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ADDRESS

ON THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

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OF

Gen. ROBERT E. LEE,

Delivered on the 12th of October, 1871,

BEFORE THE

Society of Confederate Soldiers and Sailors,

In Maryland.

BY LIEUT. GENERAL WADE HAMPTON.

1871  
ON D.C.

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## ADDRESS.

MR. PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY :

THE survivors of the Confederate Army and Navy in Maryland, have done me the honor to invite me to address them on this anniversary, so full of mournful interest to the South, and they have given me the grand theme which has already engaged, and will engage for generations to come, the ablest pens and the most eloquent tongues in Christendom, "THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF ROBERT LEE."

Whilst appreciating the compliment that brings me before you, it is with a profound sense of my inability to "rise to the height of this great argument," that I assume the duty your kindness has imposed. Nor would I venture to do so, comrades of the Confederate service, were it not that it seems to me no duty can be more sacred than that which bids every true man of the South, at all times, by all means, in all places, to pay homage to the character, and honor to the memory of our great leader. To myself, whose good fortune it was to follow that illustrious Chief, from the beginning to the close of the marvellous career, which has placed his name by the side of those of the world's greatest captains,—who witnessed his grand magnanimity in the flush of his proudest triumphs,—his sublime serenity in the hour of disaster,—who was sustained by his constant faith in the justice of our cause, encouraged by his kindness, and honored by his friendship,—this call to join in doing honor to his memory, has the sanctity and the tenderness that death, and death alone, can give. Once again, and for the last time, I seem placed on duty in the service of my old Commander, and the voice that summons me here, waking many of the proudest, though saddest, emotions of my heart, comes from the tomb of him, who, though "dead, yet speaketh."

It would ill become any Confederate soldier, who is not a renegade to the faith for which he fought, to refuse to deck the honored grave of Lee, and while the humble garland I would reverently and tenderly place on that hallowed spot, seems but poor and withered by the side of those rare flowers the world has, with such lavish hand, scattered there, let me hope that my votive offering will be accepted in the spirit in which it is made. Believe me, it comes from a heart which feels profoundly that calamity which, while taking from the bereaved South that son of hers in whom centered so much of the just pride, the heartfelt gratitude, the passionate love of his countrymen, has stricken down the first soldier of his time, and deprived humanity and Christianity alike of one of their highest ornaments.

It is fortunate for you, my friends, as well as for myself, that the subject you have given me, needs not the adventitious aids of rhetoric, the embellishments of fancy, or the persuasive power of eloquence, to commend it to your hearts. The story of that grand life, which has so recently come to an end, is best told in the simple and severe language of truth, and the character of him who made that life so noble and so virtuous, will be best delineated by the plain recital that recalls the virtues which gave it lustre, and tells of the genius that has crowned it with undying glory. To do this properly, is a task of no ordinary magnitude, for the bare enumeration of the deeds that made Lee great, and of the virtues that made him good, would more than consume the time allotted to this occasion, and the picture then presented to you, though drawn from life itself, by the hand of truth, would seem almost too bright to belong to humanity.

But to those,—should there be such,—who regard the portrait as too highly colored, let the record of a life full to overflowing with heroic deeds, and of a character crowned with every virtue, speak for itself. By thus holding up to your view the record of that heroic and unblemished life, my task will be best discharged, while the lessons such a life should teach will sink deeper into our hearts and those of our children than any words of eulogy, how-

ever deserved, or any power of language, however eloquent, could inculcate. But while a proper respect for the great dead, as well as for ourselves, impels us to do reverence to his memory, the fulfilment of this duty overwhelms us with bitter grief, for it recalls to our weary hearts, all those hopes that lie buried in the grave of Lee. When the Trojan Chief, flying from his ruined city, under whose "high walls" he had prayed to die, was urged by the Carthaginian Queen to recount the misfortunes of his country, with a heart broken by the loss of friends, of kindred, and of native land, he exclaimed: "*Infandum, Regina, jubes renovare dolerem; quæque miserrima ipsi vidi.*"

These pathetic words of the Trojan exile wake a sorrowful echo in the heart of many a patriot in the desolated South, as standing amid the ruin of his country, he looks, with moistened eye and saddened heart, on the grave of him who was that country's ablest defender. It is with feelings such as these, where the deepest grief for the failure of our cause,—exulting pride in the heroic struggle we have made,—profound sorrow for the martyrs of that cause,—and a strong sense of the duty we owe to their memory are all blended,—that I come to speak to you of Lee.

ROBERT EDWARD LEE,—*clarum et venerabile nomen*,—comes of a race whose names have won honorable mention in history for centuries past. The founder of the family, Launcelot Lee, came to England with William the Conqueror. Farther on, in the old English annals which tell of the Crusades to the Holy Land—that romantic episode in the history of the world—we read that Lionel Lee, at the head of a goodly retinue of gallant knights and brave men-at-arms, fought under the banner of Richard Cœur de Lion, on the plains of Palestine, and as a reward for his great gallantry was created first Earl of Litchfield. Richard Lee, a younger scion of this noble house, came to America during the reign of Charles the First, and became the founder of a family which has given to our country many of its most devoted patriots, its most distinguished soldiers, and its most able statesmen. It would be impossible to record here the deeds, or to recall even the names of those who

have made this family so illustrious in our annals. Nor, perhaps, would this be the proper occasion to do so. This task belongs more appropriately to the biographer, and it cannot fail to be a source of gratification to the countrymen of the great Confederate Commander-in-Chief to know that in this instance this duty devolves on one eminently qualified to fulfil it,—that gallant officer, who was distinguished as his Aid, and honored as his friend. It seems too, peculiarly fit and proper, that a kinsman of that Marshall, who recorded the mighty actions and the sublime virtues of our Washington, should tell of the mightier actions and the equal virtues of our Lee.

Though time forbids me to do more than glance at the distinguished ancestry of Gen. Lee, I cannot omit to mention one name dear to every lover of liberty—that of Henry Lee—Light Horse Harry of our first Revolution—who, besides achieving for himself a noble fame in the same great cause for which his son fought—the right of self-government—will be immortalized as the friend of our first Washington and the father of our second. During all these centuries, through which the descent of Gen. Lee has been traced, we find representatives of the stock whence he sprung, winning for themselves distinction and renown on sea, as well as on land, claiming a proud place alike in English and American History, and proving themselves worthy ancestors of one, who was destined to make their name, already illustrious, immortal for all time to come. Blessed as Gen. Lee was in his descent from ancestors so distinguished, he was scarcely less so in the land of his nativity,—that grand old Commonwealth from whose prolific womb have sprung so many heroes, sages, and patriots,—proud, heroic, but now mourning Virginia! By a strange coincidence, to which his subsequent character and career gave peculiar significance, the place of his birth in Westmoreland county was within a few miles of the spot where Washington first saw the light. The natural objects and scenes that surround the boy exercise a powerful influence in forming the character of the man. We see how potent is this mysterious power of nature, not only upon indivi-

duals, but upon nations, for we find the spirit, genius, and characteristics of different peoples, transmitted unchanged from generation to generation, through centuries of national existence. Not only do the physical features of a country tend to form the character of its people, but its traditions, its associations, and its memories, contribute to the same result. During the boyhood of Gen. Lee, these natural influences must have exerted a powerful effect on his mind and his heart.

Descended from one of the most ancient and honorable families of a State, every page of whose history was blazoned by glorious deeds and noble names; gazing from his proud ancestral home up to the same sky and over the same fields upon which the eyes of Washington, of Monroe, of Richard Henry Lee and of Henry Lee had first opened; listening to the words of his patriotic father, as he recounted the glorious deeds of the Revolution, while the sound of the same British guns, which had waked the slumbering echoes of Virginia in that war, was borne by every breeze that swept the broad bosom of the Potomac, to his young ears,—is it strange that the soul of the boy should have been filled with high and noble aspirations, and that his heart should have been stirred by the hereditary fire of his heroic ancestry? “The child is father to the man;” and though but few reminiscences of the boyhood of Lee have been given to the public, we have every reason to suppose that the scenes which surrounded him at this period, induced him to choose arms as his profession, while the teachings and the example of his parents implanted then in his heart those seeds of virtue, which were destined to bear in his later years such full and rich harvest. But while there are, as I have said, but few public memorials of Gen. Lee’s boyhood, there are nevertheless some, which seen in the light cast on them by subsequent events, possess great interest. These shew, not only what his disposition was, but how that disposition was encouraged and his character formed by the earnest exhortations of his father, and the tender care of his mother. He had the misfortune to lose his father in early youth, just at the time his example and instruction were most needed, but

the force of this great loss was broken by the judicious management of an affectionate mother. The letters of his father, written in the last years of his life to one of his elder children, are full of the warmest affection, the soundest advice and the noblest sentiments. In them we can readily trace the source from which his illustrious son imbibed his life-long love of truth, his devotion to duty and his practice of virtue. A few extracts from these letters will prove, not only how earnestly the writer impressed on his children a constant adherence to virtue, but will also enable us to discern the foundation of the character of Gen. Lee, which, when rounded off in all its beauty and filled out to its grand proportions, won the admiration of the world by its virtues, and extorted its wonder by its greatness. In the first of these letters to his son, he speaks of "the love and practice of virtue, the only real good in life;" and he goes on to say, "You know my abhorrence of lying, and you have been often told by me that it led to every vice and cancelled every tendency to virtue. Never forget this truth, and disdain the mean and infamous practice. Epaminondas, the great Theban, who was the most virtuous man of his age, so abhorred lying that he would never tell one even in jest. Imitate this great man and you may equal him in goodness—infinity to be preferred to his greatness. I pray you never to forget that virtue is our first good, and lying its deadly foe. Above all things earthly, even love to the best of mothers and your ever-devoted father, I entreat you to cherish truth and abhor deception. \* \* \* Socrates justly thought man's great business was to learn how to do good and to avoid evil. Be a steady, ardent disciple of Socrates, and regard virtue, whose temple is built upon truth as its chief good. I would rather see you unlearned and unnoticed, if virtuous in practice as well as in theory, than to see you the equal in glory to the great Washington; but virtue and wisdom are not opponents; they are friends, and coalesce in a few characters such as his. \* \* \* Fame in arms or art, however conspicuous, is naught unless bottomed on virtue. Think, therefore, of fame only as the appendage of virtue, and be virtuous, though poor, humble and scorned."

Before leaving these admirable letters, so full of the noblest teachings and the sublimest truths, and which are in such striking contrast to the worldly wisdom, the grovelling, narrow philosophy inculcated by Chesterfield to his son, let me give one other extract, which possesses for us a tender interest as relating to him whom we now mourn. Speaking with just pride and rare discrimination of that son, whose character I am now endeavoring, though with feeble and unequal hand to portray, he says: "Robert was always good, and will be confirmed in his happy turn of mind by his ever-watchful and affectionate mother. Does he strengthen his native tendency?" The heart that dictated, and the hand that penned these lines, have long been cold in death; he to whom they were applied, after a life dedicated to virtue and illustrated by glory, has just gone down to his grave, followed by the prayers, the blessings and the tears of his afflicted countrymen, and no nobler or truer epitaph could be inscribed on his tomb than those simple and touching words: "he was always good." Turning from the contemplation of the boyhood of Lee, so full of promise, we find him at the age of eighteen entered as a cadet at West Point, where, as everywhere else through life, his character and his ability placed him in the very front rank. During his whole academic course he never received a demerit or a reprimand, and at his graduation he stood amongst the highest in a class among whom were such men as Joseph E. Johnston.

