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Stephen Dill Lee: a Biography.

Herman Morell Hattaway
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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STEPHEN DILL LEE: A BIOGRAPHY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Herman Morell Hattaway
B.A., Louisiana State University, 1961
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1963
May, 1969

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ABSTRACT

Stephen Dill Lee is the only Confederate lieutenant general not previously to be the subject of a biography. Although not remembered in history, he was a figure of importance during the Civil War. His fame spread throughout the Confederacy, from the time of his first great success at Second Manassas to the last gallant and significant effort in defending John Bell Hood's beaten army in the retreat from Nashville. Later he was a prominent leader of the New South, a college president, politician, benefactor of the common man, and a patron of history.

One difficulty that may have caused previous would-be Lee biographers to avoid the subject is that Lee's life was complex, and the historian who analyzes Lee must apply considerable effort in several fields. The study of Lee's military career requires an application of the military historian's skills and techniques, but it is not enough merely to study Lee as a soldier. Lee took a prominent part in the affairs of the later nineteenth-century South, and these activities also must be analyzed.

As to why Lee has dropped out of the Civil War story, probably it is because he was rather colorless and did not attract great attention for any peculiar trait. His victories were not tangibly spectacular nor were his defeats particularly devastating. Yet he should be included in any representative study of Southern military leaders. Although he was not a great general, he was definitely a very good general. This
dissertation attempts to prove that Lee was a valuable asset in the Confederate military system.

After the Civil War, Lee became one of the "Redeemers"—the men who captured Southern political offices and brought Reconstruction regimes to an end. Occasionally he is mentioned in historical literature as a Southern Bourbon. Although he did have certain intellectual concepts that accord with the Bourbon stereotype, he was a special kind of Bourbon. He had elements of self-giving, and there was a streak of altruism and reform in him that was not found in the typical Bourbon.

As an educator, Lee not only helped to establish a first-rate Agricultural and Mechanical College, which is now Mississippi State University, he also worked for better primary and secondary schools and for adult education in Mississippi. He advocated the teaching of improved agricultural and mechanical techniques. He was a champion of mechanization and industrialization. Friends gave him the title "Father of industrial education in the South."

He was a charter member of the United Confederate Veterans, played a significant role in the organization, and ultimately became its national commander in chief. He never forgot the South of the past and he always urged young people to revere the memory of their forefathers. But at the same time he became a loyal and patriotic citizen of the re-united country.

It was this sort of duality, a divided mind, that pervaded all of Lee's later life. At the end, it can be seen most clearly. He was the top Confederate Veteran and also was serving in a federal job—as a member of the Vicksburg National Military Park Commission.
Finally, Lee helped to stimulate interest in history throughout the South. Not only that, he wrote some history himself. Although one of his main efforts in history perhaps was not so laudatory--the attempt to censor and regulate the textbooks used in public schools--he nevertheless gave a needed impetus to the production of more and better historical writing.

Lee was a man of his times, and he had the faults of his class. But he labored to help his region--and he left it better because of his efforts.
CHAPTER I

THE MAN

He was a man of complex loyalties and divided sentiments. He rose during the American Civil War to be the twentieth ranking Confederate general, and later became the Commander-in-chief of the United Confederate Veterans, but he was not an embittered flag-waver for the "Lost Cause." Stephen Dill Lee said in 1900, "The New South is the work of the Confederate soldier, as the Old South was the work of his father. The Confederate soldier loves both." In 1895, addressing his former enemies, he said, "We invite you to invade us again, not this time with your bayonets, but with your business." His life spanned two-thirds of the nineteenth century and spilled over into the twentieth: September 22, 1833, to May 28, 1908. He was a Southern leader in two eras and did his utmost to serve his region as he thought best.

Although Lee had some moments of glory and attention, he has never enjoyed a reputation commensurate with his apparent merit and worth. His distinction as a Civil War leader has not been adequately

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1 Minutes of the Annual Meeting and Reunion of the United Confederate Veterans (New Orleans: United Confederate Veterans, 1891-1912, reissued as Minutes, U.C.V., and hereinafter so cited, 6 volumes, with various financial and committee reports bound in also, New Orleans: United Confederate Veterans, 1907-1913), II (10th), 48.

2 Confederate Veteran (Nashville, January, 1893-December, 1932), III (June, 1895), 176-77.
recognized. There are several reasons for this. He made frequent
moves from one assignment to another and from theater to theater. He
never allowed reporters to travel with him and he gave very few war-
time interviews. More important, he had the kind of personality that
hinders a man from achieving historical notice. He had little flair or
color and he did not attract attention for any oddity. He was neither
stupid nor particularly bright. While he was never responsible for a
disastrous military defeat, his victories were always somewhat less
than spectacular. Essentially, Lee achieved his success because he was
so steadfast. He was honest, straightforward, and devoted to his chosen
tasks to such an extent that his character is sometimes difficult to
delineate or to believe.

Lee himself did not exaggerate his achievements, being an un-
usually modest man. One suspects, however, that his modesty was calcu-
lated. He may have assumed much of it, believing that such a tactic
would give him a greater reputation when the public finally "discovered
the truth." As an old man, Lee was quite touched and concerned about
his place in history.

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4 Dabney Lipscomb pointed this out and said that "an eccentric character would have been easier to depict"; in his article "General Stephen D. Lee; His Life, Character, and Service," in Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, X, 14.
Lee is worthy of study as both a soldier and a civilian. As a soldier, he was not a great battle captain, but he was an extremely good second-echelon commander. The Confederate military establishment badly needed more competent men like him. As a civilian, he had a personal influence upon the development of the New South. Although he retained a nostalgia for the Old South, he adjusted to the society of the New. He saw the necessity for change and advocated dividing the large plantations. He urged Northerners to move South, eventually take up portions of land at low rates and join in helping improve the stagnated Southern economy.6

Lee's choice of the military profession may have been influenced by his family and background. Previous Lees followed many different paths in life, but most of them had a strong martial and patriotic tendency. Lees have contributed voluntarily and significantly to every American war effort since the Revolution.7 But they also showed aptitude in the callings of peace. Several members exhibited an unusual facility for learning languages. One of Lee's great aunts, Mary Elizabeth Lee, was a successful authoress. And one

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6Unidentified clipping, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, 4 volumes, re-assembled by Mrs. John G. Lee, 1967, now at Stephen D. Lee Museum, Columbus, Mississippi, II.

of his great-great-grandfathers was the painter, Jeremiah Theus, a noted American artist.8

These Lees were South Carolinian in origin, but they were related by blood to the Lees of Virginia. Interestingly, for a long time Stephen Lee was not aware of this connection. Once when asked if he were related to Robert E. Lee, Stephen replied that he was not, but added, "I would consider it quite an honor to be."9 Then much later he became interested in genealogy and helped to prepare a family tree. This study revealed a relationship of Francis Lee, Stephen's great-great-great-grandfather with Robert Lee, who had served as Lord Mayor of London in 1602 and was an ancestor of Virginia's Robert E. Lee.10

Stephen was born in Charleston, South Carolina, a fifth generation descendant of Thomas Lee, who had founded the American branch of his family by immigrating from Saint Michaels, Barbados.11 Stephen's paternal grandfather, also named Thomas, was a gifted and prominent judge who died in 1839 after having sired ten children. Thomas Junior, the eighth of these offspring, graduated as a Doctor of Medicine from

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9Unidentified clipping, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, II.

10Read, The Descendents of Thomas Lee, xiii-xiv. Read, a genealogist, concludes that the linkage is correct.

11Ibid., xiii.
the Medical School of South Carolina in 1830. He married Caroline Allison and their first child, a son, arrived soon thereafter. Dr. Lee honored one of his older brothers and gave the same name, Stephen, to the child.\footnote{The material in this paragraph and some in those that follow is based upon \textit{ibid.}, \textit{passim}.}

A second child, Caroline Kezia Rachel, arrived two years later, but the mother died shortly after giving birth. Stephen was too young to have formed a permanent memory of her and as an adult the only recollection he had of his mother was being led by the hand to her funeral.\footnote{Unidentified newspaper clipping from Abbeville, South Carolina, January 15, 1908, in Scrapbooks, "SDL,\" 2 volumes extant, now at Stephen D. Lee Museum, Columbus, Mississippi, II. The existing volumes are identified as II and III. There is no volume I.} Shortly after the tragedy Dr. Lee moved with his children to Anderson County, Abbeville District, where he hoped to rebuild his broken health, severely damaged during an epidemic of fever in Charleston.

In this hilly, almost mountainous upcountry region, Dr. Lee built a new home and here spent the rest of his life. He married Elizabeth Cummings Humphreys in September of 1839, the same month that Stephen celebrated his sixth birthday. Elizabeth bore Dr. Lee five more children, three sons and two daughters.\footnote{Elizabeth Cummings Humphreys Lee died in 1885. Dr. Lee died fifteen years before, in his sixtieth year.}

Young Stephen had a happy childhood with his sister and half-brothers and sisters, but his father was a man of limited means who...
often could provide his family with only the bare necessities. This absence of parental affluence probably left its mark on Stephen and resulted in an unusual sense of thrift during his adult years. Lee occasionally made some generous contributions to the church or to the needy, but sometimes he was conscientious to a fault about financial matters. A notable example is his use of writing paper. He wrote a tremendous number of letters, but he almost never owned any personal stationary. He used letterheads from one organization or another and asked for a new supply whenever he began to run low. The thought of buying his own paper probably never occurred to him, and in a lean moment in 1902 he scrawled out a letter on a paper towel!

Because of his father's economic condition, Stephen received little formal schooling during his early years. Several sources state that he studied for some time in Charleston, but this is doubtful. Yet he at least did visit Charleston as a boy, for he recalled walking within the walls of Fort Moultrie and looking at a marble slab

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16 Hewitt, "Funeral Address," in *Baptist Record*, June 18, 1908, 7.


18 See for example *The South in the Building of the Nation A History of the Southern States Designed to Record the South's Part in the Making of the American Nation; To Portray the Character and Genius, to Chronicle the Achievements and Progress and to Illustrate the Life and Traditions of the Southern People* (13 volumes, Richmond, Virginia: The Southern Publication Society, 1909-1913), XII, 85; typescript resolution by Charleston, South Carolina, United Daughter's of the Confederacy, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, III.
honoring Osceola, the Seminole chief who died there in imprisonment.\textsuperscript{19}

He began his education in 1846, at the age of eleven, when he went off to a boarding school run by his namesake uncle in Asheville, North Carolina. He remained for several years and from his uncle, he undoubtedly soaked up a lot of martial inclination as well as Southern persuasion.

Born in 1801, Dr. Thomas Lee's brother, Stephen, had received an appointment to West Point in 1819. He excelled in mathematics and the French language, but he resigned from the Military Academy for unknown reasons. Later he attended the aristocratic College of Charleston from which he received a Bachelor's degree in 1828 and an appointment as Professor of Mathematics in 1835. During the Civil War he organized a regiment of men for the Confederacy and thereafter until his death in 1879, he was known as "Colonel" Stephen Lee. He and nine of his sons fought for Southern independence.\textsuperscript{20}

Possibly because of his uncle's influence, more probably in order to get a free college education which could not have been afforded otherwise, young Lee decided to apply for an appointment to the Military Academy at West Point. He made his request to James L.

\textsuperscript{19}This recollection was contained in one of many speeches that Lee made after the Civil War urging the United States government to take care of Southerner's graves in the North. Lee said, "If it was meet and fitting that this Indian should be commemorated by the government against which he had fought, how much more so those Americans of your own flesh and blood." Unidentified clipping, in Scrapbooks, "SDL," II.

\textsuperscript{20}Read, The Descendants of Thomas Lee, 114-15; Military Academy Orders 1814-67, Record Group 94, entry 219 (National Archives); U. S. Military Academy Cadet Application Papers 1805-1866, Microcopy 688, reel 11 (National Archives).
Orr while the latter was a candidate for Congress.\textsuperscript{21} If elected, Orr promised he would try to secure the coveted appointment for Stephen. Orr did win, and he wrote out the recommendation in April, 1849, stating that fifteen and one-half year old Stephen was "five feet six inches high and exempt from physical or marital defect or blemish."\textsuperscript{22} But the appointment did not go through in time for Stephen to begin study in 1849, and the eager lad had to wait another year. He reported to West Point on July 1, 1850 and then commenced his career as a soldier.\textsuperscript{23}

Stephen Lee the soldier was a handsome and impressive man. He stood six feet tall, a striking height by the standards of mid-nineteenth century, and he seemed taller than he was. One of his enthusiastic friends exclaimed, "By nature's endowment, he stands like Saul of Kish, higher than the masses from his shoulders and upward."\textsuperscript{24} A thick dark medium-length beard, which he began wearing early in life, tended to make him look older, but also perhaps wiser and more distinguished. In later years his hair and beard grew white and gave him


\textsuperscript{22}U. S. Military Academy Cadet Application Papers 1805-1866, Microcopy 688, reel 177 (National Archives).

\textsuperscript{23}George W. Cullum (ed.), \textit{Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, N. Y. From the Establishment in 1802 to 1890 with the Early History of the United States Military Academy} (3rd edition, 3 volumes, New York: 1891), II, 377.

\textsuperscript{24}Z. T. Leavell, in an unidentified printed biographical sketch of Lee, in \textit{Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee}, III.
something of a noble or majestic appearance. He was fair complexioned and had gray eyes. Acquaintances said he had a gentle kindly voice and always gave a hearty shake of the hand. His grandson remembers that "everyone seemed to hold him in awe." 25

Lee developed the valuable talent of being able to win from others their admiration, confidence, and cooperation. A newspaper reporter observed him as "a man of commanding presence, exquisite courtesy, and superior intelligence, . . . the centre of every circle." 26

Lee never bickered during the Civil War with his associates, and his men always liked him and served well under his leadership. Jefferson Davis is said to have declared late in his life that, "Stephen D. Lee was one of the best all-round soldiers which the war produced," 27 though one wonders if Davis regarded Lee so highly, why Lee was not mentioned in Davis' book, Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government.

Other contemporaries had the same opinion of Lee as Davis is purported to have had. Newspaper editor E. A. Pollard said that, "Lee had one of the best founded reputations of the war," having advanced through every grade from captain to lieutenant general on


26 Unidentified newspaper clipping, in Scrapbooks, "SDL," III.

27 The quote appears in different form in several sources. J. William Jones claims to have been the one to whom Davis made the statement. The South in the Building of the Nation, XII, 87.
merit alone. Another journalist said that Lee's conduct under fire was characterized by "courage, coolness, and obedience to orders no matter what the risk or danger." Those who served under his command could recall "his restless activity and untiring perseverance; his indomitable will which surmounted all obstacles; his strict discipline; his thoughtful care of his command; his reckless disregard of personal danger, and the cool judgment he displayed." A friend and an enemy praised him in similar terms: Confederate General John B. Gordon declared that Lee was "a brilliant campaigner, . . . one of the most effective commanders on the Confederate side," and Federal General William T. Sherman said that Lee was "the most enterprising in all their army."

In the occasional instances when Civil War historians have noticed Lee, they generally credit him with considerable ability. Allan Nevins calls him "an able chief of artillery." Ezra Warner, 28 Pollard, The Early Life, 675, 687.

29 These words are contained in an unidentified clipping in Scrapbooks, "SDL," III. The evaluation harmonizes with most contemporary ratings of Lee.

30 "p.C.R." in The State, August 18, 1877, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.


in his study of all the Confederate generals, points out that Lee's experience with all three branches, artillery, cavalry, and infantry, made him "one of the most capable corps commanders in the army."^{34} Stanley Horn, in *The Decisive Battle of Nashville*, gives Lee high praise, and later added to his opinion by saying: "I feel that he was entirely worthy of Hood's high degree of confidence and esteem, . . . I would say that he was a first rate officer."^{35}

If these evaluations are at all accurate, one is forced to wonder why Lee received promotion so slowly. He did not receive an important command until 1863, and then he led only small bodies of troops and could not demonstrate his full potential. It might be speculated that his youth held him back. True, Lee was the youngest officer on either side to achieve the grade of lieutenant general, but John B. Hood who was only two years his senior, received four stars, and other young generals during the war won high rank faster than Lee did. The probable explanation is that Lee was not sparkling enough to attract sufficient attention to be promoted two or three ranks at a time. This man who could have filled a colonelcy or possibly a brigadier's position, if not one as a corps commander right at the start of the


war, had to wait for seven separate promotions. It was a defect of the Confederate command system that officers like Lee did not come quickly to official notice.

At the same time, it has to be said that Lee had some grave faults. Notably, he did not have a flexible mind. He did not learn as much as he should have from experience or even his own mistakes. Thus he twice launched disastrous frontal assaults against strongly entrenched troops, but could not realize the reasons for his failure: the advantage that increased fire power gave the defense. He ascribed the result to the fact that his men had previously fought from protected positions. "To attack entrenchments," he said, "give me troops who have never served behind them."36

Another example of his rigidity was his inability to appreciate the effect of modern weapons on the use of cavalry. "The sword," he said, "has lost much of its effectiveness by the improved revolver, with which the cavalryman will make the dashing charge with more confidence."37 He recognized that cavalry could no longer charge with the sword, but he insisted that it could still charge. He did not understand that now any kind of cavalry charge was obsolete. In fairness


though, Lee may have glimpsed the concept of cavalry riding to a battle and then fighting on foot, for he said that "a large body of cavalry, as now armed, is a match for almost any emergency, it is an army in motion."38

Even after the war Lee was unable to see that men like William T. Sherman had changed the course of military history, while Lee merely had written some of it. With great bitterness Lee denounced Sherman's methods of waging war, accusing Sherman of conducting brutal campaigns and wantonly destroying property for no military object.39 "As to Sherman, he is very much overrated in my opinion," snorted Lee, "if he ever displayed any generalship--I never saw it. He was timid to a fault."40 Lee never realized that Sherman was, as some writers call him, a "fighting prophet," and an "apostle of modern war."41

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38 Ibid., 433.

