



THE DREADFUL DETAILS OF WAR

The America Civil War was the first war to be documented with photographs, and the person most often associated with this work is Mathew Brady. Without question, Brady is one of the giants of early photography. Brady studied painting as a youth, but when he met Louis Daguerre in France in 1839, he decided to return to the US to pursue a career as a daguerreotypist. In 1844 he opened a studio in New York City. Over his career, he photographed many influential individuals still known to us today—US presidents, military elite, politicians, writers.

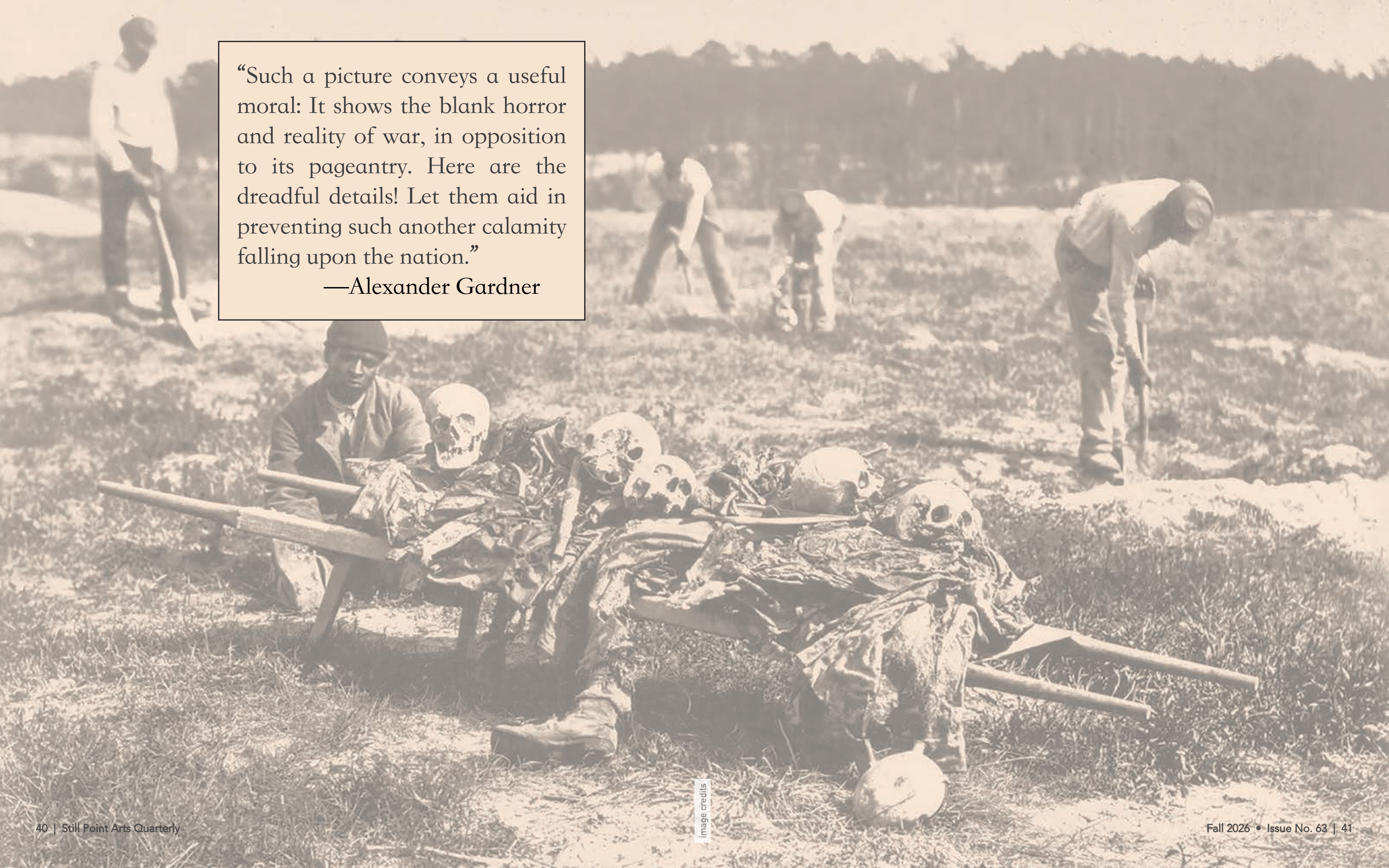
When the Civil War began, Brady had the idea to document the war and sought permission to do so from President Lincoln; permission was granted as long as Brady covered the costs. One of the people Brady hired to assist with the project was Alexander Gardner; his job was to maneuver the wagonload of equipment through the difficult landscape, focus the large camera, and capture the image. One day on the field, Gardner realized that the images they were taking were not really showing the brutal results of the war—images of those who died in ditches and fields. So, despite the horror and the risk, he decided to take his camera to capture the wrenching sites of the war, something that had never been done before.

“Mr. Brady has done something to bring home to us the terrible reality and earnestness of war. If he has not brought bodies and laid them in our dooryards and along the streets, he has done something very like it . . . These pictures have a terrible distinctness. By the aid of the magnifying glass, the very [f]eatures of the slain may be distinguished.” (“Brady’s Photographs,” *The New York Times*, 1862)

At some point, Gardner left Brady to go into business for himself because Brady had the habit of crediting himself for every image taken, even though most were taken by his assistants. In fact, several of Brady’s assistants decided to leave him. After the war, Gardner published his two-volume work *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the War*, carefully giving each photographer the credit they were due.

“Such a picture conveys a useful moral: It shows the blank horror and reality of war, in opposition to its pageantry. Here are the dreadful details! Let them aid in preventing such another calamity falling upon the nation.”

—Alexander Gardner





Marius Vasse



Henry Armytage Sanders

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WORLD WAR I



Thomas Keith Aitken



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