a former Democrat, as his running mate. He was under attack not only from the Democrats, who nominated George B. McClellan and came out for a policy that might almost be characterized as peace at any price, but from the Radical Republicans, many of whom had wished to dump him in favor of Secretary of the Treasury Chase.

Then, almost overnight, the atmosphere changed. On September 2 General Sherman's army fought its way into Atlanta. When the Confederates countered with an offensive northward toward Tennessee, Sherman did not follow. Instead he abandoned his communications with Chattanooga and marched unopposed through Georgia, "from Atlanta to the sea."

Sherman, like Grant, was a West Pointer who resigned his commission only to fare poorly in civilian occupations. Back in the army in 1861, he suffered a brief nervous breakdown. After recovering he fought under Grant at Shiloh and the two became close friends. "He stood by me when I was crazy," Sherman later recalled, "and I stood by him when he was drunk."

Far more completely than most military men of his generation, Sherman believed in total war-in appropriating or destroying everything that might help the enemy continue the fight. "We have devoured the land," he wrote his wife. "All the people retire before us and desolation is behind."

Another object of Sherman's march was psychological. "If the North can march an army right through the South," Sherman told General Grant, southerners will take it "as proof positive that the North can prevail." This was certainly true of Georgia's blacks who flocked to the invaders by the thousands, cheering as the soldiers put their former masters' homes to the torch.

Sherman's victories staggered the Confederacy and the anti-Lincoln forces in the North. In November the president was easily reelected, 212 electoral votes to 21. The country was determined to carry on the struggle.

At last the South's will to resist began to crack. Sherman entered Savannah on December 22, having denuded a strip of Georgia 60 miles wide. Early in January 1865 he marched northward. In February his troops captured Columbia, South Carolina. Soon thereafter they were in North Carolina, advancing relentlessly. In Virginia Grant's vise grew daily tighter, the Confederate lines thinner and more ragged.

**To Appomattox Court House**

On March 4 Lincoln took the presidential oath and delivered his second inaugural address. With victory sure, he spoke for tolerance, mercy, and reconstruction. "Let us judge not," he said after stating again his personal dislike of slavery, "that we be not judged." He urged all Americans to turn without malice to the task of mending the damage and to make a just and lasting peace between the sections.

Now the Confederate troops around Petersburg could no longer withstand the federal pressure. Desperately Lee tried to pull his forces back to the Richmond and Danville Railroad, but the swift wings of Grant's army enveloped him. Richmond fell on April 3. With fewer than 30,000 men to oppose Grant's 115,000, Lee recognized the futility of further resistance. On April 9 he and Grant met by prearrangement at Appomattox Court House.

It was a scene at once pathetic and inspiring. Lee was noble in defeat; Grant, despite his rough-hewn exterior, sensitive and magnanimous in victory. Acting on Lincoln's instructions, with which he was in full accord, Grant outlined his terms. All that would be required was that the Confederate soldiers lay down their arms. They could return to their homes in peace. When Lee hinted that his men would profit greatly if allowed to retain possession of their horses, Grant agreed to let them do so.

**Winners, Losers, and the Future**

And so the war ended. It cost the nation more than 600,000 lives, nearly as many as in all other American wars combined. The story of one of the lost thousands must stand for all-Union and Confederate. Jones Budbury, a 19-year-old Pennsylvania textile worker, enlisted at once when the war broke out. He saw action at Bull Run, in McClellans's Peninsula campaign, at Second Bull Run, at Chancellorsville, and at Gettysburg. A few months after Gettysburg he was wounded in the foot and spent some time in an army hospital. By the spring of 1864 he was a first sergeant, and his hair had turned gray.

In June he was captured and sent to Andersonville military prison, but he fell ill and the Confederates released him. In March 1865 he was back with his regiment. On April 6, three days before Lee's surrender, Jones Budbury was killed while pursuing Confederate units near Sailor's Creek, Virginia.

The war also caused enormous property losses, especially in the Confederacy. All the human and material destruction explains the hatred and resentment that the war implanted in millions of hearts.

What had been obtained at this price? Slavery was dead. Paradoxically, although the war had been fought to save the Union, after 1865 the United States was less a union of separate states than a nation. Secession had become inconceivable. In a strictly political sense, as Lincoln had predicted from the start, the northern victory heartened friends of republican government and democracy throughout the world. A better integrated society and a more technically advanced and productive economic system also resulted from the war.

The Americans of 1865 estimated the balance between cost and profit according to their individual fortunes and prejudices. Only the wisest realized that no final accounting could be made until the people had decided what to do with the fruits of victory. That the physical damage would be repaired no one could reasonably doubt; that even the loss of human resources would be restored in short order was equally apparent. But would the nation make good use of the opportunities the war had made available? What would the ex-slaves do with freedom? How would whites, northern and southern, react to emancipation? To what end would the new technology and social efficiency be directed? Would the people be able to forget the recent past and fulfill the hopes for which so many brave soldiers had given, as Lincoln put it at Gettysburg, their "last full measure of devotion"?

**CHAPTER 15**

**Reconstruction of the South**

ON APRIL 5, 1865, ABRAHAM LINCOLN visited Richmond. The fallen capital lay in ruins, sections blackened by fire, but the president was able to walk the streets unmolested and almost unattended. Black people crowded around him, hailing him as a messiah. Even the whites seemed to have accepted defeat without resentment. A few days later, in Washington, Lincoln delivered an important speech on reconstruction, urging compassion and open-mindedness. Then, on April 14, while he was watching a performance of the play Our American Cousin at Ford's Theater, a half-mad actor, John Wilkes Booth, slipped into his box and shot him in the head with a small pistol. The next morning, without having regained consciousness, Lincoln died. With him perished the South's best hope for a mild peace. The awesome drama was still unfolding; retribution and a final humbling of the South were inevitable.