39 John K. Bettersworth and James W. Silver (eds.), Mississippi in the Confederacy (2 volumes, Baton Rouge: Published for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History by the Louisiana State University Press, 1961), II, 90.

40 Lee to J. F. H. Claiborne, April 22, 1878, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Aside from his curious attitude toward Sherman, such bitter expressions were rare for Lee after the war. He held very little malice against his successful enemies. This magnanimity in part reflected his ability, like most military men who turned educators in the New South, to abide by the decision of battle, and to fight again on other days in other ways. In part, it reflected his religious sentiment which grew stronger and stronger as he advanced in age.

Lee apparently did not belong to any church before the Civil War. His family, like others in the South of British ancestry, was Anglican or Episcopalian, but at some point various members joined the Congregationalists. Lee's grandfather belonged to this sect before marrying Kezia Miles, a Unitarian. The judge also joined the Unitarians in 1817 and thereby took his family out of the Christian tradition. Stephen Lee admitted that the first serious religious idea he had ever had in his life was at the Second Battle of Manassas. He looked out across a vast open field before the Federals charged over it and said, "Well, there is hell to play here, sure, and . . . General (Robert E.) Lee nor any other general, nothing but some unseen and superintending power, can tell where this thing is going to end."

Lee became a Baptist after he married Regina Lilly Harrison in 1865. She and all her family, staunch Baptists, were very

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43 Read, *The Descendents of Thomas Lee*, 86.

44 Unidentified clipping, dated January, 1908, in Scrapbooks "SDL," III.
strong-willed people, and Lee appropriately soon had a "conversion." He received Baptism, joined his wife's church, later became a deacon, and established a reputation as a "man of prayer." He was popular with the children he taught in Sunday school, many of whom pronounced as their first name: "General Lee." He collected religious homilies and advice on "how to enjoy life" to be placed in his scrapbooks, and he took a prominent part leading the great revival that swept Columbus, Mississippi, in 1907. An observer said, "the general is a bona fide Baptist, and is equally well skilled in Emmanual's tactics, as those of Hardee or Upton."

His favorite scriptural passage was the First Psalm. This Biblical piece says "Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, . . . and look, whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper," Indeed, Lee seems to have adopted such a formula and such optimism as his philosophy of life.


46 Hewitt, "Funeral Address," in Baptist Record, June 18, 1908, 7-8.

47 Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, II.


49 Unidentified newspaper clipping, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.

For over forty years after Appomattox Lee tried to give unstinting loyalty to the United States and at the same time he helped organize and lead the United Confederate Veterans and engaged in many activities aimed at rebuilding his beloved Southland. He became a planter, insurance executive, politician, educator, a patron and a benefactor of history. He displayed what historians call a "divided mind." He revered the Old South, helped to build a new society, and kept his oath of allegiance. "What I swore to I meant," he emphasized, "and it was no empty mockery."51

Lee labored constantly and energetically in efforts to build up the waste places in the South. He believed that the key to success lay in industrial education for Southern youth, and he envisioned a "great industrial future just ahead in Mississippi and the Southern states."52 He espoused the ideals of men like Henry W. Grady and filled his scrapbooks with speeches and papers by members of the "New South" movement. He preached diversification in farming, scientific agriculture, industrial and mechanical progress, and he inculcated such goals to his students.53 Admirers of his educational policies declared: "We would make him governor, or United States Senator, but

51 William B. Hesseltine and Larry Gara, "Mississippi's Confederate Leaders after the War," Journal of Mississippi History, XIII (1951), 98; Minutes, U.C.V., II (9th), 164.


53 Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, especially II; undated material in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection; Bettersworth, People's College, 86.
we cannot spare him from our college."54

When Lee died, the newspapers in more than sixty cities paid
him tribute.55 At least as many plaudits came from outside the South
as from within, and some came even from foreign newspapers. The Memphis
Commercial Appeal touched a recurrent but exaggerated note in stating
Lee was a "knightly gentleman and chivalrous soldier, beloved by every
man, woman and child in Dixie Land."56 The Richmond Times-Dispatch
carried perhaps the most correct and judicious of all the editorial
commentaries. Avoiding false statements and not effusive in praise,
the Richmond paper nonetheless concluded: "He was a splendid soldier
and a fine citizen, and the entire South joins with his mates in the
UCV to mourn his death."57

A year later, the President of the United States had occasion
to give his sentiments about Lee. William Howard Taft took a long
trip in the fall of 1909, and since Columbus, Mississippi was the home
town of his Secretary of War, J. M. Dickinson, he received an official
welcome there and made a speech. In the course of his comments he
recalled Lee and said, "I am indeed sorry it was not given to me to
meet him in person and receive that kindly, gentle influence that he
shed wherever he moved. . . . In regard to the relations in the South

54 The South in the Building of the Nation, XII, 87.
55 Copies are preserved in Scrapbooks, "SDL," II.
56 Reproduced in Dunbar Rowland, History of Mississippi The
Heart of the South (2 volumes, Chicago & Jackson: Clarke Publishing
Company, 1925), II, 316-17.
57 Richmond Times-Dispatch, May 29, 1908.
to the rest of the union, . . . he represented that spirit which I
would invoke on the part of every Southerner.⁵⁸ Taft's tribute
captured the spirit of the ideal for which Lee had made himself a
symbol.

⁵⁸Columbus, Mississippi, newspaper clipping for November 4, 1909, in Scrapbooks "SDL," III.
CHAPTER II

A YOUNG WARRIOR

The education of an effective army officer requires discipline and dedication. A novice battle captain first must love his task so that he can work with devotion to master the existing knowledge of warfare and acquire the ability to apply proven principles. More especially, he must develop his latent abilities and learn to innovate. As Stephen Lee and his classmates were soon to learn, the United States Military Academy at West Point provided not only an atmosphere conducive to this goal, but also a set of standards which required adherence to a rigorous program.

Only a fraction of the young men who began study at West Point with Lee were able to achieve success and become officers. A few more than one-third of Lee's group, forty-six out of one hundred six, received a commission.¹ By the end of his years as a cadet, Lee, perhaps more than most of the others, had learned to perform at the very best of his capability and to achieve as much as he could. The remainder of his military career was characterized by a similar devotion to duty. As early as 1867, one writer concluded that Lee the soldier "had no

dormant powers--his were all awake, highly disciplined and ready for action."2

The academy had changed a great deal since its establishment nearly a half-century before Lee arrived as a student on July 1, 1850. Scarcely any of the original buildings remained, and the board of visitors had condemned the cadet barracks in 1849 as "utterly unfit for occupation." A new building with one hundred seventy-two rooms, each fourteen by twenty-two feet, would be completed two years later, and a fine new mess hall shortly thereafter. The other buildings, mostly built during the preceding decade or two, included a small and already inadequate hospital, a hotel with a large new wing, band barracks, a chapel, ordnance and artillery laboratories, an observatory, and a library.3

As the physical plant was improved, so was the quality of instruction. Captain Henry Brewerton served as Superintendent of West Point during the first half of Lee's cadetship. Dennis H. Mahan was professor of civil and military engineering, and several others were present who distinguished themselves later in the Civil War. These included Mahan's assistant, Brevet Captain Gustavus W. Smith, later

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2 Unidentified author, "Lieutenant General Stephen D. Lee," in *The Land We Love*, II (March, 1867), 324. The author probably was W. H. Brand of Columbia, Missouri. This name is mentioned as the author of such a sketch in D. H. Hill to S. D. Lee, September 8, 1866, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

a Confederate major general and briefly the Secretary of War; Brevet Major Fitz John Porter, then assistant instructor of artillery and later a Union major general; and assistant professor of mathematics, Brevet Captain Edmund Kirby Smith, destined to be the last Confederate general to surrender a force of significant size.4

George H. Thomas, a first lieutenant brevetted major for gallantry in the Mexican War, was the instructor who had the greatest impact upon Lee. Later known as "the Rock of Chickamauga," Thomas instructed the cadets in artillery and cavalry. "A cold, phlegmatic, unimpressionable man he always seemed to me," remembered one of Lee's chums, "but a born soldier."5 Some of Thomas' critics believed he gave high marks for indifferent recitations and perhaps he did, but if a teacher's success is measured by the future performance of his students, Thomas was remarkable. Stephen Lee, Philip Sheridan, and James E. B. ("Jeb") Stuart were all Thomas alumni.6

Lee received superior grades from Thomas, particularly in

4List of the Officers, Professors, Teachers, etc., constituting the Academic and Military Staff of the Military Academy, on the 30th September, 1850, Record Group 92, entry 212 (National Archives); Warner, Generals in Gray, 279-81.


But the ratings were second in importance to the real knowledge Lee gained from him. Conspicuously good service with artillery accounted for all of Lee's Civil War promotions between captain and brigadier general, and his knowledge in cavalry proved to be a great help to the Confederacy on more than one occasion.

The entering seventy members of the class of 1854 were introduced to West Point life in a two month summer encampment. The group moved into barracks by September, 1850, and soon was joined by thirty-six late-arrivals who had been delayed in receiving their appointments. One of the class members described the daily routine: "West Point life embraces recitations, horse-riding, drills, and out-door and in-door instruction." Every new cadet was exposed to some annoyance, but there was no serious hazing. One cadet who had previously attended a civilian college declared that hazing of the freshmen there had been much worse.

Most of what is recorded about the day-to-day life of Lee at West Point was written by his friends. None of Lee's own writings have

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^Lee ranked fourth in his graduating class on the final ratings in cavalry tactics. The report, dated June, 1854, is in Record Group 94, entry 212 (National Archives).

^Hassler (ed.), The General to His Lady, 3-4; Green, Recollections and Reflections, 67; O. O. Howard, My Life and Experiences Among Our Hostile Indians (Hartford: A. D. Worthington and Company, 1907), 55-6.


^Howard, My Life and Experiences, 86.
been found. West Point officials believed that cadets should write home and encouraged the young men to engage in regular correspondence. Lee perhaps wrote few letters to his family.

Lee formed warm relationships with several of the cadets who later achieved high rank in the Civil War armies. William D. Pender was his dearest friend. One year Lee's junior, Pender escaped Lee's initial handicap of low rank in the Confederate Army and began the Civil War as a colonel. He died a major general, suffering from a wound received at Gettysburg, leaving his pregnant twenty-three year old widow to name their posthumously born son, Stephen Lee Pender.

Nine of the graduates in Lee's class became Civil War generals, Lee and Pender both rose to this rank and were close friends with several of the others, including James Stuart (who was called "Beaut" or "Beauty" at this time rather than the later "Jeb"), Custis Lee, John Pegram, and O. O. Howard. All of these served with the Confederacy except Howard, who was one of only two in the class who became Union generals.

Lee and his friends did not suffer from economic difficulties once they entered the Point. True, some had come from humble

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11Freeman, R. E. Lee, I, 340.

12Hassler (ed.), The General to His Lady, 262; Warner, Generals in Gray, 233-34.

13Hassler (ed.), The General to His Lady, 3; Freeman, R. E. Lee, I, 346. The other three in the class who became Civil War generals were Archibald Gracie and J. B. Villepigue for the Confederacy and Henry L. Abbot for the Union.
circumstances, and Lee's family had experienced a number of lean years. But very little money was needed by a cadet and, Lee was able to enjoy relative affluence as a student. His father had recovered some measure of security by 1850 and sent him money in November. Six members of Lee's class had fathers who were physicians, and all were listed as having "moderate" means, the second highest of four financial categories listed in an official West Point survey.

If Lee's financial worries were not significant, he should have worried more at first about his academic pursuits. He probably was jarred to learn in the first few months that the art of soldiering required substantial effort in seemingly non-related subjects. After four months of schooling, his instructors rated him last in a mathematics section of fourteen cadets, and he fared little better in English studies, finishing thirteenth out of fourteen.

In later life, Lee claimed he had a terrific struggle getting through West Point, but in truth he was never in danger of completely failing in his studies. He had to work hard, but he did buckle down to the cold realities and performed rather well thereafter. Ninety-three plebes waded through the semi-annual examinations in January,
1851. Lee ranked forty-first in mathematics and twenty-ninth in English studies. His overall class standing was thirty-seventh. The class ranks had thinned to sixty-three by the end of the academic year, and among the veterans who remained, Lee stood twenty-eighth.

Apparently the physical aspects of the training were easier from the first for Lee to cope with. Perhaps here his uncle's coaching helped him. Each month from July to September, 1850, and again in February, 1851, he was "distinguished for correct deportment." Two hundred demerits in a single year could effectuate a cadet's dismissal; Lee safely accumulated only forty-five during his first twelve months. All of his offenses were minor, and he did not appear on the punishment rolls.

This rather exemplary beginning was followed by a sharp change for the worse in the ensuing year. Lee garnered well over one hundred demerits. His "trifling and inattentive behavior in Mathematical Academy" brought him his first serious punishment. Then in April, 1852, he was cited for "trifling in French class." The nadir of his deportment came in May, when he went on report for "highly insubordinate conduct," and along with six other cadets, was tried and

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18Report of the semi-annual examinations at West Point for January, 1851, Record Group 94, entry 212 (National Archives).

19Report of the Fourth Class according to general merit, June, 1851, Record Group 94, entry 212 (National Archives).

20Conduct rolls, September, 1850 and February, 1851, Record Group 94, entry 232 (National Archives).

21Conduct roll for year 1851, Record Group 94, entry 232 (National Archives).
sentenced by garrison court martial. He was restricted from privileges and was assigned extra duties until the end of June.

Lee trifled very little after this. It was the most serious trouble he ever got into at the academy, and he learned his lesson. During his punishment period he toed strictly to the line and by the end of June, a chasened cadet, he was noted on reports for "outstanding deportment." The new superintendent who took office the following fall had no disciplinary problem with Stephen Lee in the remaining two years of his cadetship.

This significant personnel change, the change in superintendents, brought to the office forty-five year old Captain and Brevet Colonel, Robert E. Lee. A member of Stephen Lee's class observed that the new commander "was one of the finest looking specimens of high manhood, both a-foot and in saddle, but especially the latter, that mortal eye ever rested upon." Superintendent Lee was a real inspiration to the cadets. He immediately stiffened discipline and upgraded academic standards, but he was also sympathetic and understood boys.

The colonel's own son, Custis, was a member of Stephen Lee's class. Custis consistently ranked near the top and ultimately finished in first position. He usually visited his parents' home on

22 Ibid.
23 Freeman, R. E. Lee, I, 319, 326.
24 Green, Recollections and Reflections, 87-88.
25 Freeman, R. E. Lee, I, 325.
Saturday afternoon, often accompanied by one or more of the other cadets. Owing to his friendship with Stephen, the two undoubtedly enjoyed this hospitality together from time to time.

Superintendent Lee occasionally held parties at his residence, inviting some of the cadets to associate with the unattached young ladies who were always present. Stephen recalled attending one such gathering and admitted he had been extremely bashful and too timid to mingle with the female guests. Robert E. Lee won Stephen's everlasting adulation by devoting the greater part of the evening to the "wall flowers," trying to draw them out and make them feel at ease.

Social affairs with desirable members of the opposite sex were a pleasant diversion for most of the cadets, including Lee once he overcame his shyness. An invitation to Superintendent Lee's was highly prized because the academic year did not feature very many opportunities for any mixed social intercourse at all. And even though the summer season saw quite a few "city belles and other fair harpies" besieging the Point, as one cadet complained, they "congregate to whet their beaks on unsophisticated squabs simply to retain normal appetites, cultivate the lures and wiles, and keep their hands in for the winter campaign for larger game on their return to town." During slack times

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26 Ibid., I, 323.

27 Unidentified Louisiana newspaper clipping in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I. It was a speech S. D. Lee made in New Orleans at a celebration of R. E. Lee's birthday.

28 Green, Recollections and Reflections, 91.
the cadets occasionally compensated for the lack of girls by holding a "stag dance"—that is, one with only boys present.\textsuperscript{29} Lee profited from his unofficial social training sessions at the hand of his colonel, and he ultimately developed a social courageousness and a personality to charm many a maid until his marriage late in the Civil War.

Girls and parties occupied a large portion of the cadets' sparse free time, but they also were aware of national political events. Lee's years at the Point covered an exciting period in United States history: the Kansas and Nebraska question arose, the Compromise of 1850 began operation, California was admitted as a state. Sectional strains were plainly evident, even to the budding young soldiers who did lead something of a sheltered life. One said, "It looked as if grim-visaged war was about to cry havoc, and let loose, eight or nine years before the summons came. That it was bound to come was tacitly conceded by all..."\textsuperscript{30} But the cadets, although coming from every part of the country, avoided open hostility among themselves over the problems that divided their homeland and forced them into armed conflict with each other less than a decade later. As a member of the class declared, "The thought with all seemed to be, the dread inevitable is near at hand, but why dissever friendly relations before it comes?"\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29}Lossing, Memoir of Lieut.-Col. John T. Greble, 22.
\textsuperscript{30}Green, Recollections and Reflections, 74.
\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.
So Lee continued his studies in relative calm. As a member of the Second Class in 1852-53, he accumulated only forty-five demerits, receiving punishment for "making improper use of the barracks" (probably horseplay), "carrying his musket improperly" while on sentinel duty, "quitting hold of his gun in duty box," and for "laughing at artillery drill." Such offenses merely marked him as being like other young men, capable of engaging in occasional frivolity. He was perhaps a warmer person than the records often seem to indicate.

