The Furnace of Civil War, 1861–1865

Among freemen there can be no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet, and ... they who take such appeal are sure to lose their case and pay the cost.

Abraham Lincoln, 1863

Prologue: At first Lincoln's sole proclaimed war aim was to preserve the Union to squelch secession without necessarily ending slavery. But the failure to end the war quickly by capturing Richmond in the Peninsula Campaign in the summer of 1862 turned Lincoln toward total war against the South's political, economic, and social order—including slavery. The narrow Union victory at the Battle of Antietam in September 1862 enabled Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. The Proclamation changed the character of the war into a struggle for the preservation of the Union and the abolition of slavery. Many white people in the North greeted this new war aim with indignation, but the cause of antislavery added luster to the North's moral image abroad. Meanwhile, the North proceeded to drag the South back into the Union by brute force. The process was slow and frustrating, until Lincoln finally found in Ulysses S. Grant a general "who fights." General William Sherman campaigned relentlessly in Georgia and the Carolinas by warring on civilian morale as well as on uniformed armies. Lincoln, who had still not achieved military victory, was in grave danger of being unhorsed in the presidential election of 1864 by dissatisfied Democrats, but his ultimate triumph ensured a bitter-end prosecution of the war. The Confederates, finally forced to their knees by Grant's sledgehammer blows in Virginia, surrendered in the spring of 1865. Lincoln's assassination just days later brought deification in the North and grave forebodings in the South.

A. Northern War Aims

1. Congress Voices Its Views (1861)

John J. Crittenden of Kentucky—at various times a cabinet member, a senator, and a congressman—achieved renown in 1860 by his efforts to work out a last-ditch

1House Journal, 37th Congress, 1st session (July 22, 1861), p. 123.
compromise over slavery in the territories. After war broke out, one of his sons became a general in the Union army, another (to his father's sorrow) a general in the Confederate army. The older Crittenden, determined not to force slaveholding Kentucky and the other border states out of the Union by a crusade against slavery, shepherded the following new resolution through the House of Representatives in 1861. How was this statement designed to quiet the fears of Confederates, Southern Unionists, and border states?

Resolved by the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States, That the present deplorable civil war has been forced upon the country by the disunionists of the Southern states, now in arms against the constitutional government, and in arms around the capital; that in this national emergency, Congress, banishing all feelings of mere passion or resentment, will recollect only its duty to the whole country; that this war is not waged on their part in any spirit of oppression, or for any purpose of conquest or subjugation, or purpose of overthrowing or interfering with the rights or established institutions of those states, but to defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution, and to preserve the Union with all the dignity, equality, and rights of the several states unimpaired; and that as soon as these objects are accomplished the war ought to cease.

2. Abolitionists View the War (1863)

Lincoln at first described the Civil War as a struggle to preserve the Union, but many abolitionists had additional war aims; they saw the outbreak of the war as a divine opportunity to extinguish the evil of slavery once and for all. (Before the war began, some antislaveryites had even demanded that the North secede from the Union, to be rid of the slaveholding South.) The illustration on pages 468–469, The House that Jeff Built, first published in Massachusetts, depicts the war aims of the abolitionists. How does the illustrator treat the issue of Union? If Lincoln at the start of the conflict had accepted the views advocated in this illustration, would the war have been fought differently? (The text that accompanies the illustration is reprinted on pages 470–471.)
The House that Jeff Built*

This is the House that Jeff built.

This is the cotton, by rebels called king,
(Tho’ call’d by loyalists no such thing)
That lay in the house that Jeff built.

These are the field chattels that made cotton king,
(Tho’ call’d by loyalists no such thing)
That lay in the house that Jeff built.

These are the chattels, babes, mothers, and men,
To be sold by the head, in the slave pen:
A part of the house that Jeff built.

This is the thing by some call’d a man,
Whose trade is to sell all the chattels he can,
From yearlings to adults of life’s longest span:
In and out of the house that Jeff built.

These are the shackles, for slaves who suppose
Their limbs are their own, from fingers to toes;
And are prone to believe say all that you can,
That they shouldn’t be sold by that thing call’d a man:
Whose trade is to sell all the chattels he can,
From yearlings to adults of life’s longest span:
In and out of the house that Jeff built.

These buy the slaves, both male and female,
And sell their own souls to a boss with a tail
Who owns the small soul of that thing called a man:
Whose trade is to sell all the chattels he can,
From yearlings to adults of life’s longest span:
In and out of the house that Jeff built.

Here the slave breeder parts with his own flesh
To a trader down south in the heart of secesh
Thus trader and breeder secure without fail
The lasting attachment of him with a tail
Who owns the small soul of that thing called a man
Whose trade is to sell all the chattels he can,
From yearlings to adults of life’s longest span:
In and out of the house that Jeff built.

*This is the text that accompanies the illustrations on pp. 468–469.
This is the scourge that some call's the cat
Stout in the handle and nine tails to that
Tis joyous to think that the time's drawing near
When the cat will no longer cause chattels fear
Nor the going, going, gone of that thing call'd a man
Whose trade is to sell all the chattels he can,
From yearlings to adults of life's longest span:
In and out of the house that Jeff built.

Here the slave driver in transport applies
Nine tails to his victim nor heeds her shrill cries
Alas! that a driver with nine tails of his own,
Should be slave to a driver who owns only one:
Albeit he owns that thing call'd a man,
Whose trade is to sell all the chattels he can,
From yearlings to adults of life's longest span:
In and out of the house that Jeff built.

Here's the arch rebel Jeff whose infamous course
Has bro't rest in the plow, and made active the hearse,
And invoked on his head every patriot's curse.
Spread ruin and famine to stock the slave pen,
And furnish employment to that thing among men,
Whose trade is to sell all the chattels he can,
From yearlings to adults of life's longest span:
In and out of the house that Jeff built.

But Jeff's infamous house is doom'd to come down
So says uncle Sam and so said John Brown
With slave pen and auction, shackles, driver, and cat,
Together the seller and buyer and breeder and that
Most loathsome of bipeds by some call'd a man,
Whose trade is to sell all the chattels he can,
From yearlings to adults of life's longest span:
In and out of the house that Jeff built.

3. Abraham Lincoln Answers Horace Greeley's Prayer (1862)

Bespectacled little Horace Greeley, editor of the widely read New York Tribune, reached the heights of arrogance when he published an open letter to President Lincoln entitled "The Prayer of Twenty Millions." Professing to speak for virtually the entire population of the North, he thundered against the administration for hampering

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the war effort by not coming out bluntly for the emancipation of slaves. Lincoln replied as follows in a public letter. Analyze the qualities of his character that shine through this remarkable statement. Was Lincoln putting expediency above morality? What would he have done if the South had been willing to surrender, subject only to the retention of its slaves?

Dear Sir: I have just read yours of the 19th, addressed to myself through the New York Tribune. If there be in it any statements, or assumptions of fact, which I may know to be erroneous, I do not, now and here, controvert them. If there be in it any inferences which I may believe to be falsely drawn, I do not now and here argue against them. If there be perceptible in it an impatient and dictatorial tone, I waive it in deference to an old friend, whose heart I have always supposed to be right.

As to the policy I "seem to be pursuing," as you say, I have not meant to leave anyone in doubt.

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the National authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be "the Union as it was."

If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save Slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy Slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy Slavery.

If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about Slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save this Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union.

I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors; and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views.

I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men, everywhere, could be free.

4. "A Colored Man" Reflects on the War (1863)

For African Americans, the Civil War would have little meaning unless it entailed the destruction of slavery. To the extent that the North was reluctant to make emancipation and racial equality explicit goals of the war effort, African Americans proved hesitant to identify themselves fully with the Union cause. In the following document, an unidentified "colored man" expresses his ambivalence about the war. It should be noted that he was writing in New Orleans, which was under Union control and there-

fore, ironically, an area in which the Emancipation Proclamation was not applicable. In the course of his argument, the author repeatedly invokes the U.S. Constitution. How might the Constitution have served as symbolic common ground for those fighting for a “more perfect union” and those fighting for their “rights and liberty”?

