

Chapter 19- Drifting Toward Disunion

1854-1861

A. Stowe and Helper: Literary Incendiaries

1. Sectional tensions were further strained in 1852, and later, by an inky phenomenon
 1. Harriet Beecher Stowe, a wife of a woman and the mother of a half-dozen children, published her heartrending novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852
 2. Dismayed by the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, she was determined to awaken the North to the wickedness of slavery by laying bare its terrible inhumanity, especially the cruel splitting of families of slaves for selling
 3. Her wildly popular book (success of the novel at home and abroad was sensational) relied on powerful imagery and touching pathos; the deeper sources of her antislavery sentiments lay in the evangelical religious crusades of the Second Great Awakening
 4. Totals soon ran into the millions as the tale was translated into many languages and no other novel in American history can be compared with it as a political force
2. To millions of people, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* made slavery appear almost as evil as it really was and the truth is that it did help start the Civil War—and win the Civil War too
3. Southerners criticized her “unfair” indictment as Mrs. Stowe had never witnessed slavery at first hand in the Deep South, but she had seen it briefly during a visit to Kentucky and she had lived for many years in Ohio, a center of Underground Railroad activity
4. Uncle Tom left a profound impression on the North; readers swore to have nothing to do with the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law and the tale was devoured by millions of impressionable youths in the 1850s—some who fought in the Civil War (Boys in Blue)
5. The novel was immensely popular abroad, especially in Britain and France; when the Civil War started, the people of England sensed that the triumph of the North would spell the end of the black curse; government in London and Paris considered intervening for the South, but they realized that many of their own people would not support them
6. Another trouble-brewing book appeared in 1857, five years after the debut of Uncle Tom
 1. The *Impending Crisis of the South*, written by Hinton R. Helper, a non-aristocratic white from North Carolina, attempted to prove by statistics that indirectly the non-slaveholding whites were the ones who suffered most from the millstone of slavery
 2. Helper's influence was negligible among the poorer whites to whom he addressed his message; his book was banned in the South, where book-burning parties were held

3. But in the North, thousands of copies, many in condensed form were distributed as campaign literature by the Republicans—Southerners were further embittered

B. The North-South Contest for Kansas

1. The rolling plains of Kansas had provided an example of the worse possible workings of popular sovereignty; newcomers who ventured into Kansas were a motley lot
 1. Most of the northerners were just ordinary westward-moving pioneers in search of richer lands beyond the sunset; but a small part of the inflow was financed by groups of northern abolitionists or free-soilers—New England Emigration Aid Company
 2. People were sent to the troubled area to forestall the South and to make a profit
 3. Southern spokesmen raised furious cries of betrayal; they had supported the Kansas-Nebraska scheme of Douglas with the unspoken understanding that Kansas would become slave and Nebraska free—Nebraskans were trying to “abolitionize” Kansas
 4. A few southern hotheads, quick to respond, attempted to “assist” small groups of well-armed slaveowners to Kansas; but planting blacks on Kansas was a losing game
 5. Slaves were valuable and volatile property, and foolish indeed were owners who would take them where bullets were flying and where the soil might be free
2. Crisis conditions in Kansas rapidly worsened; when the day came in 1855 to elect members of the first territorial legislature, proslavery “border ruffians” poured in from Missouri to vote early and often; slavery supporters triumphed and set up their puppet government at Shawnee Mission and the free-soilers established a regime in Topeka
3. The confused Kansans thus had their choice between two governments—one based fraud, the other illegality; tensions mounted as settlers feuded over conflicting land claims
4. The breaking point came in 1856 when a gang of proslavery raiders, alleging provocation, shot up and burned a part of the free-soil town of Lawrence
5. This outrage was but the prelude to a bloodier tragedy

C. Kansas in Convulsion

1. The fanatical figure of John Brown now stalked upon the Kansas battlefield
 1. He was obsessively dedicated to the abolitionist cause and becoming involved in dubious dealings, he moved to Kansas from Ohio with a part of his large family
 2. Brooding over the recent attack on Lawrence, “Old Brown” of Osawatimie led a band of his followers to Pottawatomie Creek in May 1856; there they literally hacked to pieces five surprised men, presumed to be proslaveryites and this butchery tainted the free-soil cause and brought vicious retaliation from the proslavery forces