**Presidential Reconstruction**

Despite its bloodiness, the Civil War had caused less intersectional hatred than might have been expected. Although civilian property was often seized or destroyed, the invading armies treated the southern population with remarkable forbearance, both during the war and after Appomattox. Jefferson Davis and a few other Confederate officials spent short periods behind bars, but the only southerner executed for war crimes was Major Henry Wirz, the commandant of Andersonville military prison.

The legal questions related to bringing the defeated states back into the Union were extremely complex. Since southerners believed that secession was legal, logic should have compelled them to argue that they were out of the Union and would thus have to be formally readmitted. Northerners should have taken the contrary position, for they had fought to prove that secession was illegal. Yet the people of both sections did just the opposite. Senator Charles Sumner and Congressman Thaddeus Stevens, in 1861 uncompromising expounders of the theory that the Union was indissoluble, now insisted that the

Confederate states had "committed suicide" and should be treated like "conquered provinces." Lincoln believed the issue a "pernicious abstract on" and tried to ignore it.

The process of readmission began in 1862, when Lincoln appointed provisional governors for the parts of the South that had been occupied by federal troops. On December 8, 1863, he issued a proclamation setting forth a general policy. With the exception of high Confederate officials and a few other special groups, all southerners could reinstate themselves as United States citizens by taking a simple loyalty oath. When, in any state, a number equal to 10 percent of those voting in the 1860 election had taken this oath, they could set up a state government. Such governments had to be republican in form, recognize the "permanent freedom" of the slaves, and provide for their education. The plan, however, did not require that blacks be given the right to vote.

The "10 Percent Plan" reflected Lincoln's lack of vindictiveness and his political wisdom. e regimes established under this plan in Tennessee, Louisiana, and Arkansas bore, in the preside 's mind, the same relation to finally reconstructed states that an egg bears to a chicken. "We shall sooner have the fowl by hatching it than by smashing it," he remarked. He knew that eventually representatives of the southern states would again be sitting in Congress, and he wished to lay the groundwork for a strong Republican party in the section. Yet he realized that Congress had no intention of seating representatives from the "10 percent" states at once.

The Radicals in Congress disliked the 10 Percent Plan, partly because of its moderation and partly because it enabled Lincoln to determine Union policy toward the recaptured regions. In July 1864 they passed the Wade-Davis bill, which provided for constitutional conventions only after a majority of the voters in a southern state had taken a loyalty oath. Besides prohibiting slavery, the new state constitutions would have to repudiate Confederate debts. Lincoln disposed of the Wade-Davis bill with a pocket veto, and there matters stood when Andrew Johnson became president following the assassination.

From origins even more lowly than Lincoln's, Johnson had risen to be congressman, governor of Tennessee, and United States senator. He was able but fundamentally unsure of himself, as could be seen in his boastfulness and stubbornness. His political strength came from the poor whites and yeomen farmers of eastern Tennessee, and he was fond of extolling the common man and attacking "stuck-up aristocrats." Free homesteads, public education, absolute social equality-such were his objectives. The father of communism, Karl Marx, wrote approvingly of Johnson's "deadly hatred of the oligarchy."

Johnson was a Democrat, selected as the Republican Lincoln's running mate because of his record and his reassuring penchant for excoriating southern aristocrats. The Republicans in Congress were prepared to cooperate with him, but the president proved temperamentally incapable of working with them. Like Randolph of Roanoke, his antithesis intellectually and socially, opposition was his specialty; he soon alienated every powerful Republican in Washington.

Radical Republicans listened to Johnson's diatribes against secessionists and the great planters and assumed that he was antisouthern. Nothing could have been further from the truth. He believed in states' rights and shared most of his poor white Tennessee constituents' contempt for blacks. "Damn the negroes, I am fighting these traitorous aristocrats, their masters," he told a friend during the war. "I wish to God," he said on another occasion, "every head of a family in the United States had one slave to take the drudgery and menial service off his family."

The new president did not want to injure or humiliate all southerners. He issued an amnesty proclamation only slightly more rigorous than Lincoln's. By the time Congress convened in December, all the southern states had organized governments, ratified the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery, and elected senators and representatives. Johnson promptly recommended these new governments to Congress.

**Republican Radicals**

Peace found the Republicans in Congress no more united than they had been during the war. A small group of "ultra" Radicals were demanding immediate civil and political equality for blacks as well as a plot of land and access to a decent education. Senator Sumner led this faction. A second group of Radicals agreed with the ultras' objectives but were prepared to accept half a loaf if necessary to win the support of less radical colleagues. Nearly all Radicals, however, drew the fine at social equality.

The moderate Republicans wanted to protect ex-slaves from exploitation and guarantee their basic rights but were unprepared to push for full political equality. A handful of Republicans sided with the Democrats in support of Johnson's approach, but all the rest insisted at least on the minimum demands of the moderates. Thus Johnsonian Reconstruction was doomed.

Johnson's proposal had no chance in Congress for reasons having little to do with black rights. The Thirteenth Amendment had the effect of increasing the representation of the southern states in Congress because it made the Three-fifths Compromise meaningless. Henceforth, ex-slaves would be counted as whole persons in apportioning seats in the House of Representatives. If Congress seated the southerners, the balance of power might swing to the Democrats.

