



ANTIETAM/ SHARPSBURG

Robert E. Lee was

hoping to force a battle on Northern territory. With a victory on Northern soil, the British and French might start actively supporting the South. He also believed sympathetic young men in border states might join the Confederate cause.

INTO THE NORTH. After bloodying Pope, Lee led his ragged army across the Potomac into Maryland. Farmers watched as the underfed and weary men trudged up the roads. They were, according to one Maryland woman, the dirtiest men she'd ever seen. It was hard to believe that these shoeless ragamuffins were the same ones who had been thrashing the Union army.

With Lee practically on his doorstep, Lincoln was worried. He relieved General Pope from command and put McClellan back in charge of the Army of the Potomac. The president knew McClellan was not a fighter, but he needed to stop Lee, and only "Little Mac" could pull the Union army together in time.

McClellan was not eager for battle, but he now had an advantage. Confederate soldiers had left behind a copy of Lee's orders at an abandoned campsite. A Union corporal had stumbled on this precious piece of intelligence. Now McClellan was cocky. "Here is a paper with which, if I cannot whip Bobbie Lee, I will be willing to go home."

Tipped off by a Southern sympathizer, Lee began to realize that his forces were in trouble. He pulled his divided army back to the ridges outside the town of Sharpsburg. His back was against the Potomac.

McClellan caught up with him on September 15, but, as usual, he wasn't in a hurry to attack. The Union general, commanding no fewer than 87,000 troops, feared, as always, that he was outnumbered. Though he could not see them, he was sure Lee had more than 100,000 men waiting on the banks of Antietam Creek. He wasted all of September 16 worrying about it before deciding to attack.

MILLER'S CORNFIELD. It was nearly the end of the Maryland summer. Green corn was growing tall in the fields surrounding Sharpsburg. The weather was still humid and hot, with just a hint of autumn in the stands of trees between the fields.

A mist covered those fields at dawn on September 17. As the sun rose, Union General "Fighting Joe" Hooker sent his corps of 15,000 surging south toward the small white Dunker church. This high ground was guarded by Stonewall Jackson's men.

Hooker's troops met the Rebels in the lines of corn. Both sides blasted each other with cannon through the stalks. The rifle and canister fire ripped bodies apart. Whole regiments fell. Union soldiers finally reached the church. But as they turned to look behind them, they saw the cornfield was carpeted with dead and dying; 8,000 men lay killed or broken on the bloodied stalks.

THE SUNKEN ROAD. At midmorning, a Union attack rolled toward the center of Lee's forces. There, Confederate troops sheltered in a sunken road that formed a natural trench. As the Union soldiers approached the trench, the Confederate riflemen aimed their weapons. Colonel John Gordon waited until the Yankees were just twenty yards away, then yelled "Fire!"

CLARA BARTON



The wounded—those lucky enough not to be killed outright on the battlefield—faced an ordeal that made some wish for death. Many lay on the field for hours or even days. Those who survived faced agonizing amputations and lingering infections.

Clara Barton saw the misery of the war's soldiers and wanted to do something about it. A five-foot-tall Massachusetts schoolteacher, she wasn't exactly a choice candidate for the battlefield. But Barton overcame her natural shyness. She went first to Washington and began collecting food and donations. Through her organization, she was able to get needed supplies to the wounded.

In 1862, she headed for the fighting. She explained that her business was "stanching blood and feeding fainting men."

Barton was always the first nurse on the battlefield, beginning with the battle at Second Bull Run. At Antietam, she was giving a drink to a wounded man on the field when he was struck by a Confederate bullet and killed. The same bullet ripped a hole in her sleeve.

The soldiers she cared for named her "the Angel of the Battlefield," and she stood by them under fire, even when their officers fled in panic. In 1881, Barton founded the American Red Cross.



Union dead near Miller's cornfield, Sharpsburg, Maryland. The battle was the bloodiest day of the war.

Hundreds of Union soldiers, shot at close range, staggered and fell. Said Gordon: "The effect was appalling.... The entire front line, with few exceptions, went down in the consuming blast."