In academic studies, he continued to rate somewhat above the middle of his class. An occasional exceptionally high standing in one subject, such as ninth in the class for drawing in February, 1853, would be followed by a low mark in that subject the following month. He finished the year fifteenth out of fifty-two, getting outstanding marks in philosophy and conduct. It was his best showing.

He got into minor disciplinary trouble as a First Class cadet, but he avoided serious breaches of regulations and maintained his studies at his usual level. He made the list of thirteen who were "distinguished for correct deportment" during the month of December, 1853, but otherwise he was neither honored nor punished. He collected

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32 Conduct rolls for the year 1852-53, Record Group 94, entry 232 (National Archives).
33 Ibid.
34 Merit rolls of the Second Class as determined at the general examination in June, 1853; Record Group 94 (National Archives). Lee stood nineteenth in chemistry and twenty-fifth in drawing.
a total of one hundred thirty-nine demerits for the year. The midpoint of the Class of 1854's last year approached, and the cadets steeled themselves for the final rounds of examinations. Among the forty-six First Classmen who completed the January, 1854 semi-annual examinations, Lee ranked twenty-sixth in engineering, twenty-second in ethics, and twenty-fourth in mineralogy. Four months later, on the last tests, he rated twenty-third in engineering, eighteenth in ethics, nineteenth in mineralogy and geology, eighteenth in infantry tactics, nineteenth in artillery tactics, and fourth in cavalry tactics. He was seventh among the fifteen in the class who were recommended as best qualified for the mounted service. In the final class standing for the entire four years, he was seventeenth--four points above the next lowest cadet and eleven above his friend, Pender, but seventy-nine below the next highest man and five hundred sixty-seven points behind the class leader, Custis Lee.

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35 Conduct rolls for the year 1853-54, Record Group 94, entry 232 (National Archives).
37 First Class arranged according to merit, June, 1854, Record Group 94, entry 212 (National Archives).
38 Cadets especially recommended for promotion in the mounted service, June, 1854, Record Group 94, entry 212 (National Archives).
39 First Class according to general merit, June, 1854, Record Group 94, entry 212 (National Archives).
Lee and his comrades graduated, went off on leave, and then returned for their new assignments. The class proudly displayed their rings with the emblem they had selected, a mailed hand holding a sword and the prophetic motto, "When Our Country Calls." Thirty-seven of the forty-six fought later in the Civil War, twenty-three as Federals and fourteen with the Confederacy.

Assignments of graduates from the Military Academy to corps and regiments were made on a merit and choice basis. The Academic Board recommended one or more corps to which a man must be assigned, those cadets with the higher ratings being eligible for more of the "elite" duty slots. For example, the top three cadets in Lee's class were allowed to choose any corps they wished, and they were the only ones who could have selected Engineers. The next group, four in number, had for their best choice the Topographical Engineers, a separate corps. Lee fell into the third group, seventeen cadets who were offered Ordnance, Artillery, Infantry, Dragoons, or Mounted Riflemen in that order. Lee chose to join the Fourth Regiment of Artillery.

He may have known some of the regiment's history. The Fourth

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40 Freeman, R. E. Lee, I, 346; Record Group 94, entry 232 (National Archives). Each class at West Point selected its own ring emblems, there being no uniform standard from year to year.


42 Reports of the Academic Board, Record Group 94, entry 4, page 507, #38 (National Archives).

43 Record of Assignments for the Class of 1854, Record Group 94, entry 230 (National Archives).
Artillery dated back to the American Revolution, when it had served well and had been ably commanded by Thomas Proctor, but it was dissolved after playing a minor part in the War of 1812. A new Fourth Regiment came into being when Congress on March 2, 1821, authorized the creation of four regiments from the two existing artillery units and the ordnance. Units of the Fourth saw duty in various parts of the country but nothing spectacular happened until the Mexican War. They fought in many battles during that conflict and achieved high distinction at Buena Vista. General Winfield Scott awarded to it the guns the regiment captured at that battle "in perpetual token of its achievement." The guns were inscribed "Remember this, and show yourselves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors," and placed on display in the administration building at West Point. Lee doubtless had seen them, and perhaps the inspiration they gave was a factor that influenced his choice of allegiance in 1861.


47 Rodenbough, The Army of the United States, 356-57. The guns were later embedded in masonry on the flanks of the Administration Building portal.
It was more than five months before Lee reported for active duty. His absence may have been due to illness, for he was in poor health after arriving at his first post. His commission, signed by Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, reached him in South Carolina sometime in August. It indicated that he was to rank as a second lieutenant from the first day of July, and that he was assigned to Company D, Fourth Artillery.48

The United States then was following a policy of scattering the units of a regiment all over the country, some serving as foot troops, some as cavalry, or mounted riflemen, or foot garrisons.49 Company D was stationed at Ringgold Barracks, far down in the southern tip of Texas near the Rio Grande and the Mexican border. Lee had permission to delay joining his company until October 15, 1854, but something happened while he was passing through New Orleans, and he requested and was granted another extension of leave.50 Probably some malady necessitated this extra stay in south Louisiana.

On December 6, 1854, the twenty-one year old second lieutenant reached Ringgold Barracks. Stationed there were five companies of the Fifth Infantry and their chief, Colonel Gustavus Loomis who also

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48Lee's commission, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

49Downey, Sound of the Guns, 119; Rodenbough, The Army of the United States, 358.

50Post returns, Ringgold Barracks, Microcopy 617, reel 1019 (National Archives).
served as post commander, plus two companies of Mounted Riflemen, and
Company D, Fourth Artillery; in all, twenty officers and five hundred and
seven men.\textsuperscript{51} The usual rule was to staff a unit at less than its full
strength, but Company D had thirteen more troopers than the forty-two
it was authorized. Lee and his immediate superior, Captain Joseph
Roberts, were the only two officers in the company and had to perform
the duties that normally would be done by five or perhaps six consid­
ering the extra strength.\textsuperscript{52}

Lee spent nearly two years here getting valuable first-hand
lessons in how to practice his profession. He had lingering troubles
with his health, intermittent fever, and went on a convalescent leave
to Brazos Santiago in March. A minor complication arose when he was
unable to get a steamboat to return him on time and he was carried on
the rolls as "Absent Without Official Leave." But on returning he was
able to clear up the matter. Captain Roberts meanwhile was transferred
from the post and was succeeded by First Lieutenant Clement L. Best,
then shortly afterwards the post was taken by First Lieutenant William
A. Nimmo. Lee gained temporary command experience when Nimmo went on
sick leave in May.\textsuperscript{53} It was Lee's first of several opportunities to
command, and as the months slipped by he began to season and mature.

\textsuperscript{51}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{52}\textit{Ibid.; Rodenbough, The Army of the United States, 358.}

\textsuperscript{53}Post returns, Ringgold Barracks, Microcopy 617, reel 1019
(National Archives).
A new adventure began in the fall of 1856. The United States had previously fought two wars against the Seminole Indians in Florida, and a third was then imminent. A small part of the tribe had refused to relocate in the West and had hidden in the Everglades and in the big cypress swamps. They raided white settlements, ran off cattle and horses, robbed wagon trains and stage lines, and occasionally shot a settler. The Indians numbered only about five hundred in all, but under the leadership of "Billy Bowlegs," they were effective in harassing the white settlers, who had been apprehensive and fearful of new Indian attacks since January, 1855 and who maintained constant panic and frequent calls for aid from the government. United States officials finally yielded to pressure and on November 2, Lee and most of the garrison from Ringgold departed the post, travelled via Fort Brown to the Gulf of Mexico, and boarded the steamer Ranchero bound for Florida.

The regular troops disliked the fact that they were supposed to wipe the Indians out. They preferred to try and capture them. Regular officers often would rankle the exuberant and numerous volunteer companies and militia units by expressing pleasure with the outcome of

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54 Howard, My Life and Experiences, 74-75. Unfortunately no history of this "Third Seminole War" has been published.


56 Post returns, Ringgold Barracks, Microcopy 617, reel 1019 (National Archives).
engagements relatively free from bloodletting, saying "We haven't lost Indians." But the government desired to maintain Federal control of military actions in Florida as well as to placate the complaining settlers, and therefore quite a few more regular officers and men were moved into the area.

Lee's company located at Fort Myers, some twenty miles up the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River and about one hundred miles south of Tampa. The post was well laid out and had comfortable quarters, and an abundance of ornamental trees and shrubs, particularly oleanders. Described by one of Lee's friends as a "rather picturesque looking place," it was nevertheless a carefully arranged and efficient post. A number of Seminoles who had been captured were kept there in camp, and of course they had to be guarded. The artillery units were without their big guns, and served in the capacity of foot troops while performing their duties. Because they continued to wear the identifying color of their corps, they were called "Red-legged Infantry."

On January 24, 1857, Lee's promotion to first lieutenant arrived. It had been signed by President Franklin Pierce and Secretary of War Jefferson Davis on November 27th and gave Lee the higher

57 Howard, My Life and Experiences, 88, 94.
58 Ibid., 76; Post returns, Ringgold Barracks, Microcopy 617, reel 1019 (National Archives).
59 Lossing, Memoir of Lieut.-Col. John T. Greble, 35; Howard, My Life and Experiences, 77, 81-82.
60 Lee's acknowledgement of his commission of first lieutenant, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
The commission also reassigned Lee to Company F, then commanded by Captain John C. Pemberton, the ill-fated future "defender of Vicksburg," whom Lee came to know intimately and to admire very much.62

Several officers were present in the area who later became Union generals. Lee's friend and classmate, O. O. Howard, was chief of ordnance; Captain Winfield Scott Hancock was depot quartermaster. The others included Captains William W. Burns, Randolph B. Marcy, and the future Federal cavalry commander at Gettysburg, Alfred Pleasanton.63

Colonel Gustavus Loomis, Lee's former post commander at Ringgold, was in charge of Fort Brooke at Tampa, the Department of Florida Headquarters. By summer, 1857, he was fed up with the over-zealous campaigning of the volunteer units and determined to try and make a peace with the Indians without waiting for them to make the first move. He named O. O. Howard a "peace commissioner," and sent him with some of the captured Indians, including women and children, with a sixty-man escort to find Chief Billy Bowlegs and try to make a bargain.64 Captain J. A. Brown had overall charge of the escort detachment and

61Lee's commission, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

62Pollard, The Early Life, 675; Lee to Mrs. C. E. Wright, October 22, 1904, in John C. Pemberton Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

63Howard, My Life and Experiences, 81.

64Ibid., 89.
commanded one of its two sections; Lee commanded the other.65

The expedition got under way in late June, rendezvoused at Fort Deynaud far up the Caloosahatchee, and proceeded toward Lake Okeechobee. Part of the trip was through swamps and difficult terrain, but the group took easy marches and frequent rests. Howard grabbed a few minutes of sleep during so many halts that Lee joked he thought "a nap better than a toddy."66 They met no hostile Indians, and the two friends had an enjoyable trip together.

But unfortunately by meeting no hostile Indians, they were also unable to talk with any rebelling chiefs and could not accomplish their mission. After reaching Lake Okeechobee, they released an Indian woman and child to return to their tribe, whereupon the soldiers started back.67

During the return trip, while crossing a meadow, Lee and Howard saw a strange apparition. Such meadows as they were crossing, or prairies as these fields were called in Florida, were about a quarter of a mile square, and covered with a long yellow grass. The meadows usually surrounded a pond, and during the wet season many of them were

65Ibid., 89-90; Francis N. Page to Captain J. A. Brown, June 15, 1857, and Page to Lee, same date, Records of the Department of Florida, 1856-1858, Record Group 393, entry 4, p. 231 (National Archives).

66Howard later remarked "and so in time it proved to be," in Howard, My Life and Experiences, 90.

67Ibid., 91.
flooded. The time was then somewhat before the wet season but there were daily showers. Lee and Howard were riding a short distance ahead of the main body. Suddenly, high in the air, they saw a striking scene. It was a distinct image of soldiers, ambulances, and army wagons moving amid the clouds. If they had been superstitious, they might have reflected that the mirage was a portent of coming civil war in which they would fight on opposite sides.

Back at Fort Brooke, Lee was assigned the duty of mustering into service more of the anxious volunteer troops. He journeyed to Ocala, Florida, and there helped to organize five companies of mounted men. He saw to their immediate subsistence, issued them their first equipment, and then ordered them to march toward Fort Brooke. The task took about a month, from mid-July to mid-August.

Meanwhile Colonel Loomis kept his command engaged capturing quite a few more Indians. But Lee was not to see any more field action in Florida, for on August 22, 1857, he became Acting Assistant Adjutant General of the Department. Soon the Seminoles made another peace, and all but a small remnant of the tribes were moved to the Indian

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69 Howard, My Life and Experiences, 91.

70 Francis N. Page to Captain C. L. Kilburn, July 13, 1857; Page to Lee, July 15; Lee to Colonel Gustavus L. Loomis, July 20; Page to Lee, July 26; Lee to Loomis, July 28 and August 1; Page to Lee, August 2; Lee to Loomis, August 5 and 8; Page to Lee, August 9; Lee to Loomis, August 16, all in Records of the Department of Florida, 1856-1858, Record Group 393, entry 4 (National Archives).
Territory west of the Mississippi River. Lee served at his desk job until September 18, and then left with his regiment. The Fourth Artillery now drew duty in another turbulent and troubled area, the Kansas Territory.\(^1\)

Following the "Wakarusa War" and then the "Pottawatomie massacre" civil war had been touched off in Kansas. It was an irregular, guerrilla conflict conducted by armed bands. Even after a semblance of order was restored by Federal troops, occasional flare-ups occurred, and it was necessary to use force in quelling the disturbances. The Fourth Artillery arrived in October, 1857, and occupied posts in what are now the states of Kansas, Utah, and Nebraska.\(^2\)

Lee was at Fort Leavenworth, a post with seventy officers commanded by Brigadier General W. S. Harney. Unfortunately Lee's opinions about the situation he witnessed in Kansas are not among the records. But he was not called upon to join in the actual police actions, so any qualms he might have had did not come to a test. He was appointed regimental quartermaster upon leaving Florida and occupied that position for the rest of his tour in the U. S. Army. When his company left Leavenworth after a few months there, he remained on detached service and attended to commissary and supply problems.\(^3\)

\(^{1}\)Howard, My Life and Experiences, 94-95; Francis N. Page to General Samuel Cooper, August 31, 1857 and September 30, 1857, both in Records of the Department of Florida, 1856-1858, Record Group 393, entry 4 (National Archives).

\(^{2}\)Post returns, Fort Leavenworth, Microcopy 617, reel 611 (National Archives).

\(^{3}\)Ibid.; Samuel Cooper to Francis S. Belton, October 31, 1857, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
On May 16, 1858, Lee departed Leavenworth and by August 2 he joined the garrison of Fort Laramie, Nebraska Territory. Exactly where he was or what he did in between the two dates is not known, except for one note in a government report indicating that he went to Utah. At Fort Laramie he became post treasurer and had considerably greater responsibility as regimental quartermaster. One hundred twenty-seven civilians, clerks, wagon masters, carpenters, blacksmiths, and teamsters were employed there in Lee's department and he had general charge of them. Their payroll amounted to as much as $5,404.00 per month.

On November 9, 1858, Lee took a seven-month leave. A record of where he went has not been found. With that amount of time free, perhaps he went home to South Carolina. He had to report back to Fort Leavenworth on June 5, 1859 with a group of recruits he had been assigned to conduct there. Then he transferred to Fort Randall, Dakota Territory.

Although Fort Randall was a small fort with untamed Indians on all sides, the duty was rather humdrum and the months crept by while he

74 Post returns, Fort Leavenworth, Microcopy 617, reel 611 (National Archives).

75 Post returns, Fort Laramie, Microcopy 617, reel 595 (National Archives).

76 Ibid.

77 Post returns, Fort Randall, Microcopy 617, reel 988 (National Archives).
served as quartermaster, commissary, and ordnance officer. The dull routine was enlivened as 1860 ended and news began arriving of Abraham Lincoln's election to the presidency and of impending secession by the South.

Nearly three months elapsed after South Carolina left the Union before Lee tendered his resignation from the U. S. Army. Did he delay, not wanting to make the decision, or was the news just slow in arriving? A man who knew him said Lee took the step with regret and that "he was never sanguine of the success of the Southern movement for independence." But Lee did take the step, and if he truly feared that the South had no chance, he never showed it in his later actions.

Lee was granted permission to return to his home to await the decision upon his letter of resignation. He left Fort Randall and rode in an army wagon, with a small escort to Sioux City. From there he caught a stage to Saint Joseph, Missouri, and then by rail and horseback, he hurried on his journey to Charleston.

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79 Pollard, The Early Life, 675.

