ROBERT E. LEE
PRESIDENT OF WASHINGTON COLLEGE
PERSONAL REMINISCENCES,

ANECDOTES, AND LETTERS

OF

GEN. ROBERT E. LEE.

BY

REV. J. WILLIAM JONES, D.D.,
FORMERLY CHAPLAIN ARMY NORTHERN VIRGINIA, AND OF WASHINGTON COLLEGE, VIRGINIA.

[Published by authority of the Lee family, and of the Faculty of Washington and Lee University.]

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TO
THE BELOVED MEMORY
OF
MRS. MARY CUSTIS LEE,
BY WHOSE KIND ENCOURAGEMENT THIS WORK WAS UNDERTAKEN, AND WHOSE
VALUABLE AID HAS ENRICHED ITS PAGES,
THIS BOOK
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
BY
THE AUTHOR.
The author does not propose to add another "Life of Lee" to the several that have been given to the public.

Mine is a humbler but scarcely less important work.

It was my proud privilege to have known General Lee intimately. I saw him on that day in April, 1861, on which he came to offer his stainless sword to the land that gave him birth. I followed his standard from Harper's Ferry, in 1861, to Appomattox Court-house, in 1865, coming into somewhat frequent contact with him, rejoicing with him at his long series of brilliant victories, and weeping with him when "compelled to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources."

It was my still higher privilege to have been intimately associated with him during the last five years of his career, to have been one of the regular chaplains of his college, to have visited him frequently at his office and in his home, and to have had him sometimes under my own humble roof; to have mingled with him in the freest social intercourse, and to have been the daily witness of those beautiful traits of character which made him seem even grander in peace than in war.

I was one of that band of loving hearts whose sad privi-
It has been for me, therefore, a "labor of love," and one which, I trust, will not seem presumptuous or prove wholly unacceptable to the public, to recall a few personal reminiscences, cull a few anecdotes, and give a few of his private letters, which may present a picture of Robert E. Lee, the Man, as he lived and moved, and was loved, among us.

A large part of this book was originally prepared for the "Lee memorial volume," which the Faculty of Washington and Lee University designed publishing, and which I had the honor of assisting in preparing; and Mrs. Lee did me the kindness to read carefully, and very warmly approve, my manuscript.

When the publication of that volume was abandoned, and I proposed, with the consent of the Faculty, to use the material in a book of my own, Mrs. Lee wrote me a kind letter in which she said: "... Whatever the Faculty decide upon will, I know, meet with my approbation, and to no one would I more confidently trust the completion of the work, in the way you propose, than to yourself." Mrs. Lee was very much interested in the proposed publication, and I feel that, in giving this volume to the public, I am but carrying out her earnest wishes.

I was especially indebted to Mrs. Lee, and have been placed under high obligations to General G. W. Custis Lee, and General W. H. F. Lee, for the letters which form so interesting and valuable a part of this volume. My thanks
are also due to the Faculty of Washington and Lee University, not only for kind encouragement, but for invaluable assistance in the preparation of the work.

Every thing of doubtful authenticity has been excluded from these pages, and the reader will, therefore, miss a number of popular anecdotes which he would expect to find.

This first attempt at authorship is sent forth with a sincere desire that it may prove acceptable to the countless admirers of the great Confederate chieftain, that it may serve to give to all a higher appreciation of his noble character, and that it may prove a blessing to the young men of the country (more especially to those who "wore the gray"), by inducing them to study, in order that they may imitate, his shining virtues.

J. W. J.

Richmond, Va., August 1, 1874.
NOTE.

At the death of General Lee a memorial volume was announced, and this Committee was appointed to superintend the publication. Circumstances, for which neither the Committee nor the publishers were responsible, delayed and finally prevented the publication of that work. In the meantime, Rev. John William Jones had prepared this book to aid in the completion of Valentine's beautiful sepulchral monument to General Lee. Mr. Jones was a faithful chaplain in the army of General Lee, and, subsequently, while minister of the Baptist Church in Lexington, enjoyed in an unusual degree his favor and regard. During this period, and while acting at times as chaplain of Washington College, Mr. Jones had special opportunities to observe the character of General Lee, for whom he entertained an enthusiastic devotion. The Committee, knowing the peculiar qualifications which the author brings to this work, have afforded him the fullest access to the materials in their possession, and are happy now to commend to the public the completed volume as a valuable contribution toward a biography of Robert E. Lee.

Signed: COMMITTEE OF THE FACULTY
OF WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY.
CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE SOLDIER .................................................. 1


CHAPTER II.

THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT .................................. 80

Sketch by Rev. Dr. Kirkpatrick, Professor of Moral Science in Washington and Lee University—Paper of Professor Edward S. Joynes, of Washington and Lee University—Incidents.