The Yankee charge at the trench was followed by another and another for two sickening hours. Thousands of soldiers seemed to melt in the musket fire.

BLOODY LANE. Finally a Union regiment maneuvered onto a little knoll. From here they could fire down on the Confederates at a slight bend in the road. The fire from above so shocked the Rebels that one whole brigade tried to escape the trench. They were shot down by the hundreds. The sunken road became the Bloody Lane. Bodies tumbled back into the trench and covered the roadbed, in some places two or three deep.

BURNSIDE'S BRIDGE. A fresh push from McClellan's reserves would have punched through Bloody Lane and split Lee's army. But McClellan held back, still thinking Lee outnumbered him. The center of the Confederate line still held—by the thinnest of threads. Now the fighting shifted to the Union left flank.

The Union corps led by Ambrose Burnside was ordered to strike Lee's right flank, across Antietam Creek. Instead of fording the shallow creek, Burnside's 11,000 men tried over and over again to capture a narrow stone bridge that crossed it. The span was defended by just 550 Rebels on the heights above. Charging Yankees drove into the teeth of the Confederate rifles. Only after three

bloody tries did Union troops scatter the defenders.

Burnside was now set to destroy Lee's weakened right flank. At three o'clock in the afternoon, he pushed toward Sharpsburg. But just as he was closing in, Confederate reinforcements arrived from Harpers Ferry. This Rebel division fell upon Burnside's men and broke the Union attack. By sunset the fighting was over. Two days later Lee's army retreated across the Potomac. McClellan had stopped Lee's invasion, but at terrific cost. The 22,726 casualties from both sides made September 17, 1862, America's bloodiest single day of combat.

"...the slain lay in rows precisely as they had stood in their ranks a few moments before."

—General Joe Hooker



The North called the terrible field of war Antietam, while the South named it Sharpsburg. Perhaps no other battlefield was a clearer symbol of the tragedy of the Civil War. Fought practically on the border between North and South, Antietam cost both sides terribly in dead and wounded sons. In the end, no one really won the battle.



FREDERICKSBURG; CHANCELLORSVILLE

In the aftermath of Antietam, Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation. The fight to rid the land of slavery was now linked with the North's resolve to save the Union.

PURSUING LEE. McClellan had forced the Confederates back to Virginia, but to end the war, Lee's army had to be destroyed. McClellan did not have the heart for the kill. He had shaped and polished his great Army of the Potomac and could not bear to risk it. Lincoln gave the job of finishing Lee to Ambrose Burnside, one of McClellan's subordinates.

The Confederate general had dug in on the hills over Fredericksburg on the road to Richmond. Burnside would have to come to him. From behind a stone wall at the base of Marye's Heights, four lines of Rebel infantry waited for the Union attack. Their guns were sited to fire over their heads and sweep the plain in front of them.

A cannoner told Lee, "General, a chicken could not live in that field when we open on it."

MARYE'S HEIGHTS. After crossing the river into Fredericksburg, Burnside attacked on the dank, cold

morning of December 13, 1862. He sent his troops into the grinder of Lee's defenses, despite warnings from his fellow generals. The result was a long day of needless slaughter. A Union officer watched brigade after brigade take their turn against the Confederate storm of iron. The lines seemed to melt, he said later, "like snow coming down on warm ground."

The Confederates beat back fourteen separate charges, shooting down 12,700 Union men with bloody ease. No Union soldier got closer than twenty-five yards to that fatal stone wall. That night, many wounded froze to death in the bitter December wind.

TURNING TO HOOKER. Lincoln despaired of finding a good commander. After the Fredericksburg disaster and another failed march in January, he replaced Burnside with General Joseph Hooker. "Fighting Joe," at least, had an aggressive streak. Right away he got the men fresh food, fixed up their camps, and restored the army's spirit. In late April 1863, he set off to outfox Lee.

Hooker meant to force Lee out of his strong position at Fredericksburg, catch the Rebels in open country, and crush them. In all, it was a good strategy.