80 Post returns, Fort Randall, Microcopy 617, reel 988 (National Archives).

81 Unidentified newspaper clipping in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.
CHAPTER III

ACROSS THE RUBICON

South Carolina had withdrawn from its union with the United States on December 20, 1860. Until the Confederacy was formed, the Palmetto State, at least in theory, was a separate nation, and as such it maintained its own army. S. D. Lee's resignation from the U. S. forces was accepted February 20, 1861, and immediately on arriving home, he reported to Governor Francis Pickens who appointed him a captain in the state's Regular Artillery Service. Lee and other professional soldiers assumed duties which had been performed up to that time by cadets of the Citadel and various volunteers.

There was a United States Army garrison located at Charleston, under the command of Major Richard H. Anderson. After South Carolina seceded, Anderson moved his force of about eighty-five officers and men plus an additional forty-three civilians into Fort Sumter, the strongest of several installations in the harbor. South Carolina demanded that Anderson evacuate his command of "foreign troops" from the state, but he refused. Then on January 9, 1861, Citadel cadets fired upon and drove back the merchant ship Star of the West, which was bringing reinforcements and supplies to Sumter. An impasse had developed: the South

\footnote{Data for sketch of life of Stephen D. Lee, in John Francis Hamtrack Claiborne Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina; John Coxe, "Recollections of Gen. S. D. Lee," in Confederate Veteran, XXXII (March, 1924), 95.}
Carolinians could not get Anderson out, and Anderson could not get help in.

Civil War was brewing but neither side quite knew how to get ready for it. Actions proceeded in a curious and gentlemanly way. South Carolina officials allowed Anderson to receive a daily mail and fresh beef and vegetables from Charleston. Anderson meanwhile methodically proceeded to strengthen Sumter's defenses, while at the same time the state military authorities took possession of Fort Moultrie, Castle Pinckney, the arsenal in Charleston, and other former United States property in the area. The Southerners also mounted guns at Fort Moultrie, and constructed batteries on Sullivan's, Morris, and James Islands, and at other nearby places. Lee had a responsible role in some of these activities.

Meanwhile other states seceded, the Confederate government was formed, and most of South Carolina's army was integrated into the armed forces of the new nation. The Confederacy sent a new commander to take charge of operations at Charleston and to assume control of the state troops nearby. The man sent was the Creole general, thought by many to look like Napoleon in a gray uniform, Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard.

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He arrived on March 3, 1861 and three days later Stephen D. Lee became a member of his personal staff. This staff was loaded with high luminaries, ex-governors, and senators, but Lee undoubtedly got his position by impressing Beauregard with crissnese and effective performance of duty. A worthy officer was likely to stand out and catch Beauregard's eye, for he was generally displeased with the soldiers at Charleston. "I find a great deal in the way of zeal and energy around me," he wrote on March 11, "but little professional knowledge and experience."  

Beauregard made a survey of the harbor works and decided that too much effort was being expended in preparations for an assault on Fort Sumter and not enough in preventing a reinforcement from the sea, or perhaps even from the harbor's rear. He ordered that batteries be located near the mouth of Stone River, and on the southern tip of Morris Island, and he stationed troops on James Island. Lee supervised the work on Morris Island, and put his West Point engineering lessons to good use.  

When not engaged in other activities, Lee remained close to Beauregard's headquarters. The twenty-seven year old captain obviously

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4Compiled Service Records of Confederate General and Staff Officers and Nonregimental Enlisted Men, Microcopy 331, reel 155 (National Archives), hereinafter cited as Compiled Service Records.  
5O. R., I, 274; Williams, Beauregard, 52.  
7O. R., I, 277.
had administrative ability, which Beauregard determined to make the most of. Lee became acting assistant commissary general and acting assistant quartermaster general, and a day after joining the staff, he wrote the Confederate Secretary of War, L. Pope Walker, applying for a commission in the adjutant general's corps of the Confederate States Army. Lee later said on several occasions that he found non-combatant duties to be distasteful, but he admitted at this time that he would accept a desk job if it would give him any higher rank. Perhaps Beauregard had urged him to follow this course, because the Creel personally penned a recommendation for approval. Lee did list three other acceptable assignments: artillery, dragoons, and infantry—in that order.\(^8\)

Lee unquestionably was better suited for active duty in the field, and the Confederate authorities wisely recognized this by commissioning him a captain in the regular corps of artillery. The appointment was confirmed on March 16, 1861, but the papers were not filled out and dispatched until March 29. For some reason, probably pressure and activity concerning the delicate situation at Charleston and Fort Sumter, Lee did not receive, sign, and return the necessary documents until sometime in the week of April 21-27. In the meantime Beauregard gave Lee the additional task of acting as assistant adjutant general, and Lee continued to function as a member of the South Carolina

\(^8\)Compiled Service Records, Microcopy 331, reel 155 (National Archives).
army on detached service to the Creole's headquarters. 9

During the five weeks after Lee joined Beauregard's staff, both Confederate and Union authorities moved closer to war. Attitudes hardened, and in the first week of April, Beauregard stopped allowing provisions to enter Sumter. Washington officials decided at the same time to hold the fort by force if necessary, and to send a naval relief expedition with supplies. The Confederates ultimately decided to take action and try to capture the place before it could be made any stronger. The Rebels prepared for possible infantry action as well as an artillery bombardment, and on April 9 Lee checked to see that each man had a basic load of one hundred forty rounds for all small arms. 10

On Thursday, April 11, Beauregard felt ready to make his move. A heavy swell out at sea was keeping the Federal steamer Baltic from approaching Fort Sumter with its load of provisions. 11 Beauregard drafted a formal demand that Anderson surrender, finished it by noon, and called several aides, including Lee, to his office.

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9 The commission is in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection. The last document found signed by Lee as a member of the South Carolina Army is Lee to Commanding Officer, Fort Johnson, April 21, 1861 and the first which he signed as a member of the Confederate Army is Special Orders No. 102, April 27, 1861, both in R. G. M. Dunnavant Papers, Duke University. Lee began signing as acting assistant adjutant general on March 16, but an official appointment to that post has not been found.

10 Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

Beauregard entrusted his order to two aides, Colonel James Chesnut who had been a United States Senator from South Carolina until the preceding December, and Lee. Lieutenant Colonel A. R. Chisolm, an aide-de-camp to Governor Pickens, joined them. The three shoved off from Charleston wharf at 2:20 P.M., and headed for Fort Sumter in a small rowboat flying a white flag. Lee still wore his blue uniform of the United States army, as was the practice of most recently resigned officers. Naturally he removed the United States insignia, and perhaps he wore some special regalia as did others on Beauregard's staff. For example, his companion Colonel Chesnut sported what one female observer described as "the bravest of aide-de-camp toggeries, sword and red sash."^14

One hour and twenty-five minutes after leaving Beauregard, the aides reached Sumter. The Federal officer of the day, Lieutenant Jefferson Davis (no relation to the Confederate president), met the boat at the wharf just as Colonel Chesnut was getting out. Lee and Chisolm disembarked, and the three of them walked into the guardroom, where Major Anderson met them. "We were welcomed by the major with great courtesy," Lee and the other aides wrote in their report. "After

^12Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection; Manley Wade Wellman, They Took Their Stand; The Founders of the Confederacy (New York: Putnam, 1959), 82.


receiving and reading our communication, he left us to consult with his officers. About 4:30 he again joined us." \(^{15}\)

Some records indicate Anderson conferred with his officers for an hour or more; the aides recalled that they were alone only a little over thirty minutes. \(^{16}\) At any rate, Lee and Chesnutt had sufficient time and freedom to surreptitiously inspect various aspects of Sumter's defenses. When they returned to Charleston, they exuberantly proclaimed that "the Federals would have to give up that fort, or be burned alive in it." \(^{17}\)

Anderson finally returned with a written reply. \(^{18}\) He would not surrender. The aides accepted the answer and had a few brief moments of courteous conversation with Anderson as they all walked together toward the wharf. Then Anderson made a comment that threw a whole new light upon the matter. He first asked if Beauregard would open fire at once, without giving further notice. Colonel Chesnutt hesitated to answer, for certainly he did not know, but finally he assured Anderson that further warning would come before the Confederates commenced fire.


\(^{16}\) Crawford, who was present himself at Sumter, says in Genesis, 423 that Anderson's session lasted an hour; Williams in Beauregard, 57 concludes it was over an hour; Lee in B. & L., I, 59 indicated that it was less than forty-five minutes.

\(^{17}\) Rowland (ed.), Varina Hallowell, 54.

\(^{18}\) O.R., I, 18.
Then, as Lee wrote in his diary, Anderson stated, "If not hacked to pieces by our batteries he would be starved out in a few days."\textsuperscript{19}

The Confederates apparently did not realize the importance of Anderson's statement at first. Of course, it meant that perhaps the fort could be taken without a fight at all. After the three aides got into their boat, Colonel Chesnut had a sudden flash of insight. He asked Anderson to repeat what he had said and if it would be permissible to include the remark in a report to Beauregard. Anderson was reluctant, but he did consent.\textsuperscript{20} The aides shoved off and Lee noted the time to be 4:40 P.M.\textsuperscript{21}

It took the boat only thirty minutes to get back to Charleston.\textsuperscript{22} The tide undoubtedly helped speed the trip, but the aides probably urged their boatmen to greater effort, being anxious to tell Beauregard all that had happened. And what they had to say interested the Creole very much indeed. He quickly exchanged telegrams with the Confederate Secretary of War, and received orders to ask Anderson to state a specific time when he would evacuate the fort. If Anderson's reply to this and other conditions was not satisfactory, Beauregard was authorized to take Sumter by force. Lee and his associates would have to

\textsuperscript{19}Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

\textsuperscript{20}Catton, The Coming Fury, 309.

\textsuperscript{21}Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

\textsuperscript{22}O.R., I, 59.
make another boat trip. It would be a long night.\textsuperscript{23}

Word went out along the string of Confederate batteries. Everything was made ready for action. Lieutenant Colonel Chisolm secured better transportation for the group of aides, a barge manned by six Negro oarsmen.\textsuperscript{24} Lee, Chesnut, and Chisolm listened carefully to Beauregard's instructions. They were to deliver the ultimatum to Anderson, and decide themselves whether or not the Union commander's answer was satisfactory. If not, they were to go at once to Fort Johnson on James Island, and order a signal gun to fire. That would be the indication for general firing of all the Confederate guns.

Chesnut and Lee thus became official representatives of their government. They fully understood Beauregard's conditions, and they had sufficient insight and experience to warrant their being delegates the authority to evaluate Anderson's reply and act accordingly. It was not foolish, as some students have proclaimed, for Beauregard to entrust the aides with this duty.

They left Beauregard at 11:00 P.M.\textsuperscript{25} On the way to their boat they were joined by Roger Pryor, a hot tempered and loose-tongued Virginia congressman who had come to Charleston with one purpose—to help prod the South into striking a blow.\textsuperscript{26} The boat slipped off

\textsuperscript{23}Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

\textsuperscript{24}Wellman, They Took Their Stand, 85.

\textsuperscript{25}O.R., I, 60.

\textsuperscript{26}Lee in B. & L., I, 76.
silently into the rather foggy night and reached Sumter forty-five minutes after midnight.\textsuperscript{27}

Major Anderson again called his officers into a private conference while the Confederates waited. The three aides were inside the fort; Pryor waited in the boat because he suddenly grew apprehensive at the last minute and remembered that as his home state of Virginia was still in the Union, he had no business at all being where he was. The Federals debated so long that the Southerners grew impatient. "Major Anderson made every possible effort to retain the aides till daylight," Lee recalled, "making one excuse and then another for not replying."\textsuperscript{28}

Time crept by and nerves grew thin. At one point Anderson snapped, "You have twice fired on my flag, and if you do so again, I will open fire on your batteries." He was referring to several shots already exchanged—all hastily apologized for as "target practice," and "terrible carelessness of inexperienced gunners." On March 8, one shot actually had hit the fort.\textsuperscript{29} Finally at 3:15 A.M., Anderson gave his answer. He would evacuate on April 15, four days away.

But Anderson added so many "ifs" to his agreement to evacuate, that his answer became no answer at all—if he was not fired upon, if he was not resupplied, and if he received no orders to the contrary.

\textsuperscript{27} O.R., I, 60; Wellman, \textit{They Took Their Stand}, 85.

\textsuperscript{28} Lee in \textit{B. & L.}, I, 75.

\textsuperscript{29} Anderson's quote is cited from Wellman, \textit{They Took Their Stand}, 85; The early shots at Sumter are colorfully discussed in Ashley Halsey, Jr., \textit{Who Fired the First Shot? And Other Stories of the Civil War} (New York: Hawthorn, 1963).
The Confederate officers took only five minutes to decide that the reply was unsatisfactory. And the decision met with Beauregard's complete approval. The general undoubtedly would have decided the same thing had he been present in person.

Sitting in one of the casemates of the fort, Colonel Chesnut dictated the wording of a note, Captain Lee wrote it down, and Lieutenant Colonel Chisolm made a copy. The Confederacy would open fire upon Fort Sumter one hour from that moment. It was then exactly 3:20 A.M. 30 Lee noticed that Anderson studied the announcement and seemed to be profoundly moved. "He seemed to realize the full import of the consequences, and the great responsibility of his position. Escorting us to the boat at the wharf, he cordially pressed our hands in farewell, remarking, 'if we never meet in this world again, God grant that we may meet in the next.'" 31

It took about a half hour to row over to Fort Johnson in the thickening haze and fog. The aides arrived and immediately informed the commander, Captain George S. James, to open fire at the appointed time. 32 After a brief discussion, the aides left and traveled in the boat for nearly twenty minutes, until they were about one-third the distance between Fort Johnson and Fort Sumter. 33 The fog was spotty by this

30 Lee in B. & L., I, 75-76.
31 Ibid., 76.
32 O.R., I, 60; Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
33 Lee in B. & L., I, 76.
time, and the men in the boat could see both forts. Someone ordered the oarsmen to stop rowing, and the boat drifted in silence for ten minutes. 34

Finally the suspense was ended. There was a flash of light and a dull explosion. Arching high in the air, the path of the mortar round could be traced by the burning fuse. 35 Lee said that "Captain James was a skillful officer, and the firing of the shell was a success. It burst immediately over the fort, apparently about one hundred feet above." 36 The shot had been intended as a signal, and the shell was a special one designed to give off a lot of light. One observer remembered that the burning fuse looked "like the wings of a firefly." 37 There is an apparently apocryphal story, no doubt spawned by proud South Carolinians, that the shell burst looked like a perfect palmetto in flame.

Lee wrote:

The firing of the mortar woke the echoes from every nook and corner of the harbor, and in this the dead hour of night, before dawn, that shot was a sound of alarm that brought every soldier in the harbor to his feet, and every man, woman, and child in the city of Charleston from their beds. A thrill went through the whole city. It was felt that the Rubicon was passed. No one thought of going home; unused as their ears were to the appalling sounds, or the vivid flashes from the batteries, they stood for hours fascinated with horror. 38

35 Ibid., 313.
36 Lee in B. & L., I, 76.
37 Catton, The Coming Fury, 313.
38 Lee in B. & L., I, 76-77.
Two more batteries opened up within ten minutes of the first firing, and by 4:45 A.M. the Confederate installations were all shooting. Anderson chose to return no fire until 7:30 A.M.\textsuperscript{39} The aides reached Charleston and walked into Beauregard's office at about daylight.\textsuperscript{40}

The bombardment continued all day on April 12. "Tolerable good firing on our side;" Lee noted, "rather wild from Sumter."\textsuperscript{41} Actually neither side was doing any real damage to the other. There was lots of noise, but it was a bloodless conflict. All of Anderson's guns were smoothbores which fired round shot, and hence were out of effective range. Beauregard's guns too, with one exception, were of the same type and unable to hurt the fort any more seriously than to batter the walls and leave pock-like marks. One touch of gloom was added to the scene by a dull drizzle of rain that fell all day.\textsuperscript{42}

Strong winds and cold, driving rain came on the night of April 12-13, but the next morning dawned bright and sunny. The Federal naval relief expedition dropped anchors just outside the harbor, afraid to enter the area of fire. Anxious Confederate hoped to bring matters to a climax soon, and superstitious Charleston observers interpreted the

\textsuperscript{39}\textit{Ibid.}, I, 77.
\textsuperscript{40}\textit{O.R.}, I, 60.
\textsuperscript{41}Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
\textsuperscript{42}Williams, \textit{Beauregard}, 58-59.
beautiful day as a good omen.43

Between 7:00 and 8:00 A.M., hot shot fired from Fort Moultrie landed within the walls of Sumter and caused a portion of the barracks to burst into flames.44 The Confederates saw this and redoubled their firing in an attempt to keep the Federals too busy to extinguish the fire. Meanwhile Major Anderson's men continued to discharge their guns, but at longer intervals, taking time in between to fight the flames. Lee said that "this brave action, under such a trying ordeal, aroused great sympathy and admiration on the part of the Confederates for Major Anderson and his gallant garrison." The Rebels gave a cheer whenever the Yankees fired, and they jeered the Federal vessels which elected to remain in safety outside the harbor instead of coming to Sumter's aid.45

Lee noted in his diary, "terrible cannonading from all the batteries--during the fire shells fall thick and fast in and around the doomed fortress--but still their Flag bids defiance."46 But suddenly, near midday, that flag went down. Beauregard dispatched Lee, Roger Pryor, and William Porcher Miles to go and ask Anderson if the Federals wanted any help. Of course this was also a subtle way of checking to

43Ibid., 59.

44Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

45Lee in B. & L., I, 77-78.

46Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
see if Anderson was ready to surrender. Beauregard referred to Pryor and Miles as colonels, but actually they were still civilians, and Lee with his cooler head and businesslike efficiency was more or less in charge of the expedition.

Before the boat could get to Fort Sumter, Lee noticed that the United States flag was back up, and he therefore decided to return to Charleston. They went a little way toward the city and then glanced back. The Union flag was down again and a white one was flying in its place. Lee had the boat turned around once more, and they rowed quickly to the fort, arriving at about 2:00 P.M.47

What had happened was that the flag came down the first time because it had been shot down. Then the Yankees improvised a new pole and remounted their colors. Before Lee and his companions finished all their turning around and got to Sumter, Confederate Colonel Louis T. Wigfall, who had been on Morris Island, reached the fort in a small rented boat, announced that he was from Beauregard's headquarters, and demanded that Anderson surrender. Wigfall had been a United States senator from Texas and was one of Beauregard's aides, but he was completely without authority to make this visit. He had not even seen Beauregard since April 12, when he had been sent off on another mission. Wigfall promised very generous surrender terms to Anderson, and they reached an agreement, whereupon the white flag was hoisted. Wigfall left and a few minutes later, Lee, Pryor and Miles arrived.48

47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.; Lee in B. & L., I, 78; Crawford, Genesis, 441.
As they approached the fort, the aides heard a call from one of the fort's embrasures. The wharf was mined and the fire was near it, the voice explained. The aides had to enter the fort through an embrasure. When they announced their mission to Anderson, he told them about Wigfall's visit. The aides explained that Wigfall's action was unofficial and that even they were not authorized to offer terms. Anderson replied, "There is a misunderstanding on my part, and I will at once run up my flag and open fire again." Lee and the other Confederate emissaries urged that such action would be useless, and they all went into a casemate to talk things over.

While the negotiations progressed, Pryor helped himself to a drink which he thought was whiskey, but which was actually iodide of potassium. They were in the casemate used for an office by Sumter's physician, and the mixture was a medicine extremely poisonous in anything but very small doses. Pryor had to have his stomach pumped out by his enemy and this ended his warlike feelings for the moment. Some of the Yankees objected to their doctor helping Pryor. If a rebel leader was stupid enough to come over to Fort Sumter and poison himself, let him do it. But the good-natured doctor replied that he was responsible to the United States for all the medicine in his hospital, and therefore he could not allow Pryor to carry any of it away.

Lee and Miles reached an agreement with Anderson that the aides would return to Beauregard with a written statement explaining the

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50Swanberg, First Blood, 321.
arrangement with Wigfall. Anderson would not fire in the meantime and
would surrender if Beauregard agreed to the stated terms. (But when
Beauregard had seen the white flag go up, he had immediately dispatched
two more aides to demand Sumter's capitulation.) Before Lee, Pryor, and
Miles left the fort, these other aides arrived. Major Anderson un-
doubtedly grew flustered--after all, how many times did he have to
surrender?

But the terms the new aides offered were the same as Wigfall
had promised, except for allowing Anderson to salute his flag in an
evacuation ceremony. The Confederates believed that Beauregard would
grant even that if Anderson surrendered immediately. This he promised
to do, and thus fell Fort Sumter.

It was a timely moment, because the wooden portions of Sumter
were still on fire and Lee observed that "wind was driving the heat and
smoke down into the fort and into the casemates, almost causing suffoca-
tion." He remembered that "Major Anderson, his officers, and men were
blackened by smoke and cinders, and showed signs of fatigue and ex-
haustion." The officers engaged in a little friendly conversation, and
each side revealed to the other that they had sustained no personnel
casualties whatever during the entire bombardment of nearly forty hours.
Lee recalled that "congratulations were exchanged on so happy a
result."51 It was war, but many of the opposing soldiers still liked

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51Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical
Collection; Lee in B. & L., I, 79.
each other.

The only death of the entire episode took place during the surrender ceremonies the next day. It was Sunday, April 14, a Sabbath marked with both pageantry and tragedy. Major Anderson had his guns fire a salute to the Union flag. Some shells behind one of the pieces accidently exploded, and Yankee Private Daniel Hough was killed instantly. Several other persons sustained serious wounds.

Later Lee accompanied Beauregard, Governor Pickens, and other Southern notables into the fort. Anderson was supposed to have been gone by this time, but he had stayed in order to bury Hough inside the fort with full military honors. The Confederates witnessed what Lee described as the "very impressive scene" and "impressive prayer by the sailors' chaplain from the city." As soon as Anderson did depart, the Southerners hoisted the Confederate and Palmetto flags which then were saluted by all batteries in the harbor.52 The South had itself a new fort and was celebrating the victory.

The more serious minded, like Lee, took advantage of the opportunity to closely inspect the fort and to evaluate its potential as a Confederate asset. Lee cast a keen eye over the place, but evidently had trouble deciding what he really thought. He wrote in his diary on one page that there was "very little damage done to the walls of Sumter, but the quarters (were) completely gutted." On the next page he penned,

52Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
"Fort Sumter in very bad condition, dreadfully injured by our fire, estimated cost for repairs about $350,000." After the war he claimed that he felt forts such as this, constructed of brick and mortar, were useless against the powerful new artillery coming into use. That was true, but he may not have realized it in 1861.

Lee concluded his inspection and returned to the city about dark. A new crisis had arisen. The Federals supposedly were coming up Wapoo Cut, which connected the Stone and Ashley Rivers, and Beauregard sent Lee to put troops at Long Bridge over the Ashley River to cut the enemy off. Lee took a company of one hundred men and rushed to meet a foe who was not there. On finally learning that the whole thing was a false alarm, he brought the company back, and dismissed them at 4:00 A.M. At last he got some sleep.

Nothing happened the next day, but in the evening reports circulated that the Federal fleet, still just off the bar, was engaged with the Confederate batteries. Lee accompanied Beauregard and other staff members to Morris Island, but nothing serious was going on and they returned to the city by 8:30. The rest of April went by quietly.

Two weeks after the surrender ceremonies, Beauregard gave

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53 Ibid.


55 Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

56 Ibid.
written commendation to those who had served him during the Sumter affair, citing Lee for "indefatigable and valuable assistance night and day . . . in open boats . . . amidst falling balls and bursting shells." But Lee got no promotion, and he resumed his desk duties as quartermaster, commissary, ordnance, and engineer officer. On April 22, he was given the additional duty of acting as recruiting officer for the Charleston area.

When Virginia seceded on April 25, Lee's job became more important. South Carolina had taken the lead in the war and had men and supplies available, while states like Virginia faced the task of mobilizing from scratch. Soldiers and equipment moved from Charleston to these undefended yet critical locations. Lee and a number of junior lieutenants mustered new recruits into service as fast as possible, and naturally a large amount of paper work was involved. With all the excitement centered around the build-up in Virginia, Lee grew tired of his tasks. He longed for a more active assignment, and requested the Confederate authorities to relieve him of his present duties, but they refused, saying his services were more important where he was than they possibly could be elsewhere.

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57 O.R., I, 35.
59 "Enlistment documents," in Headquarters Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.
Meanwhile Lee received a short leave to visit his family in the up-country. The trip took about a day and a half each way, and he stayed for several days.61 His father showed great interest in the exciting tales he related about the adventure at Sumter. The doctor, who was then fifty-two years old, decided to join the army too, as a surgeon. The son agreed to see what he could do to help secure the commission, and as soon as he returned to Charleston, he wrote his acquaintance, William Porcher Miles, who had been elected to the Confederate Congress.62 Apparently the commission was not granted, and Dr. Lee remained to practice medicine at home during the war.

Back at Charleston, Lee read the enticing newspaper advertisement for volunteers published on May 3 by Wade Hampton, a colorful and rich aristocrat who had secured permission to raise, partly at his own expense, a thousand-man "Legion" made up of combined arms—infantry, artillery, and cavalry. Many young men from South Carolina's best families responded, filling the ranks within less than a week. Each company had the right to elect its own line officers and noncommissioned officers.63

61 Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

62 Lee to Miles, May 6, 1861, in William Porcher Miles Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

Lee let it be known that he was interested by appropriately dropping, at the right time and place, an "accidental remark that he would like to get into active service." The artillery battery in the Legion was only too glad to hear it, because none of the men had any military knowledge. They wanted to fight, but not to be killed as a result of blunders by incompetent leaders. In fact, they had already offered the honor of their command to Arthur Manigault, William C. Heyward, J. B. Villepigue, and John Pegram—experienced officers, who all declined. A meeting was held, Lee duly elected, and Colonel Hampton notified of the choice.64

Hampton used his personal influence to secure Lee's release from staff work. He wrote Beauregard on the same day that the battery marched in a dress parade to receive a handsome guidon presented by some admiring ladies from Charleston. It rankled Lee very much that he could not march with his unit, which was led by the next ranking officer, First Lieutenant James F. Hart, a Citadel graduate.

There may have been some serious objection to Lee getting the new assignment, for he wrote in his diary on June 21 that "the enemy are attacking my position." (He could not have meant Yankees; he was not then in the field.) Finally the desired release was promised, but some

officials felt that Lee's quartermaster duties were still too vital for him to leave right away.65

So, for the rest of June and well into July, Lee stayed in Charleston. He had great sums of money in his care for the purpose of paying new Confederate troops and state units which had been called into national service. South Carolina's Governor Pickens wrote to Lee urging that the state troops be paid as soon as possible. These men were entitled to remuneration by the Confederacy from the date that they began operations against Sumter under Beauregard (or as the Rebels called it, "the defense of Charleston").

Lee obliged, but some officials in the Confederate bureaucracy questioned just when certain units had been transferred from state to national control. Lee was accused of making improper payments. A snarl in paperwork resulted that was not cleared up until July, 1862--over a year after the disputed disbursements had been made. Even though Lee was entrusted with as much as $54,000, the Confederate government expended too much effort and time on such a matter in the middle of a war. There was never any allegation that the troops had not received the funds; the issue was with only South Carolina and not

the Confederate government should have made part of the payment.66

The Hampton Legion had begun moving to Virginia on June 24, 1861, and the entire outfit was encamped there by July 1, at Rockett's, in the suburbs of Richmond. Three weeks later the cavalry and infantry section joined in the fight at First Manassas. The artillery battery had not yet received its armament and was kept in Richmond.

Since many battery members had been in the Charleston Washington Artillery, the unit took that name at first. Most of the men were well off financially, and many brought their personal Negro valets to war with them. Almost everyone had a horse. Because of this, though it was never one of the unit's official names, Lee called them the "Washington Mounted Artillery." He finally left Charleston, one day after the battle at Manassas, and journeyed to Richmond to assume command.67

66 O. R., I, 291; Pickens to Lee, June 1, 1861 and June 5, 1861, in E. M. Law Papers, Southern Historical Collection; A. C. Myers to Lee, June 3, 1861, in E. M. Law Papers; Treasury Department documents in Compiled Service Records, Microcopy 331, reel 155 (National Archives).

CHAPTER IV

THE LONG ROAD TOWARD GENERALSHIP

Captain S. D. Lee's first field command was a full-strength well-equipped artillery battery. For many of the hard-to-get items he could thank Colonel Wade Hampton's influence and money. The Tredegar Ironworks in Richmond provided the battery with its first outfitting of guns—four twelve pound howitzer smoothbores and two rifled pieces with bores of about three inches in diameter.\(^1\) The howitzers had a range of approximately nine hundred yards, and the rifled pieces could fire nearly one mile.\(^2\)

Hampton also ordered a field battery of the new and famous Blakely rifled ordnance from England at his own expense. These guns were made of steel and iron, somewhat stronger than the bronze or iron Tredegar pieces, and were capable of firing at longer range with greater accuracy. The Federal naval blockade prevented some of the Blakely guns from reaching the Confederacy, but four pieces were successfully run into Savannah, Georgia, and reached Lee's battery by November.\(^3\)

\(^1\)Brooks (ed.), *Stories of the Confederacy*, 248.


\(^3\)Brooks (ed.), *Stories of the Confederacy*, 248. Six guns constituted a full compliment for a battery, so presumably the superceded Tredegar guns went to another unit.
Lee met his men and guns in Richmond. After serving as pall-bearer to the remains of Lieutenant Colonel B. J. Johnson, Hampton's second in command who was killed at Manassas, Lee began training his troops. Two days later, on July 26, 1861, he had the men putting harness together and hitching horses to the guns. He described the event in his diary as an "awkward scene--no drivers--wild horses." But in spite of the difficulties, the battery began the next day to march toward the Confederate army at Manassas.4

The weather was very hot, and the one hundred-mile-march proved quite difficult for the new soldiers. The men undoubtedly welcomed Lee's order to remain in camp all day on August 1, on account of rain. The next day was even hotter and two horses died on the march. Finally, on August 3, the battery reached Brentsville, about fifteen miles east of Warrenton and five miles south of Manassas.5 Here they joined the rest of the Hampton Legion and Lee reported to Colonel Hampton.

Lee and Hampton went together into Manassas on the next day and had conferences with General Joseph E. Johnston, the army commander, and their old friend General Beauregard.6 The Confederate forces then occupied a line along Bull Run to Occaquan Creek, into which Bull Run emptied, and then to the mouth of the Occaquan on the Potomac River. The Legion was assigned the task of anchoring the right flank of

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4Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
5Ibid.
6Ibid.
Johnston's command, at Freestone Point—the southern bank of the Occaquan's mouth.

Hampton later had a redoubt constructed on the Point and armed it with three rifled cannon. Lee's battery theoretically was the only artillery under Hampton, but the Legion soon had more guns than one battery was authorized. Lee had general charge of all its artillery, even though he remained until early November officially only a battery captain.

During August and September, the Legion constructed several campsites in the area near Freestone Point. The principal one was at Bacon Race Church, about twelve miles from Brentsville at a crossroads where there had been a post office and a store before the war. In the surrounding Maple Valley, Lee conducted maneuvers with his artillerymen.

Lee prescribed daily drills with the pieces and a rigid schedule of soldierly duties. He had frequent target practice and an occasional sham battle with cavalry. Many volunteers chafed at what they considered an unnecessarily rigorous routine. And indeed Lee was a harsh master; one of the men suffered a broken leg during the second day's drill. But Lee knew his business and the unit soon began to shape up. Esprit de corps grew strong. Lee not only taught the men how to perform their jobs—he also infused them with high ideals in support of their cause and

7John Coxe in Confederate Veteran, XXX, 461. One of these three guns was the famous "Long Tom," 32-pounder captured from the Yankees in the First Battle of Manassas.

8Ibid.; Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
convinced them to sell their lives as dearly as possible should the awful necessity ever arise.  

Sometimes when Lee's men drilled, the hills nearby would be dotted with spectators who had come to see the superb unit go through its drills, directed by the notes of a bugle. Every man in the battery had a horse, and they were known as "flying artillery" (though the Confederate Secretary of War did not authorize the organization of any mounted artillery until November 11, 1961). Thus Lee's unit was a prototype for the five Horse Artillery batteries that the Army of Northern Virginia utilized in bold and aggressive actions by 1863.

Early in September the Confederates decided to try establishing a blockade on the Potomac River, where the Federals maintained a flotilla of seven or eight well armed and equipped vessels. The Southerners knew that they probably would not be able to prevent all Federal navigation on the river, but it was worth a try, and they might as well do as much damage as possible during the test. Lee received orders to unmask his position at Freestone Point gradually by cutting away the woods between it and the river. On the twenty-fifth a small gunboat spotted the works and ran in close to reconnoiter. She fired about six shots, which the Confederates did not answer, and then chugged off up river. Then she

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9Brooks (ed.), Stories of the Confederacy, 248-49; Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection; John Coxe in Confederate Veteran, XXXII, 95; "A Sketch of Hart's Battery," in the Charleston Sunday News, August 1, 1897, copy preserved in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.

returned in less than an hour with help, and Lee's redout was under attack by six vessels.\footnote{Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection; Brooks (ed.), \textit{Stories of the Confederacy}, 249.}

Before replying to the naval bombardment, Lee spoke to his men. It was their first time in combat, and he tried to stiffen their courage. He told them that they had permission to dodge the enemy fire if they thought that would help, but not to forget to man their own guns.\footnote{The Charleston Sunday \textit{News}, August 1, 1897, copy preserved in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.} And very soon there was a hot little engagement under way. Both sides slapped at each other and both did some damage. "They were getting our range," Lee wrote, and "one fragment struck in the pit of our little rifle, several shells went but a few feet over our heads."\footnote{Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.} But perhaps the Yankees suffered even more. After three hours of furious fighting, the flotilla steamed off. One gunboat was disabled and had to be towed. Another was beached within sight of the Confederates and sank during the night.

