THE BEACON BIOGRAPHIES

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M. A. DeWOLFE HOWE

ROBERT E. LEE

BY

WILLIAM P. TRENT

THE Beacon Biographies OF Eminent Americans

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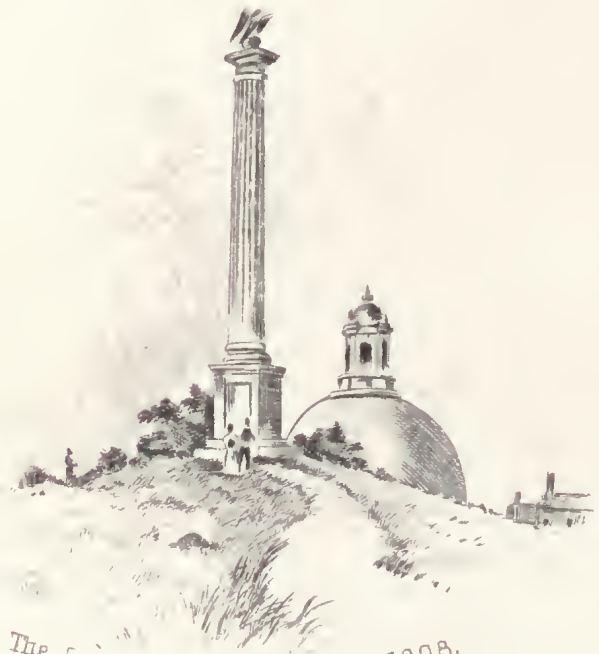

The Summit of Beacon Hill, 1808.

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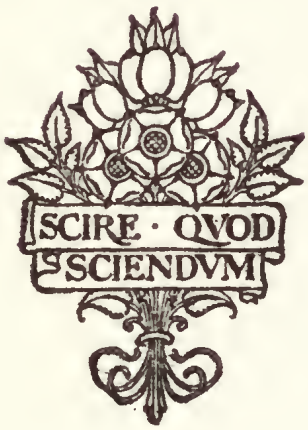

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TO BRANDER MATTHEWS.

Who makes gratitude a pleasure and friendship an inspiration.

PREFACE.

In preparing this little volume, I have drawn freely upon the larger biographies of General Lee, particularly upon the elaborate and excellent one by the late General A. L. Long, and upon those of General Fitzhugh Lee, Rev. J. William Jones, and Professor Henry A. White. Their love of their great subject makes me feel sure that the surviving authors will not begrudge lending of their substance to a writer who fully acknowledges his indebtedness to them, and whose sole desire is to add a small tribute to the ever-increasing fame of one of the world's noblest sons. In order, however, to secure substantial accuracy, I have used many books bearing on the war for the Union, such as "Grant's Memoirs," Dr. Ropes's "Story of the Civil War," Henderson's "Stonewall Jackson," Bache's "Life of General George Gordon Meade," etc., and have consulted the records where it seemed necessary. I must frankly admit that, in the course of my studies, I was

often tempted to abandon them in despair; for nearly every author seemed bent on defending his own hero from every possible criticism, and on praising such commanders on the other side as his own favorite had defeated. In the mental confusion that overcame me during this bewildering reading, I was almost rash enough to conclude that, with a few books and a steadfast determination to praise Lee, I could acquit myself of my task in a most determined and manful fashion; but now that it is finished I am apprehensive that, not being a specialist in military history, I have fallen into errors even in my bare outline sketch. If I have, I trust that they will be forgiven me because I have loved much. For my enthusiasm I do not ask to be forgiven, although I find that that is a serious fault in these critical days. My admiration for General Lee has always been considerable, but I questioned the full greatness of his powers until I began to study his life closely. Then I learned to see him as he is,—not

merely a great son of my own native State, not merely a great Southern general, not merely a great American in whom citizens of every section may take just pride, but, better than all these, a supremely great and good man, whose fame should not be limited by the chauvinistic conceptions of patriotism so rife among us to-day, but should be as wide as humanity, or, better still, as his own exquisite spirit of charity and brotherly love.

W. P. TRENT.

SEWANEE, TENN., March 1, 1899.

CHRONOLOGY.

1807

January 19. Robert E. Lee was born at Stratford, Westmoreland County, Va.

1811

His family removed to Alexandria.

1818

His father died while Lee was in the midst of his schooling.

1825

Entered West Point.

1829

Graduated second in his class. His mother died. Assigned to duty at Hampton Roads, Va.

1831

June 30. Married Mary Randolph Custis, of Arlington.

1834–37

Assistant to chief engineer of the army.

1837

June. Took charge of improvement of Mississippi at St. Louis.

1838

Made captain of engineers.

1841

At Fort Hamilton, in New York Harbor, in charge of defences.

1844

Appointed visitor to West Point.

1846–47

Rendered distinguished services in Mexican War.

1848

January–June. Stationed in Mexico.

1849–52

At work on the defences of Baltimore.

1852–55

Superintendent of West Point Academy.

1855

April. Appointed lieutenant colonel of the Second Cavalry.

1856–59

Saw service against Indians in Texas.

1859

October. Suppressed the John Brown insurrection.

1860

February. Took charge of Department of Texas where he stayed one year.

1861

March 1. Returned to Arlington to his family.

March 16. Appointed colonel of First Cavalry.

April 18. Offered command of United States armies.

April 20. Resigned commission in army.

April 23. Accepted command of Virginia forces.

May–July. Organized troops and advised President Davis in Richmond.

August–October. Was in charge of abortive campaign in Western Virginia.

November. Had charge of coast defences in South Carolina and Georgia until in

1862

March. He became military adviser to President Davis.

June 1. Assumed command of Army of Northern Virginia.

1862 (*continued*)

June 26–*July* 2. Commanded Confederates in Seven Days' fighting around Richmond.

August 30. Defeated Pope at second Manassas.

September 5. Crossed the Potomac. Began advance into Maryland.

September 12. Drew battle of Antietam or Sharpsburg. Abandoned campaign of invasion.

December 13. Won a victory over Burnside at Fredericksburg.

December. Was in winter quarters until March.

1863

May 2–3. Won a victory over Hooker at Chancellorsville.

May 10. His great lieutenant, "Stonewall" Jackson, died.

June. Began movements leading up to second invasion of the North.

July 1–3. Defeated at Gettysburg.

July 4–13. Made a masterly retreat and recrossed the Potomac.

1863 (*continued*)

October–November. Conducted the ineffective campaign of Mine Run.

December. Lay in winter quarters on the Rapidan until April.

1864

May 5–6. Fought the Battle of the Wilderness against Grant.

May 8–18. Conducted fighting about Spottsylvania Court-house.

May 21–*June* 1. Conducted operations on interior lines.

June 2–3. Fought a fierce battle at Cold Harbor.

June 18. Joined Beauregard at Petersburg. Siege of Petersburg began.

July 30. Fought the Battle of the Crater.

1865

February 9. Issued his first general order as commander-in-chief.

April 2. Retreated from Petersburg. End of the siege.

April 3. Richmond fell.

April 9. Surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court-house.

1865 (*continued*)

April 10. Issued his Farewell Address to the Army of Northern Virginia.

June 13. Applied for pardon.

August 4. Elected President of Washington College, Lexington, Va. (now Washington and Lee University).

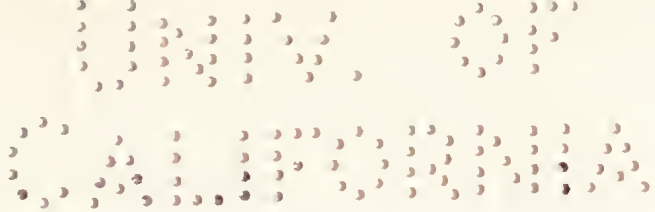
1867

February 4. Declined to be a candidate for governorship of Virginia.

1870

March–April. Visited Georgia in search of health.

October 12. Robert E. Lee died at Lexington.



ROBERT E. LEE

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I.

ROBERT EDWARD LEE was the third son, by a second marriage, of the celebrated "Light-horse Harry" Lee, who played such a brave part as a cavalry leader in the Revolutionary War, but is perhaps better remembered for having summed up the career of Washington in the appropriate though often misquoted phrase, "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his fellow-citizens." The great Confederate chieftain undoubtedly got much of his military genius and fiery energy from his father's side; but, in his nobly balanced moral and spiritual nature, he seems to have taken after his mother, Anne Hill Carter, who, in her person, represented family traditions and powers as eminent as those of the Lees. We have not time to go into the records of these two families, which Lee himself never paraded.

It must suffice us to know that, after ancient and honorable distinction in England, men and women bearing the names have for two centuries and a half illustrated the annals of Virginia, with public virtues and private graces which culminate in the character and career of the hero whose life will be briefly told in these pages.

That life began on Jan. 19, 1807, in the family house of Stratford in Westmoreland County. In the same county, at an estate looking out upon the same broad Potomac, the greatest of all Virginians and Americans had been born seventy-five years before. In 1811, by the removal of his father to Alexandria in Fairfax County, the young boy, whose name will be more and more linked with that of Washington as time goes on, was brought, as though by a propitious fate, into a favored region, over which the mature fame of his great predecessor presided, and still presides,

like a tutelar genius. It was not admiration for Washington, the man, or interest in Washington, the city, from which he had withdrawn ten years before at the advent of Jefferson to power, that induced Colonel Henry Lee to change his residence, but the very prudent and proper desire to afford his eight children greater educational privileges. The poetically-minded reader will thank him, however, for thus giving additional local contact to two great careers destined to be linked still more closely through a happy marriage; while the reader who craves romance will be glad to learn that it was from Alexandria that the old warrior, who had been commissioned by his friend Madison as major-general in the army for the invasion of Canada, sallied forth in July, 1812, for the succor and support of another friend, the Federalist editor Hanson. In the latter's behalf he received wounds, at the hands of a Republican

mob in Baltimore, that subsequently sent him to the West Indies for five years in a vain search for health, and to Cumberland Island off the Georgia coast, the estate of his dead comrade, General Nathaniel Greene, to find release from his sufferings far from his home and his kindred. These elements of romance in the father's life find few counterparts in that of the son, just as the strong inherited and transmitted passions of the former were kept in splendid subjection by the latter; but the highest glory needs no glamour, and the unselfish life of a great man, like Lee, epitomizes and embodies as much of true glory as finite men can attain to.

Meanwhile, with his father away to the South, his brother Carter at Harvard, and his brother Sidney Smith in the navy, the young Robert became the nurse and mainstay of his invalid mother; for one of his sisters was an invalid also, and one was still younger

than himself. All accounts go to prove that never did any son accept responsibilities more faithfully or any mother receive her son's loving services more gratefully and appropriately, with benedictions and counsels and prayers. "Robert was always good," his father once wrote; and this is the testimony of the schoolmaster who trained him in mathematics for West Point, and of relatives who watched his development with pride. The dignity and grace of absolute self-poise, and of single-hearted devotion to duty, are as characteristic of Lee's youth as of that of Milton or of Washington; and in all three cases it is impossible to discover the least trace of unpleasant self-consciousness or of priggishness. And with Lee, as with Washington, it was maternal devotion that best seconded Nature in her task of preparing for the world a rounded man.

His choice of a military career was probably determined for Lee by in-

herited capacities; but perhaps, as some biographers have suggested, he wished also to relieve his mother of the charge of supporting him. Doubtless he would have succeeded equally well in the ministry; for his mere presence was from his earliest youth a reproof to vice, as we learn from the story of a dissipated host of his, who came to his young guest's room, without a word said by the latter, and confessed his faults and promised amendment. Milton, at Cambridge, was just such an apostle of purity; but precisely as we are glad that Milton partly, at least, abandoned theology for poetry, so we are glad that Lee illustrated the Christian virtues in the camp and on the battlefield instead of in the pulpit. He began to illustrate them, amid somewhat alien surroundings, immediately upon his entrance to West Point in 1825, on an appointment secured for him by General Andrew Jackson, on whom he had made a good impression. He received

not a single demerit, was punctilious in performing his soldierly duties, contracted not a vice or even an unsavory habit, and finally gave proof of his diligence and of the clearness and strength of his mind by graduating, after a four years' course, with the second highest honors of his class. He was at once appointed second lieutenant of engineers, and hastened home to his mother, who was permitted just to smile upon him before she died.