3. Civil war in Kansas, which thus flared forth in 1856, continued intermittently until it merged with the large-scale Civil War of 1861-1865 (paralyzed agriculture)
2. By 1857 Kansas had enough people, chiefly free-soilers, to apply for statehood on a popular-sovereignty basis; the proslavery forces devised the Lecompton Constitution
 1. The people were not allowed to vote for or against the constitution as a whole, but for the constitution “with slavery” or “with no slavery”; if they voted against slavery, one of the provisions of constitution would protect the owners of slaves already in Kansas
 2. So whatever the outcome, there would still be black bondage in Kansas
 3. Many free-soilers, infuriated by this play, boycotted the polls; left to themselves, the proslaveryites approved the constitution with slavery late in 1857
3. The scene next shifted to Washington where President Pierce had been succeeded by James Buchanan, who was also strongly under the southern influence
 1. Blind to sharp divisions within his own Democratic party, Buchanan threw the weight of his administration behind the notorious Lecompton Constitution
 2. But Senator Douglas, who had championed true popular sovereignty, would have none of semi-popular fraudulency; he fought for fair play and democratic principles
 3. The outcome was a compromise that submitted the entire Lecompton Constitution to a popular vote; free-soil voters thronged to the polls and snowed it under
 4. Kansas remained a territory until 1861, when the southern secessionists left Congress
4. President Buchanan, by antagonizing the numerous Douglas Democrats in the North, hopelessly divided the once-powerful Democratic party—it had been the only remaining national party for the Whigs were dead and the Republicans were sectional
5. With the disruption of the Democrats came the snapping of one of the last important strands in the rope that was barely binding the Union together

D. Bully” Brooks and His Bludgeon

1. “Bleeding Kansas” also spattered blood on the floor of the Senate in 1856
 1. Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts was a leading abolitionist—he was highly educated but he had made himself one of the most disliked men in the Senate
 2. Brooding the miscarriage of popular sovereignty, he deviled a blistering speech titled “The Crime Against Kansas”—he condemned the proslavery men and referred to South Carolina and to Senator Andrew Butler, one of the best-liked men in Senate
 3. Hot-tempered Congressman Preston S. Brooks of South Carolina now took vengeance into his own hands and he resented the insults to his state and senator

4. His code of honor called for a duel, but in the South one fought only with one's social equal so the only alternative was to chastise the senator by beating an unruly dog
5. On May 22, 1856, he approached Sumner and pounded the orator with an eleven-ounce cane until it broke and the victim fell bleeding and unconscious to the floor
2. The House of Representatives could not muster enough votes to expel South Carolinian, but he resigned and was triumphantly reelected—southern admirers sent him canes
3. The injuries to Sumner's head and nervous system were serious; he was forced to leave his seat for three and a half years and go to Europe for painful and costly treatment
4. Meanwhile, Massachusetts defiantly reelected him, leaving his seat eloquently empty; bleeding Sumner was thus joined with bleeding Kansas as a political issue
5. The free-soil North was mightily aroused against the "Bully" Brooks and copies of Sumner's abusive speech were sold by the tens of thousands—earned Republican votes
6. The South, although not unanimous in approving Brooks, was angered not only because Sumner had made such a speech but also because it had been so applauded in the North
7. The Sumner-Brooks clash and the ensuing reactions revealed how dangerously inflamed passions were becoming in the US (arguably one of the first blows of the Civil War)