The Union general jumped most of his army across the Rappahannock upstream of Lee's defenses. The Yankees got well behind the Confederates before Lee knew what was happening.

The Union soldiers were jubilant—their commander had Lee reacting to their movements. But just as the Yankees began to pick their way out from the tangled, scrubby growth, Hooker panicked, ordering his men onto the defensive.

SPLITTING THE ARMY. The day that held so much promise for Hooker now gave Lee the opportunity to

THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION



Even during the second year of the war, the North was still fighting for, and only for, the restoration of the Union. Doing away with slavery was not the objective. Lincoln, though firmly against slavery, refused to free the slaves themselves. He was too afraid of driving the border states into the Confederacy. If that happened, many Union soldiers might quit the ranks, and the war would be lost.

Another reality was that the slaves were beyond Lincoln's reach. He really couldn't "free them" until Confederate forces were driven from the field.

Still, many in the North urged the president to strike at the heart of the rebellion. Freedom for the slaves—emancipation—would strike at the Confederate economy and win support for the Union overseas. Gradually,

Lincoln decided he would act to free those slaves held captive in the rebellious states, gutting the Confederate economy. By freeing slaves only in the Rebel states, he kept slave owners in the border states loyal.

Lincoln didn't want his act to seem one of military desperation. He decided to wait until the Union had a real victory on the battlefield. Lincoln got his "victory" at Antietam. With Lee driven from Union soil, the president acted. On September 22, just five days after the battle, the president ordered that, as of January 1, 1863:

"...all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforth, and forever free..."



A Confederate caisson, victim of a Union shell at Fredericksburg, Virginia. The Rebels would soon turn the tables.

craft his greatest victory. On the first night of May 1863, Lee and Stonewall Jackson sat on a pair of cracker boxes beside a small fire and plotted a daring attack. Lee would take a gamble and split his army. The next morning Jackson set off with 25,000 men. His aim was to pounce on Hooker's right flank. Lee was betting that he could hold off Hooker's 70,000 troops with the 15,000 Rebel soldiers he had left.

"...all persons held as slaves...shall be then, thenceforth, and forever free."

—Emancipation Proclamation

As the sunlight faded on the evening of the following day, German immigrant recruits, part of Hooker's Infantry, were cooking their supper. Suddenly deer and small game came bounding from the tangled wood to the west. Bugles blared, then hordes of Rebel infantry rolled out of the forest.

Jackson's attack sent the Yankees tumbling back more than two miles. Only darkness and some stubborn men in Union blue, scratching together a defense, finally halted the Confederate advance.

Under a full May moon, Jackson tried to organize his now scattered troops for a night attack. He was riding in front of his own lines when Confederate infantry mistook him for a Yankee. Gun blasts spat into the darkness, and Jackson and two of his staff fell. His aides were dead on the ground; Jackson was alive, but his left arm was shattered. Surgeons amputated it the next morning.

BATTLE ON FIRE. Hooker was now completely on the defensive. So Lee reunited the two wings of his army and struck hard. The fierce fighting in the Wilderness set dry leaves and underbrush on fire, choking the battle lines with smoke. The wounded were burning alive in the rush of flames. One wounded Union soldier remembered the horror of it: "We were trying to rescue a young fellow in gray. The fire was all around him. The last I saw of that fellow was his face.... His eyes were big and blue, and his hair like raw silk surrounded by a wreath of fire."

When General Hooker finally pulled his battered army back across the Rappahannock on May 6, he had lost 17,000 men. Lincoln was crushed by the news of the defeat. "My God," the president grieved, "what will the country say?"

Lee had lost fewer—13,000 men, but that was a quarter of his army. The Confederacy, though, was crushed with grief. Stonewall Jackson died on May 10 of pneumonia brought on by his wound. The Confederacy would soon miss his battlefield skills dearly.



GETTYSBURG

The Confederate

army had failed in 1862 to get a foothold in the North.

But it was June 1863 now, and Robert E. Lee's Army of

Northern Virginia was at its fighting peak.