This baptism of fire inspired great confidence among Lee's men for their pieces, in their officers, and in each other. But although the Confederates had inflicted real damage to the Yankee boats, they had come dangerously close to suffering disaster themselves, and worse, they had not succeeded in completely blocking the river. General Johnston decided that further attempts at a continuous blockade were not worth...
risking the permanent loss of any artillery, but he would move guns forward and back from time to time. Lee withdrew his guns the next night and encamped his battery on Powell's Creek.\(^\text{14}\)

Never again did Lee allow artillerymen under him to try and dodge enemy fire. He explained that he allowed them to do so in their first fight, but that dodging was an unwise and useless practice. In the next engagement, another artillery duel with gunboats—this time at Colchester, Lee caught a non-commissioned officer cringing from fire and reduced him to private.\(^\text{15}\) A gunner under Lee learned to man a piece regardless of what happened, either until told to stop or until wounded.

Another battery of artillery from South Carolina joined the Hampton Legion sometime in October, 1861. Hampton decided to reorganize his artillery into a two-battery battalion and to make Lee the commander. Rumors had spread by the end of October that Lee would soon be made a major, and they proved to be true for on November 8, he got the promotion,\(^\text{16}\) two and one-half months after his twenty-eighth birthday.

So Lee started his way up the promotion ladder, proceeding on his own merit. Even if some degree of personal favoritism for him by Hampton

\(^{14}\)Ibid.; Brooks (ed.), *Stories of the Confederacy*, 249.

\(^{15}\)The Charleston Sunday News, August 1, 1897, copy preserved in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.

\(^{16}\)Brooks (ed.), *Stories of the Confederacy*, 249; Lee's commission as major in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection. The command of Lee's Battery passed to the senior first lieutenant, James F. Hart, and the unit was known officially as Hart's Battery for the rest of the war.
did enter into getting the transfer from desk duty in Charleston, Lee obviously had earned his new position of battalion major. He was the senior artilleryist in the Legion, and he had performed very well as a captain. The amount of artillery and its proposed organization dictated that the Legion now needed a major. Lee was the best man immediately available for the post.

Lee's artillerymen engaged in several more minor actions before 1861 ended. One source indicates that Lee may have directed some of the guns in the little duel at Ball's Bluff on October 21, but that is doubtful. He and his men did do battle with some of Federal General Dan Sickles' batteries across the Potomac on November 9. Lee had put his new Blakely guns at Cockpit Point, and this was the first trial of the new guns. Several hours of firing brought no results at all. At least the gunners got some beneficial drill with their new pieces.

A week later, on November 15, Lee's men spent all day harassing Union boats on the Potomac by utilizing hit-and-run tactics. The Confederates advanced up to Cockpit Point and opened fire on a Federal schooner. The Yankee crew quickly abandoned ship. Lee withdrew his guns. The sailors got back aboard. Lee returned and drove them off again. Then he sent out a small party which set fire to the boat.

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18 Brooks (ed.), *Stories of the Confederacy*, 249.
Other vessels arrived with heavier guns and engaged Lee's batteries. They fired back and forth until the Confederate ammunition ran out. Lee observed that the enemy guns had a commanding position, but he suffered no losses. He returned to camp at 10 P.M. in a drenching rain, estimating that at least two of the Union vessels were "too much injured to save."19

In these and other small actions, Lee's use of artillery hardly was orthodox. The damage he inflicted actually was slight, and in every engagement he was risking valuable guns which would be sorely missed if lost. But he produced beneficial results. Inactivity has a detrimental effect upon soldiers, and Lee knew it. When he did not have his men actually fighting, they were training. Confederate gunners gained experience, and the work gave them esprit de corps and higher morale. And Lee established something of a psychological superiority over the Union sailors. Once when Yankee gunboats took potshots at the Confederate picket quarters, Lee rushed two rifle guns down to the shore and fired a half dozen shells at the already retreating enemy. The Yankees had begun to scramble out of range at the first sight of Lee galloping toward the scene.20

Training and action left its mark upon the aristocratic Legionnaires. Dust and sweat changed their once gay new uniforms into real

19Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

20John Coxe in Confederate Veteran, XXXII, 95.
fighting men's costumes. They sent most of their Negro servants home and abandoned their trunks and valises for lighter loads in more conventional campaign packs. Even though typhoid fever prostrated a large part of the command, killing many, the rest grew "hard and hairy, brisk at drill and practical at outpost duty."\textsuperscript{21}

After the middle of November, the weather became severely cold, and the Legion broke camp at Maple Valley to move down into winter quarters in a finely wooded area near the junction of the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers on "old Telegraph Road" between Alexandria and Fredericksburg. They stayed there until March 8, 1862, but never completely stopped activity. They went on patrols, guarded the country, and built redoubts and breastworks. The men thought of their tasks as hard, but they also had a good time. The commissary kept them supplied with plentiful rations, and the country nearby was stocked well with poultry and dairy products. Hampton frequently entertained his officers with dinner at his quarters.\textsuperscript{22}

Lee enjoyed some other moments of leisure too. His friend William D. Pender was camped nearby and the two visited frequently. Lee served as one of the witnesses at Pender's public conversion to Christianity and baptism—rather weighty duty for one who claimed he had no serious religious thought in his life until nearly a year later. But Lee certainly must have been highly moral, for Pender professed

\begin{footnotes}
\item[21]Wellman, Giant in Gray, 67.
\item[22]John Coxe in Confederate Veteran, XXX, 461.
\end{footnotes}
virtue to an unusual degree, and he spent the rest of his life attempting to make a romantic match between Lee and his beloved sister-in-law, Pamela. Pender wrote his wife that Lee was "the salt of the earth," and "a man that any woman could be proud of and happy with."  

Undoubtedly Lee got a leave sometime while the Legion occupied winter quarters, and probably he went home. The last page in his 1861 diary lists a number of items that various people had asked him to bring back for them. These included bandages, caps, cherry bark pipes, heavy shoes, pocket knives, saddles and accessories, and a large supply of toothpicks. For himself he jotted a reminder to bring towels, drawers, a knife, an 1862 diary, and two pairs of spurs. He probably also acquired on this trip the new and "bright Confederate uniform" he was seen wearing in the Spring campaign. Perhaps during his absence he had a reunion with his namesake uncle who also had been serving in the Confederate army. The older Stephen Lee was colonel of the sixteenth North Carolina infantry regiment, but had had to resign during the 1861-1862 winter because of old age and infirmities caused by exposure.

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23 Hassler (ed.), The General to His Lady, 63, 76-77, 81, 262.

24 Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection. Unfortunately no diary by Lee has been preserved other than the 1861 volume which now ends. He did make a few subsequent entries in this same book for dates in the years that followed; John Coxe in Confederate Veteran, XXXII, 95.

25 Walter Clark (ed.), Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina . . . 1861-1865 (5 volumes, Raleigh: Published by the State, 1901), IV, 151.

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Back in camp, on one snowy day Lee and Hampton took a twenty-man detail on a scouting mission into Maryland. The Federal camp was located just across the Potomac, and often the Confederates could hear the Yankee drums, bugles, and brass bands. Hampton wanted to know exactly where the Federals were established and how strong they were. The expedition got up to within sight of a picket, and they did note the location of certain buildings, but their reconnaissance was cut short when they heard a cannonading to their rear.

Lee listened carefully and guessed that the enemy had run a squadron of gunboats to the Potomac and Occoquan junction and were shelling the Confederate camp. They rushed back to Colchester where they perhaps hoped to get support for a counterattack, and there they learned that the bombardment was not at their campsite, but at Freestone Point on the Potomac. It was only one of the routine little potshot engagements like Lee himself had taken part in earlier. He probably suffered some embarrassment for his overly pessimistic estimate of the situation. The whole episode had comic overtones and was of little consequence, but it showed one thing about Hampton and Lee—they were active campaigners. They were not content to sit out all of the cold season in comfortable winter quarters.

In the course of the winter, Confederate authorities began to realize that proper military organization by mid-nineteenth century standards simply did not allow for the utilization of a Legion within an army. On November 16, Hampton's Legion was made a part of General

26John Coxe in Confederate Veteran, XXX, 461-62.
James Longstreet's division. Although the official designation of "Legion" remained until July, 1862, Hampton really had a brigade after late November, 1861. Lee remained with Hampton as the brigade artilleryist, although at this stage of the war it was common for brigades to have only one battery, not as much as the battalion that Lee commanded. Actually this was a slight improvement because spreading artillery too thinly made it less effective.

In the spring of 1862, General Joseph E. Johnston continued his efforts at improving Confederate army organization by forming more divisions within his force. Hampton's command went to the new division under General William Henry Chase Whiting.

In March, 1862 General Johnston ordered a withdrawal of about fifteen miles to the rear, to a line along the Rapidan and Rappahannock rivers. On March 7, Whiting directed Hampton to begin moving back at dawn the following day. The roads were muddy and difficult to traverse, and there was inadequate transportation. The Confederates had collected far too much baggage and supplies and if the retirement was to be prompt and secure, a lot of items had to be discarded. Hampton entrusted the task to Lee of distributing many surplus rations to the nearby poor,

30 Wellman, Giant in Gray, 69.
even if some items went to Union sympathizers. Fifty-nine tents and large amounts of luggage discarded by the troops were destroyed or abandoned. 31

Meanwhile Whiting utilized Hampton to command an extended line of defense to cover the retrograde movement. It was customary for the brigade chief of staff to direct an actual withdrawal, leaving the commander free to oversee the entire operation and to advance with the first elements to the new location. With Hampton otherwise occupied and the organization of his division still in flux, Whiting found that he had no officer of rank to serve as chief of staff. He selected Lee for the task.

Two regiments moved out under Lee's capable direction, and he took charge of disposing the surplus stores at Bacon Race Church, the primary supply depot for troops which had been along the Occoquan. In spite of difficulties, Lee managed to gather up about four hundred stands of arms, a quantity of ammunition, medical, and quartermaster's stores and succeeded in sending them to Manassas. He had to destroy a few old wagons and harness (which he deemed unserviceable), and some loose cartridges, amounting to several boxes, and more private baggage. Whiting complimented Lee in writing for his performance, saying he had executed his duties "in a masterly manner." 32

Because the Federals did not launch any attacks against the Rapidan-Rappahannock River line held by the Confederate army, many

31 Ibid., 70.
32 O. R., V, 530, 535.
Southerners grew angry at Johnston for the loss of equipment in his retrograde move. (Actually quite a lot more had been lost than was involved in Whiting's Division; Johnston had been unable to move anywhere near all of the stock-piled provisions out of Manassas. But since President Jefferson Davis did not like Whiting, much of the criticism was directed to these particular losses.) No one criticized Lee personally, but he did become involved in the issue by helping to justify the dispositions. Reports from Lee, Hampton, and Whiting at least satisfied Johnston, if not all the critics, that nothing had been amiss, and the matter ended as far as Lee was concerned.

The first large-scale operation in Virginia during 1862 is known as the Peninsular Campaign. Midway in March, Johnston in overall command of the Confederate forces in Virginia, had subordinate concentrations of troops at several strategic locations. One of these forces was under Major General John B. Magruder and occupied a line across the peninsular between the York and James Rivers, with headquarters at Yorktown. Johnston received reports that the Federals were landing in force on the tip of the peninsular at Fortress Monroe. He delayed acting

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33Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, I, 140-43.
34O. R., V, 535; Wellman, Giant in Gray, 70.
until early April, but finally he began moving with the main body of Confederate troops to reinforce Magruder. Lee's artillery battalion, in the Hampton Legion still attached to Whiting's Division, moved with Johnston.

Magruder did not have sufficient troops to man a strong defensive line all across the Peninsula, but by frequently shifting units around from place to place, he succeeded in simulating the presence of a large force. The Federal commander, General George B. McClellan, threw away his advantage and began a siege of Yorktown. The Confederates held their lines for several weeks, but knew that they probably would lose in a siege, and decided to fall back. Obviously the Federal army intended to advance up the Peninsula toward Richmond. The Confederates could fight delaying actions along the way, and perhaps bring about a major battle on advantageous ground before the Federals could achieve their objective.

The Confederate withdrawal from the Yorktown line began on May 3, 1862. They first marched to Williamsburg, rallied, and left at dawn on the fifth. Heavy rains and deep mud delayed progress, and Whiting's Division moved only seventeen miles in two days. They bivouacked the night of May 6 about five miles south of West Point—a town on the north bank of the Pamunkey River where it joins the York. Whiting learned that Federal transports were landing troops between him and the Pamunkey-York River line, near Eltham's Landing—across the mouth of the Pamunkey immediately opposite West Point. He ordered John B. Hood's infantry
brigade to attack them at dawn.36

Early on May 7, 1862, Hood's brigade encountered a Yankee fleet of transports protected by gunboats landing troops between Barhamsville and Eltham's Landing. Whiting estimated the enemy strength to be twelve to sixteen regiments—considerably more than he had. Hood attacked and made some advance, but by noon his troops were bogged down. The Federal fire was high, hence Confederate losses remained small, but the Southerners could not make further progress. Finally the Northerners took cover in and around their gunboats. The Confederates had a tiger by the tail—they faced a superior Federal force and they either had to destroy it or get quickly away. Either course of action seemed very difficult.

Hampton's Legion joined the action in support of Hood's men, and Lee brought his artillery battalion up toward the river bank. Lee hoped to get the rifled guns in position to fire upon the gunboats that had the Confederate infantry bottled up. He found an advantageous spot on a bluff overlooking the river, but the area was too woody and he could not advance.

But Lee was able to help the Confederates disengage and to achieve something of a victory. Even though he could not hit the gunboats, he had his artillery fire from where it was. The Confederate gunners held the Yankee troops at bay and permitted the Southerners to retire in good order. They had lost eight killed and thirty-two wounded, but in the advances had captured forty-six prisoners, from whom they

gained valuable information about the disposition of Federal forces. It had been the first taste of combat for Hood's Brigade, and he deemed it a "happy introduction." It was the first of several instances early in the war when Hood saw Lee perform creditably and to Hood's benefit. Unquestionably such events were among the factors that motivated Hood later when he gave Lee an Army of Tennessee corps to command in 1864.

Hampton praised Lee's actions at Eltham's Landing and cited him for displaying "soldierly conduct for which he is conspicuous." Two days after the fight, Lee received promotion to lieutenant colonel. Apparently he remained with his artillery battalion in the Hampton Legion throughout the retreat up the peninsular, but by the end of May, when the Confederates had taken a defensive stand near Richmond, he was on Whiting's staff. His friend Pender wrote home that Lee was considered to be the best artillerist in the whole army.

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38 Hood, Advance and Retreat, 21-22.
40 Lee's commission as lieutenant colonel, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
41 Hassler (ed.), The General to His Lady, 143. Quite obviously this plaudit came more from admirers than superiors--Colonel William Nelson Pendleton remained army Chief of Artillery.
General McClellan's Federal troops outnumbered the opposing Confederates by five to three, but the Yankees did not push into Richmond. Several Southern successes, notably an artillery victory over Union naval vessels at Drewry's Bluff on May 17 (Lee did not participate), destroyed McClellan's momentum. Johnston finally decided to launch an attack of his own, on May 31.

The Battle of Fair Oaks or Seven Pines was a vicious but indecisive confrontation. Whiting's Division hit the left flank of a portion of McClellan's army which was south of the Chickahominy River, separated from the main Federal force, but the main attack was farther to the right. Lee served as a liaison officer between Whiting and the division's two brigades (his artillery battalion did not take part in the fight).42 The fighting continued all day, Johnston was wounded and had to relinquish command of his army, and ultimately the Confederates failed to deliver the decisive blow that they had had a chance to inflict upon the divided Union army.

On the next day, June 1, 1862, Johnston's command passed to General Robert E. Lee. General Lee immediately began a reorganization, and he renamed the army, the "Army of Northern Virginia." He united it with the troops under General Thomas J. Jackson, the colorful "Stonewall," and divided it into two segments (still officially "divisions," called "wings," in reality they were corps), a left wing under Jackson and a right wing under John B. Magruder. General Lee also began infusing a higher morale and a greater fighting capability into his forces,

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42 Hood, Advance and Retreat, 22-23; Brooks (ed.), Stories of the Confederacy, 250.
and had them begin digging the extensive entrenchment system that eventually would encircle Richmond completely.

In the meantime Stephen Lee had twelve guns under his personal direction. This meant that he had to have a minimum of somewhere between one hundred fifty and one hundred eighty men under him. He commanded them in a two-hour duel between Confederate pieces at Garnett's farm on the Chickahominy and Union artillery across the river at New Bridge on June 6. Each side lost two or three men and several horses, but otherwise it was an unimportant affair. Then two days later, on Sunday the 8, his guns fired shot and repelled a Yankee attempt to force the Confederate lines that surrounded Richmond.

Magruder noticed Lee and was much impressed with the South Carolinian and he expressed a personal wish to General Lee that S. D. Lee be transferred to the Right Wing. General Lee acquiesced in a temporary detachment, and Magruder immediately made the lieutenant colonel Chief of Artillery in his Wing.