E. Old Buck" Versus "The Pathfinder"

1. The Democrats met in Cincinnati to nominate their presidential standard-bearer of 1856
 1. They shied away from both the weak-kneed President Pierce and the dynamic Douglas; each was too indelibly tainted by the Kansas-Nebraska Act
 2. The delegates finally chose James Buchanan, a well-to-do Pennsylvania lawyer who had been serving as minister to London during the recent Kansas-Nebraska uproar
 3. He was relatively enemyless but "Old Buck" was mediocre, irresolute, and confused
2. Delegates of the fast-growing Republican party met in Philadelphia with effervescence
 1. Higher Law" Seward was their most conspicuous but their final choice was Captain John C. Fremont, the so-called Pathfinder of the West—an erratic explorer-soldier surveyor virtually without political experience, but he was not tarred from Kansas
 2. The Republican platform came out vigorously against the extension of slavery into the territories, while the Democrats declared no less for popular sovereignty
3. A dose of Antiforeignism was injected into the campaign, even though extension loomed
 1. The recent influx of immigrants from Ireland and Germany had alarmed "nativists" (Protestants) and they organized the American party, known also as the Know-Nothing party because of its secretiveness and in 1856 nominated Millard Fillmore

2. Antiforeign and anti-Catholic these super patriots adopted the slogan “Americans Must Rule American” and remnants of the dying Whig party endorsed Fillmore, and they and the Know-Nothings threatened to cut into Republican strength
4. Republicans were behind Fremont with zeal but mudslinging bespattered both candidates
5. Buchanan was assailed because he was a bachelor: the fiancée of this youth had died after a lovers’ quarrel and Fremont was reviled because of his illegitimate birth (mother)
6. More harmful to Fremont was the allegation which alienated many bigoted Know-Nothings and other “nativists,” that he was a Roman Catholic in practice

F. The Electoral Fruits of 1856

1. A bland Buchanan, although polling less than a majority of the popular vote, won handily; his tally in the Electoral College was 174 to 114 for Fremont and 8 for Fillmore
2. Why did the rousing Republicans go down in defeat—Fremont lost much ground because of grave doubts as to his honesty, capacity, and sound judgment
 1. The violent threats of the southern “fire-eaters” that the election of a sectional “black Republican” would be a declaration of war on them, forcing them to secede
 2. Many northerners, anxious to save both the Union and their profitable business connections with the South, were thus intimidated into voting for Buchanan
 3. Innate conservatism triumphed, assisted by so-called southern bullyism
3. It was probably fortunate for the Union that secession and civil war did not come in 1856, following a Republican victory; Fremont was an ill-balanced and second-rate figure
4. Yet the Republicans in 1856 could rightfully claim a “victorious defeat”; the new party had made an astonishing showing against the well-oiled Democratic machine
5. The election of 1856 cast a shadow forward and North and South, peered toward 1860

G. The Dred Scott Bombshell

1. The Dred Scott decision, handed down by the Supreme Court on March 6, 1857, abruptly ended the two-day presidential honeymoon of the unlucky bachelor, James Buchanan; this pronouncement was one of the opening paper-gun blasts of the Civil War
2. Dred Scott, a black slave, had lived with his master for five years in Illinois and Wisconsin Territory; backed by abolitionists, he sued for freedom on the basis of his long residence on free soil—twist a simple legal case into a complex political issue
 1. It ruled, not surprisingly, that Dred Scott was a black slave and not a citizen; hence he could not sue—denying blacks their citizenship, menaced the position of free blacks

2. The tribunal could then have thrown out the case on technical grounds but a majority decided to go further, under the leadership of emaciated Chief Justice Taney from the slave state Maryland—a sweeping judgment on the issue of slavery seemed desirable
3. Taney rocked the free-soilers back; a majority of the Court decreed that because a slave was private property, he could be taken into any territory and legally held there in slavery
 1. The reasoning was that the Fifth Amendment clearly forbade Congress to deprive people of their property without due process of law; the Court went further
 2. The Missouri Compromise, banning slavery north of 36°30' had been repealed three years earlier by the Kansas-Nebraska Act but its spirit was still venerated in the North
 3. Now the Court ruled that the Compromise of 1820 had been unconstitutional all along: Congress had no power to ban slavery from the territories, regardless even of what the territorial legislatures themselves might want (Southerners were delighted)
4. Champions of popular sovereignty were aghast, including Senator Douglas and a host of northern and southern wings of the once-united Democratic party
5. Foes of slavery extension, especially the Republicans, were infuriated by the Dred Scott setback; their chief rallying cry had been the banishing of bondage from the territories
 1. They now insisted that the ruling of the Court was merely an opinion, not a decision, and no more binding than the views of the a “southern debating society”
 2. Republican defiance of the tribunal was intensified by an awareness that a majority of its members were southerners and by the conviction that it had debased itself
 3. Southerners were inflamed by all this defiance; they began to wonder how much longer they could remain joined to a section that refused to honor the Supreme Court