[New Orleans, La. September? 1863]

... it is retten that a man can not Serve two master But it Seems that the Colored population has got two a rebel master and a union master the both want our Servises one wants us to make Cotton and Sugar And the Sell it and keep the money the union masters wants us to fight the battles under white officers and the injoy both money and the union black Soldiers And white officers will not play togethe much longer the Constitution is if any man rebells against those united States his property Shall be confescated and Slaves declared and henceforth Set free forever when there is a insurrection or rebellion against these united States the Constitution gives the president of the united States full power to arm as many soldiers of African decent as he deems necesisary to Surpress the Rebellion and officers Should be black or white According to their abillities the Colored man Should guard Stations Garison forts and mand vessels according to his Compasities

A well regulated militia being necessary to the securuty of a free State the right of the people to keep and Bear arms Shall not be infringed

we are to Support the Constitution but no religious test Shall ever be required as a qualification to Any office or public trust under the united States the excitement of the wars is mostly keep up from the Churches the Say god is fighting the battle but it is the people But the will find that god fought our battle once the way to have peace is to distroy the enemy As long as there is a Slave their will be rebles Against the Government of the united States So we must look out our white officers may be union men but Slave holders at heart the Are allways on hand when there is money but Look out for them in the battle feild liberty is what we want and nothing Shorter

our Southern friend tells that the are fighting for negroes and will have them our union friends Says the are not fighting to free the negroes we are fighting for the union and free navigation of the Mississippi river very well let the white fight for what the want and we negroes fight for what we want there are three things to fight for and two races of people divided into three Classes one wants negro Slaves the other the union the other Liberty So liberty must take the day nothing Shorter we are the Blackest and the bravest race the president Says there is a wide Difference Between the black Race and the white race But we Say that white corn and yellow will mix by the taussels but the black and white Race must mix by the roots as the are so well mixed and has no tausels—freedom and liberty is the word with the Collered people

Sure the Southern men Says the are not fighting for money the are fighting for negroes the northern men Say the did not com South to free the negroes but to Save the union very well for that much what is the colored men fighting for if the
makes us free we are happy to hear it And when we are free men and a people we will fight for our rights and liberty we care nothing about the union we have been in it Slaves over two hundred And fifty years we have made the contry and So far Saved the union and if we heave to fight for our rights let us fight under Col­ored officers for we are the men that will kill the Enemies of the Government

now is the united States government and constitution free or a local Government if it is free let us colored population muster in to ams and garison forts guard Station and mand vessels and then we will know wheather we are free people or not then we will know wheather you want to make brest works of us or not or make us fools ornott I heard one of most Ables and distinguish lawiers Say that the Colored population was all free and Had as much liberty in the unioon as he had in four or five days after I went to him to get him to atend Some buiness for me he Said to me Are you free or Slave Sir Said i am free By your own speeches was you born free no Sir Said i we have been made fools of from the time Butlers fleet landed hear but I have remained At my old Stand and will untill i See what i am dowing I know very well that the white union men cannot put down the re­beles for them that was not rebles Soon will be i am Sory that I am not able to write good may the union forever Stand with peace and liberty to All good people

B. Lincoln and His Generals

I. George McClellan Snubs the President (1861)

Stocky and well-built General George B. McClellan, a red-mustached West Pointer who sat his horse superbly, was given command of the Union Army of the Potomac in 1861, at the unusually young age of thirty-four. A well-trained engineer and tac­tician, he was immensely popular with his men, who cheered and waved their caps as he galloped by. But the wine of responsibility and adulation went to his head. Youthful John Hay, Lincoln's private secretary, who later became a world-famous secretary of state, recorded in his diary the following astounding incident. What does it reveal about the characters of McClellan and Lincoln, as well as the general at­mosphere of the time?

November 13 [1861]. I wish here to record what I consider a portent of evil to come. The President [Lincoln], Governor Seward, and I went over to McClellan's house tonight. The servant at the door said the General . . . would soon return. We

went in, and after we had waited about an hour, McC. came in and without paying any particular attention to the porter, who told him the President was waiting to see him, went upstairs, passing the door of the room where the President and Secretary of State were seated. They waited about half an hour, and sent once more a servant to tell the General they were there, and the answer coolly came that the General had gone to bed.*

I merely record this unparalleled insolence of epaulettes without comment. It is the first indication I have yet seen of the threatened supremacy of the military authorities.

Coming home I spoke to the President about the matter but he seemed not to have noticed it specially, saying it was better at this time not to be making points of etiquette and personal dignity.

[Although Lincoln remarked, "I will hold McClellan's horse, if he will only bring us success," thereafter the president summoned McClellan to the White House whenever he wanted to see him.]

2. McClellan Upbraids His Superior (1862)

General McClellan, though a superb drillmaster and organizer of the Army of the Potomac, suffered from perfectionism and overcaution—"the slowness," Lincoln once said. Relying on Pinkerton's Detective Agency, he habitually overestimated the number of his foes and perceived difficulties more readily than possibilities. Finally prodded by Lincoln into moving, be assaulted the defenses of Richmond in the clumsily roundabout Peninsula Campaign. When he was driven back in bloody fighting by inferior forces (be reported "vastly superior numbers"), be blamed everybody but himself for his failures. He was particularly critical of the Lincoln administration for having failed to provide expected troops. What does his report to Secretary of War William Stanton reveal about his character? To what extent, if any, was be guilty of insubordination, and what may be said in his defense?

... My regulars were superb, and I count upon what are left to turn another battle, in company with their gallant comrades of the volunteers. Had I 20,000, or even 10,000, fresh troops to use tomorrow, I could take Richmond. But I have not a man in reserve, and shall be glad to cover my retreat and save the material and personnel of the army.

If we have lost the day, we have yet preserved our honor; and no one need blush for the army of the Potomac. I have lost this battle because my force was too small.

I again repeat that I am not responsible for this, and I say it with the earnestness of a general who feels in his heart the loss of every brave man who has been needlessly sacrificed today. I still hope to retrieve our fortunes; but to do this the government must view the matter in the same earnest light that I do. You must send me

*It is possible that McClellan had been drinking too heavily at a party.

very large reinforcements, and send them at once. I shall draw back to this side of
the Chickahominy [River], and think I can withdraw all our material. Please under-
stand that in this battle we have lost nothing but men, and those the best we have.

In addition to what I have already said, I only wish to say to the President that
I think he is wrong in regarding me as ungenerous when I said that my force was
too weak. I merely intimated a truth which today has been too plainly proved. If, at
this instant, I could dispose of 10,000 fresh men, I could gain the victory tomorrow.

I know that a few thousand more men would have changed this battle from a
defeat to a victory. As it is, the government must not and cannot hold me responsi-
ble for the result.

I feel too earnestly tonight. I have seen too many dead and wounded comrades
to feel otherwise than that the government has not sustained this army. If you do
not do so now, the game is lost.

If I save the army now, I tell you plainly that I owe no thanks to you or to any
other persons in Washington.

You have done your best to sacrifice this army.

[The supervisor of military telegrams ordered this message toned down before it
was shown to the secretary of war. President Lincoln wrote to McClellan that the
charge of withholding troops “pains me very much. I give you all I can, and act on
the presumption that you will do the best you can with what you have, while you
continue, ungenerously I think, to assume that I could give you more if I would. I
have omitted, and shall omit, no opportunity to send you reinforcements whenever I
possibly can.” (J. G. Nicolay and John Hay, eds., Complete Works of Abraham Lin-
coln [1894], vol. 7, p. 235.)]

3. Lincoln Warns General Joseph Hooker (1863)

General McClellan was forced to yield the driver’s seat to General John Pope, whom
General Lee vanquished at the Second Battle of Bull Run (1862). This setback
caused McClellan to look better, and he was now restored to his active command.
After holding General Robert E. Lee to only a draw at Antietam, he was replaced by
General Ambrose E. Burnside. Lee crushed his new adversary on the battlefield of
Fredericksburg late in 1862. “Fighting Joe” Hooker now succeeded Burnside. Tall,
robust, bronze-haired, and affable, this energetic West Pointer had already won lau-
rels for his dash and courage amid hailstorms of bullets. Perhaps he was the dictato-
rial “man on horseback” who, many critics thought, was necessary for victory. Yet
this army of 138,000 men was defeated by Lee’s 62,500 at the Battle of Chancel-
lorsville, May 2–4, 1863. During much of the fray, Hooker was in a daze from a
near hit by a cannonball. The letter of appointment that Lincoln had earlier ad-
dressed to this ambitious general is one of the most remarkable ever written. What
does it reveal of Lincoln’s character? What did he most fear from Hooker, and what
did he regard as Hooker’s greatest disservice to the army?

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General:—I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course I have done this upon what appear to me to be sufficient reasons. And yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which I am not quite satisfied with you.

I believe you to be a brave and skillful soldier, which, of course, I like. I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right. You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable, if not an indispensable, quality. You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does good rather than harm. But I think that, during General Burnside’s command of the army, you have taken counsel of your ambition, and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country, and to a most meritorious and honorable brother officer.

I have heard, in such way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the army and the government needed a dictator. Of course, it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. The government will support you to the utmost of its ability—which is neither more nor less than it has done and will do for all commanders.

I much fear that the spirit which you have aided to infuse into the army, of criticizing their commander [Burnside], and withholding confidence from him, will now turn upon you. I shall assist you, as far as I can, to put it down. Neither you nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get any good out of an army while such a spirit prevails in it.

And now, beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but, with energy and sleepless vigilance, go forward and give us victories.