Southern voters had provoked further northern resentment by their choice of congressmen. Georgia elected Alexander H. Stephens, vice-president of the Confederacy, to the Senate, although he was still in a federal prison awaiting trial for treason! Several dozen men who had served in the Confederate Congress had been elected to either the House or the Senate, together with four generals and many other high officials. Understandably, these choices would sit poorly with northerners.

Finally, the so-called Black Codes enacted by the new southern governments to control former slaves alarmed the North. Although the codes were a considerable improvement over slavery, they placed formidable limitations on freedom. Blacks could not bear arms, be employed in occupations other than farming and domestic service, or leave their jobs without forfeiting back pay. The Louisiana code required them to sign labor contracts for the year during the first ten days of January. In Mississippi drunkards, vagrants, beggars, "common nightwalkers," and even persons who "misspend what they earn" and who could not pay the stiff fines assessed were to be "hired out ... at public outcry" to the white person who would take them for the shortest period in return for paying their fines. Such laws, apparently designed to get around the Thirteenth Amendment, outraged northerners.

For all these reasons the Republicans in Congress rejected Johnsonian Reconstruction. Quickly they created a joint committee on Reconstruction, headed by Senator William P. Fessenden of Maine, a moderate, to study the question of readmitting the southern states. The committee held hearings that produced much evidence of the mistreatment of blacks. The hearings strengthened the Radicals, who had been claiming all along that the South was perpetuating slavery under another name.

President Johnson's attitude speeded the swing toward the Radical position. While the hearings were in progress, Congress passed a bill expanding and extending the Freedmen's Bureau, which had been established in March 1865 to care for refugees. The bureau, a branch of the War Department, was already exercising considerable coercive and supervisory power in the South. Now Congress sought to add to its authority in order to protect the black population. Although the bill had wide support, Johnson vetoed it. Congress then passed a civil rights act that not only declared that blacks were citizens of the United States but also denied the states the power to restrict their rights to testify in court, make contracts, and hold property. In other words, it put teeth in the Thirteenth Amendment.

Once again the president refused to go along, although his veto was sure to drive more moderates into the arms of the Radicals. On April 9, 1866, Congress repassed the Civil Rights Act by a two-thirds majority, the first time in American history that a major piece of legislation became law over the veto of a president. This event marked a revolution in the history of Reconstruction. Thereafter, Congress, not President Johnson, had the upper hand.

But the Radicals encountered grave problems in fighting for their program. Northerners might object to the Black Codes and to seating "rebels" in Congress, but few believed in racial equality. Between 1865 and 1868, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Connecticut, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania all rejected bills granting blacks the vote.

The Radicals were in effect demanding not merely equal rights for freedmen but extra rights, not merely the vote but special protection of that right against the pressure that southern whites would surely apply to undermine it. This idea flew in the face of conventional American beliefs in equality before the law and individual self-reliance. Events were to show that the Radicals were correct-that what amounted to a political revolution in state federal relations was essential if blacks were to achieve real equality. But in the climate of that day their proposals encountered bitter resistance, and not only from southerners.

Thus, while the Radicals sought partisan advantage in their battle with Johnson and sometimes played on war-bred passions, they were taking large political risks in defense of genuinely held principles. One historian has aptly called them the "moral trustees" of the Civil War.

**The Fourteenth Amendment**

In June 1866, Congress submitted to the states a new amendment to the Constitution. The Fourteenth Amendment was a truly radical measure. Never before had newly freed slaves been granted significant political rights. It was also a milestone along the road to the centralization of political power in the United States, for it significantly reduced the power of all the states. In this sense it confirmed the great change wrought by the Civil War: the growth of a more complex, more integrated social and economic structure requiring closer national supervision. Few persons understood this aspect of the amendment at the time.

First the amendment supplied a broad definition of American citizenship: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside." Obviously this included blacks. Then it struck at discriminatory legislation like the Black Codes: "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." The next section attempted to force the southern states to permit blacks to vote. If a state denied the vote to any class of its adult male citizens, its representation was to be reduced proportionately. Under another clause, former federal officials who had served the Confederacy were barred from holding either state or federal office unless specifically pardoned by a two-thirds vote of Congress. Finally, the Confederate debt was repudiated.

Although the amendment did not specifically outlaw segregation or prevent a state from disfranchising blacks, the southern states would have none of it, and without them the necessary three-fourths majority of the states could not be obtained. President Johnson vowed to make the choice between the Fourteenth Amendment and his own policy the main issue of the 1866 congressional elections. He embarked on "a swing around the circle" to rally the public to his cause. He failed dismally. Northern women objected to the implication that black men were more fitted to vote than white women, but most northern voters were determined that blacks must have at least formal legal equality. The Republicans won better than two-thirds of the seats in both houses, together with control of all the northern state governments. Johnson emerged from the campaign discredited, the Radicals stronger and determined to have their way.

**The Reconstruction Acts**

Had the southern states been willing to accept the Fourteenth Amendment, coercive measures might have been avoided. Their recalcitrance and continuing indications that local authorities were persecuting blacks finally led to the passage, on March 2, 1867, of the First Reconstruction Act. This law divided the former Confederacy-exclusive of Tennessee, which had ratified the Fourteenth Amendment-into five military districts, each controlled by a major general. It gave these officers almost dictatorial power to protect the civil rights of "all persons," maintain order, and supervise the administration of justice. To rid themselves of military rule, the former states were required to adopt constitutions guaranteeing blacks the right to vote and disfranchising broad classes of ex-Confederates. If these new constitutions proved satisfactory to Congress, and if the new governments ratified the Fourteenth Amendment, their representatives would be admitted to Congress and military rule ended. Johnson's veto of the act was easily overridden.