H. The Financial Crash of 1857

1. Bitterness caused by the Dred Scott decision was deepened by hard times, which dampened a period of feverish prosperity; late in 1857 a panic burst under Buchanan
 1. The storm was not so bad economically as the panic of 1837 but psychologically it was probably the worst of the nineteenth century; what caused the crash?
 2. Inpouring California gold played its part by helping to inflate the currency
 3. The demands of the Crimean War had over-stimulated the growing of grain, while frenzied speculation in land and railroads had further ripped the economic fabric
 4. When the collapse came, over five thousand businesses failed within a year and unemployment, accompanied by hunger meetings in urban areas, was widespread

2. The North, including the grain growers, was hardest hit; the South, enjoying favorable cotton prices abroad, rode out the storm—panic conditions seemed further proof that cotton was king and that its economic kingdom was stronger than that of the North
3. Financial distress in the North, especially in agriculture gave a new vigor to the demand for free farms of 160 acres from the public domain; for several decades interested groups had been urging the federal government to abandon its ancient policy of selling the land for revenue—instead, the argument was that acreage should be given outright to pioneers
4. A scheme to make outright gifts of homesteads encountered two-pronged opposition
 1. Eastern industrialists had long been unfriendly to free land; some of them feared that their underpaid workers would be drained off to the land in the West
 2. The south was even more bitterly opposed because gang-labor slavery could not flourish on a mere 160 acres; free farms would merely fill up the territories more rapidly with free-soilers and further tip the political balance against the South
 3. In 1860, after years of debate, Congress finally passed a homestead act—one that made public lands available at a nominal sum of twenty-five cents an acre; but the homestead act was tabbed to death by the veto pen of President Buchanan
5. The panic of 1857 also created a clamor for higher tariff rates; several months before the crash, Congress, embarrassed by a large Treasury surplus, had enacted the Tariff of 1857
 1. The new law, responding to pressures from the South, reduced duties to about 20 percent on dutiable goods—the lowest point since the War of 1812—financial misery
 2. Northern manufacturers, many of them Republicans, noisily blamed their misfortunes on the low tariff; as the surplus melted away in the Treasury, industrialists in the north pointed to the need for higher duties—desire for increased protection
 3. The Panic of 1857 gave the Republicans two surefire economic issues for the election of 1860: protection for the unprotected and farms from the farm-less people

I. An Illinois Rail-Splitter Emerges

1. The Illinois senatorial election of 1858 now claimed the national spotlight
 1. Senator Douglas's term was about to expire, and the Republicans decided to run against him a rustic Springfield lawyer, one Abraham Lincoln (lanky figure)
 2. Lincoln was born in 1809 in a Kentucky log cabin to impoverished parents and he was self-educated; he shone in his frontier community as a wrestler and weight lifter, and spent some time, among other pursuits, as a splitter of logs for fence rails
2. Lincoln's private and professional life was not especially noteworthy; he married "above himself" socially and the temperamental outbursts of his high-strung wife (called the "she wolf" by enemies), helped to school him in patience and forbearance

1. He gradually emerged as one of the dozen or so better-known trial lawyers in Illinois, although still accustomed to carrying important papers in his stovepipe hat
2. He was widely referred to as “Honest Abe” partly because he would refused cases that he had to suspend his conscience to defend in the Illinois courts
3. The rise of Lincoln as a political figure was not rocketlike; after making his mark in the Illinois legislature as a Whig politician, he served one undistinguished term in Congress, 1847-1849; until 1854, he had done nothing to establish a claim to statesmanship
4. But the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in that year lighted within him fires
5. After joining the Republican, Lincoln emerged as one of the foremost politicians and orators of the Northwest—Lincoln almost received vice-president nomination