C. The Proclaiming of Emancipation

I. Lincoln Expresses Misgivings (1862)

Preserving the Union was the officially announced war aim of the North. But to many Northern abolitionists and free-soilers, the unshackling of the slave was more important. An edict of emancipation would presumably quiet their clamor while strengthening the nation’s moral position abroad. Yet such a stroke would antagonize the slaveholding but still loyal border states, as well as countless Northern Democrats who were fighting for the Union and not for “a passel of slaves.” The issuance of an emancipation proclamation after the current series of Northern defeats would, moreover, seem like a last-chance act of desperation. On September 13, 1862, four days before the crucial Battle of Antietam and nine days before he issued his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln explained his position to a visiting delegation of Northern Christians from Chicago. What arguments did he give for and against an emancipation proclamation? Was Lincoln concerned with moral considerations primarily? What were his misgivings regarding the

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constitutionality of emancipation, and to what extent did he regard slavery as the cause of the war?

What good would a proclamation of emancipation from me do, especially as we are now situated? I do not want to issue a document that the whole world will see must necessarily be inoperative, like the Pope’s bull against the comet.* Would my word free the slaves, when I cannot even enforce the Constitution in the rebel states? Is there a single court, or magistrate, or individual that would be influenced by it there? And what reason is there to think it would have any greater effect upon the slaves than the late law of Congress, which I approved, and which offers protection and freedom to the slaves of rebel masters who come within our lines? Yet I cannot learn that that law has caused a single slave to come over to us.

And suppose they could be induced by a proclamation of freedom from me to throw themselves upon us, what should we do with them? How can we feed and care for such a multitude? General Butler [in New Orleans] wrote me a few days since that he was issuing more rations to the slaves who have rushed to him than to all the white troops under his command. They eat, and that is all; though it is true General Butler is feeding the whites also by the thousand, for it nearly amounts to a famine there.

If, now, the pressure of the war should call off our forces from New Orleans to defend some other point, what is to prevent the masters from reducing the blacks to slavery again? For I am told that whenever the rebels take any black prisoners, free or slave, they immediately auction them off. They did so with those they took from a boat that was aground in the Tennessee River a few days ago. And then I am very ungenerously attacked for it. For instance, when, after the late battles at and near Bull Run, an expedition went out from Washington under a flag of truce to bury the dead and bring in the wounded, and rebels seized the blacks who went along to help, and sent them into slavery, Horace Greeley said in his paper [New York Tribune] that the government would probably do nothing about it. What could I do?

Now, then, tell me, if you please, what possible result of good would follow the issuing of such a proclamation as you desire? Understand, I raise no objections against it on legal or constitutional grounds; for, as commander-in-chief of the army and navy, in time of war I suppose I have a right to take any measure which may best subdue the enemy. Nor do I urge objections of a moral nature, in view of possible consequences of insurrection and massacre at the South.

I view this matter as a practical war measure, to be decided on according to the advantages or disadvantages it may offer to the suppression of the rebellion.

I admit that slavery is the root of the rebellion, or at least its sine qua non [the factor without which it could not exist]. The ambition of politicians may have instigated them to act, but they would have been impotent without slavery as their instrument. I will also concede that emancipation would help us in Europe, and convince them that we are incited by something more than ambition. I grant, further,

*The tale that a terrified Pope Calixtus III excommunicated Halley’s comet by a papal bull in 1456 is baseless, but he did decree “several days of prayer for averting the wrath of God” (A. D. White, A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology [New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1896], p. 177).
that it would help somewhat at the North, though not so much, I fear, as you and
those you represent imagine. Still some additional strength would be added in that
way to the war, and then, unquestionably, it would weaken the rebels by drawing
off their laborers, which is of great importance; but I am not so sure we could do
much with the blacks. If we were to arm them, I fear that in a few weeks the arms
would be in the hands of the rebels; and, indeed, thus far we have not had arms
enough to equip our white troops.

I will mention another thing, though it meet only your scorn and contempt.
There are fifty thousand bayonets in the Union armies from the border slave states.
It would be a serious matter if, in consequence of a proclamation such as you de­sire, they go over to the rebels. I do not think they all would—but so many, indeed,
as a year ago, or six months ago—not so many today as yesterday. Every day in­creases their Union feeling. They are also getting their pride enlisted, and want to
beat the rebels.

Let me say one thing more: I think you should admit that we already have an
important principle to rally and unite the people, in the fact that constitutional gov­ernment [Union] is at stake. This is a fundamental idea going down about as deep as
anything.

2. Jefferson Davis Deplores Emancipation (1863)

Seeking to improve the military and moral position of the North, and taking advan­tage of the recent (limited) Union success at Antietam, Lincoln finally issued his pre­liminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862, nine days after giving
such excellent reasons for not doing so. Declaring anew that the preservation of the
Union was still his primary goal, he announced that as of January 1, 1863, the slaves
would be “forever free” in all areas still in rebellion—areas, in fact, where Lincoln
was then powerless to free anybody. He further proclaimed that the Washington gov­ernment would “do no act or acts to repress” the slaves “in any efforts they may make
for their actual freedom.” “To Southerners, this seemed like an invitation to wholesale
insurrection. They upbraided Lincoln “the Fiend,” while seriously discussing the ad­visability of shooting all Yankee prisoners of war, wounded or able-bodied. President
Jefferson Davis reacted bitterly as follows in his message to the Confederate congress.
How did his views compare with those of Lincoln, expressed in the preceding section?

We may well leave it to the instincts of that common humanity which a benefi­cent Creator has implanted in the breasts of our fellow men of all countries to pass
judgment on a measure by which several millions of human beings of an inferior
race, peaceful and contented laborers in their sphere, are doomed to extermination,
while at the same time they are encouraged to a general assassination of their mas­ters by the insidious recommendation “to abstain from violence unless in necessary self-defense.” Our own detestation of those who have attempted the most execrable

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4J. D. Richardson, comp., Messages and Papers of the Confederacy (1904), vol. 1, pp. 290–293, passim
(January 12, 1863).
measure recorded in the history of guilty man is tempered by profound contempt for the impotent rage which it discloses. . . .

In its political aspect this measure possesses great significance, and to it in this light I invite your attention. It affords to our whole people the complete and crowning proof of the true nature of the designs of the party which elevated to power the present occupant of the presidential chair at Washington, and which sought to conceal its purpose by every variety of artful device and by the perfidious use of the most solemn and repeated pledges on every possible occasion. I extract in this connection as a single example the following declaration, made by President Lincoln under the solemnity of his oath of Chief Magistrate of the United States, on the 4th of March, 1861: . . .

"I declare that I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so; and I have no inclination to do so. . . ."

Nor was this declaration of the want of power or disposition to interfere with our social system confined to a state of peace. Both before and after the actual commencement of hostilities the President of the United States repeated in formal official communication to the Cabinets of Great Britain and France that he was utterly without constitutional power to do the act which he has just committed. . . .

This proclamation is also an authentic statement by the Government of the United States of its ability to subjugate the South by force of arms, and as such must be accepted by neutral nations, which can no longer find any justification in withholding our just claims to formal recognition.

3. Border Staters Are Alarmed (1862)

Lincoln did not dare issue his Emancipation Proclamation until he was reasonably sure that the crucial border states would not be driven into the welcoming arms of the Confederacy. Even so, he was careful to exempt from his edict the slaves held in these states, and to hold out to their owners the hope of compensated emancipation. But the border states were quick to perceive that the days of their own slave property were numbered. The fearless editor of the Louisville Journal, George D. Prentice, a South-adopted Connecticut Yankee who had two sons in the Confederate army, had labored mightily to keep Kentucky in the Union, but even he voiced strong dissent. In his editorial, is he fair in his appraisal of the proclamation, especially its moral implications? Why did he not advocate joining the Confederacy?

It [the Proclamation] is evidently an arbitrary act of the President as Commander-in-Chief of the army and navy of the Union. In short, it is a naked stroke of military necessity.

We shall not stop now to discuss the character and tendency of this measure. Both are manifest. The one is as unwarrantable as the other is mischievous. The measure is wholly unauthorized and wholly pernicious. Though it cannot be executed in fact, and though its execution probably will never be seriously attempted,
its moral influence will be decided, and purely hurtful. So far as its own purpose is concerned, it is a mere brutum fulmen [futile display of force], but it will prove only too effectual for the purposes of the enemy [the South]. It is a gigantic usurpation, unrelieved by the promise of a solitary advantage, however minute and faint, but on the contrary aggravated by the menace of great and unmixed evil.

Kentucky cannot and will not acquiesce in this measure. Never! As little will she allow it to chill her devotion to the cause thus cruelly imperiled anew. The government our fathers framed is one thing, and a thing above price; Abraham Lincoln, the temporary occupant of the Executive chair, is another thing, and a thing of comparatively little worth. The one is an individual, the sands of whose official existence are running fast, and who, when his official existence shall end, will be no more or less than any other individual. The other is a grand political structure, in which is contained the treasures and the energies of civilization, and upon whose lofty and shining dome, seen from the shores of all climes, center the eager hopes of mankind.