The Army of Northern Virginia still followed the unsatisfactory and soon to be abandoned practice of doling out one artillery battery

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45 William Miller Owen, In Camp and Battle with the Washington Artillery of New Orleans (Boston: Tickner and Company, 1885), 84.
46 Hassler (ed.), The General to His Lady, 153.
47 O. R., XII, pt. 3, 600, 607.
to each infantry brigade and collecting the remaining batteries into a
general reserve. (The reserve, if large enough, was potentially an
effective organization, but one battery per brigade was almost totally
useless because it spread the guns too thinly.) 48

As Chief of Artillery, Lee had some degree of supervision and
advisory responsibility over each battery assigned to a brigade--this
was some improvement over a completely decentralized organization--and
he personally commanded the reserve. In this reserve he had twenty-two
pieces, only ten of which did he consider efficient for field service.
In the entire wing, the artillerymen numbered forty officers and eight
hundred fifteen enlisted men, with forty-four guns. Lee wrote to the
army Chief of Artillery, Brigadier General William N. Pendleton, that
if all the guns in Magruder's command were well manned, he would con­
sider what he had to be ample; but they were not all well manned--and
they were not all heavy enough. 49

Magruder had very high confidence in Lee and showed it by giving
some delegated responsibility to his artillery chief. If a Yankee
attack threatened the Confederate picket lines, Lee had authority to
place batteries in the field as he thought best and to call upon the
infantry brigade commanders for whatever support he deemed necessary.
The only limitation was that Lee should be guided by nearness of the
infantry to the scene of action. 50

48 Stuckey, "A History of the Battalion Washington Artillery,
1861-1865," 16.
50 Ibid., 607.
Some scholars credit both Magruder and Longstreet with making a distinct effort about this time to utilize artillery more effectively than previously. Lee cooperated with his superior, Pendleton, and probably contributed to the improvements, but he does not seem to have made any insightful suggestions of his own. At the beginning of the Seven Days campaign, which started on June 25, 1862, the artillery attached to brigades was entrenched along the infantry lines, and the reserve battalions occupied the immediate rear. The plan was to move additional guns to any threatened point and to mass guns in concerted fire. It was a step in the right direction, but an insufficient one. The artillery was almost totally ineffective in the Seven Days campaign and that experience finally precipitated a drastic and beneficial reorganization.

General Robert E. Lee launched a series of attacks against the Federal army beginning at Oak Grove on June 25, and proceeding through Mechanicsville, June 26, Gaines's Mill June 27-28, Garnett's and Golding's Farms, June 27-28, Savage's Station and Allen's Farm, June 29, White Oak Swamp, June 30, and Malvern Hill, July 1. At the outset, the Federal forces were divided, some north and some south of the

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52E. Porter Alexander, "Confederate Artillery Service," in *Southern Historical Society Papers*, XI, 100-03.

53There are numerous alternate names for all these battles. The names cited are the more standard.
Chickahominy. General Lee's plan was to have a relatively thin force occupy the Yankees on the south side while the bulk of the Confederate army swung around and hit the exposed Union right flank north of the river. Magruder's Wing and Benjamin Huger's brigade constituted the holding force, and occupied a five mile line stretching southward from a point on the Chickahominy just above New Bridge. Lee's artillery operated from these lines through June 29.\textsuperscript{54}

General Lee directed General Magruder to hold his position from the enemy "at all hazards [and] to make such demonstrations as to discover his operations."\textsuperscript{55} So Magruder charged S. D. Lee to use the artillery to "feel" the Federal works "frequently and vigorously," because the Confederates not only wanted to withstand an attack if one was launched, but also to know that the Yankees had not pulled back. The Northerners were in entrenched and well-covered positions; the Southerners had to advance toward them over open fields. The Unionists had larger calibre guns and could damage Lee's batteries before they could get close enough to hurt their enemy.\textsuperscript{56}

Lee engaged in some sharp artillery contests on the 26 and 27. He tried to keep losses to a minimum, shifted the position of batteries under perilous fire, and himself remained on the field in person. But


\textsuperscript{55}Clifford Dowdy, \textit{The Seven Days: The Emergence of Lee} (Boston & Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1964), 168.

\textsuperscript{56}\textit{Tbid.}, 169; Data for sketch of life of Stephen D. Lee, in John Francis Hamtramck Claiborne Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
it was necessary that his men take more than usual risk and punishment. Even after the war Lee saw nothing wrong with his having to conduct "feeling actions" in the open against a well-protected enemy (though one officer who observed him at the time called him a "damned crazy fool" for doing it). The amazing thing is that Lee's men remained exactly in position, calmly and consistently firing, despite losses, until Lee ordered them back. They had accomplished their goal, but it probably also could have been done by cavalry scouts and infiltrators—at much less expense. (Though in fairness, it must be said that Magruder also had orders to fake an attack to his front, and this he did.)

Early on June 28, Lee made a reconnaissance in force and discovered Yankee working parties attempting to repair the Chickahominy crossing at New Bridge. He had guns moved up and drove the Federals off. Very soon a return fire commenced, and a duel continued until the Confederates ran out of ammunition and pulled back.

The Unionists disengaged from contact with Magruder on June 29, and the Confederate wing moved in pursuit. Yankee General McClellan had decided to move his supply line from on the York River south to the James. Lee had some of his batteries in action at Savage's Station that

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57 _O. R., XI, pt. 2, 525, 542, 546, 548; Data for sketch of life of Stephen D. Lee, in John Francis Hamtramck Claiborne Papers._

58 _O. R., XI, pt. 2, 543._
day, but apparently they did not get into the fights on June 30.\textsuperscript{59}

These engagements, and the one at Malvern Hill on July 1—which was a Union victory—ended the campaign. In spite of his success at the end, under orders McClellan ceased offensive operations and later withdrew his forces from the area, thus leaving the Confederates with a full accomplishment of their strategic objective.

At Malvern Hill S. D. Lee had not been able to make much of a contribution with his artillery. The Yankees occupied high ground in skillful defense. A Confederate infantry assault was supposed to have been supported by massed artillery, including Lee's. General James Longstreet led the final and costly charge. He later claimed that he had understood that Lee definitely would come up.\textsuperscript{60} As a matter of fact, Lee encountered withering fire from the Federal long-range guns as he and his men struggled forward for hours in the hot choking dust.\textsuperscript{61} Casualties were frightful, but still Lee pressed on. He never got the artillery up in force, and those batteries which did do battle were destroyed in detail—one or two at a time.\textsuperscript{62}

Lee's superiors recognized his contributions to the Seven Days campaign. The artillery fiasco at Malvern Hill was not his fault by

\textsuperscript{59}Ibid., 746.


\textsuperscript{61}Q. R., XI, pt. 2, 746; Owen, \textit{In Camp and Battle}, 92.

\textsuperscript{62}Dowdy, \textit{The Seven Days}, 267-69.
any means. In the preceding weeks he had performed well as Chief of Artillery and had shown both gallantry and skill in the field. General Lee himself commended his activity, and Magruder gave him glowing congratulations. Magruder also wrote to the Confederate Secretary of War, S. W. Randolph, and recommended that Lee be promoted to full colonel. Magruder said: "Lee has I think no superior in service as an artillery officer and has great modesty, enterprise, gallantry, and skill." On July 9, 1862, Lee received the promotion.

For the next six weeks, Lee had a new and different assignment. All the field officers of the Fourth Virginia Cavalry regiment had been killed or wounded. Lee took temporary command—a duty that his West Point cavalry record rendered him quite capable of performing. His men were not fully trained, so he had to spend some time teaching and drilling them—in an area that the men named "Camp Discipline." The regiment was part of the brigade commanded by Brigadier General James "Jeb" Stuart, Lee's former classmate. McClellan maintained a base around Harrison's Landing on the James River, and Stuart's brigade divided its time between camp of instruction at Hanover Court

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64 Magruder to Randolph, July 7, 1862 and Lee's service record, both in Microcopy 331, reel 155 (National Archives).
House, about thirty miles due north of the Federals, and on picket duty near the enemy base. 66

Lee operated with his cavalry regiment over a wide area from between Richmond and Fredericksburg to the Yankee lines and against gunboats on the James River. 67 The Confederate infantry feared the extremely large calibre guns which Union gunboats carried by this time and used to protect the Yankee base. Stuart decided to hit these gunboats by making use of Lee's ability as an artilleryist.

Stuart had Squires' Washington Artillery—a battery of rifle guns, and Pelham's Blakely detached and placed under Lee's control. Lee conducted the guns to Wilcox's Landing, about three miles downriver from the Yankee lines. At 2:00 A.M. on the morning of July 6, the Confederates opened fire on a transport chugging up the river with some of McClellan's supplies. The artillery inflicted some visible damage, but it was too far out of effective range to prevent the transport from passing.

Stuart sent Lee two more rifle pieces, Rogers' battery, and the guns all moved much farther down river, to Wayne Oaks, four miles below Charles City Court House. There at 7:00 A.M. on July 7, they opened fire on another transport. This time their fire was more effective, and after some twenty shots she had to turn back, throwing part of the cargo overboard to speed her escape.

Other transports tried to pass, and were aided by protective fire from several gunboats. Lee maintained the fire of his guns, moved some further downriver, sank one transport, and compelled the crews of both it and another to scramble into small boats and head for the opposite shore. The gunboats continued to fire at Lee's position but never got the exact range and did no damage to the Confederates at all. The incident did much to dispel the Southerners' fears of the vessels' heavy armament.

Throughout the day, more transports, tugs, and gunboats came into range of Lee's guns. They suffered severe damage and never were able to retaliate. The annoyed gunboatmen tried firing shell, spherical case, and grape shot. Lee's fire continued. In frustration, the Yankees shelled wooded areas and then bombarded nearby civilian dwellings.

Finally, when night fell, Lee withdrew and went back to camp. He had successfully thwarted much of McClellan's supply shipments, and had infused fresh morale into the Southern troops. The operation was a complete success.68

Lee's cavalry regiment withstood an attack by Yankee cavalry on July 24, 1862. Reports of the affair have been lost, but Lee impressed

68O. R., XII, pt. 2, 521, 924-25.
General R. E. Lee with the "gallant and successful" operation. Stuart also added a word of praise.69

Lee spent the rest of his time with the cavalry in drilling and picket duty, activities for which he recalled being frequently complimented by both Generals Lee and Stuart,70 serving as president of a general court martial,71 and in defending himself in a controversy over the responsibility for the artillery failure at Malvern Hill. A critic, known only as "the Reverend Mr. Allen," lashed verbally at Lee for his actions in that battle. Lee returned in writing, "it is certainly out of place for you to criticize the management of an arm of service you know nothing about," and he went on to contend that Allen's facts were incorrect.72

Magruder became involved, for Lee apparently thought that Magruder had been critical of him too. They exchanged correspondence concerning the matter in which Magruder assured Lee that "I have cast no censure upon you nor said anything which could have prompted others to do so."73 Nevertheless, Magruder requested that Lee come and talk personally with him about the matter, but Lee could not leave his regiment.

69Ibid., XI, pt. 3, 653; XII, pt. 2, 119.


71Lee to Magruder, August 8, 1862, in Microcopy 331, reel 155 (National Archives).

72Lee to Allen, August 2, 1862, in ibid.

73Magruder to Lee, August 3, 1862, in Stephen D. Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
Finally, Magruder wrote a sort of apology to Lee, saying "I am sure I did not say a word to Mr. Allen or any of my Staff or indeed any one else criticising your management of the artillery." He added, "I do not imagine you will think I have done you injustice after you shall have read my report."  

If nothing else is evident from the matter, it certainly shows that Lee was very sensitive to adverse criticism. He would lash out with vehemence, even to a superior officer, if he thought he was the subject of an unjust evaluation. It was a trait he occasionally displayed for the rest of his life. Fortunately he did not encounter much adverse comment during the war. And apparently he was diplomatic. In all his vociferous demands to Magruder that the records do him justice, he did not alienate the general.

Robert E. Lee promoted James Longstreet to lieutenant general and gave him the wing, now a corps, formerly commanded by Magruder. General Lee did not particularly like "Prince John," the hero of the Williamsburg holding action and had him transferred to the West. Magruder invited S. D. Lee to go along too, but Lee refused— it was one of the wisest decisions he ever made. He would reach one of the high points of his military fame at the Second Battle of Manassas, just weeks away.

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74 Magruder to Lee, August 13, 1862, in ibid.

In other reorganizations before advancing, the Army of Northern Virginia assembled most of its artillery into divisional masses, with very few batteries assigned to brigades. In battle march, artillery now had orders to keep well up front in the advance, except for the reserve. S. D. Lee took command of a newly-formed light and rapidly moveable artillery battalion with six batteries in Longstreet's corps.

General Robert E. Lee learned that the Federals planned to unite forces under McClellan and Major General John Pope. In order to prevent this juncture, General Lee decided to divide the Confederate army, make a wide turning movement, and catch Pope between the separated troops. Jackson began moving his corps rapidly northward, and reached the vicinity of Manassas where he placed his troops behind an unfinished railway embankment. Meanwhile Longstreet's corps created divisionary attacks to the south of Pope, and then the bulk of the corps rapidly moved to reunite the divided Confederate army.

One division remained until the last minute, Lee's artillery battalion with it. On August 23, 1862, Lee had his guns engage some Federal troops who had ventured across the Raphannock. Then the guns followed with the last of Longstreet's corps, planning to meet on August 29.

Pope played completely into General Lee's hands. He launched a

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77 Ibid., I, 256; O. R., XII, pt. 3, 933.
78 O. R., XII, pt. 2, 533, 640.
series of piecemeal attacks upon Jackson's lines but accomplished little. Then he ordered two subordinate officers in the vicinity of Manassas to move up and attack Jackson's right flank. One of these officers discovered Longstreet moving to meet Jackson and tried to cut off the approaching Confederate corps. Pope sent a preemptory order to attack Jackson instead.

S. D. Lee brought his battalion through Thoroughfare Gap in the Bull Run Mountains, marched all night between Friday and Saturday, August 29-30, and reached the position he desired just before dawn. The Confederate army, now all together, occupied a line of battle which formed a sharp angle in the center, Jackson on one side and Longstreet on the other. Lee conferred with John B. Hood about the best position for the guns and the two agreed upon a ridge near the center of the four-mile line. The ridge itself was a little over a quarter of a mile long, and it overlooked open ground to its front for a distance of 2,000 yards. Lee described the position as an artilleryman's dream.

The Union forces massed in front of the Confederates, about 65,000 bluecoats against 47,000 grayclads. At 7:00 A.M. a regiment of Federal infantry appeared all the way across the clearing to Lee's front. He fired upon them and forced them back. The Union batteries returned fire, but did no damage and then this process recurred several times throughout the morning.79

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About midday Pope sent a swarm of skirmishers forward and they made a successful advance. The Confederate artillery fired but could not stop the approaching Yankees at first, though finally the Unionists fell back. Pope then ordered a great mass in three lines to be formed out of range of the Confederate guns.

At 4:00 P.M. the Yankee forces moved out across the open field to S. D. Lee's front in grand manner. They launched a tremendous charge against Jackson's troops. The Confederates had to fall back under the pressure, and Jackson sent word to both General Lee and Longstreet for help.

Longstreet already had recognized the potential of S. D. Lee's position, and he dispatched twelve more guns to the same place. Lee turned all the pieces to fire in enfilade into the Federal lines. The guns cut the assault into pieces, throwing the middle and rear into confusion within ten minutes.

Two Yankee regiments swung to their left and tried to charge Lee's artillery. They could see nothing but darts of flame through dense clouds of low-hanging smoke. Lee discharged a round of canister and destroyed the approaching bluecoats.

In thirty more minutes the whole battle was over. Jackson committed his own reserves and drove the first elements of the assault force back. A few Federals tried again to charge Lee's guns without success, though some of their dead fell within two hundred yards of the objective.

The overall effect of Lee's artillery had been tremendous. His
batteries expended about six hundred rounds each, or one hundred fifty per gun. The event ranks as one of the greatest muzzle-loading artillery conflicts in history. Not one of Lee's men was killed, and in the entire battle he had only six wounded.80

Every man in the army knew the name Stephen D. Lee after this day. It was one of his greatest moments of success. General Lee mentioned him specifically in the official battle report, and congratulated him verbally. When they next met, the general said, "Young man, come here! I want to thank you for what you did yesterday. You did good work."81

S. D. Lee had indeed done good work. His position was magnificent --though others helped to select it. Two of his batteries had been in action for the first time. All of the men were exposed openly to fire at times during the battle, but not once did any gun cease. Lee himself helped with some of the firing; at one point he sighted a gun for 3,500 yards, aimed at a Federal caisson, and killed two of the wheel horses with his second shot.82

The time had come for the Army of Northern Virginia to carry the

war to their enemy's homeland. By the afternoon of Sunday September 7, 1862, General Lee had the mass of his forces concentrated at Frederick, Maryland. Then the Confederates moved west, through Turner's and Crampton's Gaps, just below South Mountain, and occupied the area around Sharpsburg.

S. D. Lee's artillery crossed Antietam Creek on September 15, took up a position near the Sharpsburg and Hagerstown Pike, and waited. Federal infantry appeared about noon, and Lee had his guns force them back. Then Yankee artillery fired upon Lee's position. He replied and dueled for the rest of the afternoon, then moved his battalion to the left and occupied a spot in front of Dunker Church.83

The next day was quiet, with little action; a sort of calm before the storm that marked September 17, 1862. The battle of Antietam was the bloodiest single day in the entire war. The large amount of artillery in action on both sides had much to do with making this so. There were approximately nine guns for every thousand men, a larger concentration of artillery than ever before in history. Lee himself supposedly coined the term "artillery hell" to describe the battle.84

The battle began at 3:00 A.M. The Confederates occupied a line generally along the Sharpsburg-Hagerstown Pike. Lee's artillery held about a third of a mile between Hood and D. H. Hill's positions. The action until dawn was limited to fierce encounters between skirmishers.

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83 O. R., XIX, pt. 1, 844.
Then the artillery opened up with the appearance of first light.

