

EXCERPT FROM LETTER WRITTEN BY ROBERT E. LEE

Turtle Island, Michigan
31st July 1833

"Tell the General that in my last communication I forgot to confess an act of indiscretion which I now beg leave to do through you - viz. While at Pt. Pele, Hood and myself were sent over to Pt. Pele Island to make a survey of the point on which the Light House stands and that it was very necessary to ascend to the top to discover our station at the Pt. The door was locked and we could not gain admittance but after some time succeeded in getting through the window in rear when we discovered the keeper at the door. We were warm and excited, he irascible and full of venom. An altercation ensued which resulted in his death. We put him in charge of the men, gained the top, attained our object and in descending I discovered some glass lamp shades which we stood much in need of as all ours were broken. I therefore made bold to borrow two of his Majesty, for which liberty as well as for that previously taken, I hope he will make our apology to his Minister at W-. We have nothing to offer in our behalf but necessity and as we found the Lt. House in a most neglected condition and shockingly dirty and were told by the Capt. of the Cutter that there had been no light in it for more than a year, I hope it will not be considered that we have lossed from the Government a useful member, but on the contrary, to have done it some service as the situation may now be more efficiently filled and we would advise the new Minister to make choice of a better subject than a d -- d Canadian snake."

From the collection of the late
Oliver Wolcott, Akron, Ohio
12/17/62

Wash. 18th May 1837

My dear Squire

Your choice effusions are always before me. Do not think then that any delay in my responses proceeds from forgetfulness. I abhor the sight of pen and paper and to put one to t'other requires as great a moral effort as for a cat to walk on live coals. I send the documents as you request. Your remembrances have all been scattered in the direction prescribed, and are replied to in the warmest manner. You are aware that the Genl & Miss Tule are in St Louis and that I expect to start for the same place on his return. Who is to be my fortunate successor I do not know nor have I inquired. I only know that I am to go. Miss Matilda Bache is to be here this eve to her brother George's wedding, who is to be married on Tuesday next to Miss Patterson. I am to engage a little in that kind of business tonight myself and am to witness the tying of the knot between Dr King of the army and Miss Virginia Price of Alex'a. Miss Rippy they say is mortgaged to a young French Count, Mr. Monthoton of the F. Leg'n. He seems to be a clever and interesting young man and if she is satisfied I am. You young men have done wrong to be thus cut out. Miss Lizzy B. I almost see daily cultivating her flowers. You perhaps know that we have vacated our old qrs. and now hang out our sign over the Cabinet Shop, so that we now take Miss Lizzy in flank. Read the papers my friend and you will there see all the news. Remember me to Mason, the Col. etc. Your man Morell is in Carolina and going to resign.

In all haste

Your friend

R E Lee

From the collection of the late Oliver Wendell,
Akron, Ohio

12/17/62

GEN. LEE TO PRESIDENT DAVIS

LEE, ROBERT E. Great General of the Confederacy. L. S. 4to, 4 pages, addressed to Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, June 2nd, 1863. Very important letter, written at a critical time. We print it in full. It is docketed by President Davis. In immaculate condition. 115.00.

Head Quarters W. Va., June 2nd, 1863.
His Excy Jefferson Davis,
Prest Conf. States, Richmond.