What Abraham Lincoln, as President, does or fails to do may exalt or lower our estimate of himself; but not of the great and beneficent government of which he is but the temporary servant. The temple is not the less sacred and precious because the priest lays an unlawful sacrifice upon the altar. The loyalty of Kentucky is not to be shaken by any mad act of the President. If necessary, she will resist the act, and aid in holding the actor to a just and lawful accountability, but she will never lift her own hand against the glorious fabric because he has blindly or criminally smitten it. She cannot be so false to herself as this. She is incapable of such guilt and folly.

4. Racist Anxieties (1864)

Jefferson Davis focused on the “political aspects” of emancipation. But Lincoln’s liberating manifesto stirred other fears as well. Prior to the Civil War, many critics of slavery, including Thomas Jefferson, had worried about how eventual emancipation might affect social and even sexual relations between the races. The Emancipation Proclamation compelled all Americans to confront this question, and even opponents of slavery expressed anxiety on this score. The anti-Republican illustration on page 482, The Miscegenation Ball, purported to depict a social event that followed a meeting of the Lincoln Central Campaign Club in New York City in September 1864. Why might readers have found this scene disturbing? How is the typical interracial couple here portrayed?

5. Lincoln Defends His Decision (1863)

Despite a summer punctuated by dramatic Union victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg, in August 1863 Lincoln was still subject to intense criticism from dissatisfied Northerners. The most prominent target for his detractors was the controversial Emancipation Proclamation. After a series of efforts to avoid the divisive step of immediate emancipation, including a plan to pay the South to release its slaves, Lincoln had put the historic Proclamation into effect in January. In this passage, Lincoln defends his decision against a hypothetical critic. Are idealistic or practical considerations more important to his argument?

But, to be plain. You are dissatisfied with me about the negro. Quite likely there is a difference of opinion between you and myself upon that subject. I certainly wish that all men could be free, while you, I suppose, do not. Yet, I have neither adopted nor proposed any measure which is not consistent with even your view,

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provided that you are for the Union. I suggested compensated emancipation; to which you replied you wished not be taxed to buy negroes. But I had not asked you to be taxed to buy negroes, except in such way as to save you from greater taxation to save the Union exclusively by other means.

You dislike the Emancipation Proclamation, and perhaps would have it retracted. You say it is unconstitutional. I think differently. I think the Constitution invests its Commander-in-Chief with the law of war in time of war. The most that can be said, if so much, is, that slaves are property. Is there, has there ever been, any question that by the law of war, property, both of enemies and friends, may be taken when needed? And is it not needed whenever it helps us and hurts the enemy? Armies, the world over, destroy enemies' property when they cannot use it; and even destroy their own to keep it from the enemy. Civilized belligerents do all in their power to help themselves or hurt the enemy, except a few things regarded as barbarous or cruel. Among the exceptions are the massacre of vanquished foes and non-combatants, male and female.

But the Proclamation, as law, either is valid or is not valid. If it is not valid it needs no retraction. If it is valid it cannot be retracted, any more than the dead can be brought to life. Some of you profess to think its retraction would operate favorably for the Union. Why better after the retraction than before the issue? There was more than a year and a half of trial to suppress the Rebellion before the Proclamation was issued, the last one hundred days of which passed under an explicit notice that it was coming, unless averted by those in revolt returning to their allegiance. The war has certainly progressed as favorably for us since the issue of the Proclamation as before.

I know as fully as one can know the opinions of others that some of the commanders of our armies in the field, who have given us our most important victories, believe the Emancipation policy and the use of colored troops constitute the heaviest blows yet dealt to the Rebellion, and that at least one of those important successes could not have been achieved when it was but for the aid of black soldiers.

Among the commanders who hold these views are some who have never had any affinity with what is called "Abolitionism," or with "Republican party politics," but who hold them purely as military opinions. I submit their opinions as entitled to some weight against the objections often urged that emancipation and arming the blacks are unwise as military measures, and were not adopted as such in good faith.

You say that you will not fight to free negroes. Some of them seem willing to fight for you; but no matter. Fight you, then, exclusively, to save the Union. I issued the Proclamation on purpose to aid you in saving the Union. Whenever you shall have conquered all resistance to the Union, if I shall urge you to continue fighting, it will be an apt time then for you to declare you will not fight to free negroes. I thought that in your struggle for the Union, to whatever extent the negroes should cease helping the enemy, to that extent it weakened the enemy in his resistance to you. Do you think differently? I thought that whatever negroes can be got to do as soldiers, leaves just so much less for white soldiers to do in saving the Union. Does it appear otherwise to you? But negroes, like other people, act upon motives. Why should they do anything for us if we will do nothing for them? If they stake their lives for us they must be prompted by the strongest motive, even the promise of freedom. And the promise, being made, must be kept. . . .
D. The Emancipation Proclamation in England

1. Blackwood's Blasts Servile War (1862)

President Jefferson Davis, seeking both the moral support and the active intervention of neutral Europe, predicted that the Emancipation Proclamation would aid the South. He was correct insofar as the ruling class of England was concerned. The London Times regarded the proclamation as "an incitement to assassination": Lincoln would abolish slavery to punish the rebellious and preserve it to reward the loyal. A member of Parliament branded the president's edict "one of the most devilish acts of fiendish malignity which the wickedness of men could have conceived." The Tory Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, after letting go the following salvo, vainly besought the London government to intervene by force of arms. Why did the magazine regard the proclamation as an act of bafflement and desperation beyond the pale of civilized warfare?

The past month has brought us to the veritable crisis of the great Civil War in America. Brought to bay upon their own soil, the Federals in desperation have invoked to their aid the unutterable horrors of a servile war. With their armies baffled and beaten, and with the standards of the rebel army again within sight of Washington, the President has at length owned the impossibility of success in fair warfare, and seeks to paralyze the victorious armies of the South by letting loose upon their hearths and homes the lust and savagery of four million Negroes.

The die is cast. Henceforth it is a war of extermination. The North seeks to make of the South a desert—a wilderness of bloodshed and misery; for thus only, now, does it or can it hope to overcome the seceding Confederacy. Monstrous, reckless, devilish as the project is, we believe it will not succeed. But it at least marks the crisis and turning point of the war. It shows that the North has shot its last bolt—the effects of which we do not yet see, but beyond which there is no other. It proves what everyone in this country was loath to believe, that rather than let the Southern states be independent, rather than lose their trade and custom, the North would league itself with Beelzebub [the Devil], and seek to make a hell of half a continent.

In return, this atrocious act justifies the South in hoisting the black flag, and in proclaiming a war without quarter against the Yankee hosts. And thus, within the bosom of civilization, we are called upon to contemplate a war more full of horrors and wickedness than any which stands recorded in the world's history.

2. English Working Classes Cheer (1863)

The working class of England, deeply concerned with the dignity of human labor, favored emancipation, despite heavy unemployment caused by the cotton famine. They hailed the proclamation with spontaneous mass meetings. The city of Birmingham alone sent Lincoln a congratulatory address containing ten thousand signa-

1Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 92 (1862): 637.
D. The Emancipation Proclamation in England

The Emancipation Proclamation in England

Conspicuous among the British friends of the North was a wealthy low-tariff liberal and member of Parliament, Richard Cobden, who had twice visited the United States. He wrote privately to his abolitionist friend, Senator Charles Sumner, as follows. Why did Cobden regard the proclamation as an obstacle to possible British intervention?

You know how much alarmed I was from the first lest our government should interpose in your affairs. The disposition of our ruling class, and the necessities of our cotton trade, pointed to some act of intervention; and the indifference of the great mass of our population to your struggle, the object of which they did not foresee and understand, would have made intervention easy, indeed popular, if you had been a weaker naval power.

This state of feeling existed up to the announcement of the President's emancipation policy. From that moment our old anti-slavery feeling began to arouse itself, and it has been gathering strength ever since. The great rush of the public to all the public meetings called on the subject shows how wide and deep the sympathy for personal freedom still is in the hearts of our people. I know nothing in my political experience so striking as a display of spontaneous public action as that of the vast gathering at Exeter Hall when, without one attraction in the form of a popular orator, the vast building, its minor rooms and passages, and the streets adjoining were crowded with an enthusiastic audience. That meeting has had a powerful effect on our newspapers and politicians. It has closed the mouths of those who have been advocating the side of the South.

And now I write to assure you that any unfriendly act on the part of our government, no matter which of our aristocratic parties is in power, towards your cause is not to be apprehended. If an attempt were made by the government in any way to commit us to the South, a spirit would be instantly aroused which would drive our government from power . . .