J. The Great Debate: Lincoln Versus Douglas

1. Lincoln, as Republican nominee for the Senate seat, boldly challenged Douglas to a series of joint debates; this was a rash act because the senator was probably the nation’s most devastating debater; Douglas promptly accepted Lincoln’s challenge (1858)
 1. Seven meetings were arranged from August to October; at first glance the contestants seemed ill matched; the polished Douglas presented a striking contrast to the lanky Lincoln; moreover, “Old Abe” had a piercing, high-pitched voice and was often ill
 2. But as Lincoln threw himself into an argument, he seemed to grow in height, while his glowing eyes lighted up a rugged face; he relied on logic not just shouting
2. The most famous debate came at Freeport, Illinois, where Lincoln nearly impaled his open on the horns of a dilemma; suppose, he queried, the people of a territory should vote slavery down—the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott division had decreed they could not
3. Legend to the contrary, Douglas and some southerners had already publicly answered the Freeport question; his reply to Lincoln became known as the “Freeport Doctrine”
4. No matter how the Supreme Court ruled, Douglas argued, slavery would stay down if the people voted; laws to protect slavery were to be passed by territorial legislatures
5. The upshot was that Douglas defeated Lincoln for the Senate seat; the “Little Giant’s” loyalty to popular sovereignty, which still had a powerful appeal in Illinois, was decisive
6. In the general election that followed the debates, more pro-Douglas members were elected than pro-Lincoln members but tanks to inequitable apportionment, the districts carried by Douglas supporters represented a smaller population than those carried by Lincoln supporters—“Honest Abe” thus had won a clear moral victory

7. Lincoln possibly was playing for larger stakes than just the senatorship; newspapers in the East published detailed accounts of the debates, and Lincoln began to emerge as a potential Republican nominee for president; Douglas by winning, hurt splintered his party
8. After Douglas's opposition to the Lecompton Constitution for Kansas and his further defiance of the Supreme Court at Freeport, southern Democrats were determined to break up the party and the Union rather than accept him (prelim battlefields of the Civil War)

K. John Brown: Murderer or Martyr?

1. John Brown of bleeding Kansas now appeared again in an even more terrible way; his scheme was to invade the South secretly with a handful of followers, call upon the slaves to rise, furnish them with arms, and establish a kind of black free states as a sanctuary
 1. Brown secured several thousand dollars for firearms from northern abolitionists and finally arrived in western Virginia with some twenty men, including several blacks
 2. At Harpers Ferry, he seized the federal arsenal in October 1859, incidentally killing seven innocent people and injuring ten or so more but the slaves largely ignorant of Brown's strike, failed to rise, and the wounded Brown and the remnants of his tiny band were quickly captured by Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Lee
2. "Old Brown" was convicted of murder and treason after a hasty but legal trial
 1. His presumed insanity was supported by friends and relatives who were trying to save his neck but Brown—God's angry man—was given opportunity to enjoy martyrdom
 2. He was clever enough to see that he was worth much more to the abolitionist cause dangling from a rope than in any other way; he was dignified and courageous on trial
 3. His last words ("this is a beautiful country") were to become legendary; his conduct was so exemplary, his devotion to freedom so inflexible, that he took on an exalted character, however deplorable his previous record may have been
3. Brown plunged into world fame and the effects of Harpers Ferry were shattering
 1. In the eyes of the South, "Osawatimie Brown" was a wholesale murderer and an apostle of treason; many southerners asked how they could possibly remain in the Union while a "murderous gang of abolitionists" were financing armed bands
 2. Moderate northerners, including Republicans, openly deplored this mad exploit but the South concluded that the violent abolitionist view was shared by the entire North
4. Abolitionists and other ardent free-soilers were infuriated by Brown's execution; many of them were ignorant of his bloody past and they were outraged because the Virginians had handed so earnest a reformer who was working for so righteous a cause

5. On the day of his execution, free-soil centers in the North tolled bells, fired guns, lowered flags, and held rallies—the ghost of the martyred Brown would not be laid to rest