Leaving West Point with the rank of Lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers, he was engaged in the duties of this department of the service till the breaking out of the Mexican war, when he was assigned to duty with the Central Army, as its Chief Engineer, with the rank of Captain. With his career during that war you are too familiar to require more than an allusion to it here. You remember with what rapidity he rose from comparative obscurity to high and deserved prominence,—how he constantly received, as he richly merited, the warm commendation of his Commanding Officer,—how he returned covered with honors and decorations, and how he was universally considered even then,

as one of the ablest soldiers of the country. The high reputation he had achieved in Mexico, caused him, when the opportunity was presented by the formation of two new Cavalry regiments in 1855, to be promoted Lieutenant-Colonel, and assigned to duty with the 2d Cavalry, which was then commanded by one, whose name is justly enshrined in the heart of every Southern patriot—Albert Sydney Johnston. From this time until the momentous year of 1861, he was employed with his regiment in the ordinary routine of duty on the Western Frontier. One occurrence which took place during this period, however, deserves notice, not only because it brought him prominently forward, but because the circumstances attending it foreshadowed darkly and unmistakably, the progress of that fell spirit which was soon to convulse the country with the horrors of civil war, threatening to extinguish the sacred fire of liberty in the blood of its worshippers. This was the first invasion of Virginia by a band of Northern outlaws, under leadership of the infamous John Brown, having for its avowed object, the inciting of the blacks to massacre the whites, and giving the State over to rapine, arson and murder. Lee was sent to suppress this flagrant outrage and to bring the perpetrators to justice, a task he accomplished promptly and successfully. The sympathy openly expressed in many quarters for these outlaws, and the apotheosis of their leader, who expiated justly, but inadequately, his crimes on a gallows, caused reflecting minds to ponder anxiously on the critical juncture of affairs; and doubtless, during the lull in the storm which was so soon to sweep over the South in all its fury, Gen. Lee was not unmindful of the dangers hanging over his country, nor uncertain of the duty every patriot owed to that country. From the time of this flagrant violation of the laws of God and of man, events hurried on with such fearful and ominous rapidity, that the most sanguine began to lose all hope of a peaceful solution of our political difficulties. Their worst fears were realized; all efforts at mediation failed, and the beginning of the year 1861 found the Cotton States withdrawn from the Federal Union, and arrayed under that new Government which was des-

tined to have, if the briefest, yet the most glorious national existence ever given to a people. Of the causes which led to this result this is neither the time nor the occasion to speak; suffice it to say, that in the exercise of this right of withdrawal, which they felt to be as unquestionable as inalienable, the Southern States resorted to the only means by which they believed their honor could be vindicated and their liberties preserved. Not until the heat of passion, the mists of prejudice and the venom of hate, which have so deeply stained American annals during the last decade, have subsided, can the true story of this last great Revolution be given to the world. Then will the impartial historian be called on to tell with what heartfelt reluctance the South, driven to desperation, severed the bonds, no longer fraternal, which bound her to that Union she had so largely aided to make, and threw off a Government which her wisdom had mainly formed, and which her patriotism and her genius had so greatly illustrated.

But leaving the discussion of these questions to the future historian, they need be touched on here only in so far as the conduct and career of Gen. Lee were influenced by them. After the secession of the Cotton States, all eyes were turned to Virginia. The action of this great State was in accordance with her ancient renown. She stepped forth as a mediator, and exerted the influence, her character, her position, and her patriotism authorized her to use. It would be difficult to over-estimate the influence which she could of right claim. It was one of her sons—a Lee,—who first offered in Congress the resolution, declaring that these States were and of right ought to be free and independent;—another son of hers drew up the Declaration of Independence, and yet another led the armies of the infant Republic to the establishment of its liberties. Her sons fought from Massachusetts to Georgia, wherever the common cause demanded, and it is not too much to say, that without her aid, the Independence of America would never have been established. Nor did her patriotic efforts and sacrifices end with the war of Revolution. Rich herself in an almost boundless territory, she gave an empire

to that union she had formed, because she “preferred the good of their country to every object of smaller importance.”

Noble mother of States and of men by whom States are made, she has lived to see the weapons of her own children dyed in her blood, and to feel “how sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child.” But true to the great traditions of her mighty past, she felt that she had the right to speak with almost parental authority in the great crisis which had come upon the country. The tones in which she urged conciliation and forbearance were grave and solemn, befitting the occasion that called them forth, and her conduct well became her old fame.

When Virginia found all her efforts to preserve peace were fruitless, and that the only alternative left to her, was to fight for the subjugation of her sister States of the South, or to aid them in their struggle for independence, as she had done in 1776, she could not hesitate for an instant. True to the great memories of the past—true to the great teachings of her immortal sons—true to that Declaration of Independence she had framed—true to the spirit of liberty that had always inspired her, she took her place grandly in the ranks of the Southern Confederacy.

It would be foreign to the present subject to discuss the question whether Virginia had or had not the right to do this. It is sufficient for our purpose to know that she, whose hand had given to the world the Declaration of Independence—whose patriotic sons had fought in defence of the principles enunciated therein, in every State of the old confederacy, whose statesmen had done so much towards forming the Constitution of the United States, and had, as Chief Magistrates, directed with so much virtue and dignity the earliest steps of the young Republic, felt that she had the right to act as she did.

It is enough for us to know that her Southern sisters hailed her advent with joy, not alone on account of the aid her brave heart and strong arm would extend, but as giving the sanction of her great name and unsullied reputation to the cause in which they had embarked.

To those who questioned her right, she might have replied in the words of England's great constitutional lawyer, John Selden, when asked by what law he justified the right of resistance, "By the custom of England, which is a part of the common law;" while in justification of her action, she could point to the proud legend on her shield, "*Sic semper tyrannis.*"

Whatever opinion may be entertained as to the rightfulness of the cause in which she engaged, there can be no doubt as to the grandeur of the offering she made to that cause, nor of the self-sacrifice with which she made it. She knew that her breast would first receive the weapons levelled at her sisters; that her soil would be the main battle-field in which this dread issue was to be settled; that her fertile fields would be devastated and her pleasant cities laid waste; that her sons, as of yore, would give their best blood in defence of their native land; but knowing this she struck bravely and nobly as she has always done for what she believed to be the cause of right, of justice and of truth.

The accession of Virginia to the young confederacy was fraught with consequences of the utmost importance, but with none greater than that, which, by this action on her part, placed at the service of the new and struggling nation that abounding wealth of military talent she possessed. It seems always to have been the peculiar province of this great commonwealth to fill with profuse hand all demands made on her patriotism or her genius.

During the whole period of our national existence, she has given at the call of the Republic and for its service, heroes, sages and patriots, and now when she had linked her fortunes with the Southern Confederacy, she filled their most immediate want—great Captains to lead their armies. Not here—time would not permit—can all the deathless names she gave be recorded. They are inscribed on her Roll of Honor, and enshrined in the hearts of their countrymen. But were these names fewer than they are, the scroll on which they are written would be forever ablaze with glory, having on it those of Johnston, of Jackson, and of Lee.

When Virginia, in the exercise of her reserved rights of sovereignty, resumed the powers she had delegated to the Federal Government, she summoned all her sons, by the allegiance they owed her, to rally to her defence. Nobly did they respond, and few indeed were the renegades upon whom that call fell unheeded. It came to Gen. Lee while he was at Washington, and it aroused in his heart emotions of the profoundest and most anxious nature. It found him high in rank, but still higher in reputation, in the Federal Army. To this service he had dedicated, as he expressed it, the best years of his life: all his hopes and aspirations were centered in it: for twenty-five years he had served under the Flag that belonged to the whole Union, and he could not but know that he had himself made no small contribution to the glory that attached to that Banner. To leave it now was to give up the proudest memories and the most cherished associations of his life, but to fight under it against Virginia, he felt would brand his name as traitor to the land that gave him birth. The school in which he had been educated, held these doctrines of political faith, and it is not surprising that he should have imbibed the same views. His father had entertained the same convictions, as his correspondence shews. While he was Governor of Virginia, in 1792, his name had been suggested for the command of the forces on the Western frontier, and to a question from Mr. Madison, asking if he would accept the position, he replied in these words: "One objection I should only have and that is the abandoning my native country, to whose goodness I am so much indebted. *No consideration on earth, could induce me to act a part however gratifying to me, which could be construed into disregard or forgetfulness of this Commonwealth.*"

He expressed the same opinions in the Legislature of Virginia, at a subsequent period, declaring that "the State of Virginia was his country, whose will he would obey, however lamentable the fate to which it might subject him." It is a significant fact, in connection with this question, that Washington himself, catholic as was his love for the whole Union, always spoke of Virginia as

“his country.” It is not singular, then, that when Virginia called her sons to defend her, Lee responded promptly to the call, painful as was the struggle to quit a service in which he had won great distinction, and which still held out to him every allurements that could tempt an ambition less pure than his own. How deep was the pain caused him by this step, is shown in the dignified and manly letter in which he tendered his resignation, and in that touching one to his sister written on the same day. In this letter we see evidences, not only of the painful struggle in his own mind, but of that unalterable devotion to duty, which was then as always the ruling principle of his life. “With all my devotion to the Union,” he writes, “and the feelings of loyalty and duty of an American citizen, I have not been able to make up my mind to raise my hand against my relatives, my children, my home. I have therefore resigned my commission in the army, and save in defence of my native State, with the sincere hope that my poor services may never be needed, I hope I may never be called on to draw my sword. Think as kindly of me as you can, and believe that I have endeavored to do what I thought right.” These words, which the writer could not have imagined would ever meet the public eye, give the key, not only to the conduct, but to the character of Gen. Lee. “I have endeavored to do what I thought right.”

Some may question the propriety of his action in this, the most momentous epoch of his life, but none can ever doubt the sincerity of his convictions, or fail to see that here, as everywhere, he obeyed the command of duty, that “stern daughter of the voice of God.” Nor are other evidences wanting to prove that he was actuated solely by motives of the highest and purest character. A member of his family—the one best qualified to know, to appreciate and to sympathize with the contending emotions which then shook his soul—has kindly given to me an account of the circumstances attending his withdrawal from the United States Army. As no words of mine could give the history of this event with the directness and the pathos that mark this account, I venture to quote it

entire, feeling sure that its touching simplicity will move, as its truthfulness will convince, every heart.

“On the 1st day of March, 1861, Col. Lee arrived at Arlington from Texas, where he had been on duty with his Regiment, the 2d Cavalry, by order of Gen. Scott. He remained quietly at home, apparently unmoved by the excitement then so generally prevailing, and employed on some improvements on the estate, until the 18th of April, when he was summoned to Washington by President Lincoln, to confer with Mr. Blair ‘on matters of great importance.’ He obeyed the summons with evident reluctance, and found Mr. Blair had been authorized by the President to offer him the command of the United States Army in the field, on any terms he might propose, urging every possible argument to convince him that it was his duty to accept. Col. Lee replied: ‘How can I draw my sword against my State and all my friends and connections.’ Mr. Blair, finding he could make no impression on him, remarked: ‘You had better go to see Mr. Lincoln.’ Col. Lee said, ‘that would be useless, but I must go and take leave of Gen. Scott.’ This parting was one of great emotion on both sides, Gen. Scott saying: ‘Lee you have made the greatest mistake of your life, but I feared it would be so.’

“He returned to Arlington late in the afternoon, and after a sleepless night, during which he said, ‘passed the severest struggle of his life,’ he determined to resign a commission which he could no longer hold with honor. He would gladly have waited, hoping even then matters might be accommodated without recourse to arms; but this could not be, and on the morning of the 20th he sent over his resignation, which was accepted. His presence had been earnestly desired in Richmond, but he would listen to no proposition from the South while an officer in the United States Army. When that relation was severed, he felt at liberty to exert all his influence to save the country from the impending crisis, and he left for Richmond early on Monday, the 22d, with but little preparation, hoping even then to return in peace; but that was the last time his feet ever trod in the halls of

that beloved home. He sacrificed it and all the comforts of life, for a cause he believed just and righteous, and when disaster and ruin attended that cause, he was faithful even unto death."