So much for the influence which your emancipation policy has had on the public opinion of England. But judging from the tone of your press in America, it does not seem to have gained the support of your masses. About this, however, I do not feel competent to offer an opinion . . .

When I met [John C.] Frémont in Paris two years ago, just as you commenced this terrible war, I remarked to him that the total abolition of slavery in your northern continent was the only issue which could justify the war to the civilized world. Every symptom seems to point to this result. But at what a price is the Negro to be emancipated! I confess that if then I had been the arbiter of his fate, I should have refused him freedom at the cost of so much white men's blood and women's tears. I do not, however, blame the North. The South fired the first shot, and on them righteously falls the malediction that "they who take the sword shall perish by the sword."
Chapter 21  The Furnace of Civil War, 1861–1865

E. The Uncivil War

I. A Report from Antietam (1862)

"War is at best barbarism," General William T. Sherman reportedly told a group of military academy graduates. "Its glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is hell." What were the most diabolical aspects of the Battle of Antietam, as described by a sixteen-year-old Union soldier in the following account?

The next morning we had our Second battle—it was rather Strange music to hear the balls Screem within an inch of my head. I had a bullett strike me on the top of the head just as I was going to fire and a piece of Shell struck my foot—a ball hit my finger and another hit my thumb. I concluded they ment me. The rebels played the mischief with us by raising a U.S. flag. We were ordered not to fire and as soon as we went forward they opened an awful fire from their batteries on us we were ordered to fall back about ½ miles, I staid behind when our regiment retreated and a line of Skirmishers came up—I joined them and had a chance of firing about 10 times more—. . . Our Generals say they (the rebels) had as strong a position as possibly be and we had to pick into them through an old chopping all grown up with bushes so thick that we couldent hardly get through—but we were so excited that the "old scratch" himself couldent have stopt us.* We rushed onto them every man for himself—all loading & firing as fast as he could see a rebel to Shoot at—at last the rebels began to get over the wall to the rear and run for the woods. The firing encreased tenfold, then it sounded like the rolls of thunder—and all the time evry man shouting as loud as he could—I got rather more excited than I wish to again. I dident think of getting hit but it was almost a miricle that I wasent. The rebels that we took prisoners said that they never before encountered a regiment that fought so like "Devils" (so they termed it) as we did—every one praised our regiment—one man in our company was Shot through the head no more than 4 feet from me; he was killed instantly. After the Sunday battle I took care of the wounded until 11 P.M. I saw some of the horidest sights I ever saw—one man had both eyes shot out—and they were wounded in all the different ways you could think of—the most I could do was to give them water—they were all very thirsty—. . . Our Colonel (Withington) was formerly a captain of the Mich 1st—he is just as cool as can be, he walked around amongst us at the battle the bullets flying all around him—he kept shouting to us to fire low and give it to them—

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*Perhaps a reference to General Zachary Taylor, the hero of the war against Mexico, who was popularly known as “Old Zach.”
2. The Hell of Andersonville Prison (1864)

Andersonville was the biggest and most infamous of the Confederate stockades for Union prisoners of war. It was hastily erected in Georgia in early 1864, at a time when the South was reeling and desperately short of food, clothing, and medicine. The compound held up to thirty-two thousand prisoners in twenty-six fetid, disease-breeding acres. As many as half of them died. Union military authorities later tried the camp commander, German-born Confederate Captain Henry Wirz, and executed him for murder. Charles Ferren Hopkins was a twenty-year-old soldier with the First New Jersey Volunteers when he was captured at the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864. Then began his ordeal at Andersonville. What were the worst conditions he had to tolerate? How did he find the will to survive? Was Wirz justly convicted of murder?

The prison was a parallelogram of about two to one as to its length and breadth, about eighteen acres at this time—it was enlarged July 1st to about twenty-seven acres—and one-third of this not habitable, being a swamp of liquid filth. This was enclosed by wooden walls of hewn pine logs, from eight to ten inches square, four feet buried in the ground, eighteen feet above, braced on the outside, cross-barred to make one log sustain the other, and a small platform making comfortable standing room for the guards, every one hundred feet, with above waist-high space below the top of stockade, reached by a ladder. A sloping roof to protect the guards from the sun and rain had been placed over them. . . . The Florida Artillery had cannon stationed at each corner of the stockade, thus commanding a range from any direction; four guns were so placed near the south gate and over the depressed section of stockade at which point the little stream entered the enclosure.

The “dead line” so much talked of and feared was a line of pine, four-inch boards on posts about three feet high. This line was seventeen feet from the stockade walls, thus leaving the distance all around the enclosure an open space, and incidentally reducing the acreage inside and giving the guards a clear view all about the stockade or “bull pen,” the name given it by its inventor—the infamous General Winder. . . . To intrude inside this dead line was instant death, or wounds that would cause death, by the rifle of a watchful, ready, willing, murderous guard.

Inside the camp death stalked on every hand. Death at the hand of the guards, though murder in cold blood, was merciful beside the systematic, absolute murder inside, by slow death, inch by inch! As before stated, one-third of the original enclosure was swampy—a mud of liquid filth, voidings from the thousands, seething with maggots in full activity. This daily increased by the necessities of the inmates, being the only place accessible for the purpose. Through this mass of pollution passed the only water that found its way through the Bull Pen. . . . The air was loaded with unbearable, fever-laden stench from that poison sink of putrid mud and water, continually in motion by the activity of the germs of death. We could not get away from the stink—we ate it, drank it and slept in it (when exhaustion compelled sleep).

What wonder that men died, or were so miserable as to prefer instant death to

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that which they had seen hourly taking place, and so preferring, deliberately step-
ning within the dead line and looking their willing murderer in the eye, while a shot
was sent crashing into a brain that was yet clear.

The month of June gave us twenty-seven days of rain—not consecutively, but
so frequently that no one was dry in all that time. Everything was soaked—even the
sandy soil. Still, this watery month was a blessing in disguise as it gave water, plenty
of which was pure to drink. The boost of Winder was that the selection of this spot
for his Bull Pen was the place where disease and death would come more quickly
by “natural causes,” when a removal of two hundred feet east would have placed us
upon a living, pure, deep and clear stream of water, properly named “Sweetwater
Creek,” which had we been allowed to utilize would have saved thousands of
lives—but no, that was not the intent of its inventor. To kill by “natural causes” was
made more possible by this location.

The average deaths per day for seven and half months were 85. But during the
months of July, August, September, and October the average was 100 per day. One
day in August, following the great freshet, I counted 235 corpses laying at the south
gate and about. Many of those had been smothered in their “burrows” made in the
side hill in which they crawled to shield themselves from sun and storm; the soil,
being sandy, became rain soaked and settled down upon the occupant and became
his grave instead of a protection. Others, who had no shelter, in whom life was
barely existing, were rain-soaked, chilling blood and marrow, and life flitted easily
away, and left but little to return to clay. These holes or burrows in both the flats
and up the north slope were counted by thousands; no doubt there were some that
never gave up their dead, the men buried in their self-made sepulcher. No effort was
made to search unless the man was missed by a friend.

Such were Winder’s “natural causes”!! These were murders committed by most
“unnatural causes” and methods—systematic causes!...

The famous Providence Spring, so much read of, was made possible by the great
storm and freshet of August 9, 1864. It broke in the stockade near the south gate, in-
side the dead line, and swept to the lower side and broke through there also. Near
the north gate, some fifty to sixty feet south on the slope, the heavy downpour of
rain rushed down the slope inside the dead line and under the strata of sand, found
a clay bottom, and struck a small thread of pure water, and food-famished prisoners
feasted their eyes on it for days. It grew a little larger and promised hope to those
who might be able to drink of its purity. Being out of reach, all sorts of devices were
invented to get some of it. The coy little life-giving stream persistently wriggled its
way inside the dead line, though we were glad to welcome it to our side of death’s
border. Small it was but to that camp would have been like drinking diamonds—so
precious were its drops to the minds of those that knew not pure water for months.

Wirz, the helmpate of the devil, concluded that even those precious drops of
nature’s nectar, so hardly and dangerously earned, were entirely too good for the
“damned Yankees,” and would in a measure defeat his “natural causes” system of
death, and right here is where Providence Spring comes to our rescue. Wirz sent a
force of Negroes into camp to stop the flow of water of this Providence Spring.
Their efforts were in vain—fruitless, but ho! how fruitful to us poor wretches as the
stream of life resented the brutal interference of Wirz, and in its wrath burst forth a
torrent compared to its original flow. All the curses and demoniacal ravings of Wirz
availed him nothing—he could not stop it or turn it away, being located so that it reached us eventually. We now could get water from near the dead line—pure as crystal. Wirz went so far as to lead it out of reach, yet its flow of pure water into the former reekings and seepings of the Rebel sinks was still a vast improvement, for it purified the stream and increased the flow.