L. The Disruption of the Democrats

1. The presidential election of 1860 was determined by the issue of peace or civil war
2. Deeply divided, the Democrats met in Charleston with Douglas the leading candidate of the northern wing of the party; but the southern “fire-eaters” regarded him as a traitor, as a result of his unpopular stand on the Lecompton Constitution and Freeport Doctrine
 1. The delegates from most of the cotton states walked out and the remainder could not scrape the necessary two-thirds vote for Douglas, the entire body dissolved; the first tragic secession were the southerners from the Democratic National Convention
 2. The Democrats tried again in Baltimore; this time, the Douglas Democrats, chiefly from the North, were firmly in the saddle (cotton-state delegates again took the walk)
 3. The platform came out squarely for popular sovereignty and as a sop to the South, against obstruction of the Fugitive Slave Law by the states
3. Angered southern Democrats promptly organized a rival convention in Baltimore, in which many of the northern states were unrepresented; they selected as their leader the vice president John C. Breckinridge, a man of moderate views from Kentucky
4. The platform favored extension of slavery into the territories and the annexation of Cuba
5. A middle-of-the-road group, fearing for the Union, hastily organized the Constitutional Union party, sneered at as the “Do Nothing” or “Old Gentleman’s” party which consisted mainly for former Whigs and Know-Nothings, a veritable “gathering of gray-beards”
6. Desperately anxious to elect a compromise candidate, they met in Baltimore and nominated for the presidency John Bell of Tennessee (Union, Constitution, Laws)

M. A Rail-Splitter Splits the Union

1. Elated Republicans were presented with a heaven-sent opportunity for victory
 1. They gathered in Chicago in a huge wooden structure called the Wigwam
 2. William H. Seward was by far the best known of the contenders but his radical utterances, including his “irrepressible conflict” (between slavery and freedom) speech at Rochester in 1858 had ruined his prospects
 3. Lincoln was a definitely a “Mr. Second Best,” but he was a stronger candidate because he had made fewer enemies (he was nominated on the third ballot)
2. The Republican platform had a seductive appeal for just about every important non-southern groups: for the free-soilers, non-extension of slavery; for the northern manufacturers, a protective tariff; for the immigrants, no abridgment of rights; for the

Northwest, a Pacific railroad; for the West, internal improvements at federal expense; for the farmers, free homesteads from the public domain ("Land for the Landless")

3. Southern secessionists promptly served notice that the election of Lincoln—the "abolitionist" rail-splitter—would split the Union but he was no outright abolitionists
 1. In 1865, he was inclined to favor cash compensation to the owners of freed slaves but for the time, perhaps mistakenly, he issued no statements to quiet southern fears
 2. As the election campaign continued, Lincoln staged roaring rallies and parades
 3. Douglas himself waged a vigorous speaking campaign, even in the South, and threatened to put the hemp with his own hands around the neck of the first secessionist—the returns proclaimed a sweeping victory for Lincoln

N. The Electoral Upheaval of 1860

1. To a greater degree than any other holder of the nation's highest office, Lincoln was a minority president; sixty percent of the voters preferred some other candidate
 1. He was also a sectional president, for in ten southern states, where he was now allowed on the ballot, he polled no popular votes; the election of 1860 was virtually two elections: one in the North, the other in the South (rail-splitter)
 2. Douglas made an impressive showing; boldly breaking with tradition, he campaigned energetically for himself; he drew important strength from all sections and ranked a fairly close second in the popular-vote column of the entire 1860 election
2. A myth persists that if the Democrats had only united behind Douglas, they would have triumphed; even if Douglas had received all the electoral votes cast for all three of Lincoln's opponents, the "rail-splitter" would have won 169 to 134 in the E.C.
3. If the Democrats had not broken up, they could have entered the campaign with higher enthusiasm and better organization and might have actually won the election
4. The verdict of the ballot box did not indicate a strong sentiment for secession; Breckinridge, while favoring the extension of slavery, was no disunionist
5. Although a candidate of the "fire-eaters," in the slave states he polled fewer votes than the combined strength of his opponents, Douglas & Bell; yet the South was not badly off
6. The South still had a five-to-four majority on the Supreme Court and although the Republicans had elected Lincoln, they controlled neither the Senate nor the House
7. The federal government could not touch slavery in those states where it existed except by a constitutional amendment, and such an amendment could be defeated by one-fourth of the states—the fifteen slave states numbered nearly one-half of the total number of states