Two years later another woman came permanently into Lee's life to make it blessed in the highest sense of the word. During his boyhood he had visited, at Arlington, the beautiful Potomac home of Mr. Washington Parke Custis, and had been attracted by that gentleman's surviving daughter, Mary Randolph. This grand-daughter of Washington's wife seems to have been a lovely and fine woman, as well as a great heiress. Moreover, she knew how to recognize

noble qualities in a man, which lovely and fine women have not always done. Lee in his cadet uniform had looked handsome enough, and had pleased young and old alike, when during his vacations he had gone from one Virginia house to another, as was the fashion in those hospitable days; but he must have been specially attractive, as a tall, manly officer, when he took a holiday from his engineering work on the fortifications at Hampton Roads, in order to visit Arlington and its young mistress. In due time (June, 1831) the courtship ended in one of those delightful, old-fashioned country weddings of which the few survivors love to tell. We can still read the names of the bridesmaids and groomsmen, if we have a mind to; we can imagine the hilarity of the well-cared-for slaves; we can smile at the picture presented by the tall parson, who, drenched in a shower, had been forced to don habili-

ments originally cut to the measure of short Mr. Custis; we can wish that some Virginian poet had outstripped Suckling by making this wedding famous in song. But, after all, the best thing we can do is to remember that no purer marriage was ever made, and that nothing but happiness flowed from it.

The honeymoon seems to have been spent at Arlington, and must have given Lee occasion to ponder, in his serious way, over the responsibilities resting upon the owner of many slaves. Neither he nor his father-in-law believed in the institution which was just beginning to array its warm partisans and violent opponents. Indeed, Mr. Custis manumitted his negroes; and Lee, as executor, carried out the provisions of his will, although the War for the Union was raging at the time. So long, however, as circumstances forced him to be a master, the young officer was determined to be a kind one. There is even a story,

as Professor White reminds us, that he took a consumptive coachman of his mother's to Georgia, and there had him cared for. But Virginia country life had its pleasures as well as its responsibilities; and, if Lee had been made of less strenuous stuff, he would have hesitated to serve his country three years longer in building coast defences, and would have settled down at Arlington to take his ease. He had loved hunting ever since boyhood, when he used to follow the hounds for hours unfatigued; the sights and sounds of Nature were dear to him through life; he could have made himself as methodical a farmer as Washington; he thoroughly enjoyed social visiting from plantation to plantation. In a word, he had in him the making of an ideal country gentleman; but he had also something more. He loved his profession, and felt that it was a noble one; and he resolved to cling to it for his country's sake, al-

though he was too good a man to wish for war and the personal distinction he might acquire therein.

II.

In 1834 Lee was transferred from Fortress Monroe to Washington, where he acted as assistant to the chief engineer of the army, with the rank of first lieutenant. This enabled him to live at Arlington; but, on days when the long horseback ride was impossible, he joined a "mess" containing such eminent Southerners as William C. Rives, Hugh S. Legaré, and Joel R. Poinsett, as well as some younger spirits, one among whom was destined to obtain a rank among Confederate commanders second only to his own, Joseph E. Johnston. Lee was probably not the gayest or most talkative of the company, although there is plenty of evidence that he enjoyed a joke, and could tell one on occasion; but at least he was never known to speak ill of any one, and he was not too sedate to invite a comrade to mount behind him and ride double down Pennsylvania Avenue.

After three years of such uneventful life, he was ordered West to superintend the proposed improvement of the Upper Mississippi for the purposes of navigation. At St. Louis the river was threatening to leave the city high and dry, while inundating the Illinois shore. There was also work to be done at the mouth of the Des Moines River and elsewhere. After a long trip, *via* the Ohio, and a steamer wreck at the Des Moines rapids, Lee and his party made their surveys, and then prepared their maps and plans in a St. Louis warehouse. Lee did this sort of work admirably, for he was neatness and accuracy personified, and looked for a strict observance of orders in others. Congress approved the St. Louis report subsequently submitted; and the accomplished engineer, who was made captain in 1838, was kept at his important task until he was able to show his captious local critics that his plan of forcing "the current

back into its original channel, by driving piles and constructing cribs and wing-dams," would afford the city the relief it needed. His method of procedure seems to have been more or less original, and to have been the result of much hard study. We are more interested, however, in the familiar letters written home, which give glimpses of the growth of a strong, fine character. The testimony of comrades, also, is not wanting to strengthen our impression that few people could have met Lee at the beginning of his prime without being struck by his manly beauty, his genial but dignified nature, his mental breadth and balance, and his unobtrusive but always conspicuous Christian character.

Between his Western service and the outbreak of the Mexican War in 1846, Captain Lee's life was singularly free from incident, if his chief biographers may be trusted. He seems to have been

offered in 1839 an instructorship at West Point, which with his usual and, it must be confessed, over-scrupulous modesty he declined. Two years later he was put in charge of the defences of New York Harbor, and remained at Fort Hamilton until his services were required in the field. Perhaps the uneventfulness of his life is sufficiently explained by the fact that he was continuously busy, not merely with his engineering work, but with his military studies. He must have been studying the campaigns of great commanders, and become infused with the martial spirit; for we find him, upon the eve of the war with Mexico, longing to enter some more active branch of the service, preferably the artillery. Meanwhile family life was most pleasant to him, and he proved himself an excellent father to his seven children.

His views with regard to the just or unjust character of the Mexican War

are not easily determined. He did, indeed, declare that the United States had bullied the weaker nation, and that he was ashamed of the fact; but his natural exultation at the great success of the American arms, to which he had contributed most signally, was able to make him put such thoughts in the background, and there is evidence that he had a soldier's impatience at diplomatic slowness, and wished a just portion of the conquered territory to be taken at once. As questions of public policy were being freely discussed at the time, this comparative silence of Lee's is of interest as throwing light upon his subsequent conduct. It is clear that, although, as we shall see later, he was not incapable of forming intelligent opinions upon such matters, he was disposed to preserve a military aloofness from politics. This fact partly explains his subsequent adhesion to the Confederacy, and his unwillness to press his own views upon the government of President Davis.

Be this as it may, it is quite clear that of all the young officers, whether from the North or the South, to whom the Mexican War gave the baptism of fire, the most distinguished, whether for individual feats of bravery or for important military services, was Captain Robert E. Lee. At the outbreak of hostilities he was attached to General Wool's command in the northern departments. His chief exploit at this stage of his career gives evidence of the fearlessness and thoroughness of his scouting qualities, — qualities which he afterward used often to put into practice, even when he was commanding large armies. General Wool, just before the battle of Buena Vista, wished to know whether it was true that Santa Anna and his army were encamped within twenty miles, as had been reported. Lee volunteered to find out, and started off with a Mexican guide to meet his cavalry escort. He missed these in some way, and soon found him-

self several miles beyond the American lines. Threatening his guide with death, should he prove treacherous, Lee rode on until he came to signs that seemed to have been made by the enemy. He must have fuller information, however, and, in spite of his guide's terrors, persisted in searching for Santa Anna's picket-posts. Further and further he pressed, until he came upon what appeared to be a large encampment. Even now he would not turn back, but penetrated to within ear-shot, and then ventured into moonlight clear enough to assure him that the apparent encampment was a flock of sheep! The drovers informed him that Santa Anna had not yet crossed the mountains, and he galloped back twenty miles with the important news. After three hours' rest he led some cavalrymen over his former route until he actually reached the outposts of the enemy's army. If he could always have gathered his information

in the War for the Union in this thorough manner, more than one important campaign might have had a more prosperous ending.

In the beginning of 1847, Lee joined the staff of General Winfield Scott before Vera Cruz, at the personal request of that commander. The high-strung old soldier knew his man, and declared later that Lee was "the greatest military genius in America." The latter certainly gave his chief every reason to form such an opinion, when Scott's ebullient nature is taken into account. He began by arranging the batteries, which reduced the town within a week; and amid the incessant firing he had time to pray for the safety of his brother, Sidney Smith of the navy, who was in charge of one of the guns. His activity secured him favorable mention, which became even more complimentary after his skilful reconnoissances amid the mountain spurs had rendered possible

the storming of the heights of Cerro Gordo and the rout of Santa Anna's army. There is a touch of generous enthusiasm in General Scott's praise of his subordinate's usefulness, and of his gallantry "in conducting columns to their stations under the heavy fire of the enemy." There is also a touch of impetuous rashness in the story that Lee, while scouting, pushed too near the enemy, and was forced to lie in concealment all night beneath a fallen tree, on which more than one Mexican sat down to rest. In his after career, this spirit of battle intoxication led Lee too far, just as it did Washington; but it increased the love of his soldiers for him, and it lends an attractive human flush to his fame. The human note is conspicuous also in the affectionate letters he was sending home to his wife and children, of whom he was thinking "when the musket-balls and grape were whistling over *his* head in a perfect shower"; and his tender

heart comes out in his descriptions of the horrors of war, and of the relief with which he turns to the natural beauties of the country around him. It may be well to note here that Lee's love of external nature, as evidenced by his letters, was as characteristic of him as his love of children. His love of animals was also marked. On one occasion near Petersburg, after having warned back some soldiers who had ventured into danger on account of their enthusiasm for him, he exposed himself to the enemy's fire, in order to replace an unfledged sparrow in its nest.

By August Scott was ready to advance upon the City of Mexico, and by the 19th his headquarters were at San Augustin. Reconnoissance of the causeways leading to the capital had to be made; and Lee and an officer, afterward famous as General Beauregard, were sent across a broken field of volcanic rock, known as the Pedrigal, to explore the situation of

Contreras. Having surveyed the rough ground, Lee set a pioneer corps to making a road, over which in a few hours he guided the divisions of Pillow and Twiggs. He accompanied the latter force in its attack upon General Valencia's intrenchments at the edge of the lava field. Darkness having checked a flank movement, it was deemed best to await re-enforcements; and Lee undertook to report to General Scott the plan of attack he had himself suggested to a council of officers. Unattended, amid thick gloom and driving rain, he set out over the fissured lava, and by midnight reached San Augustin, and reported to his commander. Scott was so impressed by his courage and endurance that he afterward declared that in that midnight journey Lee had done "the greatest feat of physical and moral courage performed by any individual," to his knowledge, during the campaign. Not content with this signal exploit, Lee guided re-

enforcements before dawn to the seat of operations, and thus secured from Scott the chief credit for the brilliant victory of Contreras that ensued.

The Mexicans were now concentrated at the village of Churubusco; and, in the assault that followed, Lee rendered good service by urging forward a howitzer battery to the support of the brigades of Pierce and Shields, and by reporting to Scott the movements of the enemy's cavalry. The victory of Molino-del-Rey followed on September 8. Then came the brilliant charge up the steeps of Chapultepec, which had been advised by Beauregard, Lee dissenting. On this day of hot firing, in which Joseph E. Johnston, George B. McClellan, George E. Pickett, and Thomas J. Jackson distinguished themselves, Lee as chief aide carried Scott's orders to and fro "until he fainted from a wound and the loss of two nights' sleep at the batteries." He had already been brevetted major after

Cerro Gordo and lieutenant colonel after Churubusco. Now he won the brevet rank of colonel. His wound did not keep him out of the race for the capital, and he had his part in the triumphal entry of Sept. 14, 1847.

In the lull that followed, Lee had plenty of work to do in connection with surveys and drawings of the city. He was so busy that he could not be dragged to a banquet to answer to a toast to himself, but he found time to write very genial letters home and to make visits to churches and interesting spots in the vicinity. He did not join in any exuberant celebration of his country's victories; but his comrades, as we have just seen, remembered him, and the commanders, from Scott down, wrote and spoke highly in his praise. His desires for active and successful service had been amply fulfilled; and, if he had had any personal vanity, he might have been pleased to learn that competent judges

considered him the handsomest man in the army. A photograph taken in 1852 makes one feel that this was not a mistaken judgment; but it is best to let one's mind dwell on the soldier's daring and the man's quiet virtues, and on the fact that he had received just the sort of training in subordinate positions that would fit him to be a great leader when the time should come. His bursting into tears when he saw how Joe Johnston had been affected by the loss of a dear relative, and his efforts to patch up the differences between Scott and his subordinates, were indicative of qualities that would not interfere with this training, but would rather tend to make him the most gentle and considerate and best beloved of all the great captains.