To these words of truth, which come from a heart to which the honor of Gen. Lee is dearer even than his fame, nothing need be or can be added to prove the purity of his motives, and it requires but few words more to vindicate his conduct as fully from the only charge ever brought against him—that of quitting the Federal service to defend the soil of his native State. Those who bring this as an accusation against him, do so on the sole ground that inasmuch as he was educated at West Point, his services belonged of right to the Federal Government during his life, and in all contingencies. To give color and weight to this charge, which at the best is frivolous, it is asserted that Gen. Lee was educated by the Federal Government, which therefore had the paramount claim to his allegiance, as well as to his sword. This charge betrays ignorance as well as malice. Not the Federal Government, but Virginia, educated Gen. Lee. His native State, which has contributed so largely to support the Institution at West Point, sent him there. She had the right to receive an equivalent in the military training of her sons, for her contribution to an Institution which was the common property of all the States; and she had the right to demand that those she had thus educated should devote all their powers to her service. She, and she alone, had trained and armed them for efficient service, and it was hers to command; theirs to obey her voice. Whatever excuse may be made for Northern men who took part against the South in the late war, there certainly can be none for those of the South who, educated by their native States, turned against the bosoms of their mothers those weapons which they had been taught by them how to wield! This charge against Gen. Lee does not deserve refutation, but for the fact that it has been dwelt on persistently by those whose malice could frame no other accusation to impugn his conduct, or to tarnish his spotless reputation. If it was a crime in him to obey the voice of his native State, to cling to her with a

filial reverence no temptation could shake, no trial weaken, we at least—the people for whom he fought—and in whose cause he sacrificed all, can readily pardon the offence, for we know the strength and the depth of that love, “passing the love of woman,” that bound him and binds us to our natal soil.

“Land of my sires! what mortal hand  
 Can e'er untie the filial band,  
 That knits me to thy rugged strand?  
 Still as I view each well-known scene,  
 Think what is now, and what hath been,  
 Seems as to me, of all bereft,  
 Sole friends thy woods and streams were left;  
 And thus I love thee better still,  
 Even in extremity of ill.”

It was this ardent love of country, combined with a strong sense of duty, that impelled Gen. Lee to take part with the South. Greatly as he deprecated a resort to arms, and recognizing, as he said, “no necessity for this state of things,” he foresaw the impending storm of war, and he could not but know that the eyes of his countrymen were turned on him as a fit military leader in the coming struggle. That he had anticipated and was prepared to receive a call to service from Virginia, is evident from an expression which, with slight variation, appears in both of his letters, to which allusion has been made. “Save in defence of my native State, I never again desire to draw my sword,” was the language he used to Gen. Scott in his letter of resignation. This implied a willingness to draw that sword whenever Virginia commanded him to do so, and he repaired to Richmond fully prepared to devote his sword, his services, his life, to the cause which his State had espoused.

As soon as the resignation of his commission became known in Virginia, the Governor of the State appointed him to the command of all its military forces, with the rank of Major-General, and this appointment was unanimously confirmed by the sovereign power of the State, in Convention assembled. To invest this action

with all dignity and solemnity Gen. Lee was presented to the Convention, and the President, in an address singularly felicitous in manner and language, notified him of his appointment, and told him that Virginia, on that day, committed her spotless sword to his keeping. The reply of Gen. Lee, characterized by the modesty and simplicity which marked his every action, was in the following words:

“Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Convention. Profoundly impressed with the solemnity of the occasion, for which I must say I was not prepared, I accept the position assigned me by your partiality; I would have much preferred had your choice fallen upon an abler man. Trusting in Almighty God, an approving conscience, and the aid of my fellow-citizens, I devote myself to the service of my native State, in whose behalf alone, will I ever again draw my sword.” From this time until Virginia became a member of the Southern Confederacy, Gen. Lee devoted all his energies to the task of organizing the forces of the State and putting it in a proper condition of defence.

Soon after the Confederate Congress met in Richmond, Generals Cooper, A. S. Johnston, Lee, J. E. Johnston and Beuregard, were appointed Generals, ranking in the order in which they have just been named. Gen. Lee was not called on to take an active part in the earliest operations in Virginia, nor did he participate in the first rude shocks of those great armies which then began to crimson her soil with that precious blood, afterwards so lavishly, and alas! so fruitlessly poured out in her defence. It was not until the autumn of 1861, that he was assigned to duty in the field, when he was sent to supervise and harmonize operations in Western Virginia. The campaign in this quarter was not successful, and a few of those acute military critics, who, from their safe retreats in newspaper offices, used to tell us glibly, how fields should be won, censured Gen. Lee for this failure. In the absence of all official documents, all of which have been lost or destroyed, it would be palpably unjust to cast any blame on him for the conduct of this campaign. But one man now living, can

speak knowingly and authoritatively on this subject,—the great statesman and pure patriot, who then presided over the destinies of our young Republic: he who, after dedicating himself body, and heart, and soul, to the cause in which we fought, has lived to bear vicariously for us in his own person, with the sublime endurance of a martyr, the sufferings, the humiliations, the wrongs of the whole South; need I name him my friends? Does not every heart in the South instinctively frame the answer, and does not every tongue utter the name, of Jefferson Davis? He has spoken on this point, and spoken in no doubtful or uncertain tones, and to him I leave the vindication of Gen. Lee, in this, the only instance in which one breath of hostile criticism has ever risen from the South. When standing by the grave which had just closed over our great Captain, Mr. Davis, while paying a noble tribute to his memory, referred to this part of his military career in the following language: “When Virginia joined the Confederacy, Robert Lee, the highest officer in the little army of Virginia, came to Richmond, and not pausing to enquire what would be his rank in the service of the Confederacy, went to Western Virginia under the belief that he was still an officer of the State. He came back carrying the heavy weight of defeat, and unappreciated by the people whom he served, for they could not know as I knew, that if his plans and orders had been carried out, the result would have been victory rather than retreat. You did not know, for I would not have known it, had he not breathed it in my ear, only at my earnest request, and begging that nothing be said about it. \* \* \* Yet through all this, with a magnanimity rarely equalled, he stood in silence without defending himself or allowing others to defend him, for he was unwilling to offend any one who was wearing a sword and striking blows for the Confederacy.”

No other justification of Gen. Lee's conduct in this campaign is needed, as none can be more full and conclusive than that given by the highest officer of the Confederacy. It may perhaps be a matter of some interest as bearing on this point, to relate a remark made by Mr. Davis while this campaign was proceeding. Refer-

ring to the senseless criticisms made by one of the Richmond papers on Gen. Lee, and speaking of the false estimate in which his character as a military man was held, he said: "Lee is the boldest officer in the Confederate service; boldest, not only in conception, but in execution." It is but justice to these two distinguished men that this opinion of the one—an opinion so fully verified by the subsequent career of the other—should be placed on record as showing the confidence reposed then, and never withdrawn, by the Chief Magistrate of the Confederacy, in him who was destined to be the grand central figure in that great group of gallant soldiers, who fought for the South.

After his return from Western Virginia, Gen. Lee was ordered to South Carolina and Georgia, to superintend the coast defences in those States, and he remained there until the Spring of 1862. He was then recalled to Richmond, and was, by a general order, dated March 13th, "assigned to duty at the seat of Government, and under direction of the President, charged with the conduct of military operations in the armies of the Confederacy." In this position he remained until an accident opened the way for the more immediate display of that mighty military genius which has covered his name, and his country with eternal honor. The great soldier who had hitherto commanded with such signal ability, the army in Virginia—Gen. Johnston—having been severely wounded in the Battle of Seven Pines, on the 31st May, Gen. Lee was appointed to succeed him, and assumed command on the 2d June. From this time until the close of the war, the history of Gen. Lee, is the history of the immortal Army of Northern Virginia—that noblest army that ever trod this earth. To record the unparalleled achievements of that army while directed by the genius of Lee, would be a task far too great to come within the scope of an address such as the present. That wondrous story—than which no brighter has ever been traced on the page of history, belongs to the historian. It will be his to unfold to our wondering posterity that grand panorama whereon is portrayed this "bloodiest picture in the book of time." He will tell of the constant sufferings

—the devoted patriotism—the unflinching courage—the heroic deeds of that noble army, as its great Captain led it from victory to victory, in such rapid succession, that the world stood amazed alike at the prowess of the men, and the genius of the Commander. All these details pertain to the great drama upon which the curtain has just fallen, and they go to make history. But without encroaching on the domain of the historian, it may be permitted to me, to recall to your remembrance as briefly as may be, the prominent features which marked these last three terrific years of war, and gave to Lee the place he holds among the great soldiers of the world.

It is with a due sense of the difficulties attending this mode of treating this subject that it is adopted, but the theme is too vast to allow me to treat it otherwise. Nor is the time propitious for a full discussion of all the issues involved. It was the remark of an acute critic, when dissuading Swift from publishing his *History of Queen Anne*, “that the period of which he treated was too remote for a pamphlet, yet too early for a history.” Thus it is in the present case, for only those events which exercised a controlling influence on our great struggle, and, at the same time, illustrated the character of Lee, can be touched on here. With even this restriction, the field is vast, the subject grand. Do you not remember—what Southern heart can ever forget—how Lee, called unexpectedly from his duties in the Cabinet, to lead an army to which he was an entire stranger, grasped that army at once, with the hand of a giant, and hurled it with the force of a thunder-bolt upon his enemy, driving him in the great fights of the “seven days,” demoralized and defeated, to seek ignominious shelter under the fire of his gunboats? These were the first operations of Gen. Lee on a suitable field for the display of his powers, and the result was a magnificent success. The enemy who had been threatening Richmond were driven, by the combination of brilliant strategy on the part of the Southern Commander and desperate valor on the part of the Southern troops, to seek safety in flight; our people were relieved of a great anxiety,—and our soldiers—those best

judges—felt that they were once again in the hands of a great Captain—one whose genius had already gained the confidence, as his kindness was soon to win the love they had cherished for their former leader.\*

Leaving this subject, however, to follow the career of Lee, every step of which is illumined by glory, we see him hurrying from the James River, where one defeated army was cowering under protection of gunboats, to meet another army on the Rappahannock, which was marching “on to Richmond.” These troops, from whom the Federal Government expected results of the utmost importance, had been placed under the command of Pope, who will be deservedly damned to everlasting fame, for the brutality of his orders and for inaugurating a system of warfare, which was properly denounced by an English journal at the time as “casting mankind two centuries back toward barbarism.” Easily foiling this new pretender to military fame, Lee brought him to battle on the historic field of Manassas, where Southern arms were again crowned with the glory that had once before been shed upon them on the same spot. Following up this brilliant victory, Lee struck the Federal Army again at Chantilly, and drove it in confusion into the fortifications of Washington, where its brutal and braggart commander sunk at once into the insignificance from which only his own presumption had ever raised him. Thus it

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\* Before following Lee in his subsequent operations, it may be well to notice a criticism which has been made on his first. It has been said that by throwing the bulk of his force across the Chickahominy, on the right flank of the Federal Army, while he left only twenty-five thousand (25,000) men before Richmond, confronting McClellan, he exposed the city to the danger of capture. It is a sufficient answer to this criticism to say that Gen. Lee has expressed the opinion that no such danger was to be apprehended, but as discussion on this point has arisen, it may not be out of place to show how well founded was this opinion. There were, as has been said, twenty-five thousand (25,000) troops left in the lines around Richmond, when Gen. Lee moved to the North of the Chickahominy. Now putting out of the question the fact that the Federal Commander could not possibly have known what force was left in his front, it was his obvious duty as a good soldier to reënforce that portion of his line assailed, and to endeavor to maintain his position and his communications, both of which were seriously threatened by the attack on his right. But supposing that he had left that portion of his army on the North of the river to its fate, and had concentrated all the troops on the South of the stream to assault the city, could he rea-

will be seen that Lee, in the short space of two months, with a force at no time exceeding seventy-five thousand (75,000) men, defeated in repeated engagements two Federal armies, each of which was not less than one hundred and twenty thousand (120,000) strong, relieved the Southern Capital from danger, and even threatened that of the North. But the campaign, great as it had been, was not to end here. Throwing his army into Maryland, Lee swept down from that State on Harper's Ferry, capturing it with its garrison of eleven thousand (11,000) men, and seventy-two (72) guns, and then again concentrating his troops on the North of the Potomac, he fought the brilliant and bloody battle of Sharpsburg. In this great fight—for great it was, though the Southern Arms failed to gain so decisive a victory as had so generally attended them—Lee, with only thirty-seven thousand (37,000) men, repulsed every attack of the enemy, who brought into the field an army three times as strong as his own. Is this not glory enough for one campaign,—for one army,—for one man? Yet the story of these great deeds is scarce begun—the glory not yet at its zenith. Before even this campaign ended “Fredericksburg” was to be inscribed on those Southern Banners, which were already so covered by the names of victories as scarcely to leave room for another.

