

THE GREAT BATTLES



FORT DONELSON

The Confederate strongpoint of Fort Donelson, just below the Kentucky border in Tennessee, was captured by Grant in February, 1862. It was the first decisive Union victory of the war. When the Confederate commander, Gen. Simon B. Buckner, sent a note to Grant asking for surrender terms, he got Grant's famous reply: "No terms but immediate and unconditional surrender. I propose to move immediately upon your works."



ANTIETAM

In the battle of Antietam in September, 1862, Gen. Robert E. Lee's army, trying an invasion of the North, was brought to bay by Gen. George B. McClellan on the rolling hills of Maryland. After the bloodiest single day's fight of the war, the Confederates retreated into Virginia. As a result of this victory, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, transforming the conflict into a war to end slavery as well as for union.



VICKSBURG

The river stronghold of Vicksburg in Mississippi was the key to control of the great river. A Union army under Grant besieged it in May, 1863, and on July 4 compelled it to surrender. Grant took 30,000 Confederate prisoners. The fall of Vicksburg gave the Union cause a lift which it never lost thereafter. The North soon opened the entire river to navigation and Lincoln remarked that "the Father of Waters rolls unvexed to the sea."



GETTYSBURG

The battle of Gettysburg was fought from July 1 to July 3, 1863. Lee had invaded the North and was met at Gettysburg by the army of Gen. George Meade. After three days of tremendous fighting—both armies lost a total of 45,000 men—Lee was defeated and driven back to Virginia. From then on the South fought on the defensive. Southern victory at Gettysburg would almost certainly have resulted in Confederate independence.



CHATTANOOGA

On the mountains around Chattanooga, Tennessee, in November, 1863, a Union army under Grant defeated a Confederate force led by Braxton Bragg, opening the way for a final Union invasion of the Deep South. The next spring, Union armies led by William T. Sherman made the invasion, moving south to the capture of Atlanta and, ultimately, to the famous march to the sea. After the defeat at Chattanooga, Confederate hopes for a successful counter-offensive were pretty largely gone.

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