The war over, Lee was placed in charge of the defences then constructing at Baltimore. While in this employment, he was tendered the leadership of a Cuban insurrection by a junta in New

York, but declined it, as Mr. Jefferson Davis has informed us, on account of his duty to his own country to continue in her service. Perhaps by going he might have averted a subsequent war, and been brought to the front more quickly in the War for the Union, with results that cannot well be calculated. Such speculations are idle; but it is well to notice the delicate conscience with regard to the national government, as well as the always preponderant modesty with which he sought to decline his appointment in 1852 to the superintendency of the academy at West Point. His superiors would not hear of his declination, and he showed that they were right by improving the discipline and lengthening the course of study to five years. In 1855, it is needless to say without any self-seeking on his part, he was promoted lieutenant colonel of the Second Cavalry, which necessitated his leaving the academy where he had had

the pleasure of seeing his son Custis, afterward a Confederate general and president of Washington and Lee University, graduate at the head of his class.

Lee's new position had been secured to him through the increase of the army, due to the acquisition of territory from Mexico and to the repeated Indian uprisings. After being recruited at Jefferson Barracks, the Second Cavalry, under Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston, proceeded to Western Texas, where Lee joined them in March, 1856. He took firm charge of the parleyings with Catumseh, a troublesome chief, and pursued his bands, consoling himself for the monotony of his ordinary camp life by his study of the flora and fauna of the interesting region. He also kept close to his family by means of tender letters, and to his God by solitary services in his tent. On Easter Day, 1857, he seems specially to have felt his

loneliness. In July the command of the regiment devolved upon him, Johnston being called to Washington; and three months later he himself was summoned home on account of the death of his father-in-law, Mr. Custis. In due time he returned, and continued his command until the autumn of 1859, when he obtained leave to visit his family.

During this visit the famous John Brown raid occurred, and the government at once ordered Lee from Arlington to the seat of the disturbance. He reached Harper's Ferry with a company of marines on October 19, and forthwith informed himself of the situation. He posted his soldiers in the armory, deferring an attack on Brown and his men until morning, because he had learned that they had taken citizen hostages with them into the engine-house. The next day at sunrise a party of marines broke in, and secured the insurgents and the prisoners, none of the hostages being

hurt, but all save four of the lawbreakers being killed or mortally wounded. Brown had previously refused a proposition to surrender, offering terms on his part which Lee could not have taken, regarding the old man and his followers, as he naturally did, as flagrant offenders against the peace of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Lee could and did, however, protect his prisoners against would be lynchers, and, after kindly treatment, duly handed them over to the civil authorities. His diary of the affair shows that he regarded it, as nearly all Southerners did then and have done since, from a social and political point of view, and not at all from a dramatic — least of all from a sentimental — one. He could not, however, have relished his task; and we can afford to hurry on.

His period of rest was broken early in 1860 by a call to Richmond to advise the legislature with regard to organizing the militia in view of future invasions,

and a month later he was ordered to take command of the Department of Texas. Letters, which will be again referred to, show that the rapidly widening breach between the sections was filling much of his thoughts during his last year of service in the army of the United States; but he also had occupation in securing forage and in pursuing a troublesome bandit named Cortinas. Several months were passed in San Antonio, where he took interest in the building of an Episcopal church; but, when all is said, it seems a most uneventful twelvemonth for a great hero to spend, before Providence would permit him fairly to enter upon his mighty life-work. But at last, with the secession of Texas, his recall to Washington came in February, 1861; and, after a short passage through the Valley of the Shadow, he emerged upon the sunlit plains of the heroic epoch of his life.

III.

It would be superfluous to attempt to enter here upon any discussion of the causes that led to the formation of the Southern Confederacy and to the consequent War for the Union. It must be clearly understood, however, that the compact theory of the origin of the Union was almost universally held throughout the South, and had been so held since 1789, as indeed it had been partly held by New England in 1812. In view of this theory the right of a State to withdraw from the Union for good cause was maintained by almost every Southerner, and a feeling had been growing for many years that the attitude of the people of the North toward the institution of slavery constituted such a cause. Abolitionist agitation during the thirties, divided policy with regard to the Mexican War during the forties, the squabble over the newly

acquired territory and the Fugitive Slave Law in the fifties, had brought extremists to the front in both sections, and had made the Presidential election of 1860 practically a test vote as to whether the time-honored policy of compromise should be further tried or a separation be resorted to. The election of Mr. Lincoln, according to the logic of passion which rules in such matters, led by inevitable necessity to South Carolina's secession in December, 1860. The same logic determined the far Southern and South-western States to imitate her example, and the Border States to follow suit when Mr. Lincoln proposed to march his troops through them for the crushing of the new Confederacy. There was not a little of the logic of passion in the zeal with which the North prepared to do battle for the cause of Union; and the important point to remember is that, while the political theorist must use a different sort of logic,

the impartial historian must give the logic of passion its full weight in his endeavor to judge men and nations who have been actuated by it. It shows an almost naïve lack of human experience to argue — as so many historians, Northern and Southern, do — from the character of a cause viewed in the abstract to the character of the passionate flesh-and-blood actors therein. Such a procedure is safe enough in the case of plain violations of municipal and moral laws that have obtained the sanction of mankind at large, but it is unsafe in almost every other case. Hence it follows that nearly all the popular judgments passed in condemnation upon this or that prominent actor in the drama of secession will have to be revised, in so far as such judgments touch the moral character. Even in the case of Mr. Jefferson Davis, who has in the country at large and in the outside world borne much of the obloquy of having represented an un-

popular cause, the verdict of history will surely be that he was a thoroughly upright, honorable man, who did what he conceived to be his duty, and showed, on the whole, remarkable powers in the performance thereof.

This, and more than this, the world has long been willing to say of General Robert E. Lee; but, while Lee's noble genius and character lift him, by quite unanimous consent above all other Confederates, it cannot be forgotten that he would never have been willing to be judged apart from the men who fought and labored for the cause that was dear to him, or that in the last analysis there is no real reason for exempting him from any moral condemnation meted out to a man like Mr. Davis. It is true that Lee as we shall soon learn, did not believe in secession or in slavery,—he had freed his own negroes,—that he had no share in bringing on the war, and that he cannot be charged,

as Mr. Davis and other Southern leaders have been, with bad statesmanship, which, be it remembered, is not bad morals; but it is equally true that he did not believe in the general government's right to invade and coerce the Southern States, that he thought the South aggrieved, and that he accepted the situation in which he found himself, and joined his people with his eyes open. If secession, under the prevalence of the compact theory and the conviction that his right to his slave property was imperilled, casts a moral stain upon any Southerner, it must cast it upon Lee, who willingly fought to sustain the seceders, though he did not accept their arguments fully, and was offered an excellent opportunity to serve the Union cause. Yet very few people have been hardy enough to venture even to hint that there is any stain upon the escutcheon of the great soldier who led the heroic Army of Northern Virginia to victory after victory.

Our conclusion is obvious. In this and in all other matters not settled by the consensus of civilized opinion or the arbitrament of arms — neither of which methods of solution had operated by 1861 with regard to secession, or indeed completely with regard to slavery — it is idle to judge men's moral characters according to our estimate of the cause they serve. We must judge them as men, in accordance with the totality of our knowledge concerning their lives. Judged by this standard, we shall find no purer life ever lived than that of Robert Lee, no matter whether or not we believe secession to have been justifiable from the point of view of history, or deny the right of a man to let his sentiments get the better of his reason.

We left Lee recalled to Washington in February, 1861. He reached Arlington on March 1, in a frame of mind more easily guessed at than described. In his letters home he had for some time

been giving his views of the perilous political situation. He did not love the Puritanism of New England any more than most Southerners then did; but, being charitable and discreet, he did not vent his opinions in harsh words. He believed that the South had been aggrieved by the acts of the North, and in this belief wrote as follows to his son, whose political views he refrained from tampering with: —

"I feel the aggression, and am willing to take every proper step for redress. It is the principle I contend for, not individual or private benefit. As an American citizen, I take great pride in my country, her prosperity and her institutions, and would defend any State if her rights were invaded. But I can anticipate no greater calamity for my country than a dissolution of the Union. It would be an accumulation of all the evils we complain of, and I am willing to sacrifice everything but honor for its

preservation. I hope, therefore, that all constitutional means will be exhausted before there is a resort to force. Secession is nothing but revolution. The framers of our Constitution never exhausted so much labor, wisdom, and forbearance in its formation, and surrounded it with so many guards and securities, if it was intended to be broken by every member of the Confederacy at will. . . . Still, a Union that can only be maintained by swords and bayonets, and in which strife and civil war are to take the place of brotherly love and kindness, has no charm for me. I shall mourn for my country and for the welfare and progress of mankind. If the Union is dissolved and the government disrupted, I shall return to my native State and share the miseries of my people, and, save in defence, will draw my sword on none."

The spirit animating this letter is ob-

viously beyond praise. Lee could not have had a touch of the "fire-eater" about him, which is one reason why his memory is endeared to so many people in the North; though, for the matter of that, Mr. Davis was not an ultra-violent man, either, and was chosen President of the Confederacy on account of his moderation. Nor did Lee believe in the right of secession, which seems to argue his possession of a clearer head for political questions than Mr. Davis and many another Southern leader had at that juncture. But, although Lee was in the right according to the logic of abstract political reasoning, and although he was as little likely to be swayed by the logic of passion as any man that ever lived, there was another logic which, as this letter and the whole course of his life prove, he could not resist,—the logic of sympathy. He loved his fellow-Southerners, the people among whom he had been born and

with whom he had lived for much of his life, the people with whom his dearest interests of family and friendship were bound up. He might deplore the political actions of these people; but he believed they had been wronged,—a natural enough belief, considering the trend of public opinion about him,—and, in the final test he must stand or fall with them. And, in the last analysis, he was a States-rights man; for he "would defend any State if her rights were invaded," much more his mother State, Virginia.

But why, it may be and has been asked, did not Lee act as two other Virginians — Winfield Scott and George H. Thomas — acted, and uphold the government he had sworn to defend? Without criticising the motives of these two distinguished soldiers, we may reply by maintaining that they were not men of the stamp of Lee,— they were not men likely to be greatly influenced by the

logic of sympathy. Their motives in clinging to the Union had probably the moral level consonant with their general characters: Lee's motives in surrendering his commission and siding with his State had also the moral level consonant with his general character. It takes little psychological insight, however, to perceive that, eminent as Scott and Thomas were, they were not men of the same splendid moral and spiritual class with Lee, whose utterances sometimes have the ring of a great moralist, like Epictetus.* Hence, when General Garfield in his eulogy on Thomas, in comparing Lee with the latter, confidently appealed "from the Virginia of to-day to the Virginia of the future" to reverse her judgment passed upon the respective merits of her two great sons, he was

*Cf., for example, these words from the fine letter of March 6, 1864, apropos of the Dahlgren prisoners: "I think it better to do right, even if we suffer in so doing, than to incur the reproach of our consciences and posterity."

more eloquent than wise. Virginia's verdict will never be reversed, because her sons — even the few who, like the present writer, have little sympathy with the political ideals of the generation just gone — have taken Lee to their hearts as a peerless exemplar of all that is honorable and pure and exquisite and noble in human life and character. They have never put General Scott or General Thomas, however much they may respect and admire them, in any such category; and, should they ever do it, it would be a clear sign that the Mother of Presidents, or perhaps here we should say of generals, is in her intellectual dotage.