CHAPTER III.

DUTY, THE KEY-NOTE OF HIS LIFE ....................... 133

Anecdotes given by General Magruder, and ex-President Davis—His leaving the United States Army—Extracts from his private letters illustrating his devotion to the Union—His refusal of the supreme command of the United States Army—Letters to General Scott and his sister—Reception in Richmond—Letters to Hon. Reverdy Johnson containing his own account of the circumstances of his resignation—His firmness after entering the Southern Army—Conversation with Bishop Wilmer—Incidents of the surrender given by Colonel C. S. Venable—Conversation with General Wade Hampton, and with the author—Incidents given by General Gordon—Extracts from papers found in his army satchel—Letter to General Pendleton—Incident related by Hon. H. W. Hilliard.
CHAPTER IV.

MODEST HUMILITY, SIMPLICITY, AND GENTleness . . . . 147

Simplicity of his dress—Lack of display at his headquarters—Incidents illustrating his modesty—Colonel Charles Marshall's incidents of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg—Incidents illustrating the warm friendship between Lee and Jackson—Letters—His conduct toward his other officers—The account of Lee at Gettysburg given by Colonel Freemantle, of the English Army—Orders to his troops issued at Hagerstown on his retreat from Gettysburg—Incidents—Extracts from papers found in his army satchel—Incidents illustrating his tenderness for birds and animals—Letters to parties desiring to write his biography.

CHAPTER V.

His SPIRIT OF SELF-DENIAL FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS . . . . 167

Incident related by Hon. A. H. Stephens—About to go into the ranks as a private soldier—Ex-President Davis's incident—Self-denial of his living—Never used tobacco or intoxicating liquors—Incidents—Letter to a College Temperance Society—Stonewall Jackson's temperance principles—Incident related by General Ewell—General Lee's "treat"—An English officer's account of his visit to General Lee's headquarters—Incidents illustrating his deep interest in his men—Letter to the City Council of Richmond declining the gift of a residence—Refusal of gifts at the close of the war—Specimens of his letters declining pecuniary assistance—His refusal to accept a large salary, or any gratuity from the College—His letters on the subject—His object in writing a history of his campaigns to vindicate others rather than himself—Circular Letter—His want of nepotism—Incidents illustrating his refusal to promote his sons—Dr. Moore's incident of his refusal to apply for a special exchange for his son when in prison.

CHAPTER VI.

His WANT OF BITTERNESS TOWARD THE NORTH, BUT DEVOTION TO THE INTERESTS OF THE SOUTH . . . . . . . . 186

Incidents—His General Orders in Pennsylvania, and the conduct of his troops—Incidents—Treatment of prisoners—His testimony before the Congressional Reconstruction Committee—Private letter to Dr. Carter, of Philadelphia—The real facts in reference to the treatment of prisoners—Incidents illustrating his want of bitterness—Splendid conduct of Lee's veterans since the close of the war, and
his influence in bringing it about—Letters to General Grant—His application to President Johnson for "amnesty"—Letters to Colonel R. L. Maury, ex-Governor John Letcher, Hon. A. M. Keiley, Count Joannes, Commodore Tatnall, Commodore Maury, General Beauregard, General Wilcox, Chauncey Burr, Esq., Hon. Reverdy Johnson, Mrs. Jefferson Davis, Rev. G. W. Leyburn, General Early, Captain James May, Judge Robert Ould, General D. H. Maury, General James Longstreet, Hon. J. S. Black, Hon. Thomas Lawrence Jones, Colonel Blanton Duncan, Hon. James M. Mason, and others—His refusal to attend meetings having any reference to the war.

CHAPTER VII.

His Social Character . . . . . . . 235
Simplicity of his dress—"Given to hospitality"—Uniform courtesy—Retentive memory of names and faces—Incidents—Letters to Federal officers—Reply to spirit-rappers—Incidents illustrating his quiet humor—A number of his private letters.

CHAPTER VIII.

His Firmness in Carrying Out His Purposes . . . . 283
Incidents—His devotion to the Southern cause, and firm adherence to its fortunes—The true story of Appomattox Court-House—General Lee's own account—Popular errors refuted—The correspondence—Lee's appearance—His farewell address—Touching scene—Two of General Lee's letters to President Davis.

CHAPTER IX.

His Love for His Soldiers, and Their Enthusiastic Devotion to Him . . . . . . . . . . . . . 315
CONTENTS.

CHAPTER X.

His Domestic Life .......................................................... 357

His own sketch of the Lee family—His youth and early manhood—
Stratford—Life in Alexandria—Letter to his old teacher—At West
Point—His marriage—Arlington—Letters to his family—Incidents
—Leaving Arlington—Life during the war—Letters from camp to
his family—His home in Lexington—Letters.