HIGH HOPES. The men were deadly in battle now, and their commander had firm hopes that they could defeat the Army of the Potomac on Union soil. Lee was still holding onto the hope that France and Britain could be convinced to come to the aid of the Confederacy.

Behind the mountain screen of the Blue Ridge, Lee's men marched down the Shenandoah Valley and crossed into Maryland. Now that he was across the Potomac River, the fingers of Lee's three corps could reach out and threaten Harrisburg and Baltimore.

Lee's cavalry commander, Jeb Stuart, was instructed to keep an eye on Hooker and his Yankees and warn Lee if they started moving north. However, Stuart lost track of the Union army and let Lee advance blindly.

The Army of the Potomac was marching quickly to intercept Lee, but he didn't know it. He was shocked when he found out that the Yankees were already in northern Maryland and coming on fast.

THE FIRST DAY. Lee ordered his scattered army to concentrate at Cashtown near the crossroads of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania. Early on July 1, a Rebel brigade, hunting for desperately needed shoes, blundered into two Yankee cavalry brigades holding the town. The chance meeting was about to turn into the fiercest battle of the entire war.

In charge of the Yankees was General John Buford. He wasn't about to let go of this corner of high ground. He ordered his men to get off their horses and fight the Rebels on foot. This they did all morning, stubbornly holding off the Southerners until help arrived.

By midafternoon Lee brought up reinforcements and had broken the Union lines west and north of the city. Blue infantrymen streamed back through the streets of the town. Hundreds were captured, trapped in alleys and yards. But most rallied on Cemetery Hill, a strong defensive spot.

During the night, Lee tried to get General Richard Ewell to attack and seize Cemetery Hill. But Ewell failed to act. His caution allowed Union reinforcements to set up a strong line along the ridges during the night.

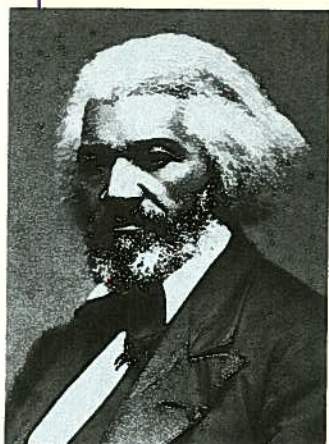
THE SECOND DAY. Union General George Meade, Hooker's replacement, had formed a fishhook line of men southeast of Gettysburg. These 60,000 men were anchored at Culp's Hill. The curve of the hook was at Cemetery Hill, with the shaft running down Cemetery Ridge (see map on page 55).

Lee's right flank commander, General James Longstreet, looked at the situation and advised Lee to leave the Yankees on the ridge alone. An assault on those strong positions might well be a disaster. Longstreet suggested that Lee move the men south and let the Yankees come after them. But Lee overruled him. "No," he said. "I am going to whip them [here], or they are going to whip me."

CEMETERY RIDGE. Lee aimed Longstreet's men at the Yankees' left flank. Ewell was ordered to charge the far right. Lee hoped to crush the Union line in a pincer movement.

At 4 P.M., sweltering in the July heat, Longstreet's divisions surged to attack in the face of heavy fire. The men smashed headlong into a stray Union corps and

FREDERICK DOUGLASS



Frederick Douglass began life as a Maryland slave and ended it as the country's greatest black leader.