Returning now to Lee's outward life, we may be very sure that President Lincoln had no more anxious watcher during the first few weeks of his trying administration than the quiet soldier at Arlington. Whether Lee at that time understood Lincoln's intentions fully or

at all gauged his powers may be doubted, but we have evidence that the President through General Scott had formed a high opinion of Lee. On April 18, Mr. F. P. Blair, at the suggestion of the Executive, visited Colonel Lee, and offered him the command of the army destined for the subjugation of the Confederacy. There can be no question as to the substantial accuracy of this statement; for Lee's famous letter of Feb. 25, 1868, to Mr. Reverdy Johnson is too explicit on the point to leave room for any denials. Lee's word is unassailable, and his clear mind and innate modesty forbid us to believe that he misunderstood the purport of Mr. Blair's visit. Besides, in view of General Scott's high opinion of him, and of the fact that he had not been in haste to resign his commission, there was every reason why the offer should have been made him. But it came in vain. "After listening to his remarks," wrote Lee to Mr. Johnson,

"I declined the offer he made me to take command of the army that was to be brought into the field, stating, as candidly and courageously as I could, that, though opposed to secession and deprecating war, I could take no part in an invasion of the Southern States."

It was a great renunciation, for Lee had no illusions as to the power of the Union and the weakness of the Confederacy; and he loved his united country and the army which, instead of leaving, by a twist of his conscience, he might have commanded. That conscience however, was not made to be twisted; and he quietly put his temptation behind him. Then he went to General Scott, and told him of his decision in what must have been, considering their relations, a still more trying interview. It has indeed been claimed that Scott had sent for Lee, in order to get him to declare himself on one side or the other. This may or may not be true,

but any effort to represent Lee as vacillating is idle. He was merely waiting for an overt act of invasion,—waiting in a sort of dread calm. It is equally idle to argue that, because he sent in his resignation from the recently acquired colonelcy of the First Cavalry on the 20th of April in a most touching letter to Scott, and on the 22d went to Richmond to receive on the following day the command of the military forces of Virginia, he acted with an easy conscience. Between the 18th, the date of the interviews with Blair and Scott, and the 20th, the date of Lee's resignation, acts amounting in the latter's opinion, as we learn from a letter to his brother Sidney Smith, to a beginning of hostilities had actually taken place. The President had declared a blockade of Southern ports, a Massachusetts regiment had entered Maryland, Pennsylvania troops were guarding Washington. To Lee this meant the invasion

against which he intended to fight, and on this view of the matter it would have been absurd for him to wait to hear of the fate of his resignation. For aught he knew, Scott might arrest him; yet gentlemen have been known to argue, seemingly, that he should have waited for this consummation. It would be as near the truth to argue that the man who had written those touching letters of April 20 to Scott and to his sister, Mrs. Marshall of Baltimore, who, although her husband was a Union man and her son fought for the North, was fully persuaded that no one could "whip Robert" — letters breathing the tenderest regret at the step he was taking, — was seduced by the bauble of a major-generalship in the Virginian army, and was in unbecoming haste to rush to Richmond and get it.

Get it he did, but in the most dignified way. On April 23 he was introduced to the Virginia convention, and was ad-

dressed by its President in fitting terms. His own reply was worthy of Washington, and must be given entire: —

"Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Convention,—Deeply impressed with the solemnity of the occasion on which I appear before you, and profoundly grateful for the honor conferred upon me, I accept the position your partiality has assigned me, though I would greatly have preferred that your choice should have fallen on one more capable. Trusting to Almighty God, an approving conscience, and the aid of my fellow-citizens, I will devote myself to the defence and service of my native State, in whose behalf alone would I have ever drawn my sword."

If ever words bore the accents of high truth and holy purpose, these words bear them. It is no wonder that the convention heard them with delight, and that the eyes of all were fastened with pleasure and wonder upon the stalwart, manly

soldier that uttered them. Alexander H. Stephens, Vice-President of the Confederacy, witnessed the ceremony, and was so struck by the hold Lee had upon his fellow-citizens that he feared that, unless the new general should be willing to run the risk of losing his rank in the forces of the Confederacy, it would be difficult to get Virginia to join the former. An interview with the modest officer soon convinced him, however, that in Lee's mind place and power were always subordinate to duty,—a word which he once declared to be the sublimest in the language. On May 25 Lee ceased to be Virginia's major-general, and became a Confederate brigadier, no higher title having been yet created in the Southern service. He had filled the interim by endeavoring to organize troops and arm them, encountering and subduing in these labors far greater difficulties than were ever presented to him by his ambition.

IV.

LEE found Virginia totally unprepared for the conflict at hand. Volunteers in large numbers were forthcoming, but there was a woful lack of arms. Fowling-pieces and rifles had to be used, and the cavalry were at first supplied with roughly made lances instead of sabres. The condition of the entire South in this respect was almost as bad, as we learn from the report of the chief of ordnance, General Josiah Gorgas. Powder especially was lacking in the arsenals, practically only two small stores, relics of the Mexican War, being accessible. Yet both Gorgas and Lee triumphed over their difficulties; and by the end of May, by working steadily and with great patience at his office in Richmond, the latter, in the words of his chief biographer, General Long, "had organized, equipped, and sent to the field more than thirty thousand men, and

various regiments were in a forward state of preparation." At this time Lee was acting Commander-in-chief of the Confederacy. When President Davis, after the removal of the capital from Montgomery to Richmond, took charge of all military movements on June 8, the Virginian general remained by his side as a constant and trusted adviser. This was particularly desirable, not only on account of Lee's success as an organizer, but because of his knowledge of the topography of his State, which was evidently destined to become the theatre of the first operations of the Union forces. Though he chafed at not being able to take the field, he gave no one an opportunity to say that he was not willing to do the duty that lay plainly before him.

Against the long defensive line of the Confederacy which stretched from the swamps of the seaboard to the Alleghanies, the authorities at Washington, after

some hesitation, directed two main movements,—one southward toward Richmond under General McDowell, the other under General George B. McClellan against the forces of Generals Garnett and Wise, gathered in the mountains of what is now West Virginia. President Davis gave his attention to the first movement, General Lee to the second. The latter had in many ways the harder task. Garnett was soon defeated and killed, McClellan being left master of North-western Virginia. Re-enforcements were hurried to the Confederates, and General Loring was sent to take command. Meanwhile the defeat of Manassas on July 21 had caused McClellan's transference, with a considerable portion of his troops, to the Army of the Potomac, and had infused an unwarranted confidence into the entire Southern people. Even the calm Lee, although not dazed, was greatly delighted, and wrote his congratulations

to Beauregard and Joe Johnston without a trace of envy at their good fortune. But McClellan's early success had seriously weakened the Confederate chances of holding to the Southern cause the mountain people, who had no sympathy with slavery; and the Confederate forces in the region were small, and ineffectively handled by generals who in two cases, at least, were aspiring politicians. Under these circumstances it seemed best to send Lee to command in West Virginia, where he arrived early in August. He must have foreseen the difficulties of the campaign, though hardly its ultimate failure.

There is no need to describe in detail the vexatious weeks that followed. The two rival political brigadiers were tactfully treated, but in vain; for Lee, uncertain of the administration at Richmond, did not assert his authority to the full. Being the gentle, considerate man he was, he could hardly have acted

otherwise; but one feels that Washington would have been more strenuous, and one discovers here the single weak point in Lee's character as a soldier, but perhaps the chief cause of his charm,—nay, his glory as a man. He could not be harsh; and so he let time slip away, accepting Loring's excuse that he was unprepared to move his troops for lack of wagons. Then incessant rains came on, the ordinary difficulties of the region were vastly increased, and sickness of all sorts more than decimated the troops. Lee wrote his wife on Sept. 26, 1861: "We are without tents, and for two nights I have lain buttoned up in my overcoat. To-day my tent came up, and I am in it; yet I fear I shall not sleep for thinking of the poor men." Still, he preserved his courage and his equanimity, and, remembering his Mexican War days, did some most venturesome scouting. But he could not do everything himself, as he learned on September 12,

when he planned to attack the Union forces under General Reynolds at Cheat Mountain. His dispositions were well conceived; but, as so often in his career, they were foiled by the failure of a subordinate to do his part; for a certain colonel, on account of false reports as to the number of the enemy's troops intrenched on the mountain, did not attack as ordered. A flanking movement was thus rendered impossible, a direct assault seemed out of the question, and the total operation amounted to nothing. Yet Lee had no reproaches for his subordinate; and his letter to Governor Letcher, describing his own mortification, is a greater tribute to his character than any victory would have been.

With equal fortitude he bore his disappointment in the subsequent movements in the Kanawha Valley. The political brigadiers were making no progress against that efficient soldier, General Rosecrans; and Lee determined

that his own presence was necessary. He arrived on the scene early in October, and forced his recalcitrant generals into some sort of union, fortifying himself strongly on a mountain crest parallel with that occupied by Rosecrans, who was taking the offensive. His engineering skill stood him in such stead that the enemy postponed attacking until reenforcements under Loring brought up the Confederate forces to about fifteen thousand, and made the two armies nearly equal. Under these circumstances the Union general remained quiet; while Lee, who never liked inaction, determined to try a well-devised flank movement. But Rosecrans slipped away by night; and pursuit, though ordered, was soon abandoned. Winter was now at hand, when operations, difficult enough in summer, would be impossible. There was, then, nothing to do but to acknowledge the campaign a failure. The Confederate government withdrew its troops,

and sent them elsewhere. Lee, whom the press abused, and even former friends began to regard as overrated, was assigned to command the Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida; and her western counties were lost to the Old Dominion forever. It must have been a crushing blow to Lee at the time, but he bore it uncomplainingly. His biographer can fortunately look at the whole affair in another light. Early failure may have taught Lee the very lessons which their easy success at First Manassas so disastrously failed to teach the Southern people. And, when all is said, no commander, however great, can succeed against bad roads, bad weather, sickness of troops, lack of judgment and harmony among subordinates, and a strong, alert enemy. Yet this is what Lee was expected to do. We at least need not indulge in such fatuous criticism, and may instead recall the interesting fact that General Lee

bought his famous war-horse, Traveller, during this disastrous campaign. Traveller cuts a much more important figure in the eyes of posterity than the newspaper critics of 1861.

Lee's work in his new command was to be of a sort familiar to him from past experience. It had become apparent that, unless the coast defences were strengthened, Southern ports would soon be effectively blockaded, and Union troops landed at many points. But how were these defences to be rendered available with few troops and poor guns? This was Lee's problem; and with his usual courage, and his remarkable executive resources, he proceeded to solve it in a very creditable fashion. A call for men was answered by the Carolinians and Georgians; and a blockade runner brought him rifles and a few, very few, good cannon. Then he made a careful study of the coast line, and, abandoning exposed situations and islands, con-

structed a strong interior line of defences against which war-vessels and gunboats could do no damage. He concentrated his strength at points that could easily support one another, laying special stress upon the safety of Charleston and Savannah. For example, to quote in substance General Long, Coosawhatchie, where Lee's headquarters were, could communicate with either Charleston or Savannah by railroad in two or three hours, while intermediate positions could be re-enforced from positions contiguous to them.

The results of these plans, which seem as simple as Lee's manners and the tinware used at the table of his modest headquarters, but which were really masterly in their grasp of the situation and the resources at hand, were soon apparent both to the enemy and to the great soldier's critics. Many of the defences erected before he took charge had been ineffectual, and points had been

captured in North Carolina by the Federal forces. Late in 1861 Port Royal, a most important harbor in South Carolina, fell an easy victim. The consequent evacuation of Hilton Head exposed Savannah, and Charleston was also in danger. But the works erected by Lee, at various points that need not be detailed, soon changed the aspect of affairs. Reconnoissances sent out by the commanders of the Union fleet were met in every direction by frowning batteries. The Federals could make comparatively little progress, and the spirits of the people of South Carolina and Georgia rose accordingly. Both Charleston and Savannah were rapidly fortified, with the result that they did not fall until the close of the war, and that a region absolutely necessary for the provisioning of the Confederate armies was left free for cultivation. It would of course be unjust to affirm that all this was accomplished by Lee alone; but it is quite

clear that his was the master mind that laid down the plans of defence successfully followed, and that his personal presence at this and that point of the extended line contributed much to the rapidity with which it was made efficient. But in March, 1862, he was recalled to Richmond for more needed work, not, however, before he had visited his father's grave on Cumberland Island.

