The Emancipation Proclamation

1863

he Emancipation Proclamation, the great umanitarian document which led to the nd of slavery in the United States, marked n important turning point in the Civil Var. For when he signed this historic proc-amation, President Abraham Lincoln hanged what had been a war to reunite the tates into a war against slavery. And after oldly affixing his signature, Lincoln said, I never in my life felt more certain that I as doing right than I do in signing this aper." Thus Lincoln, who once observed f slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong," reed every slave in the southern states hat had seceded from the Union. In addi-on, he also stimulated the war effort in he North by insuring the wholehearted upport of those who believed as he did that avery was morally wrong.

At the time the Emancipation Proclama-on was signed, the American people had een embroiled in the Civil war for more than a year. Following the secession of southern states, war had erupted on Apr 12, 1861, and thereafter the armies of th Union (North) and the Confederacy (Soutl had met in battle many times. And, muc to Lincoln's distress, the war was goin badly for the North. The Union Army wa frequently outmaneuvered and defeated battle by Confederate soldiers.

Lincoln found himself in a difficult pos tion. When the war began, both he an Congress had agreed that the objective the war was to save the Union by reunitin the states. This, Lincoln felt, was the co stitutional duty of the President. Thu while he agreed with those who urged hi to free the slaves, he was at first hesitan to do so. For he was afraid that the slav owning border states that had remained the Union — Delaware, Kentucky, Mary land and Missouri — would also secede.

Yet slavery was one of the issues tha

ad caused the war. Northern abolitionists ere calling for Federal laws to end slavery. he Southerners bitterly opposed these efrts on constitutional grounds. In their pinion, slavery was a matter that had to e decided at the state level.

It was well known that, since Negro labor as used to free white workers for battle, avery was vital to the success of the Conderate forces. One of Lincoln's cabinet embers wrote that when the army adanced "slavery met us at every turn, and ways as a foe." As the war progressed, e issue of slavery steadily increased in nportance.

Lincoln was well aware that while abolhing slavery might further divide the nion, it would also be beneficial in many spects. For example, it would keep Engnd and France, two major textileroducing nations that needed southern tton, from allying themselves with the onfederacy. Since both countries were opsed to slavery, they would not support e southern cause if slavery were made an sue. In addition, freeing the slaves would deprive the South of manpower ar strengthen the Union Army as the form slaves made their way to the North. Y another benefit would be to give the Unic forces a humanitarian reason to fight the former countrymen.

Still, there was the problem of the slav owning border states that were loyal to th Union. Lincoln was able to surmount eve this problem by making the Emancipatic Proclamation apply only to states with the Confederacy. Then in September 18(he warned the rebelling states that if the did not return to the Union by the first the year he would declare their slaves "fo ever free." When the South failed to hee this warning, the Emancipation Proclam tion went into effect on January 1, 1863.

Two years later the Thirteenth Amen ment to the Constitution was adopted abolish slavery everywhere in the Unite States. This amendment — a direct resu of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation bore out the American promise of freedo and liberty for *all.*