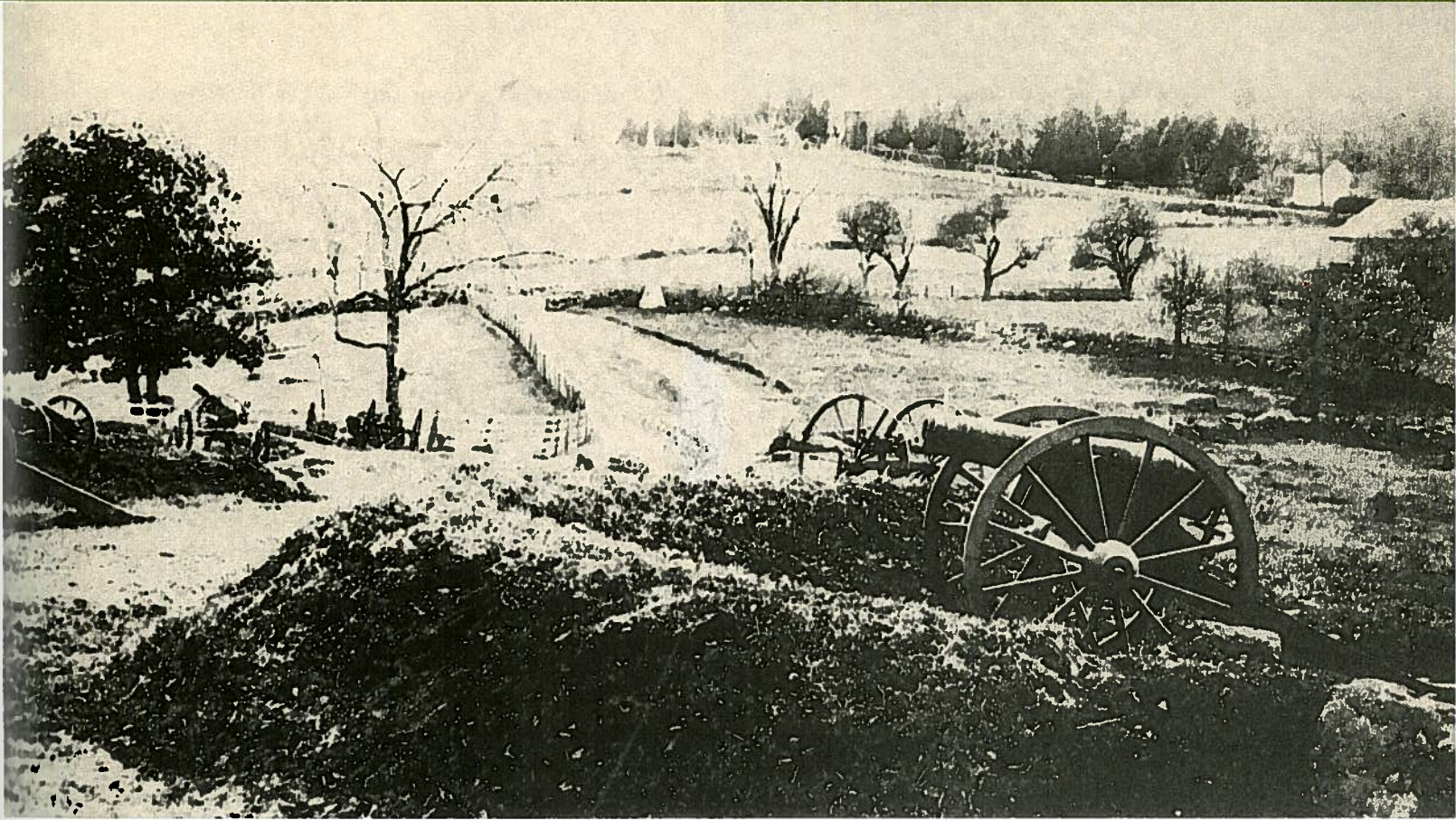
Taught to read and write by his owner's wife, Douglass escaped to freedom in the North at the age of twenty-one. In 1841, he joined the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and became one of its most effective speakers. Six years later he founded his own newspaper, *The North Star*, to spread his abolitionist arguments. Once war broke out, he insisted repeatedly that it was about slavery. "This war," he said, "disguise it as they may, is [about] perpetual slavery against universal freedom."

Once Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation,

Douglass campaigned loudly for the right of free blacks to fight for the cause of the Union and freedom. "The arm of the slave [is] the best defense against the arm of the slaveholder. Who would be free themselves," said Douglass, "must strike the blow...I urge you to...smite to death the power that would bury the Government and your liberty in the same hopeless grave."

Perhaps Frederick Douglass' greatest insight was that blacks—whether former slaves or freemen—were not a separate society.