His return to his native State meant that he was to see his invalid wife once more, but under very trying circumstances; for beautiful Arlington had been confiscated, and his family were exiles. Even his calm spirit revolted at the fate that had befallen the home of his wife and children; and, in his references to the matter, he came as near to bitterness as he could come. His strong temper rebelled still more at such acts of devastation as affected private citizens or communities, for his own ideals as

to the proper mode of conducting war were of the highest and noblest kind. He forbade pillage or destruction of any sort, whether he was in the enemy's country or not. What he would have replied to Sheridan's brutal remarks to Bismarck during the Franco-German War on the necessity for devastation — remarks at which even the man of "blood and iron" almost winced — is not hard to imagine; but he always ended by controlling his feelings, and by redoubling his energies in order to fight like a master of the art — not the trade — of war. It was never his habit even to refer to his opponents harshly. His usual name for them appears in a query he once addressed to his subsequent biographer, — "Now, Colonel Long, how can we get at *those people?*" On one occasion he stated positively that he had never seen the day when he did not pray for them.

In Richmond, Lee settled down to di-

recting all the military operations of the Confederacy, under the supervision of President Davis, who, being a graduate of West Point and a soldier of distinction in the Mexican War, was not disposed to be a merely nominal commander-in-chief. It speaks well for Lee's serenity of character that he could work with so little friction in such a situation. Whether he would have accomplished more by a strenuous assertion of his military genius must always remain a matter in doubt, although such assertion could only have come later. Certain it is, however, that he set diligently to work to get men and supplies in readiness to meet McClellan's advance up the Peninsula. Outside of Virginia the fall of Roanoke Island and of Forts Henry and Donelson made affairs look gloomy; but, in the pitched battles likely to ensue, the victors of Manassas found something to look forward to.

There is no need to describe here Stonewall Jackson's movements in the Valley of Virginia or the slow advance of McClellan toward Richmond. Lee kept in full communication with Jackson, to whom he gave a free hand; but he could not agree with the plan of General Joe Johnston, who was to command against McClellan, to the effect that a stand should be taken in front of Richmond, with an army made equal to McClellan's by the union with the troops already assigned to the Peninsula service of all available forces in North and South Carolina and Georgia. In other words, Johnston wished to risk the fortunes of the Confederacy on one blow. He proposed to withdraw troops from Norfolk, and would of course have used the forces near Richmond. In short, he would have stripped the Atlantic coast region bare. It was a daring plan, on which Mr. Davis wished to get all the light he could. So a council

was held, in which Johnston unfolded his scheme and Lee opposed it. The latter objected to weakening South Carolina and Georgia, which he had just made strong enough to resist attack; and he believed that a small army could be well handled in the Peninsula. This opinion — which is partly to be explained on the score of Lee's own peculiar genius as a strategist, — appealed to Mr. Davis, who naturally did not wish to abandon Norfolk or run serious risks elsewhere. Johnston's scheme, indeed, strikes one as grandiose; but, while it might have led to signal victory and to a temporary paralysis of Union efforts, there is little reason to believe that it would have brought immediate peace. Lee would probably have been nearer to this consummation, had he won at Gettysburg, than Johnston would have been, had he lured McClellan to Richmond, and then annihilated him.

Be this as it may, Johnston was ordered to the Peninsula, where McClellan did not show himself niggardly in the time expended on taking Yorktown and Williamsburg. Before the superior hosts of the enemy the Confederate commander retreated steadily, and in his always masterly fashion, to the Chickahominy River, Norfolk being thus, after all, lost to the enemy. Meanwhile Jackson's wonderful dash down the Valley had kept McDowell from joining McClellan; and upon the latter leader Johnston now turned, as soon as he found that part of the Union forces had crossed the Chickahominy. The great battle of Seven Pines took place on May 31, in which there was tremendous fighting with no decisive result. Lee, eager to be upon the field, had volunteered his services to Johnston, and rode out from Richmond with President Davis to the scene of the engagement. He took no part in the

fighting; but, when he learned that Johnston had been wounded, and remembered that G. W. Smith, next in command, was in bad health, he would have been more than human, had he not reflected with pleasure that his time had probably come. Sure enough, on the next day, June 1, after some indecisive fighting, the command of the army on the Chickahominy devolved upon General Robert E. Lee, now for the first time placed in a position that would enable him to employ to the utmost his splendid military gifts. Late in the day Lee rode to Smith's headquarters, and relieved him; but the great man in him had previously triumphed over the warrior, for in the morning he had written Smith a most encouraging letter, inciting him to win a decisive victory before he himself could reach the field. Most men would have desired a victory for their side; but they would have refrained from

wishing, even on paper, that that victory should be pushed forward a few hours, and thus fall to another commander.

V.

LEE'S first duty upon assuming command of the Army of Northern Virginia was the unpleasant one of having to resist the general wish and advice of his officers to fall back upon a stronger position nearer to Richmond. He felt that such action was unnecessary and impolitic, but he also felt that he did not yet have the confidence of his officers and troops. Under such circumstances it was a bold thing for him, in opposition to the judgment of those whom he usually trusted, to decide to stand his ground; but he did it with excellent results. His decision once reached, he set about obtaining re-enforcements in his usual vigorous fashion. He also sent out that brave cavalryman, General J. E. B. Stuart, to obtain information as to McClellan's forces and situation. Stuart executed a brilliant circuit of the whole Union army, and Lee knew

that he had another great lieutenant besides Jackson. He now prepared to take the offensive.

The complicated movements that followed can be given here only in a large way. Jackson was called in with his forces, and attended a council of war in Richmond along with Longstreet and the two Hills. Lee was determined to leave Richmond more or less exposed, because, with his faculty for divining the plans and probable actions of his adversary, he did not believe that McClellan would move upon the city. He seems, however, to have been mistaken, according to some authorities, in his views as to McClellan's ultimate disposition of his troops. However this may be, the Confederates on the 26th of June began a well-conceived attack, which was not successful, owing to Jackson's inability to bring up his men in time to turn the right flank of the Federals. "Stonewall" had overestimated the marching

powers of his fatigued veterans. Thus, as so often, Lee's plans were upset by a subordinate's failure to do his part; and A. P. Hill's gallant but unwise attack at Beaver Dam Creek was disastrously repulsed. The next day Jackson's appearance was partly neutralized in its effects by the general ignorance that seemed to prevail regarding the country. But, finally, he got into the tremendous attack on Porter's corps which goes by the name of the battle of Gaines's Mill. After several hours of fierce fighting, Lee ordered a general advance; and the day was won, but with nearly even losses on both sides. It took immense exertions on the part of the Confederate commander to dislodge Porter's inferior numbers; but his superiority to his Federal adversary, McClellan, is conspicuous, when the latter's failure to support his gallant officer effectively is fully realized. Lee was thus left in complete command of the north bank of the

Chickahominy; but he had paid dearly for a success which might have been much greater, had he been properly seconded. Even now McClellan had a fine opportunity to capture Richmond; but he was bent upon retreat to the James, so that he might make connection with his gunboats.

Lee was a comparatively long time (twenty-four hours) in guessing his opponent's intentions. He has been criticised for not using his cavalry to obtain the necessary information, but such use of cavalry does not appear to have been much made at that time, and the breaking up of the York River Railroad, on which Stuart was engaged, was designed to cut McClellan off from his previous base of supplies. Besides, instructions had been given subordinates to watch the Federals, and report their movements,—orders which were not, it would seem, properly obeyed. On the whole, then, Lee must be absolved from

blame; and, certainly, the Confederate failure on June 29 to hamper seriously the retreating Federals was due again to the lack of vigor of subordinates, Longstreet included. Again on the 30th, at Frazier's Farm, Lee was not properly supported; and McClellan's army gained Malvern Hill,—a position from which it could not be dislodged in spite of the hard fighting of the Confederates on July 1. Yet McClellan retreated in the night, for all the world like a whipped commander, and finally halted only at Harrison's Landing, where he was safe under the fire of his gunboats. Thus ended the famous Seven Days' fighting around Richmond.

Lee was not satisfied with the results of the campaign, although the Southern people were abundantly so, and made him their hero for once and all. In the main, the results, especially from a political point of view, were superb. Richmond was relieved; and the great Army

of the Potomac had been driven to seek a new base of supplies, and would not speedily take the offensive again. But Lee thought that his opponent should have been routed. Opinions differ as to whether he did not overrate his chances of success; and some of his operations, particularly the attack at Malvern Hill, have been unfavorably criticised. These are matters which the specialists must continue to debate; but it is hard to resist the conclusion that Lee was right in believing that with proper support he could nearly, if not quite, have inflicted a crushing defeat instead of merely checking McClellan and turning him away from Richmond,—a result largely due, it would seem, to that commander's lack of forward-pushing will.* In the fighting of June 30, with McClellan absent from the field,—almost as

*The reader may be interested to know that General McClellan's headquarters during a portion of this fighting were at a farm owned by the writer's father. The unfavorable views of McClellan expressed in these

characteristic a habit of his as that of exaggerating the forces of the Confederates,—and Stonewall Jackson sluggish in his movements, the goddess of Fortune smiled upon the Union cause in such a bland fashion as to make the efforts of Lee's critics fruitless, when they tell us that he overestimated his powers. There was a chance for a victory on that day that might have led to something still more crushing. At any rate, the commander who was not absent from the field appears to our untrained eyes as a magnificent general, ungraciously hampered by fate. He appeared to his own soldiers, however, an all-conquering hero; and he himself in his proclamation to his splendid troops, veterans already and destined to give him as loyal and efficient sup-

pages—views that will seem odd in a Southern book—are not due, however, to injuries done to the above-mentioned estate, which, as a matter of fact, suffered nearly as much from subsequent occupation by the Confederates.

port in battle after battle as ever great leader received, returned the compliment in the most generous fashion. But the army that had retreated had fought superbly, too, and had preserved its fighting qualities better than the elated Southerners then supposed. How could it have been otherwise, when Americans stood pitted against Americans?

Meanwhile the Federal government, which was hampering itself by bad methods of raising troops and by an unwise choice of a general military adviser, had organized the Army of Virginia under General John Pope, with whom McClellan was to join when he had extricated his forces. Pope threatened the Piedmont region about Charlottesville, and issued proclamations that incensed both his enemies and his own soldiers; but dislike of the braggart's personality could not blind Lee to the fact that his army was a menace to Richmond. He accordingly sent Jackson to

Gordonsville with about twelve thousand men, and himself watched over McClellan, who again began to retreat, this time in obedience to directions from Washington. This left Lee free to join Jackson by the middle of August, in order to deal with Pope. It was proposed to strike the Federals near the Rapidan River; but captured papers revealed the Confederate plans, and Pope retreated toward the Rappahannock, on the banks of which river Lee caught up with him by August 21. The movements that followed are too complicated for treatment in a sketch like the present. Pope seems to have been bewildered himself and to have had poor advice from Washington; while his troops had nothing of the solidarity of a regular army such as that of Lee, which made up for its lack of clothes and food by its enthusiasm and endurance. Lee, on the other hand, was flushed with success, and knew that with

Jackson to help him he could accomplish great results. In his confidence he divided his army, to give Jackson an opportunity to make a flank movement on Pope's rear, and hold him at bay until he himself was ready to offer battle. It was a rash procedure, and might have been dearly paid for if it had been made against a greater antagonist. But after five days the venturous chieftain reaped the reward of his courage and of his unerring ability to profit by an opponent's mistakes. The Federal forces were completely routed on August 30 upon the same field of Manassas that had witnessed the first great Confederate victory. Pope's army took refuge at Washington, while Lee paused for a moment to determine what use to make of his great success. In three months he had practically cleared Virginia of about two hundred thousand Federal soldiers with less than half that number. Was it not time to carry the war into the enemy's country?

Lee was not long in making up his mind that an advance into Maryland with his seasoned, eager troops would certainly postpone Federal attempts to reinvade Virginia, and thus favor the recuperation of the latter State, while, in case of victory, insuring an advantageous position for future movements, and perhaps inciting the Confederate sympathizers in Maryland to attempt to withdraw that Commonwealth from the Union. His letter to Mr. Davis of September 3 outlined his plans, and won the executive consent after the army was in motion; while the shorter one of the 7th, from the neighborhood of Frederick, indicated that he did not anticipate any permanent success with the Marylanders. He issued to the latter, however, a very fine proclamation, matching the dignified general orders given a few days before to his own confident troops.