But, before turning to the field just named, it will be well to see what the hero, who won the successes already mentioned, has

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sonably have hoped for success? A glance at the map will show, that a line less than five miles long drawn from the James river and running Northeast would have covered every approach to the city, and would have extended some distance North of the New Bridge road. This road, together with the bridge and all the bridges and fords above, was in the possession of Lee. There were men enough before Richmond to man the line already indicated fully, and no line so manned by the Army of Northern Virginia was ever broken by the Federal Army. Had McClellan, therefore, resorted to the desperate measure of assaulting Richmond, he would have been compelled, not only to encounter a force of twenty-five thousand (25,000) men posted behind strong works, but to expose the right flank of his army to the danger of an attack from the victorious troops of Lee, who could readily have been thrown across the Chickahominy, before the lines around the city could have been forced. It appears to me, therefore, that McClellan adopted the only course that promised to save his army, and the generalship he displayed during all the movements of that bloody week, marks him as the ablest, as he certainly was, the most honorable Commander the Federal Army ever had.

said of them. In one of these General Orders, which always carried, even to our enemies, conviction of their truth, he tendered his thanks to his army, in the following simple and modest language :

“HEAD-QUARTERS, A. N. VA., Oct. 2d, 1862.

“*General Order, No. 116.*

“In reviewing the achievements of the army during the present campaign, the Commanding General cannot withhold the expression of the admiration of the indomitable courage it has displayed in battle, and its cheerful endurance of privation and hardship on the march. Since your great victories around Richmond, you have defeated the enemy at Cedar Mountain, expelled him from the Rappahannock, and, after a conflict of three days, utterly repulsed him on the plains of Manassas, and forced him to take shelter within the fortifications around his capital. Without halting for repose, you crossed the Potomac, stormed the heights of Harper’s Ferry, made prisoners of more than eleven thousand (11,000) men, and captured upwards of seventy (70) pieces of artillery, all their small arms and other munitions of war. While one Corps of the army was thus engaged, the other insured its success by arresting, at Boonsboro’, the combined armies of the enemy advancing, under their favorite General, to the relief of their beleaguered comrades. On the field of Sharpsburg, with less than one-third his numbers, you resisted from daylight until dark the whole army of the enemy, and repulsed every attack along his entire front of more than four miles in extent. The whole of the following day you stood prepared to resume the conflict on the same ground, and retired next morning, without molestation, across the Potomac. Two attempts, subsequently made by the enemy, to follow you across the river have resulted in his complete discomfiture, each being driven back with loss. Achievements such as these demanded much valor and patriotism.

“History records few examples of greater fortitude and endurance than this army has exhibited; and I am commissioned by

the President, to thank you in the name of the Confederate States, for the undying fame you have won for their arms. Much as you have done, much more remains to be accomplished. The enemy again threatens us with invasion, and to your tried valor and patriotism, the country looks with confidence for deliverance and safety. Your past exploits give assurance that this confidence is not misplaced.

“R. E. LEE, *Gen'l Com'g.*”

These words, brief and simple as they are, record deeds rarely equalled. What was accomplished by Lee in the brief period embraced in this order will be more readily comprehended by giving the actual results of the campaign. These were, besides a series of brilliant victories to the Confederate arms, losses to the enemy of seventy-five thousand (75,000) men, one hundred and fifty-four (154) pieces of artillery, and seventy thousand (70,000) small arms. If to this list, so glorious to the Army of Northern Virginia, be added the Federal loss in the battle of Fredericksburg, we shall have the enormous number of eighty-seven thousand, five hundred (87,500) men, killed, wounded, and captured, by this army in one short campaign.

After the battle of Sharpsburg, the troops had a short period of repose in the Valley of Virginia, but movements on the part of the enemy soon rendered it necessary for Gen. Lee to put his columns once more in motion. About this time McClellan, who had always been governed by the laws of war as recognized among civilized nations, was superseded by Burnside, in command of the Army of the Potomac. The new commander determined to occupy Fredericksburg, in order to secure good winter quarters for his troops, near his base of supplies. His movement looking to this object was detected by Lee, and when the Federal Army was concentrated on the Heights of Stafford, preparatory to crossing the river, Burnside found his able antagonist confronting him on that field, which was soon to be made memorable as the scene of one of his most brilliant victories. Foiled in his attempt to secure a

strong position on the south bank of the river, Burnside determined to attack Lee in position. As the heavy fog, which hid both armies on the morning of the 13th of December, slowly drifted off, the Federal troops were seen moving to attack the Confederate right, held by Jackson. The story of that assault is soon told; it is the story of all the fields where Stonewall Jackson fought. Boldly as the assault was made, it met a sudden and bloody repulse; nor was it again renewed on that portion of the line. The sound of the guns engaged here had scarce ceased, when the deep roar of artillery on our left told that the enemy were sweeping on in the first of those desperate charges, which left half of their assaulting columns dead and wounded before Marye's fatal hill. All efforts to storm this position were repulsed with terrific slaughter, and night fell on a field over which the Southern cross floated in triumph; fit termination of a campaign seldom equalled in the magnitude and glory of its achievements. One result of this battle, a result which had followed every engagement between the two armies, was the removal of the Federal Commander, who was superseded by Hooker. This officer spent the residue of the Winter in reorganizing his discomfited and dispirited army, so that when Spring opened he was prepared to take the field with one hundred and forty thousand (140,000) men, fully equipped, and constituting, in his opinion at least, "the finest army on the planet." Lee still occupied his old position near Fredericksburg, with a force of less than forty-five thousand (45,000) men, Longstreet's corps having been sent to the south of the James River. Availing himself of the absence of this corps, Hooker determined to turn Lee's left, which would force him—in the language employed on this occasion by the Federal Commander—to "either ingloriously fly, or come out from behind his defences and give us battle on our own ground, where certain destruction awaits him." These were the boastful words in which he—forgetful of the example of Pope, and unmindful of, if he ever knew, the Scriptural injunction, "let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off"—addressed his

troops. In order to cover his real movement he crossed one portion of his army to the south side of the river, below Fredericksburg, and with the rest of his command he passed the Rappahannock and Rapidan above their junction, concentrating his troops at Chancellorsville, on the 30th of April.\*

As soon as Hooker had drawn his columns together, our great Captain moved to meet him. No operations of his are marked by greater boldness, celerity and brilliancy than those attending that terrific conflict, which was soon to light up, with the fires of death, the gloom of that great Wilderness, which held in its dark recesses the two hostile armies, on that eventful night of the 30th of April. Leaving Early with a small force, to hold in check the enemy, who was threatening Fredericksburg from below, Lee boldly threw the rest of his army against Hooker. The conduct of this movement was committed to his great Lieutenant, who was destined to fall on this his most glorious, but to us fatal field, where victory was dearly purchased by the life-blood of Jackson!

Marching all the night of the 30th, Jackson encountered the enemy at nine o'clock on the morning of the 1st of May, and he immediately proceeded to carry out the order of Lee, which was to "attack and repulse the enemy." When Hooker found that Lee had "come out of his defences to give battle" instead of "ingloriously flying," he seems to have lost what little head he ever had, and he at once retreated to Chancellorsville, where he began to fortify his position. The strange spectacle was thus presented, of an army more than eighty thousand (80,000) strong, which had moved out only the day previous in the confident assurance of

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\* Before giving the result of the great battle that followed, it may be proper to correct a misapprehension which exists to a certain extent, that Hooker, by this movement, took Gen. Lee by surprise. Personal knowledge of the fact, enables me assert that he was not surprised, but that he had anticipated this movement and was prepared for it. From information obtained in various reconnoissances within the lines of the enemy, I was led to believe that the next effort would be made against our left. This information, and the deductions drawn from it, were communicated to Gen. Lee, through Gen. Stuart. Acting upon the communication, the former made a full personal inspection of the points threatened; after which he expressed himself as perfectly satisfied of his ability to defeat any movement from those directions.

victory, covering itself with breastworks and two hundred (200) pieces of artillery, to save itself from a force not half its number. And if any thing could add to the strangeness of this spectacle, it was the fact that this small attacking army had in its rear another body of the enemy of not less than thirty thousand (30,000) troops! But critical as was Lee's position, he was equal to the emergency. With a small force, he threatened the enemy in front, while Jackson was sent to turn his left flank. That success attended this movement, it is scarcely necessary to say, for Jackson conducted it. Plunging into the gloomy depths of the great forest, he passed with his usual rapidity and secrecy across the whole front of the enemy and at five o'clock in the afternoon he was completely in rear of his right flank. While Hooker was busy congratulating his army in foolish orders, on having turned Lee's left flank, Lee had effectually turned his right, and was ready to strike one of those heavy blows he so often dealt. As soon as Jackson gained the position he desired, he struck the enemy with his accustomed irresistible impetuosity and his tried veterans, led in person by their beloved chief, swept every thing before them. But the very vigor of their attack and the ardor of their pursuit produced confusion in their ranks, and owing to the darkness of the night it became necessary to halt, to reform their line. Fatal pause! For at that moment Jackson, who had ridden forward to examine the position of the enemy, was fired on by his own troops, and fell in the very hour of victory, struck down by the men, who would willingly have given their own lives to save his. Lee had lost "his right arm," and the South a soldier whose very name was a tower of strength to her and a terror to her enemies. An English writer—one who distinguished himself as an officer in the Crimean War—has so happily drawn the character of this great soldier, that I cannot refrain from quoting the language applied to him, for even at the grave of Lee, the South drops a tear to the memory of Jackson. Speaking of Virginia, this writer says: "She has given to the country a hero whose name will last to the end of time, as an instance of the combination of the most adventurous

and at the same time, felicitous daring as a soldier—the most self-sacrificing devotion as a patriot, and the most exalted character as a man—one who could unite the virtues of the Cavalier and of the Round-head without the faults of either, and be at once a Havelock and a Garibaldi.” The fall of Jackson stopped the farther pursuit of the enemy, and this cessation saved the Federal Army from utter destruction. Stuart was placed in command of Jackson’s Corps and as he was unacquainted with the ground or the position of the troops, he deferred the renewal of the attack until the next morning. In the meantime the Federal position had been greatly strengthened, while their force had been increased by the arrival of a fresh corps. As the first rays of the sun began to pierce the heavy cloud of smoke left by the last night’s battle the Southern troops, shouting “remember Jackson,” threw themselves against the breastworks, bristling with artillery and steel. The struggle was obstinate and doubtful, until Lee, who had gradually extended his left, formed a junction with the Corps of Jackson, when placing himself at the head of the combined forces, he stormed the works, and drove the enemy in complete rout to seek shelter behind an interior line of fortification. Lee immediately prepared to carry these works, and thus destroy at one great blow, the already defeated Federal army. But this blow was arrested, just as it was about to fall, by the information that a force almost as strong as his own, was advancing to attack him in rear. In his front was an army still double his own, while another was threatening to strike him in the rear. This was a condition of things to call for the exercise of the highest military qualities, and the genius of Lee proved adequate to the demand made on it. Taking a few brigades, he moved to meet the advancing enemy and drove him across the Rappahannock, on Monday night. The next day he hastened back to crush Hooker, but the bird had flown—“the finest army on the planet” had vanished for “reasons well known to that army,” as their Commander delicately expressed it, leaving as the only mementoes of their proud advance seventeen thousand (17,000) of their number on the battle-field,

together with fourteen (14) guns and twenty thousand (20,000) small arms. This battle, or rather series of battles, has been dwelt on at greater length than the preceding ones, because the ability displayed by Lee on this memorable occasion was of the very highest order, and because of the mournful interest that will always link the genius and the fate of Jackson with this glorious field.