"We are Americans," he reminded the country during the war, "and shall rise and fall with Americans."



Sunlight filters over the fields at Gettysburg. This battle, the bloodiest of the war, claimed over 51,000 American casualties.

shattered it, capturing a boulder-topped ridge known as Devil's Den.

The fighting there and in the wheat field was a whirl of confusion and carnage. One New York officer looked down onto the battle and was horrified: "The wild cries of charging lines, the rattle of musketry, the booming of artillery and shrieks of the wounded [created] a scene like very hell itself."

"The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."

—Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address

LITTLE ROUND TOP. Overrunning Devil's Den, the Rebels surged up two rocky hills, Big and Little Round Top. Rebel cannons sitting on top of Little Round Top would be able to blast the whole Union line. It was the key to the day's battle.

But a Union general saw what was happening. In the nick of time he rushed a brigade onto Little Round Top. The 20th Maine Regiment found itself alone at the far end of the Union line. Crouching down among the boulders,

they threw back five separate charges by the 15th Alabama. Colonel Joshua Chamberlain remembered the tangled fighting like the landscape of a nightmare: "At times I saw around me more of the enemy than my own men."

Chamberlain and his men bravely held on—Little Round Top was saved. Lee's two flank attacks had almost succeeded. The Rebels had broken the Union line on Cemetery Ridge and Cemetery Hill. Neither charge, though, had forced the Yankees off the hills for good. Meade's army had been terribly mauled. But he and his generals decided to stay and fight it out.

THE THIRD DAY. Lee guessed that Meade had used men from the center of his line to plaster the holes the Rebels had punched in his flanks. On July 3, the Confederate general decided to smash that center. He planned an infantry assault, helped by massive artillery fire. A fresh division, led by General George Pickett, would lead the charge.

General Longstreet, once again, cautioned Lee against attacking this way. The men, he explained, would have to cross a mile of open ground. They would be under fire the whole way. "General," Longstreet pleaded, "I have been a soldier all my life.... It is my opinion that no 15,000 men ever arrayed for battle can take that [Union] position."

But Lee had reached his own crossroads. There was no turning back now. "The enemy is there," he said, "and I am going to strike him."



GETTYSBURG- PICKETT'S CHARGE

At 1 P.M., on July 3, in the then unknown town of Gettysburg, the Confederates opened the biggest artillery bombardment ever heard in North America. One hundred and seventy cannons concentrated their fire on the clump of trees that marked the center of the Union line. The storm of shot and shell dismembered horses, blew up ammunition wagons, and cut men in half.

PICKETT'S CHARGE. The Federals returned fire, but they knew an infantry attack was coming, so they conserved their ammunition. When the Union guns reduced their firing in the middle of the afternoon, the

Confederates thought the Yankee artillery had been put out of action. Longstreet ordered Pickett to attack.

Long ranks of sweaty infantry stepped out of the trees along Seminary Ridge and headed for the Union lines. But the Federal guns on Cemetery Ridge began immediately to bark. Sometimes as many as ten men were killed and wounded by a single shell burst. One Union gunner wrote, "We could not help hitting them at every shot."

The Rebels were taking a terrible pounding, but they pulled themselves up the slope. When they closed to 200 yards, the Union lines opened up in a blaze of rifle and canister fire. "Arms, heads, blankets, guns, and knapsacks," remembered one Federal officer, "were tossed into the clear air."

Even through the storm of the battle, the terrible moan from the field could be heard.

OVER THE WALL. The surviving Confederates herded toward the clump of trees at the stone wall. The crossfire was now hitting them from three sides.

Finally, a few hundred Rebels led by General Lewis Armistead managed to break the Union line at an angle near the trees. They vaulted over the wall into a mass of Yankee defenders. Armistead was killed by a rifle bullet, but his men fought the surprised Yankees hand to hand.

LINCOLN'S GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

It took workers months to collect the debris of battle after the fight at Gettysburg. The Union dead were finally collected from their temporary graves and moved to a new site atop Cemetery Hill. Confederate dead were left

in the mass graves where they'd been buried just after the battle.