O. The Secessionist Exodus

1. South Carolina, which had threatened to go out if the “sectional” Lincoln came in and four days after the election, its legislature voted unanimously to call a special convention
 1. Meeting at Charleston in December 1860, South Carolina unanimously voted to secede and during the next six weeks, six other states of the lower South, followed the leader over the precipice: Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas; four more were to join them later, bringing the total states up to eleven
 2. The seven seceders, formally meeting at Montgomery, Alabama, in February 1861, created a government known as the Confederate States of America
 3. As their president, they chose Jefferson Davis, a dignified and austere recent member of the U.S. Senate from Mississippi (former cabinet member with wide military and administrative experience but he suffered from chronic ill-health)
2. The crisis, already enough, was deepened by the lame duck interlude; Lincoln, elected president in November 1860, could not take office until four months later; during this period of uncertainty, seven of the eleven deserting states pulled out of the Union
3. President Buchanan has been blamed for not holding the seceders in the Union by sheer force—for wringing his hands instead of secessionist necks; he was now nearly seventy, and although devoted to the Union, he was surrounded by pro-southern advisers
4. A proponent of the Constitution, he did not believe that the southern states could legally secede yet he could find no authority in the Constitution for stopping them with guns
5. Old Buck” was faced with a far more complex and serious problem
 1. One important reason why he did not resort to force was that the tiny standing army of some fifteen thousand men, then widely scattered, was urgently needed to control the Indians in the West; public opinion in the North was not willing to fight
 2. Fighting would merely shatter all prospects of adjustment and until the guns began to boom, there was still flickering hope of reconciliation rather than a contested divorce
 3. When Lincoln became president, he continued Buchanan’s wait-and-see policy

P. The Collapse of Compromise

1. Impending bloodshed spurred final and frantic attempts at compromise—in the American tradition; the most promising of these efforts was sponsored by Senator James Henry Crittenden of Kentucky, on whose shoulders had fallen the mantle of fellow Henry Clay
 1. The proposed Crittenden amendments to the Constitution were designed to appease the South; slavery in the territories was to be prohibited north of 36°30’, but south of that line federal protection would be given in all territories existing or to be acquired
 2. Future states, north or south of 36°30, could come into the Union with or without slavery, as they should choose (slavery supporters were to be guaranteed rights in the

southern territories, as long as they were territories regardless of popular sovereignty)

2. Lincoln flatly rejected the Crittenden scheme which offered some slight prospect of success, and all hope of compromise evaporated; for this refusal he must bear a heavy responsibility but he had been elected on a platform that opposed the extension of slavery
3. Buchanan probably could not have prevented the Civil War

Q. Farewell to the Union

1. Secessionists left for a number of avowed reasons, mostly relating in some way to slavery; they were alarmed by the inexorable tipping of the political balance against them
 1. The “crime” of the North, was the census returns; Southerners were dismayed by the triumph of the sectional Republican party, which seemed to threaten slaveholding minority—wary of free-soil criticism, abolition nagging, and northern interference
 2. Many southerners supported secession because they felt sure that their departure would be unopposed; they were confident that the Yankee would not, could not fight
 3. They believed that northern manufacturers and bankers, so heavily dependent on southern cotton and markets, would not dare to cut their own economic throats
 4. But should war come, the immense debt owed to northern creditors by the South could be promptly repudiated, as it later was during the Civil War
2. Southern leaders regarded secession as an opportunity to cast aside their generations of “vassalage” to the North; an independent Dixieland could develop its own banking and shipping and trade directly with Europe (the low Tariff of 1857 was not menacing)
3. Worldwide impulses of nationalism were fermenting in the South; this huge area, with its distinctive culture, was not so much a section as a sub-nation
4. The principles of self-determination seemed to many southerners to apply perfectly to them; few if any of the seceders felt that they were doing anything wrong or immoral
5. In 1860-1861, eleven American states, led by the rebel Jefferson Davis, were seceding from the Union by throwing off the yoke of “King” Abraham Lincoln