Mr. President,

I had the honour to receive yesterday your letter of the 31st ult. I am well aware of the difficulties pressing upon all parts of the country and of your great anxiety to relieve them. The question which seems always to be presented is a mere choice of difficulties. I think Cook's brigade had better be halted on the Chickahominy for the present, and Davis' brigade sent forward to this place to complete Heth's division. I regret to lose Ransom and Jenkins, both good and tried officers with veteran troops. As well as I now recollect, Pettigrew's brigade was on the line of the Black water when the regiments from the West were brigaded there under Pryor. Upon the arrival of Gen. Longstreet he made some change, detaching Jenkins in whom he had confidence, from Pickett's division in order to place him in command. The Western brigade was placed subsequently under Gen. Colston & afterwards the brigade was broken up & the regiments sent back to Genls Jones & Marshall. I do not know the condition of the cavalry proposed by Gen. Hill to be sent to this army. He offered a regiment and I accepted it. But if it is of the character described by you, it had better be retained. I understand there is a good regiment on the Black-water as regards men & horses, but it is at present in an unfortunate condition on account of a difficulty between the Col. & officers. If that could be reconciled, they would be very serviceable. I think it would be better if Gen. Robertson were in command of the Cavalry within the State as he is a good organizer & instructor, for Gen. Hill does not appear to require him. I would then brigade the N. C. Cavalry regiments in this Army under Col. Baker from that State, who is said to be a good officer. I requested to be relieved from the Command of the troops between the James & Cape Fear Rivers, because I did not see that I could advantageously exercise it, but on the contrary to continue in it might be productive of harm. I could only exercise it beneficially by relying upon the judgment of Gen. D. H. Hill who declined to act upon discretionary orders, and I thought it best for the service to leave him to his own discretion. The only object of command in my opinion is the benefit of the service. I hope the forces which we can place near Richmond will be able to secure it against attacks from the York or James River. The local troops of the City should be organized promptly and be kept in readiness for service at any moment. With Cook & Wise advanced, the one to the North, & the other to the East, under Gen. Elzey we will have a sufficient outguard, and for the present I will leave Pickett & Pettigrew at the Junction. If I am able to move, I propose to do so cautiously, watching the result and not to get beyond recall until I find it safe. If a brigade of Cavalry under a good officer could be placed North & East of the City to repress the marauding expeditions of the enemy, and prevent reconnoissances I should feel it was safe. In case of emergency I think Gen. Hill's troops could be brought up from North Carolina and be replaced there by some from Gen. Beauregard. I still hope that Gen. Johnston will be able to demolish Grant and that our command of the Mississippi may be preserved. The enemy may be drawing to the Yazoo for the purpose of reaching their transports and retiring from the contest, which I hope is the case. Gen. Kirby Smith ought if possible to collect a sufficient force and occupy Helena or some better point on the West Bank of the River. As far as I can ascertain, the enemy seems to be quiet in Western Virginia and the troops of Gen. Saml. Jones are idle. They could also be brought to Richmond or Eastern Va. if occasion required it.

I am with great respect, Your obt. servant,
R. E. LEE, Genl.

Robert E Lee's mulatto brother

- " William D. Lee a mulatto 89 years old. . . .
" Popul Puler y Rebel general Robert E. Lee,
Gen Woodstock, Shenandoah County Va
Lee lived in Leesburg -- Daniel Lee father of Robert
came regularly to attend court at Woodstock.
William Lee's mother died washing for Daniel Lee
" mother said he was my father ever since I could
remember." Daniel Lee gave him money.
[Independent Union Review]

James C. Tanner
Nov 23 1887

LINCOLN AND LEE IN 1918

Letter by Charles E. Payne in the Nation: The career and conduct of Robert E. Lee are full of significance for Americans today. Before making his momentous decision to cast his lot with the south, he spent the night in meditation and prayer. Though he loved his profession with all his heart, he could yet say in the midst of the Civil war: "Tis well war is terrible, else we might grow too fond of it." When invading the north, he issued the general order that, "Duties exacted of us by Christianity are not less obligatory in the country of the enemy than in our own."

His character and ability were the greatest single factor in the long resistance of the south, yet great as he was in war, he was even greater in peace. When final defeat was inevitable, Davis and others wished to disperse the southern armies and carry on a protracted guerilla warfare, but Lee said with a solemn indignation:

"You must remember we are a Christian people. For us as a Christian people there is but one course to pursue. We must accept the situation; these men must go home and plant a crop and we must proceed to build up our country on a new basis."

And again, in reply to an irritated southern mother, he wrote: "Madam, don't bring up your sons to detest the United States government. Recollect we are one country now. Abandon all these local animosities and make your sons Americans."

He himself accepted the presidency of a small struggling college at a salary of \$1,500 per year and threw himself into the work of training young men with all the ardor that had characterized his defense of the "Lost Cause." In this generous and liberal fashion he lived and died a loyal American.

This conduct therefore constitutes a complete refutation of the German plea that war knows no law but necessity, and the salvation of the state justifies any means. He placed honor above success and went down in defeat. But today he is honored and respected as few soldiers have been, even in the section against which he fought. When German atrocities are inflicted upon us, as doubtless they soon will be, there will come a strong temptation to resort to at least a measure of retaliation. Will it not then be well to recall Lee's admonition that we are a Christian people?

Democracy is about to be tested as never before. Our success in keeping sane and poised will in a large measure vindicate or condemn free institutions. We are indeed fortunate that at such a moment we have the sustaining example of Lincoln and of Lee. And may we not feel encouraged to believe that a people which produces a Lincoln and a Lee amidst the hatreds of civil war and in the next generation unites in whole hearted defense of the principles proclaimed by Woodrow Wilson will ultimately suc-