Although drastic, the Reconstruction Act was so vague that it proved unworkable. In deference to moderate Republican views, it did not spell out the process by which the new constitutions were to be drawn up. Southern whites preferred the status quo, even under army control, to enfranchising blacks and retiring their own respected leaders. They made no effort to follow the steps laid down in the law. Congress therefore passed a second act, requiring the military authorities to register voters and supervise the election of delegates to constitutional conventions. A third act further clarified procedures.

Still white southerners resisted. The laws required that the constitutions be approved by a majority of the registered voters. Simply by staying away from the polls, whites prevented ratification in state after state. At last, in March 1868, a full year after the First Reconstruction Act was passed, Congress changed the rules again. The constitutions were to be ratified by a majority of the voters. In June 1868, Arkansas, having fulfilled the requirements, was readmitted to the Union, and by July a sufficient number of states had ratified the Fourteenth Amendment to make it part of the Constitution. But it was not until July 1870 that the last southern state, Georgia, qualified to the satisfaction of Congress.

**Congress Takes Charge**

To carry out this program in the face of determined southern resistance required single-mindedness over a long period to an extent seldom demonstrated by an American legislature. The persistence resulted in part from the suffering and frustrations of the war years and the refusal of the South to accept the spirit of even the mild reconstruction designed by Johnson. President Johnson's stubbornness also influenced the Republicans. They became obsessed with the need to defeat him. The unsettled times and the large Republican majorities, always threatened by the possibility of a Democratic resurgence if "unreconstructed" southern congressmen were readmitted, sustained their determination.

These considerations led Republicans to attempt a kind of grand revision of the federal government, one that almost destroyed the balance between judicial, executive, and legislative power established in 1789. A series of measures passed between 1866 and 1868 increased the authority of Congress over the army, over the process of amending the Constitution, and over Cabinet members and lesser appointive officers. Finally, in a showdown caused by emotion more than by practical considerations, the Republicans attempted to remove President Johnson from office.

Johnson was a poor president and out of touch with public opinion, but he had done nothing to merit ejection from office. Though he had a low opinion of blacks, his opinion was so widely shared by whites that it is inappropriate to condemn him as a reactionary on this ground. Johnson believed that he was fighting to preserve constitutional government. He was honest and devoted to duty, and his record easily withstood the most searching examination. When Congress passed laws taking away powers granted him by the Constitution, he refused to submit.

The chief issue was the Tenure of Office Act of 1867, which prohibited the president from removing officials who had been appointed with the consent of the Senate without first obtaining Senate approval. In February 1868, Johnson "violated" this act by dismissing Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, who had been openly in sympathy with the Radicals for some time. The House, acting under the procedure set up in the Constitution for removing the president, promptly impeached him before the bar of the Senate, Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase presiding.

The trial was conducted in a partisan and vindictive manner. Johnson's lawyers easily established that he had removed Stanton only in an effort to prove the Tenure of Office Act unconstitutional. Nevertheless, the Radicals pressed the charges (11 separate articles) relentlessly. Tremendous pressure was applied to the handful of Republican senators who were unwilling to disregard the evidence.

Seven of them resisted to the end, and the Senate failed by a single vote to convict Johnson. This was probably fortunate. Had he been forced from office on such flimsy grounds, the independence of the executive might have been permanently weakened. Then the legislative branch would have become supreme.

**The Fifteenth Amendment**

The failure of the impeachment did not affect the course of Reconstruction. The president was acquitted on May 16, 1868. A few days later, the Republican National Convention nominated General Ulysses S. Grant for the presidency. At the Democratic convention Johnson had considerable support, but the delegates nominated Horatio Seymour, a former governor of New York. In November, Grant won an easy victory in the electoral college, 214 to 80, but the popular vote total was close: 3 million to 2.7 million. Grant's margin was supplied by southern blacks enfranchised under the Reconstruction Acts, about 450,000 of whom supported him. A majority of white voters probably preferred Seymour. Since many citizens undoubtedly voted Republican because of personal admiration for General Grant, the election statistics suggest that a substantial white majority opposed the policies of the Radicals.

The Reconstruction Acts and the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment achieved the purpose of enabling black southerners to vote. The Radicals, however, were not satisfied; they wished to guarantee the right of blacks to vote in every state. Another amendment seemed the only way to accomplish this objective. The 1868 presidential election, which demonstrated how important the black vote could be, strengthened their determination. After considerable bickering over details, the Fifteenth Amendment was sent to the states for ratification in February 1869. It forbade all the states to deny the vote to anyone "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." Once again nothing was said about denial of the vote on the basis of sex.

Most southern states, still under federal pressure, ratified the amendment swiftly. The same was true in most of New England and in some western states. Bitter battles were waged in Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, and the states immediately north of the Ohio River, but by March 1870 most of them had ratified the amendment, and it became part of the Constitution.

**"Black Republican" Reconstruction: Scalawags and Carpetbaggers**

The Radicals had at last succeeded in imposing their will on the South. Throughout the region, former slaves voted, held office, and exercised the "privileges" and enjoyed the "immunities" guaranteed them by the Fourteenth Amendment. Almost to a man they voted Republican.

The spectacle of blacks not five years removed from slavery in positions of power and responsibility attracted much attention at the time and has since been examined exhaustively by historians. The subject is controversial, but certain facts are beyond argument. Black officeholders were neither numerous nor inordinately influential. None was ever elected governor of a state; during the entire period, fewer than 20 served in Congress. Blacks held many minor offices and were influential in southern legislatures, though they made up the majority only in South Carolina.

The real rulers of the "black Republican" governments were white: the "scalawags"-southerners willing to cooperate with the Republicans because they accepted the results of the war and to advance their own interests-and the "carpetbaggers"-northerners who went to the South as idealists eager to help the freed slaves, as employees of the federal government, or more commonly as settlers hoping to improve themselves.