After the signal defeat of Hooker both armies resumed their former positions, and two plans for future operations presented themselves to Gen. Lee. One was to wait in his lines another attack from the enemy, and the other was to draw him, by skilful manœuvering, from his strong and threatening position. The first named plan was open to so many grave objections that he preferred the latter, full of risk though it was. In accordance with this determination he put his troops in motion on the 3d of June, and threw Longstreet's Corps round to Culpepper C. H. Ewell, who had succeeded Jackson, followed Longstreet, while the 3d Corps, which had recently been organized and placed under A. P. Hill, remained at Fredericksburg, in observation of the enemy. The Federal Commander seemed totally unable to comprehend the movements of his enemy, and he halted for sometime in his old position.

While he was hesitating, Lee had sent Ewell to the Valley, where he captured Winchester and Martinsburg, destroying the entire force holding these places. About four thousand (4,000) prisoners, many small arms and stores, with twenty-nine (29) guns, were the trophies which fell into Ewell's hands, while the Valley was freed from the enemy. Besides these substantial fruits of victory, command of the roads across the Potomac was obtained, thus enabling Gen. Lee to transfer the seat of war from Virginia to Maryland or Pennsylvania. He was not slow to avail himself of this opportunity, and on the 24th of June, the two corps present with him were thrown across the river, Longstreet crossing at Williamsport, and Hill, at Shepardstown. Ewell, who had crossed two days previously, occupied Chambersburg, on

the 23d, when the whole of the infantry was concentrated on the 27th. The cavalry had unfortunately been left in Virginia, and its absence was severely felt by Gen. Lee, as he needed it to mask the movements of his infantry, and to obtain information.

The first act of Gen. Lee, upon entering the country of the enemy, was the publication of the following noble address to his troops, dated

“CHAMBERSBURG, *June 27th*, 1863.

“The Commanding General has observed with marked satisfaction, the conduct of the troops on the march, and confidently anticipates results commensurate with the high spirit they have manifested. No troops could have displayed greater fortitude, or better performed the arduous duties of the past ten days. Their conduct in other respects has, with few exceptions, been in keeping with their character as soldiers, and entitles them to approbation and praise. There have, however, been instances of forgetfulness on the part of some, that they have in keeping, the yet unsullied reputation of the army, and that the duties exacted of us by civilization and Christianity, are not less obligatory in the country of the enemy than in our own. The Commanding General considers that no greater disgrace could befall the army, and through it our whole people, than the perpetration of the barbarous outrages upon the innocent and the defenceless, and the wanton destruction of private property that have marked the course of the enemy in our own country. Such proceedings not only disgrace the perpetrators and all connected with them, but are subversive of the discipline and efficiency of the army, and destructive of the ends of our present movements.

“It must be remembered that we make war only upon armed men, and that we cannot take vengeance for the wrongs our people have suffered, without lowering ourselves in the eyes of all whose abhorrence has been excited by the atrocities of our enemy, and offending against Him to whom vengeance belongeth, and without whose favor and support, our efforts must all prove in vain.

“The Commanding General, therefore, earnestly exhorts the troops to abstain with most scrupulous care from unnecessary or wanton injury to private property; and he enjoins upon all officers to arrest and bring to summary punishment all who shall, in any way, offend against the orders on this subject.

“R. E. LEE, *General.*”

This order, pervaded as it is by the spirit of Christianity and the dictates of humanity, confers greater glory on its author than the most brilliant of his victories, for it shows how solicitous he was to mitigate the horrors of war. Coming from one, whose own “beloved home” had been despoiled and desecrated; who had seen his country subjected to a fate which finds no parallel in the history of civilized warfare, save in the cruel devastation of the Palatinate; who had witnessed the perpetration of atrocities at which humanity shudders, and who was at the head of a victorious army, every man of which had in his own person, or the persons of his kindred, felt these unutterable atrocities,—it constitutes the brightest jewel in that crown of glory which Lee has won for himself. Well may the South be proud of the leader who, when time and opportunity held out the alluring temptation of inflicting merited retaliation, could restrain the angry passions of his men by appealing to their unsullied reputation, and by reminding them that “vengeance is mine, saith the Lord: I will repay.” Nor can anything prove more fully the influence Gen. Lee had over his men, than the fact, creditable alike to the Commander and to the army, that his order was most scrupulously obeyed. But the sublime lesson of generosity and magnanimity he gave on this occasion was, unfortunately, lost upon the enemy, as his subsequent conduct showed, for South Carolina and Virginia were converted into deserts wherever his army penetrated. This conduct on the part of the enemy, however, only brings out in stronger and brighter colors, the character of Lee, for

“Nor florid prose, nor honied lies of rhyme,  
Can blazon evil deeds, or consecrate a crime;”

and defeated as we are, we would rather that fate should be ours, than to have been successful by the perpetration of evil deeds, or the commission of crimes, which would forever have stained our cause and disgraced our triumph!

Lee had his army concentrated at Chambersburg, on the 27th of June, as has been said, but owing to the unfortunate absence of his cavalry, he had received no accurate information of the movements of the enemy. This, as he has himself said, embarrassed him greatly, and was the real cause of his fighting the battle of Gettysburg. There can be no doubt that Gen. Lee, when he invaded Pennsylvania did not intend to deliver battle unless the advantages of position were in his favor, and these, he had every reason to suppose, his superior skill could enable him to secure. But unadvised of the movements of his enemy, until the 29th, he found himself then forced to fight or to retire. The latter could not be done without sacrificing all the benefits he hoped to reap from his expedition, nor would such a course have accorded with his own wishes or those of his troops. Whatever course was to be adopted the first imperative necessity was the rapid concentration of his army, which had been divided, and while this was being effected, the heads of the two hostile columns came into collision at Gettysburg, on the 1st of July. This rendered a battle inevitable, and Lee prepared immediately and willingly for the conflict. Two plans of battle presented themselves to the Confederate Commander; one was to move by his right flank, and by interposing between Meade and Washington, force the enemy to give up his strong position, when he would be compelled to attack or fall back on his Capital; the other was to attempt to break the centre of the enemy and throw both wings of his defeated army off from their line of communications. The latter was the boldest plan, the one promising the greatest results in case of success, and this Lee adopted.

It would be impossible, in the space allotted to this discourse, to give the details of that terrific battle which shook, for three days, as with the throes of an earthquake, the hills and valleys of

Gettysburg. The world already knows the bloody story of that great fight. It knows with what desperate valor the Southern troops threw themselves against those inaccessible heights, frowning with artillery, and bristling with bayonets; how, during the two first days, they forced the enemy from many of his strong positions and held the ground they had so dearly won by their blood; how, on the third day, when the final death struggle took place, they planted their Banners in the last strong-hold of the enemy, but, exhausted by their desperate efforts, had not the strength to hold the crest they had so bravely gained; and how, falling back slowly to their own position, they awaited sternly an attack from the foe. But that foe had no heart, nor strength, to assault the bleeding, but indomitable, line so defiantly confronting him. It is true, that the Southern Army had, for the first time, failed to accomplish all it had attempted; but, though falling short of complete success, no sign of defeat, or of demoralization, or of doubt, was visible in its torn, but unconquered, ranks. It had done all that valor could do: it had driven a largely superior enemy from many of his strong positions: it had captured prisoners and artillery, while inflicting a loss of twenty-four thousand (24,000) men on him: and, but for the accident that prevented a concert of action along the whole line, in the last great charge, it would have made the battle, instead of a drawn fight, another glorious victory to its arms. The Federal Army was not only content, but rejoiced to accept this issue of the conflict, an issue to which it had been so little accustomed, and Meade deserves credit for having been able in his first battle, to check among his troops, what Wellington, when speaking of his Spanish allies, called "the habit of running away."

Grand as Lee had always appeared when victory sat upon his banners, he was grander still, when his bleeding columns slowly and sullenly fell back from that fatal hill which they had won, but could not hold. No rebuke, not even an impatient gesture, nor an angry word, met his tried and devoted veterans, as they moved defiantly back. Riding to meet them amid the storm of

shot and shell, he cheered and encouraged them by words of almost fatherly affection, and rising far above all personal considerations, he had the magnanimity to exclaim: "This is *my* fault; it is I who have lost this fight." Noble words; which should win for his character greater admiration than any victory could have bestowed!

The great struggle was over; Lee had failed to crush his enemy, but he had left him too weak to strike back. Failing however of full success, with his ammunition exhausted, his communications threatened, he had no alternative but to withdraw to some position nearer his base. Maintaining his line in front of the enemy for twenty-four hours, inviting an attack, he then withdrew, without any attempt on the part of the enemy to molest him. Reaching the Potomac on the 7th, he found the river too much swollen to allow him to cross. Apparently not in the least disconcerted by this circumstance, which certainly would have been most alarming had his army been a defeated one, he took position and prepared for battle. Meade's pursuit, if it can be called such, did not bring him in presence of Lee until the 12th, when he immediately began to entrench. His army had been largely reënforced, but he wisely determined not to attack Lee, for the wounded lion was at bay, and his spring might yet prove fatal. The river was found low enough on the 13th to be forded, the pontoon bridge was ready on the same day, and on the 14th Lee crossed safely into Virginia. The campaign of 1863 virtually ended here, though there were several unimportant movements on the part of both armies, during the next few months, ending with Meade's abortive attempt to force the Southern line at Mine Run, on the 28th of November.