3. General William T. Sherman Dooms Atlanta (1864)

General William T. Sherman, a tall, red-bearded West Pointer from Ohio, understood and liked the South better than most other Northerners did. He was in fact teaching in a military academy in Louisiana when war erupted. Yet he became one of the earliest practitioners of “total war”—that is, breaking the morale of the civilians in order to break the backbone of the military. Before leaving captured Atlanta on his spectacular march to the sea, he ordered the inhabitants to evacuate the city, pending its destruction as a military measure. In response to an appeal from the city fathers that he would work a cruel hardship on pregnant women, invalids, widows, orphans, and others in an area already overflowing with refugees, he sent the following reply. Was his position ethical?

Gentlemen: I have your letter of the 11th, in the nature of a petition to revoke my orders removing all the inhabitants from Atlanta. I have read it carefully, and give full credit to your statements of the distress that will be occasioned, and yet shall not revoke my orders, because they were not designed to meet the humanities of the case, but to prepare for the future struggles in which millions of good people outside of Atlanta have a deep interest.

We must have peace, not only at Atlanta, but in all America. To secure this, we must stop the war that now desolates our once happy and favored country. To stop war, we must defeat the rebel armies which are arrayed against the laws and Constitution that all must respect and obey. To defeat those armies, we must prepare the way to reach them in their recesses, provided with the arms and instruments which enable us to accomplish our purpose.

Now, I know the vindictive nature of our enemy, that we may have many years of military operations from this quarter; and, therefore, deem it wise and prudent to prepare in time. The use of Atlanta for warlike purposes is inconsistent with its character as a home for families. There will be no manufactures, commerce, or agriculture here for the maintenance of families, and sooner or later want will compel the inhabitants to go. Why not go now, when all the arrangements are completed for the transfer, instead of waiting till the plunging shot of contending armies will renew the scenes of the past month? Of course, I do not apprehend any such thing at this moment, but you do not suppose this army will be here until the war is over. I cannot discuss this subject with you fairly, because I cannot impart to you what we propose to do, but I assert that our military plans make it necessary for the inhabitants to go away, and I can only renew my offer of services to make their exodus in any direction as easy and comfortable as possible.

You cannot qualify war in harsher terms than I will. War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it; and those who brought war into our country deserve all the curses and maledictions a people can pour out. I know I had no hand in making this war, and I know I will make more sacrifices today than any of you to secure peace. But you cannot have peace and a division of our country. If the United States submits to a division now, it will not stop, but will go on until we reap the fate of Mexico, which is eternal war.

The United States does and must assert its authority, wherever it once had power; for, if it relaxes one bit to pressure, it is gone, and I believe that such is the national feeling. This feeling assumes various shapes, but always comes back to that of Union. Once admit the Union, once more acknowledge the authority of the national Government, and, instead of devoting your houses and streets and roads to the dread uses of war, I and this army become at once your promoters and supporters, shielding you from danger, let it come from what quarter it may. I know that a few individuals cannot resist a torrent of error and passion, such as swept the South into rebellion, but you can point out, so that we may know those who desire a government, and those who insist on war and its desolation.

You might as well appeal against the thunderstorm as against these terrible hardships of war. They are inevitable, and the only way the people of Atlanta can hope once more to live in peace and quiet at home, is to stop the war, which can only be done by admitting that it began in error and is perpetuated in pride.

We don’t want your Negroes, or your horses, or your houses, or your lands, or anything you have, but we do want and will have a just obedience to the laws of the United States. That we will have, and, if it involves the destruction of your improvements, we cannot help it.

You have heretofore read public sentiment in your newspapers, that live by false-
hood and excitement; and the quicker you seek for truth in other quarters, the better. I repeat then that, by the original compact of government, the United States had certain rights in Georgia, which have never been relinquished and never will be; that the South began war by seizing forts, arsenals, mints, custom-houses, etc., etc., long before Mr. Lincoln was installed, and before the South had one jot or tittle of provocation.

I myself have seen in Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mississippi, hundreds of thousands of women and children fleeing from your armies and desperadoes, hungry and with bleeding feet. In Memphis, Vicksburg, and Mississippi, we fed thousands upon thousands of the families of rebel soldiers left on our hands, and whom we could not see starve.

Now that war comes home to you, you feel very different. You deprecate its horrors, but did not feel them when you sent carloads of soldiers and ammunition, and molded shells and shot, to carry war into Kentucky and Tennessee, to desolate the homes of hundreds and thousands of good people who only asked to live in peace at their old homes, and under the government of their inheritance.

But these comparisons are idle. I want peace, and believe it can only be reached through union and war, and I will ever conduct war with a view to perfect and early success.

But, my dear sirs, when peace does come, you may call on me for anything. Then will I share with you the last cracker, and watch with you to shield your homes and families against danger from every quarter.

Now you must go, and take with you the old and feeble, feed and nurse them, and build for them, in more quiet places, proper habitations to shield them against the weather until the mad passions of men cool down, and allow the Union and peace once more to settle over your old homes at Atlanta. Yours in haste,

W. T. Sherman, Major-General commanding

4. Georgia Damns the Yankees (1864)

After burning much of Atlanta, General Sherman daringly cut loose from his base of supplies, and headed for the sea. With the troops forced to live off the country, be detailed soldiers (loosely called “bummers”) to round up poultry, livestock, and other provisions. This type of foraging degenerated at times into pillaging, which was aggravated by bands of lawless civilians from both North and South. What light does this passage from the diary of a returning Georgia woman cast on the effectiveness of Sherman’s methods, the state of Southern morale, and the prospect of North-South harmony after the war?

December 24, 1864.—About three miles from Sparta [Georgia] we struck the “Burnt Country,” as it is well named by the natives, and then I could better understand the wrath and desperation of these poor people. I almost felt as if I should like to hang a Yankee myself. There was hardly a fence left standing all the way from Sparta to Gordon. The fields were trampled down and the road was lined with carcasses of horses, hogs, and cattle that the invaders, unable either to consume or to carry away with them, had wanonly shot down, to starve out the people and

prevent them from making their crops. The stench in some places was unbearable; every few hundred yards we had to hold our noses or stop them with the cologne Mrs. Elzey had given us, and it proved a great boon.

The dwellings that were standing all showed signs of pillage, and on every plantation we saw the charred remains of the gin-house and packing-screw, while here and there lone chimney-stacks, "Sherman's sentinels," told of homes laid in ashes. The infamous wretches! I couldn't wonder now that these poor people should want to put a rope round the neck of every red-handed "devil of them" they could lay their hands on.

Hay ricks and fodder stacks were demolished, corn-cribs were empty, and every bale of cotton that could be found was burnt by the savages. I saw no grain of any sort, except little patches they had spilled when feeding their horses and which there was not even a chicken left in the country to eat. A bag of oats might have lain anywhere along the road without danger from the beasts of the fields, though I cannot say it would have been safe from the assaults of hungry man.

Crowds of [Confederate] soldiers were tramping over the road in both directions; it was like traveling through the streets of a populous town all day. They were mostly on foot, and I saw numbers seated on the roadside greedily eating raw turnips, meat skins, parched corn—anything they could find, even picking up the loose grains that Sherman's horses had left. I felt tempted to stop and empty the contents of our provision baskets into their laps, but the dreadful accounts that were given of the state of the country before us made prudence get the better of our generosity.

Before crossing the Oconee [River] at Milledgeville we ascended an immense hill, from which there was a fine view of the town, with Governor Brown's fortifications in the foreground and the river rolling at our feet. The Yankees had burnt the bridge; so we had to cross on a ferry. There was a long train of vehicles ahead of us, and it was nearly an hour before our turn came; so we had ample time to look about us. On our left was a field where thirty thousand Yankees had camped hardly three weeks before. It was strewn with the debris they had left behind, and the poor people of the neighborhood were wandering over it, seeking anything they could find to eat, even picking up grains of corn that were scattered around where the Yankees had fed their horses. We were told that a great many valuables were found there at first, plunder that the invaders had left behind, but the place had been picked over so often by this time that little now remained except tufts of loose cotton, piles of half-rotted grain, and the carcasses of slaughtered animals, which raised a horrible stench. Some men were plowing in one part of the field, making ready for next year's crop.

5 General Ulysses S. Grant Displays Generosity (1865)

While Sherman was ravaging Georgia and the Carolinas, General Grant was slowly grinding his way into Virginia. Superior Union forces finally drove General Lee into a corner, and at Appomattox the sloppily dressed General Grant met with the handsomely attired General Lee to discuss terms of surrender. The following version is taken from Grant’s Memoirs, which he completed on his deathbed in 1885 while suf-

ferring agony from cancer of the throat. (Although he did not live to see the two volumes published, they netted his indebted widow more than $400,000 in royalties.) At the time of the surrender negotiations, there were still several Confederate armies in the field, and there was a real possibility that the Civil War would degenerate into a protracted guerrilla war. In the light of these circumstances, comment on Grant’s generosity, described in his Memoirs as follows.