A few scalawags were prewar politicians or well-to-do planters, but most were ordinary people who had supported the Whig party before secession. The carpetbaggers were a particularly varied lot. Most had mixed motives, and personal gain was among them. But so were opposition to slavery and the belief that blacks deserved to be treated decently. Many northern blacks became carpetbaggers: ex-soldiers, ministers, teachers, and lawyers. Some of these blacks became southern officeholders, but their influence was limited.

That blacks should fail to dominate southern governments is certainly understandable. They lacked experience in politics and were mostly poor and uneducated. They were nearly everywhere a minority. Those blacks who held office during Reconstruction tended to be better educated and more prosperous. In an interesting analysis of South Carolina black politicians, Thomas Holt reveals that a disproportionate number of them had been free before the war. Of the rest, a large percentage had been house servants or artisans, not field hands. Mulatto politicians were also disproportionately numerous and (as a group) more conservative and economically better off than other black leaders.

In South Carolina and elsewhere, blacks proved in the main able and conscientious public servants: able because the best tended to rise to the top in such a fluid situation and conscientious because most of those who achieved importance sought eagerly to demonstrate the capacity of their race for self government.

Not all black legislators and administrators were paragons of virtue. In The Prostrate South (1874), James S. Pike, a northern journalist, called the government of South Carolina "a huge system of brigandage." This was a gross exaggeration, but waste and corruption were common enough. Some legislators paid themselves large salaries and surrounded themselves with armies of useless, incompetent clerks. One Arkansas black took $9,000 from the state for repairing a bridge that had cost only $500 to build. A South Carolina legislator was voted an additional $1,000 in salary after he lost that sum on a horse race.

However, the corruption must be seen in perspective. The big thieves were nearly always white; blacks got mostly crumbs. Furthermore, graft and callous disregard of the public interest characterized government in every section and at every level during the decade after Appomattox. Big-city bosses in the North embezzled sums that dwarfed the most brazen southern frauds. The New York City Tweed Ring probably made off with more money than all the southern thieves, black and white, combined. The evidence does not justify the southern corruption, but it suggests that the unique features of Reconstruction politics-black suffrage, military supervision, carpetbagger and scalawag influence-do not explain it.

Southerners who complained about the ignorance and irresponsibility of blacks conveniently forgot that the tendency of 19th-century American democracy was away from educational, financial, or any other restrictions on the franchise. Thousands of white southerners were as illiterate and uncultured as the freedmen, yet no one suggested depriving them of the ballot.

In fact, the Radical southern governments accomplished a great deal. They spent money freely but not entirely wastefully. Tax rates zoomed, but the money financed the repair and expansion of the South's dilapidated railroad network, rebuilt crumbling levees, and expanded social services. Before the Civil War, as Eric Foner points out in Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, planters possessed a disproportionate share of political as well as economic power, and they spent relatively little public money on education and other public services. During Reconstruction an enormous gap had to be filled, and it took money to fill it. The Freedmen's Bureau made a start, and northern religious and philanthropic organizations did important work. Eventually, however, the state governments established and supported hospitals, asylums, and school systems that, though segregated, greatly benefited whites as well as blacks.

The former slaves eagerly grasped the opportunities to learn. Nearly all appreciated the immense importance of knowing how to read and write; the sight of elderly men and women poring laboriously over elementary texts beside their grandchildren was common everywhere. Schools and other institutions were supported chiefly by property taxes, and these, of course, hit well-to-do planters hard. Hence much of the complaining about the "extravagance" of Reconstruction governments concealed traditional selfish objections to paying for necessary public projects.

**The Ravaged Land**

The South's grave economic problems complicated the rebuilding of its political system. The section had never been as prosperous as the North, and wartime destruction left it desperately poor by any standard. In the long run the abolition of slavery released immeasurable quantities of human energy previously stifled, but the immediate effect was to create confusion. Freedom to travel without a pass, to "see the world," was one of the ex-slaves' most cherished rights. Understandably, many at first equated legal freedom with freedom from having to earn a living, a tendency reinforced for a time by the willingness of the Freedmen's Bureau to provide rations and other forms of relief in war-devastated areas. Most, however, soon realized they would have to earn a living; a small plot of land, they hoped, would complete their independence.

This objective was forcefully supported by the relentless Congressman Thaddeus Stevens, whose hatred of the planter class was pathological. "The property of the chief rebels should be seized," he stated. If the lands of the richest "70,000 proud, bloated and defiant rebels" were confiscated, the federal government would obtain 394 million acres. Every adult male ex-slave could easily be supplied with 40 acres. The beauty of his scheme, Stevens insisted, was that "nine-tenths of the [southern] people would remain untouched." Dispossessing the great planters would make the South "a safe republic," its lands cultivated by "the free labor of intelligent citizens." If the plan drove the planters into exile, "all the better."

Although Stevens's figures were faulty, many Radicals agreed with him. "We must see that the freedmen are established on the soil," Senator Sumner declared. "The great plantations, which have been so many nurseries of the rebellion, must be broken up, and the freedmen must have the pieces." But the extremists' view was simplistic. Land without tools, seed, and other necessities would have done the freedmen little good. Congress did throw open 46 million acres of poor-quality federal land in the South to blacks under the Homestead Act, but few settled on it. Establishing former slaves on small farms with adequate financial aid would have been of incalculable benefit to them and to the nation. This would have been practicable, but it was not done.