Meanwhile the army of about forty-

five thousand men, undismayed by shortness of supplies, especially of shoes, began its forward march on September 3. Lee marched also, or rode in ambulance; for a fall from his frightened horse had injured his right hand to such an extent that it was some time before he could hold a bridle. The Potomac was crossed on the 5th to the tune of "Maryland, my Maryland." From Frederick, Jackson was despatched to capture Harper's Ferry, which he did on the 15th, the Federal commander having been ordered to maintain his position in what proved to be a complete trap. This operation, however, weakened Lee, against whom McClellan was now advancing; for it delayed any move for the capture either of Harrisburg or of Baltimore, and left him with scattered forces. Yet Lee, as we see from his subsequent report, deemed the reduction of Harper's Ferry absolutely necessary. The correctness of his judgment has been questioned; but it

does seem that a hostile force of ten or twelve thousand might have been a serious menace to the Confederates in case of an enforced retreat over the Potomac in consequence of a Federal victory, and there was an excellent chance of bagging prisoners. Then, too, Lee probably counted on Federal evacuation of the post, which was only reasonable. Such evacuation took place at the beginning of the Gettysburg campaign.

It is certain, however, that hostile fortune had more to do with the failure of this Maryland campaign than any mistake made by Lee. Two copies of that commander's order outlining his plans had been sent to General D. H. Hill. One of these, by the merest accident, was found by a Federal soldier and carried to McClellan. He at once displayed an energy rather unusual for him, and attacked Hill at Boonsborough on Sunday, the 14th. Fortunately, Lee was quick enough to re-enforce his gal-

lant officer by about four thousand men under Longstreet; and the Confederates managed to hold their mountain top. But affairs looked desperate until the news came that Harper's Ferry had been taken, and that Jackson was hastening back. Then Lee, with his characteristic cool rashness, determined to give battle at Sharpsburg, though his divisions were still separated and his enemy was in force. He has been much criticised for not retreating, and has been accused of underestimating the fighting qualities of the soldiers opposed to him. The latter charge is doubtless true, but the fault was not idiosyncratic. It was determined by well-known Southern traits, and should hardly be called a fault, since it has unquestionably led to more victories than defeats. Besides, Lee doubtless counted more on McClellan's mistakes,—a more reasonable ground of confidence; and, fighting for political motives, he was not inclined to

throw away even a bare chance of winning a victory, or at least proving that, though shaken off, he was an antagonist whom it would be prudent to compound with ere he should gather himself for another spring. But, after all, settling or not settling such matters in one's closet is a very different thing from settling them on the field; and, even if Lee was unduly rash, it is as plain as anything in history that he fought the battle of Sharpsburg, or Antietam, on September 17 with magnificent skill. Mr. John C. Ropes, perhaps his ablest critic, declares emphatically, "Of General Lee's management of the battle there is nothing but praise to be said." It was an enormously bloody conflict, the Confederates losing about one-fifth of the troops within reach,—*i.e.*, eight thousand out of forty thousand,—the Federals a slightly less fraction of their seventy thousand within reach, but over a fourth of the forty-six thousand who

encountered Lee's thirty-one thousand in desperate grapple. Yet, after all this carnage, it was really only a drawn battle; and the next morning, though Lee was eager to fight, his best lieutenants pronounced against attempting the Federal right flank. In the afternoon news came of advancing re-enforcements for McClellan, who, not using all the troops available, had fought his great battle badly enough; and the brave Army of Northern Virginia had to seek the region that gave them their name. They passed the Potomac in perfect order, McClellan, who with more enterprise would have attacked them on the 18th, doing practically nothing to stop them. By October 2 Lee was able to issue an address to his soldiers from his headquarters near Winchester, reviewing the prowess of their arms in terms as deserved as they were glowing. Still more remarkable achievements awaited them; but, politically, the campaign just ended had been

a failure. Splendid fighting could not save the isolated and depleted South.

A young British soldier, afterward famous as Lord Wolseley, who visited Lee's headquarters near Winchester, which were pitched in a rocky place, because Colonel Long was vexed that Lee would not occupy a farm-yard, much less a farm-house, for fear of disturbing the occupants, has given an interesting description of the simple way the great commander lived, when his troops were at rest. Simplicity in its best sense was indeed Lee's distinguishing note. Save the three stars on his collar, which a colonel might also wear, he wore no finery. He did not even carry a sword, though not because such weapons were not presented to him by admirers. He was reserved in demeanor, and was treated with great deference by his officers and men, who behind his back, however, gave him a name that stirs the survivors to-day, and

sums up as much affection and admiration as any leader has ever received,—the homely name of "Marse Robert." Yet he cracked jokes with his staff, as, for example, about his favorite beverage, buttermilk, which was too mild for some of his young officers. And whenever, as rarely happened, he lost patience with any of them, he was sure to seize a speedy opportunity to do some little courteous, kindly act that would make its recipient glad that he had unwittingly stirred that temper so seldom ruffled. In other words, Lee's whole deportment was that of an infinitely modest gentleman, General Grant's subsequent description of him as austere being amusingly wide of the mark. Certainly, austerity is about the last quality to be found in the private letters Lee was writing at this time, in which he poured out his heart with regard to the destitution of his troops; nor do austere commanders, as a rule,

trouble themselves to write about and distribute troopers' socks knit by their own daughters and female friends, or to devote part of their valuable time to obtaining permission from their government to return a fallen adversary's sword and horse to his widow.

Lee occupied his rest in beseeching the administration, now in sore financial straits, for supplies,—sometimes he had to plead for soap,—and in recruiting and disciplining his army. He was also forming plans for an onward movement, and wishing McClellan would do something that would employ the Confederate troops, who, since a recent revival of religious enthusiasm, were another "New Model." Toward the last of October McClellan moved, wisely choosing to penetrate between Lee's army and Richmond, which that army had to guard at all hazards. In November he was superseded by Burnside, whose movements made it plain that he could

be met on the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg, though Lee would have preferred, with the consent of the Richmond authorities, to do his fighting on more interior lines, in the hope, in case of victory, of more completely cutting off his antagonist from his base of supplies. Fredericksburg, however, was decided upon, and Lee moved Longstreet from Culpeper — where Burnside ought probably to have sought him — to the Rappahannock, to dispute the Federal passage of that river. Jackson, whose corps had been for some time in the Valley, was, after much wavering correspondence, brought within reach, Lee again proving himself to be right in counting on his adversary's inaction for a period in which a greater general might have accomplished much. Finally, after having effected the crossing of the river by his powerful army, Burnside began on December 13 one of the most tremendous battles of the whole

war, by ordering an attack on the Confederate right, where Jackson's thickly massed troops stood undefended. The movement resulted in complete failure, though several times renewed. The attempt on the left, strongly intrenched on Marye's Hill, was equally disastrous, the fighting toward evening becoming terrific. By nightfall the Federals had lost over twelve thousand men, the Confederates less than five thousand. Burnside would have fought again the next day; but his officers dissuaded him, nor was Lee in a condition to take the offensive. The Federals recrossed the river, and for the nonce the two armies watched one another amid the increasing discomforts of the winter.

The battle of Fredericksburg was as picturesque as it was terrible; and, as Lee took his station on the hill since called by his name, his heart must have been filled with exultation when he heard the roar of the batteries and

saw the gayly advancing columns hurled back, whether by Jackson's or by Longstreet's veterans. But he might also have felt that Fortune was kind in giving him an ineffective opponent like Burnside, though he could hardly have guessed that he was soon to have another taste of her favors in the choice of General Joseph Hooker as Burnside's successor. His family letters show, however, that he ascribed his success to God, not to Fortune.

After a trying winter, varied only by cavalry raids and pathetic attempts to secure supplies, Lee sprang into life and energy when he found that Hooker, with an army over twice as large as his, was preparing to cross the Rappahannock. The Federal commander had thought to deceive Lee as to his real movements, but the latter saw through his schemes. Hooker's plans seem, however, to have been good; and he unquestionably got Lee into a dangerous position, when the

latter's reduced forces are taken into account. Some writers go so far as to deny that Lee divined Hooker's movements; but it is at least clear that, after beginning well, the Federal commander lost his head in a manner to be accounted for only by physiological considerations.

Hooker gained at Chancellorsville — a clearing on the edge of the great thicket known as the Wilderness — his desired position in Lee's rear, and thought he had that general at his mercy. Lee, however, was never more alert; and on the night of May 1 he suggested to Jackson a circuitous march that enabled that superb corps commander to fall upon Hooker's rear unexpectedly, and inflict one of the most crushing defeats known to history. It was purchased, however, as the world knows, by the loss of the life that after Lee's the South could least spare. Stonewall, while reconnoitring for another attack, was shot in the dark

by his own men. When he heard of Jackson's wound, Lee sent him word that the great victory of May 2 belonged not to himself, but to the man who had surprised the enemy so completely and disastrously. This was magnanimous, and therefore like Lee; but it is not fair. He himself was in the thick of the fighting of the 3d; and the soldiers who stopped for a moment, in their uncontrollable desire to cheer him as he rode to the front, showed that they knew well enough who the real head of the Army of Northern Virginia was, and who was entitled to the crowning glory of its every victory. Jackson was great, and his loss ever after hampered his superior; but General Fitzhugh Lee is clearly right in claiming Chancellorsville as his uncle's victory, and, perhaps, his most wonderful battle. Lee also practically claimed it for himself in a letter to Dr. A. T. Bledsoe, — as fine a letter as one could wish to read.

The fighting that followed May 3d need not be described. The 6th revealed to Lee the fact that Hooker had used the stormy night to retreat beyond the Rappahannock. The losses on both sides during the successive fights had been very heavy and proportionally even; but in spite of the fact that losses were bound to tell more disastrously upon him than upon his opponent, and in spite of his constant lack of supplies, Lee, actuated by his standing desire to destroy the Army of the Potomac, determined to draw Hooker from his position by once more invading the North. The rightful confidence of a born soldier in his own powers and in those of his tried veterans, and the political necessity for striking rapid and disheartening blows, may perhaps justify plans which few commanders would have dreamed of, much less dared to follow; but the wisdom of the Gettysburg campaign, even if victory had fallen to the Confederates

in the great battles of July, will always furnish historians with matter for discussion. It must be remembered, however, that Lee's proposal to have Beauregard brought up to Virginia to threaten Washington was an integral part of his scheme, and that it was beyond his power to force the Confederate authorities to accede to his wishes.

The bold and well-executed movements by which Lee gathered his forces for the passage of the Potomac, and drew Hooker northward, must be passed over, although it should be noted that through a reorganization the Army of Northern Virginia, with its three corps under A. P. Hill, Longstreet, and Ewell, was equal to three armies of about twenty-five thousand each. By June 26 Chambersburg was reached ; and the next day General Order No. 73 was issued, which closed with an injunction against unnecessary destruction of private property. But now want of information with re-

gard to Hooker's movements began to be felt; for Stuart, through a great blunder, had allowed the Federal army to cut him off from his own commander. Lee's orders are said to have been indefinite; but, after all, one does not presumably need to counsel able lieutenants not to commit *felo de se.*

On June 28 Lee learned that he was to have a far better soldier than Hooker against him,—General George Gordon Meade. No dismay was felt at the news, but Meade's swift marching rendered a rapid concentration of the Confederate forces necessary. By July 1 both armies were near Gettysburg, and some fighting advantageous to the Confederates had been done, Lee in the mean while having been kept anxious by Stuart's absence. In fact, the great pivotal battle now to be fought was precipitated through Lee's lack of requisite information. Had he been at liberty to choose his time and place, the result

might have been different. As it was, the Federals had taken a strong position on Cemetery Ridge; and Lee would have to do the dislodging, though, as a matter of fact, Meade, too, would have liked to choose a different field of operations. On the morning of July 2 dislodgment was attempted; but Longstreet, a slow mover, failed to come up in time, although he had only four miles to traverse. This unforeseen delay enabled the Federals to intrench themselves still more strongly, and by the close of the day their various corps had reached the scene of action without having been attacked in detail. The blame for the Confederate remissness seems to attach to Longstreet, who was plainly out of sympathy with Lee's plans. Whether the latter ought to have removed his lieutenant is one of those questions no one can settle, yet it is at least clear that the ever-considerate Lee was not the man to take such a step.