The opening of the next campaign found Lee, on the 1st of May, 1864, on the southern bank of the Rapidan, his encampments extending from that river to Gordonsville. The desperate fighting of the last two years, the insufficient supply of food, and the barbarous policy of the Federal Government in refusing to exchange prisoners, had reduced the Army of Northern Virginia

to less than forty-five thousand (45,000) men at this time. This statement of its numbers was received directly from Gen. Lee himself, so there can be no question of its correctness. Opposed to this small army was a force upwards of one hundred and forty thousand (140,000) strong, thoroughly equipped, and with inexhaustible resources upon which to draw. The Federal Government had given the control of all military operations to Gen. Grant, an officer who, thrown by accident to the surface, had the additional good fortune to rise there, when the resources of the Confederacy were well-nigh exhausted. He is said to have expressed a profound contempt for what had hitherto been regarded as one of the surest indications of an able Commander—skilful manœuvering—and he placed his whole reliance in using superior numbers, “to hammer continuously until by mere attrition” his enemy would be crushed. This system, looking as it does for success only to the employment of brute force, requires rather the strength that numbers give, than the genius of the soldier, but the bloody sacrifice of lives it involved was a matter of slight consequence to the Federal Government, so long as the mercenaries of Europe and the slaves of the South could be used as substitutes for the patriots of the North, who could thus fight safely for the Constitution and the Union. But the South, cut off from all foreign aid,—with the ear of the world closed against her by the misrepresentations of her enemies—surrounded on all sides by danger—subjected to treatment which violated every principle of civilized warfare—with thousands of her sons sleeping beneath the soil they had died to defend, or by a worse fate, perishing in Northern prisons—had no resources save in those heroic armies which had so long upheld the cause of their country. Hardships, starvation and the bullets of the enemy were diminishing these daily, and she had no mercenaries to fight battles for her sons. All that she could do was to fight as long as one ray of hope was left to cheer her, and this she did do. The end was not far off, but before it came the Army of Northern Virginia was destined to leave to history a record of glory as bright as the brightest

inscribed on its pages, and Lee was in his last campaign to surpass even his former achievements. But how can the story of these achievements be told in a few hurried pages? When Gen. Lee was asked, soon after the war, if he intended to publish any history of its events, his reply was that the time had not yet come to give the whole truth concerning our struggle; for if given now, the world could scarce credit the strange story. If he who was the chief actor in those mighty events, who knew not only all that was done, but the hidden springs of action, thought it best to postpone the duty he had proposed to himself of recording the deeds of his army in its last campaign, well may any feebler hand shrink from the attempt. Mine certainly does, all unequal as it is to the task, and I can only pass before you in rapid review, a few of the many great actions which made this one of the grandest—if not the grandest—campaign of modern times.

The relative positions of the two armies have been stated, as well as the condition of each. Grant, in pursuance of the plan he had adopted, moved across the Rapidan on the 4th of May, with a view to turn Lee's right flank, and thus force him to fall back on Richmond. His passage of the river was unobstructed, which he regarded as a great success. Lee, had he chosen to do so, could have struck him then, for he had been apprised from Washington of the contemplated movement, as well as of the numbers of his enemy. He preferred however to draw Grant into the tangled depths of the Wilderness, before delivering the blow he meditated. As soon therefore as the Federal Army had penetrated the forest, Lee, not regarding his vast inferiority of numbers, threw his small but determined army on the vast force that had come to crush him. Once again the deep solitude of these dark woods which had been shaken by the thunders of Chancellorsville, was broken by the scream of shot and shell, and the roll of musketry; the struggle was long, bloody and obstinate, but Southern arms, as on many another gory field, overcame the disparity of numbers, and were crowned with success. The enemy, in a contest of two days, was repulsed on all sides, and Grant's first move had ended in

discomfiture. Severe as was the loss sustained by the Federal Army on this occasion, it would have been much heavier, if not destructive, but for the recurrence of the same unfortunate accident which, on nearly the same ground, snatched from the hand of Jackson the richest fruits of victory at Chancellorsville. Longstreet had turned and routed the left flank of the enemy, and as he was forming his invincible corps for the final charge, he was accidentally wounded by his own men. The assault was necessarily suspended; the enemy availed himself of this pause to rally and cover himself with breastworks, and thus escaped the almost certain ruin that would otherwise have befallen him. It was on this occasion, when the battle was raging with its utmost fierceness, that an incident of the most touching and dramatic character occurred. The Southern troops, pressed at one point by overwhelming numbers, gave back, and it seemed that their line would be broken. At this supreme moment, when the fate of the day was trembling in the balance, Lee, placing himself at the head of that gallant Texas Brigade that never faltered, ordered the men to follow him. Then was witnessed a scene never beheld since the time when Washington's men, seizing his bridle-rein, besought him not to expose himself so rashly; a scene which even amid the carnage of the battle wrung tears from eyes all unused to weeping. Not one man advanced to the charge; but from one end of the line to the other, rose high above the din of arms, the cry, "Lee to the rear. We will charge, but you shall not go." Touched beyond expression by this devotion of his troops, the great Captain yielded to their wishes, and he soon saw through the tears that almost blinded him, the men who feared death only for him, sweeping away the enemy as the whirlwind drives before it the leaves of Autumn. This charge, which cost the lives of half the heroic brigade that made it, restored the fight, and night found the enemy repulsed on every side.

During the next day, the 7th, both armies remained in position. Lee having foiled the first movement of his adversary by the decisive blow he had struck, and Grant unwilling to assault those

stubborn lines he had been unable to break in a conflict of two days. That night he moved, with the hope of still being able to plant his army on the communications of Lee, by seizing Spottsylvania Court House, but when the head of his columns reached that point, it was only to find it occupied by his enemy. Driven back with loss, in his attempt to secure this position, he massed his heavy force to crush, if possible, the enemy whom he could not flank; and at daylight on the 12th, he assailed the Southern line. A temporary advantage attended the first onset, a salient being carried with the loss to us, of some prisoners and guns; but this advantage was dearly paid for by the enemy, who left thousands of his men in front of that deadly gap, which all his efforts failed to widen. Lee's line was immovable, and Grant's system of hammering had cost him forty thousand (40,000) men in the first week of its trial. Failing to force a passage, he again endeavored to flank the enemy he could not dislodge; but when he reached Hanover Junction, the point at which he aimed, Lee was there offering battle. Declining to take up the gauntlet thrown down here to him, he moved once more by the left, and crossing the Pamunkey, appeared at Cold Harbor, where he found the Army of Northern Virginia confronting him, on the same field which had once before proved so glorious to its arms, and so fatal to the Army of the Potomac. Grant had now come to the end of that line, on which he had declared he "would fight it out if it took all Summer." The first month of Summer had just opened. Richmond, though its spires might be seen from the adjoining hills was still covered by the army that had protected it so long, and unless he could by one last desperate effort break that bristling line of bayonets, which seemed always in his path, he would be forced to abandon his favorite plan of operations, and adopt another. His pride, his system of hammering, his temper—for he was a hard fighter—all urged another trial of strength. Concentrating his masses in front of Lee's position, he hurled them against it once again, only to see them again recoil with frightful slaughter. Let a Federal writer tell the story of this bloody dis-

aster to Federal arms. "It took hardly more than ten minutes of the figment, men call time, to decide the battle. There was along the whole line a rush—the spectacle of impregnable works—a bloody loss—then a sullen falling back and the action was *decided*. \* \* \* \* But rapidly as the result was reached, it was *decisive*; for the consciousness of every man pronounced further assault hopeless. The troops went forward as far as the example of their officers could carry them; nor was it possible to urge them beyond, for there they knew lay only death, without even the chance of victory. Some hours after the failure of the first assault, Gen. Meade sent instructions to each corps Commander, to renew the attack without reference to the troops on his right or his left. The order was issued through these officers to their subordinate Commanders, and from them descended through the wonted channels; but no man stirred, and the immobile lines pronounced a verdict, silent, yet emphatic against further slaughter. The loss on the Union side in this sanguinary action was over thirteen thousand, (13,000.) This is the language in which an eye-witness describes this battle. In the main he is correct, but his evident desire to palliate the disastrous defeat sustained by the Federals, leads him to give an exaggerated idea of the strength of the Southern position. Those "impregnable works," he speaks of, were the ordinary and temporary works hastily thrown up by the men occupying the line. As to the natural strength of the position, it is only necessary to say that Lee, with a force not one-third as strong as Grant's, had two years previously driven the Army of the Potomac from the very same ground, now held by the Army of Northern Virginia. The failure of the last attack ended Grant's "overland campaign" against Richmond. The result of the battle of Cold Harbor, together with the significant refusal of his troops to renew the assault, left him no option but to resort to other operations. His whole movement so far had been a stupendous failure; a failure which had cost him sixty thousand (60,000) men, while Lee had proved himself in every thing save numbers, infinitely his superior.

Lee's generalship was not confined solely to the direction of movements which came under his immediate supervision, it was far wider in its scope as was shown by the wonderful foresight by which he detected, as if by inspiration, the plans of his enemy, and the unequalled skill with which he defeated them. As an illustration of his profound sagacity in those matters, it is only necessary to recall the complete and disastrous defeat attending the several expeditions set on foot about this time to cut his communications. By the first of these, Hunter was to move up the Valley of Virginia with a view to the capture of Lynchburg, while two strong forces were to coöperate with him moving from different directions on the same point. One of them, under Crook and Averill, formed a junction with him at Staunton, when the whole force moving through Lexington, where Hunter had the baseness to burn the Virginia Military Institute, together with the house of Gov. Letcher, reached Lynchburg on the 16th June. To aid this force, Sheridan was despatched with a heavy body of cavalry to destroy the Central Railroad, and then join Hunter, when the combined forces could, after taking Lynchburg, cut all Lee's communications in that quarter, and be free to move on Richmond from that point. Sheridan was met at Trevillian's Station on the Central Road, by a force of cavalry not half as strong as his own, and after a conflict of two days was driven back with heavy loss, and that good soldier, Early, sent by Lee, reached Lynchburg in time to defeat Hunter, and drive him across the mountains.

While these expeditions, from which such great results had been anticipated, were meeting disastrous terminations, another had been put in motion on the south of James river. A force of cavalry about eight thousand (8,000) strong had been sent under Wilson to cut all communications on the south of the river. This force was checked at Staunton river, and on its return was utterly routed at Sapponey Church and Ream's Station, with the loss of all its artillery and wagons, and a large number of men. In these expeditions of Sheridan and Wilson, the Federal Cavalry, besides their killed and wounded, amounting to a large number,

lost two thousand, three hundred (2,300) prisoners, and twelve (12) guns. Lee was thus able, while holding Grant at bay, to break with the small force at his disposal every combination made against him. All of Grant's attacks on Lee having been defeated, all his attempts at flanking thwarted, and all his expeditions ending in disaster, nothing was left to him but to cross the James river, and fall back on the plan of campaign, which McClellan was not allowed to try in 1862. This he did; having in view as his first object the capture of Petersburg; but he was again too late, the veterans of Lee reaching there not only in time to hold the place, but to leave ten thousand (10,000) of the enemy dead and wounded before it. Repulsed again, Grant, as a last resort laid siege to the Army of Northern Virginia, hoping that famine and the spade would accomplish what the weapons of his men had never been able to effect. In this novel operation, he had every advantage on his side. The river which formed an admirable channel of supply for his army, cut the Southern line in two. His base of operations was immediately at his back, and his resources in men and means were unlimited. The line Lee was forced to hold was nearly forty (40) miles long, and intersected by two rivers; all supplies for his troops had to be transported for hundreds of miles, over badly equipped railroads, while these supplies obtained with such difficulty were insufficient; his men were neither well-armed nor well-clothed; and above all he had but thirty-five thousand (35,000) muskets, with which to hold this long and weak line. So reduced was the army at this time, that Gen. Lee said, he "did not dare to tell any one how small his numbers were." Yet the old fire that had led this heroic army to so many victories, was not extinct. With scarcely men enough to form a picket line they held their position with desperate and unrelaxing grasp. For nine long months, the weary days and the bitter nights found them at their post, barring Grant's passage to Richmond. During all this time, one long, unceasing battle raged. Shot and shell were rained without cessation on their devoted ranks; the great force hemming them in, swung its ponderous

weight first on one flank and then on the other, seeking what it could never find, a vulnerable point. The weary troops were forced to sleep in the trenches, for there were not men enough to form reliefs.