Then, after a little further conversation, General Lee remarked to me again that their army was organized a little differently from the army of the United States (still maintaining by implication that we were two countries); that in their army the cavalrymen and artillerists owned their own horses; and he asked if he was to understand that the men who so owned their horses were to be permitted to retain them. I told him that as the terms were written they would not; that only the officers were permitted to take their private property. He then, after reading over the terms a second time, remarked that that was clear.

I then said to him that I thought this would be about the last battle of the war—I sincerely hoped so; and I said further I took it that most of the men in the ranks were small farmers. The whole country had been so raided by the two armies that it was doubtful whether they would be able to put in a crop to carry themselves and their families through the next winter without the aid of the horses they were then riding. The United States did not want them and I would, therefore, instruct the officers I left behind to receive the paroles of his troops to let every man of the Confederate army who claimed to own a horse or mule take the animal to his home. Lee remarked again that this would have a happy effect.

On the day that Lee asked Grant for surrender terms (April 7, 1865), the Richmond Evening Whig published the following obituary notice:

DIED: CONFEDERACY, SOUTHERN.—At the late residence of his father, J. Davis, Richmond, Virginia, Southern Confederacy, aged 4 years. Death caused by strangulation. No funeral.

6. An Abolitionist Officer Commands Black Troops (1869)

In late 1861 Union forces seized Port Royal, a heavily slave-populated sea island off the South Carolina coastal town of Beaufort. For the remainder of the war, Port Royal served as a kind of laboratory for abolitionist experiments in how to deal with freed slaves. Among the most striking developments at Port Royal was the raising of the first black regiment mustered into the Union forces. Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823–1911), a Harvard-educated Unitarian minister and outspoken abolitionist, sailed south in 1862 to take up his new command as a colonel in the black First South Carolina Volunteers. After the war, he published a remarkable book about his experiences, from which the following excerpt is taken. What did Higginson find most gratifying about the character and behavior of his troops? Is he ever

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condescending about them? What do his reflections suggest about the abolitionist temperament? about the freed slaves' aspirations?

Thanksgiving-Day; . . .

Already I am growing used to the experience, at first so novel, of living among five hundred men, and scarce a white face to be seen,—of seeing them go through all their daily processes, eating, frolicking, talking, just as if they were white. Each day at dress-parade I stand with the customary folding of the arms before a regimental line of countenances so black that I can hardly tell whether the men stand steadily or not; black is every hand which moves in ready cadence as I vociferate, “Battalion! Shoulder arms!” nor is it till the line of white officers moves forward, as parade is dismissed, that I am reminded that my own face is not the color of coal. . . .

It needs but a few days to show the absurdity of distrusting the military availability of these people. They have quite as much average comprehension as whites of the need of the thing, as much courage (I doubt not), as much previous knowledge of the gun, and, above all, a readiness of ear and of imitation, which, for purposes of drill, counterbalances any defect of mental training. To learn the drill, one does not want a set of college professors; one wants a squad of eager, active, pliant school-boys; and the more childlike these pupils are the better. There is no trouble about the drill; they will surpass whites in that. As to camp-life, they have little to sacrifice; they are better fed, housed, and clothed than ever in their lives before, and they appear to have few inconvenient vices. They are simple, docile, and affectionate almost to the point of absurdity. The same men who stood fire in open field with perfect coolness, on the late expedition, have come to me blubbering in the most irresistibly ludicrous manner on being transferred from one company in the regiment to another. . . .

[After describing his life with the First South Carolina Volunteers, Higginson in his concluding chapters tells some of the life stories of his individual troops and reflects on the meaning of their life in slavery and under arms.]

There was another family of brothers in the regiment named Miller. Their grandmother, a fine-looking old woman, nearly seventy, I should think, but erect as a pine-tree, used sometimes to come and visit them. She and her husband had once tried to escape from a plantation near Savannah. They had failed, and had been brought back; the husband had received five hundred lashes, and while the white men on the plantation were viewing the punishment, she was collecting her children and grandchildren, to the number of twenty-two, in a neighboring marsh, preparatory to another attempt that night. They found a flat-boat which had been rejected as unseaworthy, got on board,—still under the old woman’s orders,—and drifted forty miles down the river to our lines. Trowbridge happened to be on board the gunboat which picked them up, and he said that when the “flat” touched the side of the vessel, the grandmother rose to her full height, with her youngest grandchild in her arms, and said only, “My God! are we free?” By one of those coincidences of which life is full, her husband escaped also, after his punishment, and was taken up by the same gunboat.

I hardly need point out that my young lieutenants did not have to teach the principles of courage to this woman’s grandchildren.
I often asked myself why it was that, with this capacity of daring and endurance, they had not kept the land in a perpetual flame of insurrection; why, especially since the opening of the war, they had kept so still. The answer was to be found in the peculiar temperament of the races, in their religious faith, and in the habit of patience that centuries had fortified. The shrewder men all said substantially the same thing. What was the use of insurrection, where everything was against them? They had no knowledge, no money, no arms, no drill, no organization,—above all, no mutual confidence. It was the tradition among them that all insurrections were always betrayed by somebody....

It always seemed to me that, had I been a slave, my life would have been one long scheme of insurrection. But I learned to respect the patient self-control of those who had waited till the course of events should open a better way. When it came they accepted it. Insurrection on their part would at once have divided the Northern sentiment; and a large part of our army would have joined with the Southern army to hunt them down. By their waiting till we needed them, their freedom was secured.

Two things chiefly surprised me in their feeling toward their former masters,—the absence of affection and the absence of revenge. I expected to find a good deal of the patriarchal feeling,.... but certainly they had not a particle. I never could cajole one of them, in his most discontented moment, into regretting “ole mas’r time” for a single instant. I never heard one speak of the masters except as natural enemies. Yet they were perfectly discriminating as to individuals; many of them claimed to have had kind owners, and some expressed great gratitude to them for particular favors received. It was not the individuals, but the ownership, of which they complained. That they saw to be a wrong which no special kindnesses could right. On this, as on all points connected with slavery, they understood the matter as clearly as Garrison or Phillips; the wisest philosophy could teach them nothing as to that, nor could any false philosophy befog them. After all, personal experience is the best logician.

Certainly this indifference did not proceed from any want of personal affection, for they were the most affectionate people among whom I had ever lived. They attached themselves to every officer who deserved love, and to some who did not; and if they failed to show it to their masters, it proved the wrongfulness of the mastery. On the other hand, they rarely showed one gleam of revenge, and I shall never forget the self-control with which one of our best sergeants pointed out to me, at Jacksonville, the very place where one of his brothers had been hanged by the whites for leading a party of fugitive slaves. He spoke of it as a historic matter, without any bearing on the present issue....

The point of inferiority that I always feared, though I never had occasion to prove it, was that they might show less fibre, less tough and dogged resistance, than whites, during a prolonged trial,—a long, disastrous march, for instance, or the hopeless defence of a besieged town. I should not be afraid of their mutinying or running away, but of their drooping and dying. It might not turn out so; but I mention it for the sake of fairness, and to avoid overstating the merits of these troops. As to the simple general fact of courage and reliability I think no officer in our camp ever thought of there being any difference between black and white. And certainly the opinions of these officers, who for years risked their lives every moment on the fidelity of their men, were worth more than those of all the world beside.
Chapter 21  The Furnace of Civil War, 1861–1865

No doubt there were reasons why this particular war was an especially favorable test of the colored soldiers. They had more to fight for than the whites. Besides the flag and the Union, they had home and wife and child. They fought with ropes round their necks, and when orders were issued that the officers of colored troops should be put to death on capture, they took a grim satisfaction. It helped their esprit de corps immensely. With us, at least, there was to be no play-soldier. Though they had begun with a slight feeling of inferiority to the white troops, this compliment substituted a peculiar sense of self-respect. And even when the new colored regiments began to arrive from the North my men still pointed out this difference,—that in case of ultimate defeat, the Northern troops, black or white, would go home, while the First South Carolina must fight it out or be re-enslaved. . . .

I cannot conceive what people at the North mean by speaking of the negroes as a bestial or brutal race. Except in some insensibility to animal pain, I never knew of an act in my regiment which I should call brutal. In reading Kay’s “Condition of the English Peasantry” I was constantly struck with the unlikeness of my men to those therein described. This could not proceed from my prejudices as an abolitionist, for they would have led me the other way, and indeed I had once written a little essay to show the brutalizing influences of slavery. I learned to think that we abolitionists had underrated the suffering produced by slavery among the negroes, but had overrated the demoralization. Or rather, we did not know how the religious temperament of the negroes had checked the demoralization. Yet again, it must be admitted that this temperament, born of sorrow and oppression, is far more marked in the slave than in the native African. . . .

