



ULYSSES S. GRANT

## I Gave Up All Idea of Saving the Union Except by Complete Conquest (1885)

*Following his capture of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, Grant believed the Confederacy was a house of cards that would soon collapse. Overconfident, he rapidly pushed south but was badly surprised at Shiloh, Tennessee, where he barely managed to stave off a crushing defeat. For Grant, who was deeply impressed by the morale and fighting spirit the enemy soldiers had displayed, Shiloh was a turning point, not just professionally but also in terms of his conception of the war. In his Memoirs, he described the impact this battle—the fiercest fought in the West—had on his thinking.*

Up to the battle of Shiloh I, as well as thousands of other citizens, believed that the rebellion against the Government would collapse suddenly and soon, if a decisive victory could be gained over any of its armies. Donelson and Henry were such victories. An army of more than 21,000 men was captured or destroyed. Bowling Green, Columbus and Hickman, Kentucky, fell in consequence, and Clarksville and Nashville, Tennessee, the last two with an immense amount of stores, also fell into our hands. The Tennessee and Cumberland rivers, from their mouths to the head of navigation, were secured. But when Confederate armies were collected which not only attempted to hold a line farther south, from Memphis to Chattanooga, Knoxville and on to the Atlantic, but assumed the offensive and made such a gallant effort to regain what had been lost, then, indeed, I gave up all idea

of saving the Union except by complete conquest. Up to that time it had been the policy of our army, certainly of that portion commanded by me, to protect the property of the citizens whose territory was invaded, without regard to their sentiments, whether Union or Secession. After this, however, I regarded it as humane to both sides to protect the persons of those found at their homes, but to consume everything that could be used to support or supply armies. Protection was still continued over such supplies as were within lines held by us and which we expected to continue to hold; but such supplies within the reach of Confederate armies I regarded as much contraband as arms or ordnance stores. Their destruction was accomplished without bloodshed and tended to the same result as the destruction of armies. I continued this policy to the close of the war.

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FROM Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1885), pp. 368–69.