But at last in the afternoon a fierce attack was delivered. Both sides made a dash for a hill, Little Round Top, which through a gross error on General Sickles's part had been left unoccupied; but the Federals reached the summit first, and Hood's brave Texans could not dislodge them. Meanwhile Sickles's corps at the weakest point of the Federal line was forced backward by a terrible assault from Longstreet's men, and by seven o'clock Meade's left wing had been badly crippled. But the Confederates did not follow up their success, and night fell leaving Lee still sanguine of an eventual victory. If Longstreet had let his superb troops get into action earlier, and if Hill and Ewell had supported him properly when he did begin, the much debated story of Meade's intention to retreat would never have occupied subsequent writers. In other words, if Lee had had three Jacksons, he might practically have won Gettys-

burg on the second day; but he must not be blamed for his choice of corps commanders, for they were probably as good as any he could have secured, all charges of favoritism in their appointments to the contrary notwithstanding. That such charges should ever have been made against a man like General Lee is a crowning proof of the fact that military controversies almost neutralize the glory of honorable warfare.

On the morning of the 3d, Longstreet was again tardy in supporting Ewell, and the Confederates suffered severely in consequence. In the afternoon there was a great artillery duel; and, when this slacked, Pickett, as Lee had ordered, began to move his chosen troops forward. When they had traversed half of the fourteen hundred yards between them and Cemetery Ridge, the Federal guns again opened fire; but the Confederates had nearly exhausted their ammunition without Lee's knowledge, and their guns

did not support the advancing columns as he had intended. Fifteen howitzers did indeed move after them, but the ammunition chests on the caissons were not filled!

Of the "wild charge" now made, there is little need to speak; for the world has never been able to forget it. Such of Pickett's men as the terrific Federal fire left on their feet gained the crest and the breastworks, but their success was only for a moment. Heth's division had not been able to face the fire, and the other supports planned did not become effectual. So the great charge has gone down to history as merely a charge, whereas there are reasons for believing that, if Lee's orders had been followed, Meade's comparatively weak centre would have been forced with permanent results. Pickett's first report would have brought this out, had not Lee, with his usual magnanimity, urged him to destroy it and write

another. The great soldier, but greater man, preferred to take upon himself the total responsibility for the failure of his brilliant plans. Thus the greatest defeat of his life is the chief glory of his noble character.

Meade's army was seemingly too much shattered for him to venture the next day upon the offensive, although Lee stood ready for him. Under these circumstances, and while he still had about fifty thousand eager men, the Confederate leader, knowing that his ammunition was short, and fearing that his communications might be cut off, began to retreat. He moved calmly, and reached the Potomac without serious molestation, but found it swollen and unpassable. Meade followed, but intrenched himself, and did not venture an attack. The Potomac having subsided, Lee got his army across with masterly skill; and the great campaign of invasion, which represented more of a political than a physical defeat, was concluded.

The Federal commander crossed over into Virginia shortly after, but no events of importance took place in that State during the remainder of the year. Elsewhere the Confederacy suffered great losses. Vicksburg fell before Grant's sturdy blows, and Federal control of the Mississippi was thus established. Things went badly for the South in Tennessee also, and Charleston was closely pressed, both commanders in Virginia furnishing troops for the respective operations. In September, 1863, it was proposed to send Lee to Tennessee; but the effects of his absence from Virginia were too much feared to permit the experiment. Lee himself, feeling that a crisis was at hand, and, perhaps, weary of bearing criticism, suggested early in August that Mr. Davis should relieve him by a younger man; but the Confederate President properly replied, "To ask me to substitute you by some one, in my judgment, more fit to com-

mand, or who would possess more of the confidence of the army or of the reflecting men of the country, is to demand an impossibility."

So Lee remained in charge, and raised his army to nearly fifty-nine thousand, which he depleted by thirteen thousand the next month by detaching Longstreet for Tennessee and Pickett for Petersburg. With his reduced force he stood against Meade on the Rapidan, and early in October crossed over to seek battle. Finding his rear threatened, the Federal general retreated beyond the Rappahannock. Lee followed, and various manœuvres ensued, Meade at one time marching South to get at Lee, while the latter was moving in the opposite direction to get at Meade. Once or twice the Confederates got into nasty situations; but when, finally, the two armies late in November found themselves opposed on the little stream known as Mine Run, it became ap-

parent to Meade who had expected an easy victory, but had been subjected to his rival's fate of having a subordinate fail him, that Lee had intrenched himself too strongly to be worth disturbing. He accordingly withdrew to Culpeper, and the campaign was over, both generals having shown much ability, Meade, however, as was natural, gaining more prestige than Lee, from whom men now expected masterly achievements in every situation.

VI.

NEVER had Lee's troops suffered greater privations than they did during the winter of 1863–64 in their defences behind the Rapidan. They kept their guns pointing steadily toward the Federals at Culpeper Court-house, and they kept their spirits up within their own camp; but they had a hard time keeping hunger down. Even their commander, whose small tent was pitched on a hillside in their midst, allowed himself meat only twice a week, and sent every delicacy that came to him to the hospitals. But he maintained his dignity, his courage, and his faith in God; and he presents almost, if not quite, as sublime a picture as Washington at Valley Forge. His fellow-citizens, although they, too, were in the depths of privation, felt such admiration for him that it was a pain to them not to be able to show it in a concrete form. But he

would take nothing; and his letter to the City Council of Richmond, who had endeavored to make him accept a house for his family, throws a splendid light on his character. And, as if to try him more severely, sore family afflictions beset him.

With the spring, however, came the stir and strain of action he was always craving. Grant, the hero of the West and commander-in-chief of all the Union forces, had taken actual charge of the Army of the Potomac, which was nominally under General Meade, and meant to fight the war out to an end. Grant was a great general; but he was to find a still greater antagonist, even if a mortal one, as he encouraged himself by thinking. Being mortal, Lee could be "hammered" out; and, as that was the only way to subdue him and end the war, Grant was, politically at least, justified in taking it, although it may be contended that he really gained his

point by *pressing* Lee flat by means of a siege. His success does not, however, entitle him to wear Lee's laurels; for it is as clear as anything can be that in the campaigns briefly to be described the general who was finally defeated was a greater master of the art of war than his opponent, that, if he had had Grant's task to perform, even against a general as great as himself, he would have done it more expeditiously and with less loss of life than Grant did. Such, at least, will always be the belief of many of us, in spite of our genuine admiration for Grant, both as a general and as a man.

The Army of the Potomac at the opening of the campaign numbered nearly one hundred and twenty thousand, and was admirably equipped. Lee had less than sixty-two thousand ragged veterans. He was fighting on the defensive, however, in a country most difficult for an attacking enemy;

and these facts must be allowed to neutralize much of Grant's numerical superiority. Yet we should not forget that the masterly man is the one who knows how to use his opportunities to the best advantage; and this, judging by the delays and losses he caused Grant, Lee appears to have done. Grant did not do it, seemingly, when on May 4, 1864, he set his army in motion across the Rapidan, and halted in the tangled thickets of the Wilderness; for he there gave Lee the field of operations that best suited him. On the afternoon of the 5th the Federal right and the Confederate left came upon one another in the brush; and the latter, being in position, sent the former reeling back with loss. On the right Hancock failed to drive A. P. Hill from his position. Early on the morning of the 6th Hill was again assailed, and was saved only by the happy but tardy arrival of Longstreet. It was in this fight that Gregg's Texas

Brigade, recognizing Lee riding along with them to their charge, cried out to a man: "Go back, General Lee! Go back!" He had just before, carried away by the battle-fever, shouted out to them, "My Texas boys, you must charge." That was how they answered him as they ran. Lee still pressing on, the shout of protestation was redoubled; and a sergeant nerved himself to seize his bridle-rein. Then, disappointed but assuredly proud at heart, the great leader dropped behind.

The Confederate success secured by Longstreet's advance against Hancock was much checked by the former's wounding at the hands of his own men, which forced Lee to take charge in person. Hancock's troops were now intrenched behind logs, however; and, although the Confederates carried a portion of his defences, they were finally driven out, and the battle was practically over. The losses had been heavy

on both sides; but Grant's determination to withdraw to Spottsylvania Court-house showed that the advantage rested with Lee, if indeed any advantage could come out of such an Inferno, in which men of the same blood fought hand to hand in the tangled brush like wild beasts contending for a lair.

The Federals, in their advance upon Spottsylvania Court-house, naturally thought that they had left Lee fifteen miles to the rear; but he had again guessed and forestalled his adversary's plans, and had sent General R. H. Anderson with Longstreet's corps by a circuitous route to plant himself across Grant's line of march toward Richmond. General Long is not far out of the way when he describes these movements as Napoleonic. Nor need Napoleon have been ashamed of the hard fighting done on either side for the next five days (May 8–12), during which Grant was extricating himself from the difficult

country in order to effect a junction with Butler on the James. Manœuvring being impracticable, Grant simply had to fight his way out; but his attacks on the intrenched Confederates, although delivered with heroic energy and determination, were usually repulsed with great loss. On the 12th, however, a breach was made in the Southern lines at the famous Salient. This led to tremendous efforts on Lee's part to check the advance of the Federal masses. The carnage was tremendous, but the Federals were at last forced to desist from their efforts. Lee, as at the Wilderness and as at Spottsylvania on the 10th, tried to charge at a desperate moment during this contest of the 12th; but he was again forced to retire by his troops.

From May 13 to 18 Grant tried no more fighting, and sent for re-enforcements, while the Confederates were glad to rest. On the 18th and 19th he again attacked Lee's line, looking for weak

places, but failed to find them. On the 20th, having received large re-enforcements, he followed his former plan of a flank march; but Lee was again too quick for him, and reached Hanover Junction a day before him. Here Grant had to cross the North Anna River; and, when this had been done with loss, he found that Lee had wedged his centre, which rested on the river, between the two Federal wings. Such a position promised nothing even for a hammerer; and he hastened on to the Pamunkey, Lee again using his advantage of operating on interior lines to arrest any advance on Richmond, by taking up a position on the Totopotomoy. Again Grant shrank from a general attack, and moved on; and again Lee kept pace with him. There was skirmishing of course, and heavy fighting at Bethesda Church, and finally, on June 1 and 2, very severe fighting and skirmishing took place on the old battle-ground of Cold Harbor,

near the Chickahominy. A desperate assault on the Confederate works was made on June 3, and Grant, according to the most reliable figures, lost about ten thousand men to his opponent's two thousand. Undismayed, the Union leader would have renewed the attack the next day; but even as bold a fighter as Hancock used his discretion, and rested his men. The hammering was too much for the subordinate generals, when they had to deliver blows with such rapidity. They preferred the slower strokes of a siege, and Grant finally showed by his change of plans that he agreed with them. It was high time; but regular approaches could not keep Lee from sending troops against Hunter in the Valley, and on June 12 Grant moved toward the James. He was now compelled to join Butler's already harassed force, and to reach Richmond by first taking Petersburg. In other words, he had made miscalculations that had dam-

pened the spirits of his splendid army, had lost nearly fifty-five thousand men between the Rapidan and the James, and had been outgeneralled by Lee at almost every turn. It is true that one would not gather this from his "Memoirs." Yet he was nearer his goal, although the Confederates, flushed with victory, hardly perceived it. Twenty thousand men could not be lost with impunity by the cooped-up South; and the survivors who fought under Lee were mortal, like their commander, and would not know how to conquer that fell foe, hunger. Lee was in reality playing a masterly game of chess with an inferior adversary, who, however, had the privilege of replacing his pieces as fast as they were taken.