CHAPTER XI.

His Love for Children ...................................................... 409

A number of pleasing incidents illustrating this.

CHAPTER XII.

His Christian Character, illustrated by Incidents, Letters,
and Personal Reminiscences ............................................. 415

CHAPTER XIII.

Sketch of his Sickness, Death, and Funeral Obsequies, by
Colonel William Preston Johnston—Author's Conclusion ............ 446

APPENDIX.

Selections from Eulogies on General Lee ................................ 461
Address of Hon. J. P. Holcombe ......................................... 485
REMINISCENCES OF GEN. ROBERT E. LEE.

CHAPTER I.

THE SOLDIER.

General Lee was in the highest, truest sense of the term, a soldier; and, while a detailed narrative of his military achievements is not proposed, our portraiture would be incomplete without a chapter on his character and career in his chosen profession.

With ample materials at hand, I prefer that the picture should be drawn by abler pens than my own, and shall, therefore, freely cull from what has been said by some of the ablest military critics of this and other countries.

And I am fortunate in being able to present the estimate of Lee's generalship given by Lieutenant-General J. A. Early, in his address before Washington and Lee University, January 19, 1872, on the occasion of the second anniversary celebration of General Lee's birthday.

Omitting only a few of the opening and concluding paragraphs, I give in full this splendid tribute of an able soldier to the chieftain whom he followed so faithfully during the war, and whose memory and fame it seems his proudest ambition to perpetuate:

"The commencement of hostilities in Charleston harbor, the proclamation of Lincoln, calling for troops to make an
unconstitutional war on the seceded States, and the consequent secession of Virginia, found General Lee a colonel in the United States Army, with a character and reputation which would have insured him the highest military honors within the gift of the United States Government. In fact, it has been said that the command of the army intended for the invasion of the South was tendered him. However, rejecting all overtures made to him, as soon as he learned the action of his native State, in a dignified manner, and without parade or show, he tendered his resignation, with the determination to share the fate of his State, his friends, and kin-dred. The then Governor at once, with the unanimous consent of the Convention of Virginia, tendered him the command of all the forces of the State. This he accepted, and promptly repaired to Richmond, to enter upon the discharge of his duties, knowing that this act must be attended with a very heavy pecuniary loss to himself on account of the locality of his estates. Those who witnessed his appearance before the convention, saw his manly bearing, and heard the few grave, dignified, and impressive words with which he consecrated himself and his sword to the cause of his native State, can never forget that scene. All felt at once that we had a leader worthy of the State and the cause.

"As a member of the military committee of the conven-
tion, and afterward as a subordinate under him, I was in a condition to witness and know the active energy and utter abnegation of all personal considerations with which he devoted himself to the work of organizing and equipping the Virginia troops for the field. While he bore no active part in the first military operations of the war, yet I can safely say that, but for the capacity and energy displayed by General Lee in organizing and equipping troops to be sent to the front, our army would not have been in a condition to gain the first victory at Manassas. I do not, however, intend, by this statement, to detract from the merit of others. The Confederate Government, then recently removed to Rich-
mond, did well its part in bringing troops from the South; and I take pleasure in bearing testimony to the fidelity and ability with which the then Governor of Virginia coöperated with General Lee in his efforts to furnish men as well as the munitions of war.

"His first appearance in the field, as a commander, was in Western Virginia, after the reverses in that quarter. The expectations formed in regard to his operations there were not realized, and, though he met with no disaster or defeat to his troops, the campaign was regarded as a failure. The public never thought of inquiring into the causes of that failure, and it is not to be denied that an impression prevailed among those who did not know him well, that General Lee was not suited to be a commander in an active campaign. There were some editors who, while safely intrenched behind the impregnable columns of their newspapers, proved themselves to be as fierce in war as they had been wise in peace, and no bad representatives of the snarling Thersites, and these hurled their criticisms and taunts, with no sparing hand, at the head of the unsuccessful commander. It would be profitless, now, to inquire into the causes of the failures in Western Virginia. It is sufficient to say that they were not attributable to the want of capacity or energy in the commanding general.

"He was, subsequently, sent to the Southern seaboard, for the purpose of supervising the measures for its defense, and he proved himself a most accomplished engineer, and rendered most valuable services in connection with the seaboard defenses in that quarter.

"In March, 1862, he was called to Richmond, and charged with the conduct of military operations in the armies of the Confederacy, under the direction of the President. Just before that time, the evacuation of Manassas took place; and, subsequently, the transfer of the bulk of the opposing armies in Virginia to the Peninsula, the evacuation of Yorktown and the line of Warwick River, the battle of Williamsburg,
and the transfer of the seat of war to the Chickahominy, in the vicinity of Richmond, occurred.