The former slaves therefore had to work out their destiny within the established framework of southern agriculture. White planters expected the ex-slaves to be incapable of self-directed effort. If allowed to become independent farmers, they would either starve to death or descend into barbarism. Of course, the blacks did neither. True, southern agriculture output declined precipitously after slavery was abolished. On the average, free blacks produced much less than slaves had produced. However, the decline in productivity was not caused by the inability of free blacks to work independently. It was simply that being free, they chose no longer to work Eke slaves. They let their children play instead of forcing them into the fields. Mothers devoted more time to child care and housework, less to farm labor. Elderly blacks worked less. In any case, emancipated blacks were far better off materially than under slavery, when all they got from their masters was mere subsistence.

White southerners misunderstood the reasonable desire of blacks to devote more time to leisure and family activities; they took it as evidence that blacks were lazy. A leading southern magazine complained in 1866 that black women now expected their husbands "to support them in idleness." It would never have made such a comment about white wives who devoted themselves to housework and child care.

The family fife of ex-slaves was changed in other ways. Male authority increased when husbands became true heads of families. When blacks became citizens, the men acquired rights and powers denied to all women, such as the right to hold public office and serve on juries. Similarly, black women became more like white women, devoting themselves to separate "spheres" where their lives revolved around housekeeping and child rearing.

**Sharecropping and the Crop Lien System**

Immediately after the war, blacks usually labored for wages, but the wage system did not work well for two reasons. Money was scarce, and banking capital, never adequate even before the collapse of the Confederacy, accumulated slowly. This situation made it difficult for landowners to pay workers in cash. More important, blacks did not Eke working for wages because it kept them under the direction of whites and thus reminded them of slavery.

Since the voluntary withdrawal of so much black labor from the work force had produced a shortage, the blacks had their way. Quite swiftly, a new agricultural system known as sharecropping emerged. Instead of cultivating the land by gang labor as in antebellum times, planters broke up their estates into small units and established on each a black family. The planter provided housing, agricultural implements, draft animals, seed, and other supplies, and the family provided labor. The crop was divided between them, usually on a fifty-fifty basis. If the landlord supplied only land and housing, the laborer got a larger share. This was called share tenancy.

Sharecropping gave blacks the day-to-day independence they craved and the hope of earning enough to buy a small farm. But few achieved this ambition because whites resisted their efforts adamantly. As late as 1880, blacks owned less than 10 percent of the agricultural land in the South, though they made up more than half of the region's farm population.

Many white farmers were also trapped by the sharecropping system. New fencing laws kept them from grazing livestock on undeveloped land, a practice common before the Civil War. But the main cause of southern rural poverty for whites as well as blacks was the lack of sufficient capital to finance the sharecropping system. Like their colonial ancestors, the landowners had to borrow against October's harvest to pay for April's seed. Thus the crop hen system developed, and to protect their investments, lenders insisted that growers concentrate on readily marketable cash crops: tobacco, sugar, and especially cotton.

The system injured everyone. Diversified farming would have reduced the farmers' need for cash, preserved the fertility of the sod, and, by placing a premium on imagination and shrewdness, aided the best of them to rise in the world. Under the crop lien system, both landowner and sharecropper depended on credit supplied by local bankers, merchants, and storekeepers for everything from seed, tools, and fertilizer to overalls, coffee, and salt. Small southern merchants were almost equally victimized by the system, for they also lacked capital, bought goods on credit, and had to pay high interest rates.

Seen in broad perspective, the situation is not difficult to understand. The South, drained of every resource by the war, was competing for funds with the North and the West, both vigorous and expanding and therefore voracious consumers of capital. Reconstruction, in the literal sense of the word, was accomplished chiefly at the expense of the standard of living of the producing classes. The crop hen system and the small storekeeper were merely the agents of an economic process dictated by national, perhaps even worldwide, conditions.

This does not mean that recovery and growth did not take place. But compared with the rest of the country, progress was slow. Just before the Civil War, cotton harvests averaged about 4 million bales. During the conflict, output fell to about half a million, and the former Confederate states did not enjoy a 4 million-bale year again until 1870. Only after 1874 did the crop begin to top that figure consistently.

In manufacturing, the South made important gains after the war. The tobacco industry, stimulated by the sudden popularity of cigarettes, expanded rapidly. The exploitation of the coal and iron deposits of northeastern Alabama in the early 1870s made a boomtown of Birmingham. The manufacture of cotton cloth also increased, productive capacity nearly doubling between 1865 and 1880. Yet the mills of Massachusetts alone had eight times the capacity of the entire South in 1880. Despite the increases, the South's share of the national output of manufactured goods declined sharply during the Reconstruction era.

**The White Counterrevolution**

Radical southern governments could sustain themselves only so long as they had the support of a significant proportion of the white population, for except in South Carolina and Louisiana, the blacks were not numerous enough to win elections alone. The key to Radical survival lay in the hands of the wealthy merchants and planters, mostly former Whigs. People of this sort did not fear black economic competition. Taking a broad view, they could see that improving the lot of former slaves would benefit all classes.

Southern white Republicans used the Union League of America, a patriotic club founded during the war, to control the black vote. Powerless to check the league by open methods, dissident southerners established a number of secret terrorist societies, bearing such names as the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights of the White Camelia, and the Pale Faces.

The most notorious of these organizations was the Klan, which originated in Tennessee in 1866. At first it was purely a social club, but by 1868 it had been taken over by vigilante types dedicated to driving blacks out of politics, and it was spreading rapidly across the South. Sheet-clad night riders roamed the countryside, frightening the impressionable and chastising the defiant:

Niggers and Leaguers, get out of the way,

We're born of the night and we vanish by day.