By the evening of June 18, Lee had joined his forces with those of Beauregard for the defence of Petersburg, and the last stage of the war had begun, the Federals having meanwhile lost upward

of ten thousand men through attacks upon the troops behind Beauregard's trenches. It seemed as if Grant had forgotten his lesson; but he had not, and was soon intrenching himself for the siege of Petersburg. Lee from this time felt that the struggle was hopeless, so far as Richmond was concerned; yet the Confederate authorities persisted in believing that the South's fortunes stood or fell with her capital. Lee had not been strenuous enough to make himself a dominating power, like Cromwell or Washington. So there was nothing for him to do but fight it out to the bitter end, and lose his gallant army and his well-served cause, but not his enduring fame and honor. It is idle to wish that he had taken matters in his own hands, and retreated to the Valley. That would not have been in consonance with that exquisiteness of character that gives him his chief charm, and it would only have protracted a doomed struggle.

For, although in this summer of 1864 the North seemed to waver in its Herculean task, there is little reason to believe that any success Lee might have had by luring Grant into the mountains would have brought peace and Confederate independence.

There is no need to describe the siege of Petersburg, which lasted from June, 1864, to the end of March, 1865, or to recount the contemporary movements farther South by which Sherman slowly crushed out all chance of succor for Lee and his veterans. Grant's strong works protected him, and his ample supplies rendered his ultimate victory certain. Yet his efforts against the Weldon Railroad in the summer and autumn cost him dearly, as did also his famous attempt late in July to blow up the Confederate works in front of Petersburg. The ensuing battle of the Crater proved that Lee's veterans were still invincible, and that the Federals still had subordi-

nate generals, who had learned nothing by experience. But the bravery of the Confederate private soldier and the genius of their commander, and the spirit and dash of subordinates like Early, were all unavailing. Nor was it now worth while to give Lee the empty honor of the commandership-in-chief of the Confederate armies (February, 1865),—a position which should have been his long before. That he would have filled it admirably is clear from the suggestions as to operations far afield that he had been continually making in his letters. Probably the final result would not have been different, but posterity would have had the satisfaction of knowing that the right man was in the right place.

Yet was not this true, after all? Was not the right man in his place — amid those wintry, shelterless trenches around Petersburg — as commander of those ragged, frozen, starved, but unconquered troops who held their thirty-five or forty

miles of defences with a thousand men to the mile? What other American save Washington would have been the right man there? And how can any man or woman, who loves courage and genius, and unselfishness and gentleness and implicit trust in God, not love Lee, whatever may be thought of the losing cause he served? Who among us does not envy the opportunity of that Richmond lady to show her love, who made him drink the last cup of tea she had, and complacently sipped the muddy water of James River, that he might not detect her sacrifice and refuse to accept her homage?

But we must hasten to the closing scene of the great drama. Late in March, 1865, Lee planned a desperate attack upon Grant's right; but, as so often before, his subordinates failed him. Then Grant tried the Confederate right; and Lee, guessing his intention, took the initiative in order to frustrate him, but,

finding the Federals too strongly massed, had to retire to his works. On April 2 the Federals broke the weak Confederate lines; and, Lee's position becoming untenable, he resolved, if possible, to lead his thirty thousand men to some defensible point in the interior. Notice was given to Richmond, and that city surrendered on the 3d. Lee pressed on to Amelia Court-house, where he had ordered supplies to be in waiting. In some unexplained way his directions failed to take effect; and the provision train passed through Amelia, and was unloaded in Richmond. It was a bitter disappointment. Grant was fast approaching with a large part of his forces, and yet the Confederates had no food to support them either for a last fight or for a swift retreat. Nevertheless, it is hard to say which bore the disappointment more bravely, the commander or his troops. Finally, on April 7, Grant sent a most courteous note, asking for a sur-

render. Lee still hoped to secure supplies at Appomattox Court-house, and replied that he did not consider his cause hopeless, but that in order to save a useless waste of blood he should like to know Grant's terms. Further correspondence followed, and on the evening of the 8th Lee learned that his hoped-for stores had been captured. He then took his last chance of war, and ordered his remnant, only ten thousand strong, to break through the enemy in front, unless the latter's infantry were found too heavily massed. On the morning of the 9th the devoted forces moved forward; but, after a little fighting, Gordon reported the dreaded presence of preponderant infantry barring his advance, and demanded re-enforcements, doubtless intending no irony. Lee had nothing left to do but to send a flag of truce to Grant, with the declaration to those about him that he would rather die a thousand deaths than go

through the necessary interview. But he had resolved that it was his duty to surrender, and duty was always paramount with him.

The meeting with Grant took place a little before noon on the same morning (April 9, 1865) at a private residence in the village of Appomattox Court-house. Nothing could have exceeded Grant's courtesy. Indeed, he rose to the full stature of a hero; and the scene of the greatest surrender in American history ought to be remembered with pride by every citizen of our now united country, for it illustrates, as perhaps no similar event has ever done, the essential nobility of human nature.

The rest is soon told. Grant generously allowed the Confederate privates to keep their horses for their spring ploughing; and Lee rode away to be surrounded by his ragged veterans, who still refused to believe he would surrender, and who sobbed in anguish when

he told them that the struggle was over. The tears stood in his eyes; and they stand in the eyes of those who love him, as to-day they read over or recall the pathetic scene. On the following day he issued to the survivors of the Army of Northern Virginia as dignified an address as any commander, victorious or defeated, has ever written. After receiving visits from old friends like General Meade,—pathetic visits, which yet show how much human nature, with its godlike capacities, ought to be above the brutal necessity of settling disputes by war,—he mounted Traveller, and rode slowly toward Richmond. Halting at the house of his brother, Charles Carter, in Powhatan County, he insisted, in spite of the rain, on spending a last night in his old tent. What poet will tell us of his thoughts? Arrived in Richmond, he was greeted with wild enthusiasm, in which Northern troops who had fought against him joined heartily.

Finally, he escaped from demonstrations trying to him, but inspiring to every lover of his kind, by entering the modest house where his family was waiting to receive him. He had left that family four years before, the hope of his native State. He returned to it the chosen hero of the Southern people. He will remain the hero of that people and of thousands of men and women throughout the world who love valor and virtue in supreme combination. Those who place strenuous power in its rightful position of supremacy among human capacities, when it is joined with spotless virtue, will put Washington, but Washington only of all Americans, above him in the rolls of fame. But Lee would have been prompt to assert Washington's unique grandeur; while Washington, could he speak to us, would assert Lee's unique charm. To the historian the one man will be the greater, to the dramatist the other; nor will the poet ever cease to

affirm that on the field of Appomattox the mighty battle-axe struck down the keen Damascus blade.

VII.

LEE remained in Richmond until June, when he retired with his family to a quiet country place. In the city he had been subject to all sorts of interruptions, for friend and foe wished to see and hear him. While he was too great a man to feel bitterness and too dignified to be placed in much embarrassment, it was only natural that he should long for retirement, although such devotion as that shown by the ragged troopers, who wished to spirit him away to the mountains and there shield him against threatened arrest, must have touched him deeply. He was still more touched, however, by the helpless condition of his people, and never showed himself greater than when he applied for pardon, and urged all citizens to adapt themselves as far as possible to the new régime and to develop whatever resources their stricken

section possessed. He withdrew his application for amnesty when it looked as if he would be tried for treason, but this last indignity was not offered him in face of Grant's characteristic opposition.

He proposed to spend his country leisure in preparing a history of his campaigns; but, unfortunately, materials were hard to collect, and the world has been deprived of a valuable and, considering Grant's achievement, perhaps a very great book. Offers of other and more lucrative employment came to him from all sides. Even from England he had the tender of an estate. But he would take no gifts; and he would not sell his name to any enterprise, even an honorable one. He would attempt nothing for which he did not feel qualified; and this fine scrupulousness almost kept him from taking a position which he afterward adorned,—the presidency of Washington College at Lexington, to which he was elected in August,

1865. How this institution, which had been founded on funds bequeathed by Washington, could resume its duties amid the general depression was hard to see. Indeed, there is an amusing story told as to the difficulty with which a suitably dressed trustee was secured for a necessary interview with General Lee. But the installation of the new president took place on October 2, and the saying that where there's a will there's a way received a fresh confirmation.

Lack of space forbids us to describe at any length the five years General Lee devoted to his new task. Perhaps as clear a proof of his administrative capacity as could be desired is furnished by the fact that, although a soldier by training and profession and a former superintendent of West Point, he did not seek to cramp the college by introducing features of discipline and study with which he was familiar. Other Southern colleges that called old sol-

diers to their chairs were not so fortunate; but, then, there was no other General Lee to be had. From the material side Lee's presidency was soon seen to be a success; from the intellectual side equal progress was made, for the scheme of studies was enlarged most liberally and in the line of modern requirements; while from the moral side it would have been impossible to obtain finer results. Lee's character as a Christian and a man dominated the academic community; nor has his influence in all likelihood ceased to be felt, although a generation has passed away. He knew his students personally, and a word from him was sufficient to control the wildest spirits among them. In short, he was an ideal president of a typical American college; and there is no reason to believe that he would not have been equal to the responsibilities of a great university. He was probably right in declining to be made Governor of Virginia, for his

distinct executive genius hardly seems to have been political in character. Yet this is by no means certain. What is certain is that, much as in Washington's case, his splendid moral character has for many people cast somewhat in the shade his great intellectual powers. The opinion is widely prevalent that neither Lee nor Washington had a great mind; but it may be safely contended that this is an utter mistake, due to a common inability to recognize greatness when mental qualities and capacities are admirably balanced.

Lee's family life during his career at Lexington seems to have been so pure and beautiful that we may well forbear to touch it. It was troubled only by his own failing health. Since his exposure in 1863 he had suffered from rheumatism of the heart, and by the fall of 1869 he began to show plain signs of giving way. The winter tried him severely, and in the spring of 1870 he took a trip

to Georgia with no permanent good results. After a summer at the springs he resumed his duties at the college with somewhat of his old ardor; but on September 28 he had to preside at a vestry meeting in a damp, cold church and to go home late through the rain. With characteristic generosity he had promised to make up a deficit in the clergyman's salary; and with equally characteristic piety he stood that evening at his tea table to say grace, when suddenly his voice failed him and he sank into a chair. For several days he lingered and almost seemed to improve; but on October 10 he grew worse, and at nine o'clock on the morning of the 12th he died, "a prisoner of war on parole," with the pathetic exhortation upon his lips, "Tell Hill he *must* come up." How often he had waited for his subordinates to come up! Now he himself had answered his Master's summons as calmly and as grandly as he had obeyed

His commands throughout his long, glorious life.

If it remained only to tell of the gloom cast over the South by his death, of the tributes to his worth that came spontaneously from friend and foe, of the homage paid his worn-out body in Lexington, of the solemn funeral given him, of the monuments that have since been reared in his honor, our task would be comparatively easy. It is obvious, however, that we must take leave of such a man with an attempt to sum up his character and achievements; and this is a task from which any historian or biographer might well shrink. The present writer must frankly confess his inadequacy to its performance, but he would be false to himself and his hero, did he not claim for the latter a place among the greatest and finest spirits that have ever trod this earth. With the supreme men of action, the small

group of statesmen-conquerors, which includes Cæsar, Alexander, Charlemagne, Cromwell, Frederick, Napoleon, Washington, and perhaps one or two more, he cannot be ranked, because he never ruled a realm or a republic, and actually shrank in 1862 from assuming the responsibilities of commander-in-chief. We know, indeed, from his own words that he would not have wished to resemble any of these men save Washington; and we know, also, that he could not have entered their class without losing the exquisite modesty and unselfishness that give him his unique charm. But do we, his lovers, wish to put Lee in any class, even the highest? Should we not prefer him to stand alone? If we do, we have our wish; for no one class contains him. There is, seemingly, no character in all history that combines power and virtue and charm as he does. He is with the great captains, the supreme leaders of all time. He is with

the good, pure men and chivalrous gentlemen of all time,—the knights *sans peur et sans reproche.* And he is not only in these two noble classes of chosen spirits, but he is, in each case, either a plain leader or else without any obvious superior. But where can another such man be found? Of whom besides Lee may it be justly said that he is with Belisarius and Turenne and Marlborough and Moltke on the one hand, and on the other with Callicratidas and Saint Louis, with the Chevalier Bayard and Sir Philip Sidney?

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