The Union Cemetery was to be dedicated on November 19, 1863.

President Lincoln was asked to attend, although he

was not to be the main speaker. That honor was given to the distinguished orator Edward Everett. Lincoln was only to add a few "appropriate remarks."

Everett's speech before the crowd of 6,000 lasted an hour and fifty-seven minutes. By the time Lincoln rose to the podium, the audience had probably heard enough for one day. But Lincoln only had a few words to say.

"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

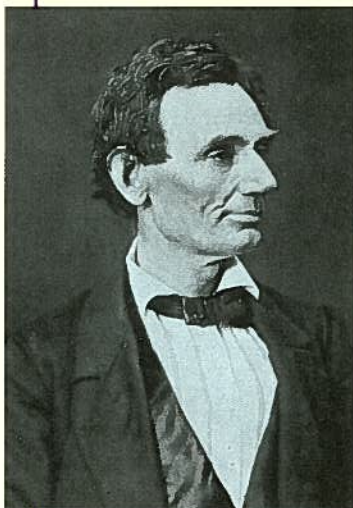
Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation, so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives, that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what

we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Lincoln spoke for only two minutes. The audience was so shocked at the shortness of his speech, no one applauded it. Lincoln confessed to a friend that he thought his effort had been "a flat failure."

Lincoln's words, however, would ring through history, immortalizing the sacrifice of his nation's sons.





Union dead at Gettysburg. General Meade's Army of the Potomac, at great cost, had turned back the Rebel invasion.

A Massachusetts soldier remembered: "Foot to foot, body to body and man to man they struggled, pushed and strived and killed.... Underneath the trampling mass, wounded men who could no longer stand, struggled, fought, shouted, and killed—hatless, coatless, drowned in sweat, black with powder, red with blood..."

Within minutes, every Rebel soldier who had crossed the wall was captured or killed.

THE COST OF FAILURE. The wounded and few unhurt survivors from Pickett's Charge streamed back toward

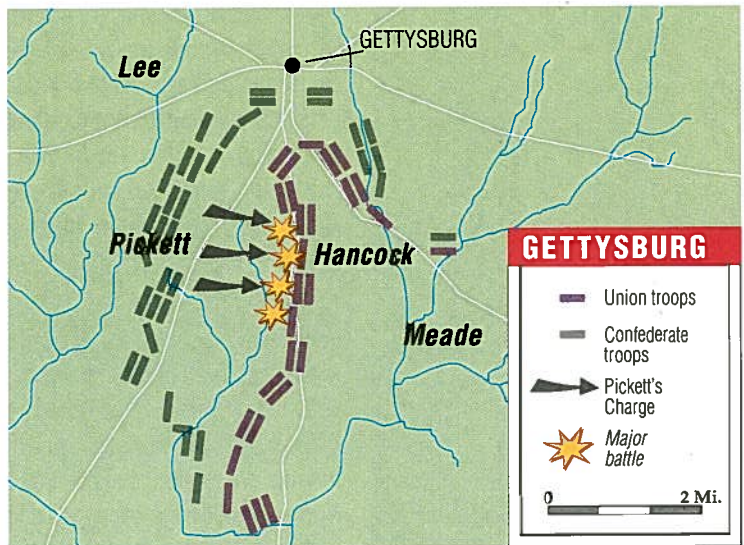
Meade was content to let Lee go. His own army had lost more than 23,000 men in three days. Lee had lost close to forty percent of his force; 28,000 had been killed, wounded, or captured. More than 51,000 Americans—one out of every three men at Gettysburg—had been killed or wounded. Despite the frightful losses, the War Between the States would go on.

"He has loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword."

—Julia Ward Howe,
"Battle Hymn of the Republic"

Lee, who tried to comfort them, but he himself was stricken. His greatest gamble had failed. Now he would lead the battered Army of Northern Virginia south again, back across the Potomac.

Lincoln urged Union commanders to pursue the Rebels, but heavy rains made it impossible. General



Pickett's division led the Rebels in a bloody charge that failed to crack Meade's line.