No rations have we, but the flesh of man

And love niggers best-the Ku Klux Klan;

We catch 'em alive and roast 'em whole,

Then hand 'em around with a sharpened pole.

Whole Leagues have been eaten, not leaving a man,

And went away hungry-the Ku Klux Klan.

When intimidation failed, the Klansmen resorted to force, in hundreds of cases murdering their victims, often in the most gruesome manner.

Congress struck at the Klan with three Force Acts (1870-1871), which placed elections under federal jurisdiction and imposed fines and prison sentences on persons convicted of interfering with any citizen's exercise of the franchise. Troops were dispatched, and by 1872 the federal authorities had arrested enough Klansmen to break up the organization.

Nevertheless, the Klan contributed substantially to the destruction of Radical regimes in the South. Even respectable white southerners came to the conclusion that terrorism was the most effective way of controlling the black population and escaping northern domination.

Gradually it became respectable to intimidate black voters. Beginning in Mississippi in 1874, terrorism spread through the South. Instead of hiding behind masks and operating in the dark, these terrorists donned red shirts, organized into military companies, and paraded openly. The Mississippi redshirts seized militant blacks and whipped them publicly. When blacks dared to fight back, heavily armed whites easily put them to rout. In other states similar results followed.

Terrorism fed on fear, fear on terrorism. White violence led to fear of black retaliation and thus to even more brutal attacks. The slightest sign of resistance came to be seen as the beginning of race war, and when the blacks suffered indignities and persecutions in silence, the awareness of how much they must resent the mistreatment made them appear more dangerous still. Thus self-hatred was displaced, guilt suppressed, aggression justified as selfdefense, individual conscience submerged in the animality of the mob. Before long the blacks learned to stay home on election day. "Conservative" parties-Democratic in national affairs-took over southern state governments.

The North had subjected the South to control from Washington while preserving state sovereignty in the North itself. In the long run this discrimination proved unworkable. The war was fading into the past and with it the anger it had generated. Northern voters could still be stirred by references to the sacrifices Republicans had made to save the Union and by reminders that the Democratic party was the organization of rebels, Copperheads, and the Ku Klux Klan. Yet emotional appeals could not convince northerners that it was still necessary to maintain a large army in the South. In 1869 the occupying force was down to 11,000 men.

Nationalism was reasserting itself. Had not Washington and Jefferson been Virginians? Was not Andrew Jackson Carolina-born? Since most northerners had little real love or respect for blacks, their interest in racial equality flagged once they felt reasonably certain that blacks would not be reenslaved if left to their own devices in the South.

Another, subtler force was also at work. Prewar Republicans had stressed the common interest of workers, manufacturers, and farmers in a free and mobile society, a land of opportunity where self reliant citizens worked together in harmony. Southern whites had insisted that laborers must be disciplined if large enterprises were to be run efficiently. By the 1870s, as large industrial enterprises developed in the northern states, the thinking of business leaders became more sympathetic to southern demands for more control over "their" labor force.

**Grant as President**

Other matters occupied the attention of northern voters. The expansion of industry and the rapid development of the West, stimulated by a new wave of railroad building, loomed more important to many than the fortunes of ex-slaves. Heated controversies arose over tariff policy, with western agricultural interests seeking to force reductions from the high levels established during the war, and over the handling of the wartime greenback paper money. Debtor groups and many manufacturers favored further expansion of the supply of dollars, and conservative merchants and bankers argued for retiring the greenbacks in order to return to a "sound" currency.

More damaging to the Republicans was the failure of Ulysses S. Grant to live up to expectations as president. Qualities that had made Grant a fine military leader for a democracy-his dislike of political maneuvering and his simple belief that the popular will could best be observed in the actions of Congress-made him a poor chief executive. When Congress failed to act on his suggestion that the quality of the civil service needed improvement, he announced meekly that if Congress did nothing, he would assume that the country did not want anything done. Grant was honest, but in a naive way that made him the dupe of unscrupulous friends and schemers.

Grant did nothing to prevent the scandals that disgraced his administration and, out of a misplaced belief in the sanctity of friendship, he protected some of the worst culprits and allowed calculating tricksters to use his good name and the prestige of his office to advance their own interests at the country's expense.

The worst of the scandals-such as the Whiskey Ring affair, which implicated Grant's private secretary, Orville E. Babcock, and cost the government millions in tax revenue, and the defalcations of Secretary of War William W. Belknap in the management of Indian affairs-did not become public knowledge during Grant's first term. However, in 1872, Republican reformers, alarmed by rumors of corruption and disappointed by Grant's failure to press for civil service reform, organized the Liberal Republican party and nominated Horace Greeley, the able but eccentric editor of the New York Tribune, for president.

The Liberal Republicans were well-educated, socially prominent types--editors, college presidents, and economists, along with a sprinkling of businessmen and politicians. Their liberalism was of the laissez-faire variety; they were for low tariffs and sound money and against measures benefiting particular groups, whether labor unions or railroad companies or farm organizations. They disparaged universal suffrage, which, one of them said, "can only mean in plain English the government of ignorance and vice."

The Democrats also nominated Greeley, though he had devoted his political life to flailing the Democratic party in the Tribune. That surrender to expediency, together with Greeley's temperamental unsuitability for the presidency, made the campaign a fiasco for the reformers. Grant triumphed easily, with a popular majority of nearly 800,000 votes. Nevertheless, the defection of the Liberal Republicans hurt the Republican party in Congress. In the 1874 elections, no longer hampered as in the presidential contest by Greeley's notoriety and Grant's fame, the Democrats carried the House of Representatives. It was clear that the days of military rule in the South were ending. By the end of 1875 only three southern states-South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana-were still under Republican control.