Through that dreary Winter, this handful of brave men held, as with the grasp of death, that long line, against which a powerful enemy was constantly exerting his utmost strength. Nor did they hold it only defensively. Whenever an opportunity offered, they struck as only the Army of Northern Virginia could strike, exacting a heavy toll in blood for every effort to dislodge them. They felt how desperate was the struggle, for save in God, they had no hope but in their own tried weapons and in Lee.

Thus passed the nine months during which they were beleaguered; months, in every day of which terrible suffering was endured, sublime fortitude displayed, and immortal deeds achieved. But when Spring first begun to shed its glories over the earth, all saw the "beginning of the end." The endurance, the heroism, the powers of our grand old army had been taxed to their utmost limits, and even Lee himself, he who had achieved with this army as much as man ever accomplished, could do no more. The circle of fire surrounding them closed in, and those lines which had been held so long and so heroically, in front of which thousands of the enemy had fallen, and every yard of which had been stained by the blood of their defenders, were at length broken. How and why they were broken can best be told in the words of him who held them so long, and I esteem myself fortunate in being able to give his explanation of this disastrous event. This is contained in a private letter, and I trust that the historical importance of this communication will excuse the seeming egotism on my part in making it public. The letter is as follows:

"NEAR CARTERSVILLE, *August 1st, 1865.*

"MY DEAR GENERAL:

"I was very much gratified yesterday, at the reception of your letter of the 5th ult. I have been very anxious concerning you,

and could obtain no satisfactory information. \* \* \* You cannot regret as much as I did that you were not with us, at our final struggle. The absence of the troops which I had sent to North and South Carolina, was I believe, the cause of our immediate disaster. Our small force of cavalry, (a large portion of the men, who had been sent to the interior to winter their horses, had not rejoined their regiments,) was unable to resist the united Federal Cavalry, under Sheridan, which obliged me to detach Pickett's Division to Fitz Lee's support, thereby weakening my main line, and yet not accomplishing my purpose. If you had been there with all of our cavalry, the result at Five Forks would have been different. But how long the contest could have been prolonged, it is difficult to say. It is over, and though the present is depressing and disheartening, I trust the future may prove brighter. We must at least hope so, and each one do his part to make it so. \* \* \* I had just received sufficient reports of the operations of the army, from the time of its departure from Orange to its arrival before Petersburg, to enable me to write a narrative of events, when the movements of the enemy prevented.

"All these reports, with my letter-books, records, returns, maps, plans, &c., were destroyed by the clerks charged with their safety, the day before we reached Appomattox C. H., to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy. I am anxious, not only to write a history of that campaign, but a history of the campaigns in Virginia; I send you a circular I had prepared on the subject. I hope you will be able to furnish me with an account of your operations, and such other information as you have. I am unwilling that the services and patriotism of our glorious men should be lost to posterity, and although I am unable to do justice to their conduct, I can collect the facts for those who can. \* \* \* \*

"That every happiness may attend you and yours, is the earnest prayer of your friend,

"R. E. LEE."

This was the solution given by Gen. Lee, of the rupture of his lines, and when it is remembered how greatly, his already small

force, was reduced by the detachments sent to the South, there is every reason to suppose that it is the correct one. But, even after his lines were broken, he struggled to save his army and with it his country. He withdrew his troops and sought to gain those great mountain fastnesses in Virginia, where Washington had declared that he could save the liberties of America, if lost everywhere else. But an adverse fate had pronounced against him, and his men, weary, foot-sore, and starved, were destined never to reach those strong-holds, in which their leader had said he could maintain the war for twenty years. Of the horrors of that frightful retreat, when with "death in the front, destruction in the rear," and where gaunt famine fought on the side of our enemies, it is as useless, as painful, now to speak. The heart sickens as it recalls the death-throes of that once mighty army, whose bayonets had for four years sustained the liberty of the South, and it would fain draw a veil over the mortal agony that wrung the heart of its Commander, when he saw all was lost. He had done all that man could do, and he felt now that the time had come, when it was his duty as a soldier, and as a Christian, to save the farther effusion of blood. No thought of self entered into the consideration of this question. In his own words, "the question is whether it is *right*, and if it is right, I take the responsibility."

Believing that it was right to do so, he surrendered the little remnant of that band of heroes, who had followed him through three years of blood, of victory, and of glory, and he sheathed forever his spotless sword.

. . . . . "Never hand  
 Waved sword from stain so free;  
 Nor purer sword led a braver band;  
 Nor a braver bled for a brighter land;  
 Nor a brighter land had a cause so grand;  
 Nor a cause a Chief like Lee."

The end had come: "our sun had gone down while it was yet day:" that cause, so grand, sanctified by the tears, the prayers, the life-long agony of our noble women, and glorified

by the devotion, the patriotism, the blood of our men, fell when the sword of Lee was surrendered; and, with its fall, the military career of our great Chief ended forever.

In order to form a correct estimate of this career, we should compare Lee in his character and achievements as a soldier, with the great Captains of other days. The late war between the States, though it placed millions of men in the field, gave but one soldier on either side who could bear for a moment the perilous comparison with Lee,—his predecessor in command of the Army of Northern Virginia,—and as he, fortunately for the South, still lives, it would scarcely be agreeable to him to compare him with his illustrious countryman. It is true that Lee surrendered his sword and the skeleton of his army to the last and most successful of the Federal Commanders, but there is one criterion by which the merits of the two Generals can be easily tested. This test, simple as it is sure, consists in considering the resources of each, and then estimating the results accomplished by each.

What did Lee effect with the Army of Northern Virginia?

In the three years he commanded that army, he inflicted a loss on the enemy of not less, and perhaps more, than three hundred thousand (300,000) men, besides taking guns and small arms almost beyond computation. In his last campaign, with a force at no time exceeding forty-five thousand (45,000,) and often far less than that number, he destroyed one hundred and twenty thousand (120,000) of the enemy, and he held for nine months, a weak line against an army quadruple his own. These are, in brief, the actual, palpable, enduring results of his generalship.

What did Grant effect during those same eleven months of carnage embraced in the last campaign, to prove his generalship? He began his movement with upwards of one hundred and forty thousand (140,000) men, and he was able, on account of his great resources, to keep his army up to this number at least, to the close. In the first month of the campaign his loss was so heavy, that had his dead and wounded been placed touching each other, they would literally have formed one long, continuous, gory line, from the

Wilderness to Cold Harbor! They at least, had fought it out on that line. In the whole campaign he lost not less than one hundred and twenty thousand (120,000) men, and he finally, by mere weight of numbers—for his generalship could never have accomplished this—overwhelmed his antagonist. But in order to bring this question down to narrower limits, let us suppose that the relative numbers and positions of the opposing armies had been reversed, and that Grant with thirty-five thousand (35,000) men, had occupied a line forty miles long, while Lee confronted him with one hundred and forty thousand (140,000) Southern troops; can any imagination, however wild, stretch so far as to conceive that he could have held that line for nine months? The proposition is too absurd for serious consideration. He would not have held it for one month, not for one day, no, not for one hour! We must look then to the great soldiers of the past, to find fit subjects for the comparison we wish to make. An English author—the same from whom the glowing tribute to Jackson, already quoted, was taken—calls Lee “the General who stands second to Wellington among the great soldiers of English blood of the present century; and who, if you enlarge the field and take the world into competition, will acknowledge no superior besides Wellington and Napoleon alone.” Recognizing the justice of this criticism, as far as Napoleon, who stands alone in the art of war, is concerned, it may be questioned in the case of Wellington. Coming as it does from an English soldier, we should receive it as the highest compliment an Englishman could pay to Lee, and I am far from wishing to detract from the merits of the hero of Waterloo. But taking him, in the words just quoted, as the great soldier of English blood of the present century, and according to him full praise for his deeds, we of the South claim that our great soldier was his superior.\*

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\* An able writer in the *Southern Review*, has drawn the comparison between these two distinguished Captains so forcibly, that I give it in his own words. Speaking of the achievements of Wellington he says: “As compared with those of Gen. Lee, they seem, including even Waterloo, absolutely insignificant. Gen. Lee, with a force not so large as the Anglo-Portuguese Regular Army, which Wellington had under

If we turn from Wellington to Marlborough, the other and greater soldier of English blood, we shall find his achievements surpassed also by those of Lee. Between 1704 and 1709, Marlborough won his four great victories of Blenheim, Ramilies, Oudenarde and Malplaquet. His numbers on each field were about equal to those of his enemy. The smallest force he had engaged in any of these battles was fifty-two thousand (52,000) men, and the loss he inflicted in all of them in killed and wounded, did not exceed thirty-five thousand (35,000) men. Thus we see that in

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him when he encountered Massena in 1809—not half so large as his whole force, if the Portuguese Militia be taken into the account—in the space of twenty-eight days, in three battles, killed and wounded more men than Wellington ever killed and wounded during his whole career from Assaye to Waterloo, both inclusive. In one of these battles he killed and wounded more men by nine thousand, (9,000,) than the French Army lost, including prisoners, in the whole campaign of Waterloo, and the pursuit to the gates of Paris. In the same battle he killed and wounded more men than Wellington, Blucher and Napoleon, all three together, lost in killed and wounded in the battle of Waterloo by five thousand (5,000) men. In the second of these battles he killed and wounded the same number that both the opposing armies lost in the battle of Waterloo; and in the third he killed and wounded more men by seven thousand, (7,000,) than the French alone lost in the battle of Waterloo. In the three battles together, Lee killed and wounded more men, by at least thirty thousand, (30,000,) than the allies and the French lost in the whole campaign, including prisoners. The force with which Lee operated never amounted at one time to fifty thousand (50,000) men; the force with which Wellington and Blucher acted was, even according to English estimates, one hundred and ninety thousand (190,000) strong. The force to which Lee was opposed was from first to last two hundred and forty thousand (240,000) strong; the force to which Wellington and Blucher were opposed was but one hundred and twenty-two thousand (122,000) strong. When Massena invaded Portugal, in 1810, Wellington had thirty thousand (30,000) British troops and twenty-five thousand (25,000) Portuguese Regulars, who, in the battle of Busaco, according to Wellington's own account, 'proved themselves worthy to fight side by side with the British veterans;' besides forty thousand (40,000) admirable Portuguese Militia. He had Lisbon for his base, with a British war fleet riding at anchor, and innumerable vessels of other descriptions plying between the port and England, and bringing the most abundant supplies of arms, provisions and munitions of war. He had surrounded the port with the most tremendous system of fortifications known in modern times, and his task was to defend the strongest country in Europe. In Lee's case the enemy had possession of the sea, and could and did land a powerful army to attack the very basis of his operations, while he was fighting another of still greater strength in front. It is probably not altogether just to Wellington to institute this comparison. If his deeds look but commonplace beside the achievements of this campaign, so do all others. The history of the world cannot exhibit such a campaign as that of Lee in 1864."

These are startling figures, and they show by the results accomplished, how powerful an engine of destruction was the Army of Northern Virginia when wielded by the hand of Lee.

comparing the great soldier of the South with the greatest Captains, to whom England, justly proud of her martial fame, has given birth, he was not only their peer but their superior. While drawing this comparison between the Confederate leader and the two foremost English soldiers, I have been forcibly struck by the resemblance he bore to them in the best traits and virtues which have been attributed to them, while he was free from the hardness of the one, and the avarice of the other.