F. Lincoln’s Reelection and Assassination

I. The South Bemoans Lincoln’s Election (1864)

President Lincoln, though savagely criticized by many, was renominated in 1864. His opponent was the slow-moving General McClellan, the deposed war hero, whom the Democrats nominated on a peace-at-almost-any-price platform and for whose election the Confederates were praying. Leaving nothing to chance, the Republicans rounded up the soldier vote and, aided by timely military success, swept Lincoln to victory. Northern newspapers hailed the result as a triumph for the democratic process. Southern journals reacted differently—notably the jaundiced Richmond Dispatch, which had branded Lincoln “the Ape.” Can you account for this newspaper’s extreme bitterness and for its conviction that the election had not been a free one?

Yesterday [election day] will be long remembered in the annals of mankind. On yesterday, twenty millions of human beings, but four years ago esteemed the freest population on earth, met at various points of assemblage for the purpose of making a formal surrender of their liberties . . . to a vulgar tyrant who has never seen a shot fired in anger; who has no more idea of statesmanship than as a means of making

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1Richmond Dispatch, November 9, 1864.
money; whose career has been one of unlimited and unmitigated disaster, whose personal qualities are those of a low buffoon, and whose most noteworthy conversation is a medley of profane jests and obscene anecdotes—a creature who has squandered the lives of millions without remorse and without even the decency of pretending to feel for their misfortunes; who still cries for blood and for money in the pursuit of his atrocious designs. . . .

It seems strange to us that he should have condescended to submit to an election at all; and we are convinced he would never have done so had he not been convinced beforehand that it would result in his favor. How McClellan could ever have been so infatuated as to thrust himself in his way, we are unable to conceive. The light punishment he had to expect was to be crushed, for he might have felt assured that, even had he been elected, he would not have been allowed to take his seat.

All the preparations of Lincoln indicate a determination to take possession of the government by force—his military arrangements; the stationing of soldiers about the polls; the arrest of the New York commissioners; the prohibition against any tickets but his own in the fleet; his jealous supervision of the voting in the army—all these indicate a determination to conquer by the ballot box if possible, but, in any event, to conquer. How could McClellan expect to weather such a storm as his adversary had it in his power to raise at any moment of the day? . . .

We are prone to believe that every nation enjoys the exact proportion of freedom to which it is entitled. If the Yankees have lost their liberties, therefore, we think it self-evident that it is because they never deserved to have them. If they are slaves, it is because they are fit for the situation. Slaves they have been for years to all the base passions that are indicative of a profligate and degenerate race; and when nations advance to that point, the transition to material bondage costs but a single step.

2. Davis Deplores Lincoln’s Murder (1881)

On Good Friday, April 14, 1865, Lincoln was shot in the head at close range by a half-crazed actor, John Wilkes Booth. The North was outraged. Frenzied mobs wrecked the headquarters of a number of Copperhead newspapers that displayed unconvincing grief or unconcealed satisfaction. Many unthinking Southerners expressed secret or open joy. But others had sobering second thoughts. Jefferson Davis, who was then fleeing and who was falsely suspected of plotting the foul deed, recorded his impressions some sixteen years later. Why did Davis regard the assassination as a great misfortune?

We arrived at Charlotte [North Carolina] on April 18, 1865, and I there received, at the moment of dismounting, a telegram from General Breckinridge announcing, on information received from General Sherman, that President Lincoln had been assassinated.

An influential citizen of the town, who had come to welcome me, was standing near me, and, after remarking to him in a low voice that I had received sad intelligence, I handed the telegram to him. Some troopers encamped in the vicinity had

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collected to see me; they called to the gentleman who had the dispatch in his hand to read it, no doubt supposing it to be army news. He complied with their request, and a few, only taking in the fact but not appreciating the evil it portended, cheered, as was natural at news of the fall of one they considered their most powerful foe. The man who invented the story of my having read the dispatch with exultation had free scope for his imagination, as he was not present, and had no chance to know whereof he bore witness, even if there had been any foundation of truth for his fiction.

For an enemy so relentless in the war for our subjugation, we could not be expected to mourn; yet, in view of its political consequences, it could not be regarded otherwise than as a great misfortune to the South. He had power over the Northern people, and was without personal malignity toward the people of the South. His successor [Andrew Johnson of Tennessee] was without power in the North, and the embodiment of malignity toward the Southern people, perhaps the more so because he had betrayed and deserted them in the hour of their need.

3. The British Press Recants (1865)

The British journals, which had been highly critical of Lincoln, were shocked by his assassination into substituting commendation for criticism. A conspicuous exception was the Tory London Standard, which ungraciously declared, “He was not a hero while he lived, and therefore his cruel murder does not make him a martyr.” The magisterial London Times, which had referred to the president as “Lincoln the Last,” ate crow in generous amounts. Was Britain’s concern wholly sentimental?

... A space of twenty-four hours has sufficed not only to fill the country with grief and indignation, but to evoke almost unprecedented expression of feeling from constituted bodies... In the House of Lords the absence of precedent for such a manifestation was actually made the subject of remark.

That much of this extraordinary feeling is due to the tragical character of the event and the horror with which the crime is regarded is doubtless true, nor need we dissemble the fact that the loss which the Americans have sustained is also thought our own loss is so far as one valuable guarantee for the amity of the two nations may have been thus removed.

But, upon the whole, it is neither the possible embarrassment of international relations nor the infamous wickedness of the act itself which has determined public feeling. The preponderating sentiment is sincere and genuine sympathy—sorrow for the chief of a great people struck down by an assassin, and sympathy for that people in the trouble which at a crisis of their destinies such a catastrophe must bring.

Abraham Lincoln was as little of a tyrant as any man who ever lived. He could have been a tyrant had he pleased, but he never uttered so much as an ill-natured speech... In all America there was, perhaps, not one man who less deserved to be the victim of this revolution than he who has just fallen.

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4. A Kentucky Editor Laments (1865)

The border state of Kentucky, precariously loyal during the Civil War, reacted to the murder of its most famous son with mixed emotions. Some seventy miles from the site of the log cabin in which the infant Lincoln had first seen the light of day, the editor of the Frankfort Commonwealth penned the following sad tribute to "our noble and beloved President," "stricken down, unarmed, defenseless and unwarned, by the hand of a rebel assassin." Why did this newspaper regard the tragedy as a calamity for the South?

LINCOLN IS DEAD. The awful fact which these few words convey has filled the land with mourning. How suddenly had it turned our joy to sadness, our gladness to grief. In the very midst of our rejoicing over the late triumph of the Union over the rebellion, of our joy in view of the ending of our civil strife, and of our thoughts and purposes of love towards those who have brought all these troubles upon us at whose hands we have so greatly suffered, this crushing blow has come upon us, turning the light to darkness, our happiness to misery, our laughter to tears. God in mercy grant it may not, too, turn our thoughts of peace and love towards our enemies into purposes of deadly hate and implacable revenge.

LINCOLN IS DEAD. They have conspired against his life, have sought and taken it, towards whom he had not one thought of hate, to whom he had again and again made most gracious offers of peace and pardon, and for whose kind and merciful reception back to their old places in the Union, his last thoughts and work were given. Truly they knew not what they did—when Abraham Lincoln fell, the South lost its best and truest friend.

LINCOLN IS DEAD. He has fallen at his post, working for the restoration of the Union to its old harmony and prosperity. And in this work there was an earnest desire to serve his whole country. In his heart there was no hate of the rebellious South, no feeling of revenge on account of the terrible wrongs it had inflicted upon our happy land, no bitterness of spirit towards those who continually maligned and traduced him. By the hands of love he would draw back those of rebellion to their old allegiance. Thus have they rewarded him.

LINCOLN IS DEAD. He has given his life a sacrifice for ours. That the Union might be preserved and the enjoyment of life, liberty and property be insured to us and our posterity, he called the people to arms after the blow struck at Sumter. For that, and for all that he has done well and wisely for the suppression of the rebellion, he has incurred the hatred of rebels in arms and their sympathizers in our midst. This hatred has bred vengeance, and vengeance has done its base, cowardly work in the assassination of our President. Thus he has laid down his life for ours—he has fallen a martyr to his country's cause, and in his country's memory his praise shall ever live.

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Thought Provokers

1. Why did Lincoln believe that the ideal of Union was more important than that of freeing the slave? Which had the greater emotional appeal, and why?
2. Was there danger of a military dictatorship in the North during the Civil War?
3. In what respects did the Emancipation Proclamation prove to be statesmanlike? Why was it so late in coming?
4. In view of the earlier British emancipation of slaves, why should Britain's ruling class have criticized Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation?
5. It has been argued that Sherman was a humane general because in the long run he reduced civilian suffering by bringing the war to a more speedy end. Comment.
6. During his lifetime, Lincoln was widely regarded in the South and among many Northern Democrats as an inept, joke-telling buffoon. Account for his ranking today as perhaps our greatest president. Is he overrated?