**The Disputed Election of 1876**

Against this background the presidential election of 1876 took place. Since corruption in government was the most widely discussed issue, the Republicans nominated Governor Rutherford B. Hayes of Ohio, a former general with an unsmirched reputation. The Democrats picked Governor Samuel J. Tilden of New York, a wealthy lawyer who had attracted national attention for his part in breaking up the Tweed Ring in New York City.

In November early returns indicated that Tilden had carried New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Indiana, and the entire South, including Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina, where the Republican party was still in control. This seemed to give him 203 electoral votes to Hayes's 165. However, Republican leaders had anticipated the possible loss of Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana and were prepared to use their control of the election machinery in those states to throw out sufficient Democratic ballots to alter the results if doing so would change the national outcome. Realizing that the electoral votes of those states were exactly enough to elect their man, they telegraphed their henchmen on the scene and ordered them to go into action. The local Republicans then invalidated Democratic: ballots in wholesale lots and filed returns showing Hayes the winner. Naturally, the local Democrats protested vigorously and filed their own returns.

Congress created an electoral commission to decide the disputed cases. The commission consisted of five senators (three Republicans and two Democrats), five representatives (three Democrats and two Republicans), and five justices of the Supreme Court (two Democrats, two Republicans, and one independent, David Davis). Since it was a foregone conclusion that the others would vote for their party no matter what the evidence, Davis would presumably swing the balance in the interest of fairness.

However, before the commission met, the Illinois legislature elected Davis senator! He had to resign from the Court and the commission. Since independents were rare even on the Supreme Court, no neutral was available to replace him. The vacancy went to Associate Justice Joseph P. Bradley of New Jersey, a Republican.

Evidence presented before the commission revealed a disgraceful picture of election shenanigans. On the one hand, in all three disputed states Democrats had clearly cast a majority of the votes; on the other, it was unquestionable that many blacks had been forcibly prevented from voting.

In truth, both sides were shamefully corrupt. Lew Wallace, a northern politician later famous as the author of the novel Ben Hur, visited Louisiana and Florida shortly after the election. "It is terrible to see the extent to which all classes go in their determination to win," he wrote his wife from Florida. "Money and intimidation can obtain the oath of white men as well as black to any required statement.... If we win, our methods are subject to impeachment for possible fraud. If the enemy win, it is the same thing."

Most modern authorities take the view that in a fair election the Republicans would have carried South Carolina and Louisiana but that Florida would have gone to Tilden, giving him the election, 188 electoral votes to 181. In the last analysis, this opinion has been arrived at simply by counting white and black noses: blacks were in the majority in South Carolina and Louisiana. Amid the tension and confusion of early 1877, however, even a Solomon would have been hard pressed to judge rightly amid the rumors, lies, and contradictory statements. The Democrats had some hopes that Justice Bradley would be sympathetic to their case, for he was known to be opposed to harsh Reconstruction policies. On the eve of the commission's decision in the Florida controversy, he was apparently ready to vote in favor of Tilden. But the Republicans subjected him to tremendous political pressure. When he read his opinion on February 8, it was for Hayes. Thus by a vote of 8 to 7 the commission awarded Florida's electoral votes to the Republicans.

Vote after vote, both on details and in the final decisions in the other cases, followed party lines exactly. The atmosphere of judicial inquiry and deliberation was a facade. The commission assigned all the disputed electoral votes to Hayes.

To such a level had the republic of Jefferson and John Adams descended. Democratic institutions, shaken by the South's refusal to go along with the majority in 1860 and by the suppression of civil rights during the rebellion, and further weakened by military intervention and the intimidation of blacks in the South during Reconstruction, seemed now a farce. Democrats talked of not being bound by so obviously partisan a judgment. Tempers flared in Congress, where some spoke ominously of a filibuster that would prevent the recording of the electoral vote and leave the country, on March 4, with no president at all.

**The Compromise of 1877**

Fortunately, forces for compromise had been at work behind the scenes in Washington for some time. Although northern Democrats threatened to fight to the last ditch, many southern Democrats were willing to accept Hayes if he would promise to remove the troops and allow the southern states to manage their internal affairs by themselves. Ex-Whig planters and merchants who had reluctantly abandoned the carpetbag governments and who sympathized with Republican economic policies hoped that by supporting Hayes they might contribute to the restoration of the two-party system. With .the tacit support of many Democrats, the electoral vote was counted by the president of the Senate on March 2, and Hayes was declared elected, 185 votes to 184.

Like all compromises, this agreement was not entirely satisfactory; like most, it was not honored in every detail. Hayes recalled the last troops from South Carolina and Louisiana in April. He appointed a former Confederate general, David M. Key of Tennessee, postmaster general and delegated to him the congenial task of finding southerners willing to serve their country as officials in a Republican administration. The new alliance of ex-Whigs and northern Republicans did not flourish, however, and the South remained solidly Democratic. The major significance of the compromise, one of the great intersectional political accommodations of American history, has been well summarized by C. Vann Woodward:

The Compromise of 1877 marked the abandonment of principles and force and a return to the traditional ways of expediency and concession. ... It wrote an end to Reconstruction and recognized a new regime in the South. More profoundly than Constitutional amendments and wordy statutes it shaped the future of four million freedmen and their progeny for generations to come.

For most of the former slaves, this future was to be bleak. Forgotten in the North, manipulated and then callously rejected by the South, rebuffed by the Supreme Court, voiceless in national affairs, they and their descendants were condemned in the interests of sectional harmony to lives of poverty, indignity, and little hope. Meanwhile, the rest of the United States continued its golden march toward wealth and power.