When the Iron Duke died, the clergyman who delivered the sermon on the occasion of his death said: "It has caused feeling of greater delight than the rehearsal of all his victories, to be informed that those who knew him best speak of his regular, consistent and unceasing piety; of his unostentatious but abounding charity; and tell us that he consecrated each day to God; that at the early service in the Chapel Royal, he who was no hypocrite, never did any thing for a mere pretence, who scorned the very idea of deceit, was regularly, almost alone, confessing his sins, acknowledging his guilt and entreating mercy in the beautiful words of our own Evangelical Liturgy, not for his own merits, but for the merits of that Saviour who bled and died for him." Does not this picture of Christian devotion recall to all who knew him best the fervent, humble piety that marked the life of Lee? \*

It was the remark of one to whom mankind has given the rare title of Great,—Frederick of Prussia,—when speaking of another

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\* The language in which the biographer of Marlborough paints his virtues, seems fitted so expressly to draw the character of our leader, that I beg to quote that also, though it would be unjust to his memory to suppose that he was not more deserving of the praise contained in it, than the hero to whom it was applied. "As a private individual, he possessed the domestic virtues in an eminent degree. He was a dutiful and obedient son, a tender husband, an affectionate father and an indulgent master. \* \* \* The endowments and virtues of so extraordinary a mind, were combined and embellished with no less distinguished graces of person and manner. \* \* His demeanor was graceful, dignified and captivating, and no man possessed in a higher degree the art of conciliation. His very denials were tempered with such gentleness and complacency, that even the applicants, who were least satisfied in regard to the object of their solicitations, could not quit him without being charmed with his deportment. \* \* \* He was equally regular and exemplary in the performance of moral and religious duties. The principles which he had imbibed in his early years were indelibly impressed on his mind, and in courts and camps, as well

extraordinary man, that "Cromwell did not deserve the surname of Great, which is due only to virtue." If this be so, as it surely should be, we shall search history in vain for one more deserving the appellation than the Christian hero who led the armies of the South. There is one other name holding a noble place in history, which is worthy to be put by the side of that of Lee, the name of one to whom our immortal Chief, in his genius, his virtues, and his piety, bore a striking resemblance, that of Gustavus Adolphus, the hero of Sweden. It would be an interesting subject to trace the historical parallel between these two illustrious soldiers and to observe how strangely history sometimes repeats itself, not only in the affairs and fate of Nations, but in the character of those whose actions have had a permanent influence on the world. But this discussion would lead into too wide a field, and passing reference can now alone be made to a few of the most prominent points in which these two great Champions,—the one of religions, and the other of civil liberty,—resembled each other. Both of them possessed in the highest degree, not only all those virtues which dignify humanity, but those nobler ones which true Christianity alone can give. Both were, even by their enemies, regarded as sincere, pure, honest and pious. It will be an eternal honor to Gustavus, that he was the first who sought to strip war of some of its horrors by restraining his men from the commission of those atrocities, which too often stain the progress of an army, and by impressing on them, that they fought not for conquest, nor for pillage, nor for vengeance, but for the faith of their fathers.

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as in domestic life, he exhibited the same pious confidence in an overruling Providence. He was a firm believer in the truths of the Christian Revelation, and zealously attached to the devotions of the Established Church. Hence he was punctual in his attendance on the divine offices, a frequent communicant, and manifested a devotion no less remote from enthusiasm than from indifference. He was never known to utter an indecent word, or to give an example of levity. \* \* \* He discountenanced the slightest degree of intemperance or licentiousness, and labored to impress his officers and troops with the same sense of religion which he himself entertained. \* \* \* Previous to a battle prayers were offered up at the head of each regiment, and the first act after a victory was a solemn thanksgiving."

These are the colors in which this writer paints the nobler qualities in the character of Marlborough, and while admitting that these colors are too bright, we can readily conceive that this distinguished Captain, like Wellington and Lee, possessed not only ability as a soldier, but many qualities of a higher nature.

In the two centuries which have rolled by, since the fair-haired Swede led that army of patriots to victory on the field of Lutzen, the world has seen but twice the glorious spectacle of such an army, led by Chiefs who were his equals in virtue. Once, when Washington fought for liberty, and again, when Lee struck in the same great cause. Like Gustavus, Lee was modest, brave and magnanimous, and like him too, he was opposed by men, who waged war on the savage principles of Tilly and of Wallenstein. Great and good as was the noble Swede, we point proudly to Lee as his equal. Few indeed, and far between, are the names written on the page of history, which will live as long in the esteem, the admiration, and the affection of mankind, as that of the great Virginian.

The military career of Gen. Lee has been traced at far greater length than was desirable on such an occasion but as rapidly as the subject would allow. It has been my object, not to embarrass the narrative by any criticisms of my own, but to let the great actions which marked that career, through its whole progress, speak for themselves. From these actions, the verdict of history will after all, be made up, and that verdict, neither the praise of his friends, nor the censure of his enemies, will be able to influence. We place him, without one doubt, before that august tribunal, feeling assured that his motives, his deeds and his virtues, will be judged by posterity, as we, his countrymen, judge them now.

“ His grandeur he derived from Heaven alone,  
 For he was great e'er fortune made him so;  
 And wars, like mists that rise against the sun,  
 Made him, but greater seem, not greater grow.

“ His ashes in a peaceful urn shall rest;  
 His name, a great example stands to show,  
 How strangely, high endeavors may be blest,  
 Where piety and valor jointly go.”

At the close of Gen. Lee's military service he retired quietly to private life, and though the record left by him as a private citizen

is as noble as any portion of his whole career, it was unfortunately for the South and for the world all too brief. He lost no time in vain regrets, but set himself resolutely to fulfil the duties which were before him. Offers of assistance poured in on him from all quarters; but though deeply touched by this evidence of the love entertained for him, he refused them all, saying, "my friends have offered me everything except work." He felt that it was his duty to work, and with him, "duty was the sublimest word in our language." His own tastes led him to seek absolute retirement, and prompted by these he was at first disposed to refuse the Presidency of the Washington College. But when it was suggested to him that he could accomplish infinite good in this position, he at once determined to accept the place. Having done this, no offer of pecuniary advantage could tempt him to quit the path where duty led him. As he himself has expressed it, "I have a self-imposed task which I must accomplish. I have led the young men of the South to battle. I have seen many of them fall under my standard. I shall devote my life now to training young men to do their duty in life."

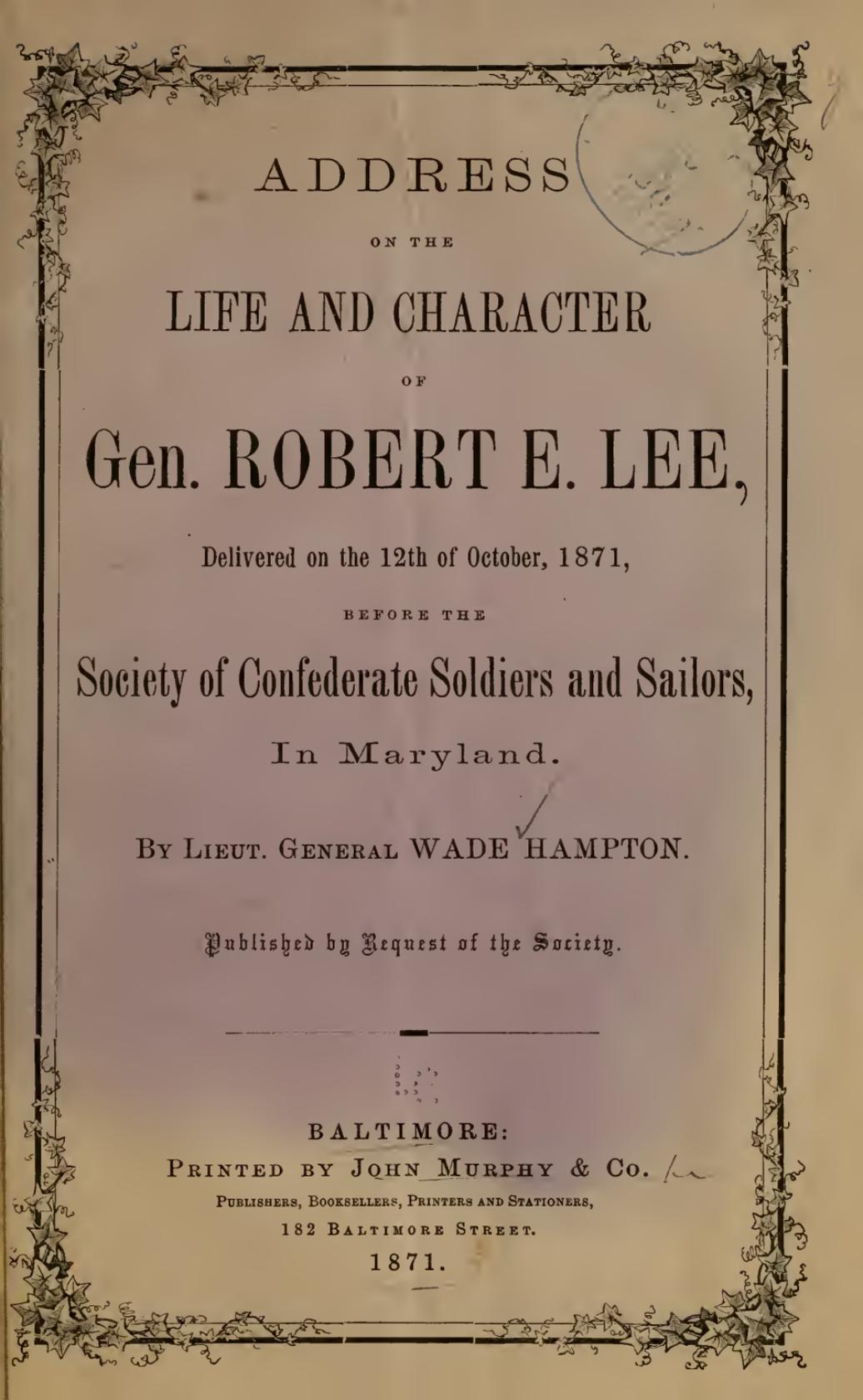
To this task he devoted himself with all the intensity of his great nature, and he was found at this post when he was summoned to the presence of that God whom he had served so long and so well. Surrounded by all that domestic affection could give, or public veneration could bestow, it was the fond hope of our people that he would long be spared to the South, to teach her sons to follow his example and emulate his virtues. But he himself felt that the wounds his heart had received, were mortal. When he rallied from his first attack and we were cheered by the hope that his precious life would be spared, a friend called to congratulate him on his convalescence, and to express the hope that his health would soon be perfectly restored. Shaking his head gravely, and placing his hand on his heart, he replied, "No: the trouble is here." The trouble was indeed there, for the sorrows, the afflictions and the wrongs of the people whom he loved so well, were snapping one-by-one his heart-strings, and he fell at last, dying as

truly for the South, as if he had fallen in her cause on the bloodiest field he ever won in her defence. And thus he passed away from the scene of his labors and his glory, to appear at the bar of that Great Judge, who alone can and will decide, whether the cause in which he died, was right or wrong. But though he is no longer with us, his example, his fame and his virtues are still left to us, and he thus is not dead.

“ But strew his ashes to the wind,  
 Whose sword or voice, has served mankind.  
 And is he dead, whose glorious mind  
 Lifts thine on high?  
 To live in hearts we leave behind,  
 Is not to die.

“ Is't death to fall for Freedom's right?  
 He's dead alone, that lacks her light!  
 And murder sullies in Heaven's sight  
 The sword he draws.  
 What can alone ennoble fight?  
 A noble cause.”





ADDRESS  
ON THE  
LIFE AND CHARACTER  
OF  
Gen. ROBERT E. LEE,

Delivered on the 12th of October, 1871,

BEFORE THE

Society of Confederate Soldiers and Sailors,  
In Maryland.

BY LIEUT. GENERAL WADE HAMPTON.

Published by Request of the Society.

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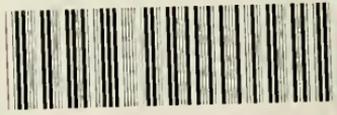




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