"On the 31st of May and 1st of June, the battle of Seven Pines was fought, and General Johnston was so severely wounded as to be disabled for duty in the field for some time. Fortunately, the eminent and patriotic statesman who was at the head of the Government well knew the merits of General Lee, and at once assigned him to the vacant command; and then, in fact, began that career to which I invite your attention.

"When General Lee assumed command of the army, which before that time had borne the name of the 'Army of the Potomac,' but was soon rechristened by the name of the 'Army of Northern Virginia,' he found the Confederate capital beleaguered by an army of over one hundred thousand men, with a very large train of field and siege guns, while his own force was very little more than half that of the enemy. Nevertheless, he conceived the idea of relieving the capital of the threatening presence of the besieging army, by one of those bold strategic movements of which only great minds are capable. General Jackson, by his rapid movements and brilliant operations in the Valley, had prevented the march of a column of about forty thousand men, under McDowell, from Fredericksburg on Richmond, to unite with the besieging army; and a part of McDowell's force, and Fremont's army from Northwestern Virginia, had been sent to the Valley, for the purpose of crushing Jackson. It was very apparent that Jackson's force, then consisting of his own command proper, Johnson's command from Alleghany Mountain, and Ewell's division, could not long withstand the heavy forces concentrating against it; and that, when it was overwhelmed, the enemy's troops operating in the Valley and covering Washington would be at liberty to move on Richmond; while the detachment, from the army defending that city, of a force large enough to enable Jackson to contend successfully, in a protracted campaign, with the forces accu-
mulating against him, would probably insure the fall of the Confederate capital. Preparations were, therefore, made to attack the besieging army, with the forces covering Richmond and in the Valley, by a combined movement. Some reënforcements were brought from the South, and three brigades were sent to the Valley, for the purpose of deceiving the enemy, and facilitating the withdrawal of General Jackson. Fortunately, that able and energetic commander had been enabled to prevent the junction of Fremont’s army with the troops sent from McDowell’s command, and, taking advantage of their separation and the swollen condition of the water-courses, had defeated both forces in succession, and so bewildered their commanders by the rapidity of his movements, that they retreated down the Valley, under the apprehension that Washington was in danger. Leaving all of his cavalry but one regiment to watch the enemy and mask his own movement, General Jackson, on the 17th of June, commenced his march toward the enemy’s lines near Richmond, in compliance with the plan and orders of General Lee; and on the 26th of June, less than four weeks after General Lee had been assigned to the command of the army, his attacking columns swung around McClellan’s right flank, and fell like an avalanche on the besieging army. Next day, Jackson was up, and then ensued that succession of brilliant engagements which so much accelerated McClellan’s famous ‘change of base,’ and sent his shattered army to Harrison’s Landing, under cover of the gunboats on the James.

“To give you some idea of the boldness and daring of this movement, and the impression it made on the enemy, I will call your attention to some facts and figures.

“In his report, dated in August, 1863, and printed in 1864, McClellan gives the strength of the troops under his command at Washington, on the Potomac, and within reach, on the 1st of March, 1862, as—

“‘Present for duty, one hundred and ninety-three thousand one hundred and forty-two.’
"A portion of this force had been left to operate in the Valley, another to cover Washington; and he puts the strength of the 'Army of the Potomac,' which designation his army bore, on the 20th day of June, 1862, just six days before the battles began, at—

"'Present for duty, one hundred and five thousand eight hundred and twenty-five.'

"He further says that he had sixty batteries with his army, aggregating three hundred and forty field-pieces. Besides these he had a large train of siege-guns.

"General Lee's whole force, of all arms, including the troops of Magruder, Huger, Holmes, and Jackson, when the latter arrived, did not reach eighty thousand effective men, and of these, Holmes's command, over six thousand strong, did not actively engage in any of the battles. There were thirty-nine brigades of infantry in all engaged on our side in the battles around Richmond, inclusive of Holmes's command. The strength of twenty-three of them is given in the official reports, and was forty-seven thousand and thirty-four, including the batteries attached to a number of them. In these were embraced the very largest brigades in the army, as, for instance, Lawton's. The sixteen brigades, whose strength is not given, were four of A. P. Hill's, two of Longstreet's, two of Huger's, and eight of Jackson's. Taking the average of those whose strength is given for the eight brigades of A. P. Hill, Longstreet, and Huger, and an average of fifteen hundred for Jackson's eight brigades—which would be a very liberal estimate for the latter, considering the heavy fighting and long and rapid marches they had gone through—and it will give about seventy-five thousand men, including a number of batteries attached to the brigades. The cavalry with the army was less than two brigades, and that, with the artillery not included in the reports of brigades, could not have reached five thousand men. The field-guns with our army, which were all that were used, were not near half as many as those of the enemy, and many