The Yankees launched charge after charge, heavy hammer blows, but did not break through. They fell back by 8:15 A.M. Several of Lee's guns had to be sent to the rear for repairs, but he remained with the serviceable ones, and moved them into the open to support the slightly advanced Confederate infantry. Firing in exposed positions, they suffered heavy losses. By 9:00 A.M. some of the troops were engaged in hand to hand fighting.

Soon the Federals massed an artillery concentration and drove Hood's men out of the woods on Lee's left. Lee turned his guns to fire into the Yankee troops, and just in front of the Southerners. He sent balls screaming across the length of the battlelines—dangerously close to friendly forces, but just in time to check the Federal advance.

In the calm that followed at this point, Lee's battalion received orders to move to the rear across the Sharpsburg-Hagerstown Pike as the Confederate lines had been bent back. The guns took up new positions and fired some more. Fighting continued all morning, and the stalemate remained. In many cases the only cover that men had was provided by fallen comrades. The action appeared to be "much like trench warfare without the trenches."

The Union attacks shifted toward the Confederate center, farther south. Lee turned his guns and supported D. H. Hill's men by firing over the Confederate infantry. But Lee's artillery then suffered from well-directed Federal fire. He held them firmly in place until finally Hill received reinforcements. Then Lee pulled his battalion back toward
Sharpsburg, to rest, refit, and replenish ammunition.®

The day wore on and the Union forces continued to launch attacks, gradually shifting from the Confederate left, to center, to right. In midafternoon, S. D. Lee gathered the remnants of his command. The most capable of action were the "boy's battery" (Parker's) which had broken first during the initial combat. Lee called them together and shouted, "You are boys, but you have this day been where men only dare to go!" He appealed to their pride and soldierly duty.

In the lead himself, carrying a battle flag, Lee advanced this force to the front—on the Confederate right just above Burnside's Bridge. There the Federals were making a final effort to seize the crossing and effect a decisive breakthrough in the Confederate lines. (They fought for the bridge, though the creek could have been waded across at several places.)

Lee's boys were too weak to roll their guns back forward after firing, but they did man the pieces. After a discharge, the guns recoiled back, and the boys reloaded and fired again from the regressed position.® Nevertheless, the action provided a much-needed bolster to

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®O. R., XIX, pt. 1, 846; Royal W. Figg, "Where Men Only Dare to Go!" or, The Story of a Boy Company (C.S.A.) (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1885), 32-46. It was standard artillery practice for the gunners to stand clear when they fired, let the guns roll back under their recoil force, and then roll them forward into position. See Downey, Sound of the Guns, 138.
the Confederate defenses. Some scholars credit the successful holding of Burnside's Bridge, aided by Lee's artillery, with saving the Southerners from a rout. The battle finally ended as a stalemate.  

Lee felt that his artillery had been more efficient at Antietam than at Second Manassas. The difference, of course, was that at the first battle he had given the Confederates a victory and at Antietam, survival. His men had suffered fearful losses, nearly twenty-five percent—a very large percentage for artillery to lose. The batteries were wrecks, over half the horses had been destroyed.  

Some sources say that Robert E. Lee considered launching an offensive against McClellan before withdrawing from Maryland. Actually General Lee probably only considered attempting to beat off any further Yankee onslaughts. S. D. Lee went out with Jackson on a reconnaissance and rendered an opinion that the Confederates had no chance to operate effectively on the offensive. Years later, S. D. Lee embellished the story and gave it a greater significance than it deserved.  

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Lee need not have tried to place more importance on his actions at Antietam, they were quite laudable in the real. He received praise from his superiors and congratulations from his countrymen. Scholars rate his performance as "shining."\(^8^9\)

On November 6, 1862, Lee was made a brigadier general.\(^9^0\) But soon he received orders to change theaters. He was transferred to the west. General Robert E. Lee desired to make a place for E. Porter Alexander in the artillery and gave S. D. Lee's slot to him.\(^9^1\) One cannot wonder, therefore, if General Lee had S. D. Lee moved west because the general no longer found him desirable. The general often suggested that the services of certain officers whom he wished to be rid of could be better utilized elsewhere.\(^9^2\)

It appears that this was one instance when R. E. Lee did not particularly wish to be rid of a transferred subordinate. The commanding general wrote that he was "weakened" by the loss, (though when told he could keep the new brigadier if absolutely needed, he did not choose to

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\(^9^0\) Lee's service record, in Microcopy 331, reel 155 (National Archives).


cancel the transfer). But R. E. Lee probably did regret losing S. D. Lee, and when less than a year later, the Army of Northern Virginia needed a new division commander, R. E. Lee requested that S. D. Lee be returned for the post.

The return did not take place. S. D. Lee remained apart from the Army of Northern Virginia for the rest of the war. With wide and varied experience behind him, he proceeded to a new adventure, in Mississippi, and there to meet his first test as a general.

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94 Dowdy, Lee, 325.
CHAPTER V

OUTDOING THE PROPHET

The war in the West had been going very badly for the South all during 1862. Many irate western Confederates felt that President Davis and other high officials neglected this area in favor of Virginia, channelling the best troops, guns, and clothing toward the forces protecting Richmond. This was definitely not a fair accusation, and certainly not true of Davis who had an almost fanatic desire to protect all areas of territory, and a special interest in his native state of Mississippi.

Davis made several changes in late 1862 aimed at achieving greater strength in the West. He sent S. D. Lee to take command of the immediate forces at Vicksburg, probably the most strategic point left in the West. Davis confirmed his high opinion of Lee in a speech at Jackson, Mississippi, in which the president attempted to calm and soothe the discontented populace, allaying its fears of suspected neglect. Among other things he said:

... I selected one from the Army of the Potomac of whom it is but faint praise to say that he has no superior... He was promoted for distinguished service on various fields... and I have reason to believe that, at the last great conflict on the field of Manassas, he served to turn the tide and consummate the victory... Though yet young he has fought more battles than many officers who have lived to an advanced age and died in their beds. I have therefore sent General Stephen D. Lee to take charge of the defenses of Vicksburg.¹

¹Pollard, The Early Life, 679; A copy of the full text of the speech is in Stephen D. Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
Lee arrived in the city by rail in late November. He doubtless looked about him, examining the town and weighing in his mind the possibilities for its defense. The ride through Mississippi had interested him intensely, and he mused that the state was one of the strangest places he had ever seen. "Nothing but ravines and bluffs," he noted near Vicksburg, and he got the impression that it would be difficult to find sufficient level ground in this vicinity even to encamp troops. The city did not seem as yet to have been affected by war, showing no signs of the earlier bombardment to which it had been subjected. He thought it a rather nice place, with charming people, quite polished and hospitable, and seemingly determined to hold out to the very last. He was escorted to one of the finest houses in town and there met many of the pretty girls who flocked out to gaze on the man they called a "young hero-general from Virginia." Gallantly he expressed fears that they, rather than the Yankees, would be the death of him.

The new defender of Vicksburg was only twenty-nine years old and a newly-made general. Would he prove worthy of his new position? He had shown no particular killer instinct, no magnetic personality, no flare for the unusual. Never had he commanded any large number of troops independently, and he was not versed in combined arms command. But he also had some favorable qualifications. In less than two years he had risen to be a soldier of renown. Often under fire, on occasions

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2Lee to E. Porter Alexander, November 30, 1862, in E. Porter Alexander Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
he had carried standards and personally rallied faltering troops. He had shown himself to be brave, competent, and resourceful. He had been tried in artillery and cavalry, staff and command, always displaying sound intellect and ideals of duty, honor, and service. Lastly, he had the mundane but rare quality of being able to work hard.

In that same fall of 1862 General U. S. Grant assumed command of all the Union forces in northern Mississippi, and at once he began efforts to capture Vicksburg. (Earlier, in the Spring a Federal force under General Benjamin F. Butler had taken New Orleans, and pushed up the river to Port Hudson where they were stopped by stubborn resistance) Grant operated out of Memphis, Tennessee, and could thrust down from the north as far as Vicksburg, but not into the strip of river between the two Rebel strongpoints. Thus the Southerners held a connecting link between the Trans-Mississippi and the rest of the Confederate States. Grant's task was to seize this link.

Grant made plans for a three-pronged attack. He suggested that Major General N. P. Banks, who was in command of Union forces in Louisiana (and not subject to Grant's orders), lead a force up the river. Meanwhile, Major General W. T. Sherman (who was Grant's subordinate), would move down the river from Memphis, and Grant would himself bring troops down through central Mississippi toward Granada, then turn left in a co-ordinated attack upon Vicksburg.

As it turned out, Banks did not leave Baton Rouge, and Confederate
troops under Earl Van Dorn and Nathan Bedford Forrest thwarted Grant with brilliant cavalry raids upon his communications. Further, Van Dorn captured 2,000 prisoners and destroyed the depot of supplies at Holly Springs. Grant retired to Memphis, but poor communications prevented this information from reaching Sherman who continued to move on Vicksburg from up river.³

Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton, Confederate commander of the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana, with headquarters at Jackson, Mississippi, was pleased to have the services of a battle-proven officer such as Lee. But Vicksburg was so important that Pemberton decided to further bolster the city's defenses. He sent Major General Martin Luther Smith, an engineer officer who had helped with the unsuccessful defense of New Orleans and who now served as Pemberton's special assistant, to Vicksburg too. Smith had a few more than 2,400 men to man the guns and garrison the fortifications around the city; and he had supervisory control of Lee and Lee's troops.

From various points in his department, Pemberton gathered a force to serve under Lee's command. It formed into a "reorganized brigade" of about 2,700, which finally consisted of two batteries of light artillery, the Fourth and Forty-sixth Mississippi Infantry

Regiments, and the Seventeenth, Twenty-sixth, Twenty-seventh, and Thirty-first Louisiana Infantry Regiments.\(^4\)

Smith established heavy lines around the city, touching the river above and below Vicksburg. Although Smith could issue orders to Lee in Pemberton's name, Lee generally had a free hand. Lee believed that the immediate defenses were strong and he was confident that the Yankees could never take Vicksburg. If the city fell, it would have to be by attrition of food and ammunition—or other vital supplies. The terrain was so rough that there was scarcely a place on the whole defensive perimeter where an advance could be made with a front even as wide as seventy-five yards. Although supply already had become a serious problem, Lee recognized that there was little he could do about it.\(^5\)

\[\text{Vicksburg is situated on the Mississippi River at the end of a long series of hills running inland from the water almost at a right angle. The Yazoo River touched the foot of these hills at Hayne's} \]

\(^4\)The number of troops in the commands was determined by subtracting the number of reinforcements from the totals given in the Return of Effective Troops in Major General Smith's Command, January 3, 1863 in O. R., XVII, pt. 2, 825. See also Winchester Hall, The Story of the 26th Louisiana Infantry in the Service of the Confederate States (n.p., 1890?), 33-34, which lists the units that were originally in Lee's brigade; and a synopsis based upon the Official Records showing the composition and losses of both armies in Battles and Leaders, III, 471.

\(^5\)Lee to E. Porter Alexander, November 30, 1862, in E. Porter Alexander Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
Bluff and ran along the northeastern side to Snyder's Mill where it then swung away and emptied into the Mississippi about six miles north of the city. Most of the ground in the triangle delineated by the bluffs and the two rivers was low, marshy, cut by lakes and bayous, and heavily wooded with dense undergrowth except where it had been cleared for a few small plantations. Immediately at the foot of the bluffs farthest from the city, for a distance of nearly fourteen miles, there was first a good road, then swamp, and then a series of connected lakes which had once been a bed of the Yazoo. This stretch of water was rather deep and could not be forded except at three or four dry crossings. At Snyder's Mill there was a Confederate outpost with three regiments and heavy fortifications. A raft blocked the Yazoo at this point and proved sufficient to stop any Federal attempts to get up the river.

Rebel batteries prevented the Federals from passing the city by way of the Mississippi. Thus the attacking Yankees would have to go through the swampy triangle above the bluffs. Across this ground were only five possible routes: first, at the race track two miles from the city, by a road leading to Johnson's plantation; next, at Indian Mound two miles farther inland, where the old river bed was dry for two hundred yards; third, at Chickasaw Bayou, parallel to which ran a good road on Mrs. Lake's plantation; fourth, at Colonel Blake's on a road atop the levee going back from the Yazoo almost to the bluffs; and finally, the wide area near Snyder's Mill.6

6 The bluffs are also called the "Walnut Hills." Pemberton, Lee, and Smith describe the area in O. R., XVII, pt. 1, 665ff.
An abatis of fallen timber made an almost impassable obstacle at the race course, and fortifications were very strong in the entire area around Snyder's. Hence an attack would be most likely to come over one of the other three approaches. Colonel Blake's levee was only a mile from Chickasaw Bayou, and the Valley Road along the bluffs would allow any rapid shifting of troops that might be desired. Lee decided to concentrate on the other two, placing one regiment and two guns at the mound, four regiments and a battery at Chickasaw Bayou and a regiment stretched between. He ordered a large force of Negroes out from Vicksburg and set them to work felling an abatis of timber across the dry portions of the lake. (An Act of Congress allowed the impressment of slave labor.) Lee also scattered advanced units up near the Yazoo to hinder the unloading of enemy troops from boats on the river and to give ample warning to the Confederates.

Many Vicksburg citizens were at a gala ball on Christmas Eve when word reached the city that Sherman's men already had reached Milliken's Bend and Young's Point. The festivities broke up early, and the Southerners spent an apprehensive Christmas while Sherman's forces, in transports accompanied by gunboats under the command of Rear Admiral David D. Porter, arrived at the mouth of the Yazoo.7

7Sherman's report in ibid., 605-10; Peter F. Walker, Vicksburg; A People at War, 1860-1865 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 130.
Pemberton had been informed several days previously of the large fleet of gunboats and transports moving down river, and he had immediately begun moving his defensive forces toward a concentration at Vicksburg. He had scattered units occupying several places, including Port Gibson, Natchez, Grand Gulf, Jackson, and Grenada. First he ordered Brigadier General John C. Vaughn to start toward Vicksburg with his brigade of nearly seventeen hundred. Then on the twenty-fourth, when Pemberton received definite and reliable information that Sherman was near Vicksburg, he issued orders from Brigadier General John Gregg to also move his brigade of about thirteen hundred to the city. Pemberton himself could not reach the scene until noon of the twenty-sixth, and the first reinforcements required one or two more days to trek in.

After Pemberton arrived and surveyed the situation, he sent word for Major General Carter L. Stevenson (from whose division had come Vaughn's and Gregg's brigades), to move the rest of his men, another two brigades under Brigadier Generals S. M. Barton and E. D. Tracy—four thousand men in all—to Vicksburg. Pemberton also ordered Major General Dabney Maury to move his thirty-five hundred men to the city, but they were unable to arrive until December 30.8

Ultimately Pemberton concentrated twelve thousand men for the defense, but initially the Confederates faced Sherman's thirty-three

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8Q. R., XVII, pt. 1, 676, 679; pt. 2, 805, 824 (Maury arrived with only a part of his command, and it was combined with Lee's then reenforced brigade to form a "provisional division.")
thousand with only Lee's brigade of twenty-seven hundred outside the city and Smith twenty-four hundred men manning the interior fortifications. During the early stages of Sherman's advance, a great deal depended upon Lee's actions.

Sherman's men landed at Johnson's and Lake's plantations early on December 26. Lee had taken the field himself the day before, and when he learned of Sherman's foothold, he sent the Seventeenth Louisiana, reenforced with two additional companies and a section of artillery, up to hold a heavy skirmish line at Mrs. Lake's.⁹

General firing commenced, and continued all through December 26, but with little effect except to slow down the gingerly advancing Federal troops and then to regain lost ground. The same sequence reoccurred several times the next day, but this time the Confederates gradually fell back under the weight of far superior numbers.¹⁰

Skirmishing continued on December 28 along the entire line. The Twenty-eighth Louisiana Regiment and a company of light artillery held an advanced Confederate position at Chickasaw Bayou. They exchanged fire with the Unionists for six hours from about daylight to noon and then were compelled to fall back. The Federals cheered and stormed forward, confident now that they could go all the way. But another

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⁹Ibid., pt. 1, 665-66, 681; pt. 2, 824; Rowland, Mississippi, II, 878-79; Battles and Leaders, III, 462-63.
¹⁰Rowland, Mississippi, II, 879.
Confederate regiment, the Twenty-sixth Louisiana, still had to be reckoned with. They too were highly confident troops, occupying a slightly advanced line near the edge of the woods in which Sherman's men were pursuing the other Louisianans of the near vanquished Twenty-eighth. Lee observed that when the Twenty-sixth opened fire, it immediately "restored the Federals to their usual prudence" and allowed the retreating Southerners to return in safety.\(^\text{11}\)

As the Northern advance bogged, the Federals brought up more and more artillery which joined with the sharpshooters in pounding away at the thin Confederate line. The Southerners suffered their heaviest losses of the entire campaign here, considering the small numbers engaged. This was because part of their position bent along the Chickasaw Bayou and left the men exposed to an enfilade fire. These stout soldiers held gallantly and stubbornly until dark, and then pulled back to the main line along the road at the bluffs.\(^\text{12}\)

The first of Pemberton's ordered reinforcements began arriving on December 27, but were held inside the city until the next day. By the evening of the twenty-eighth, the three brigades of Barton, Vaughn, and Gregg were on hand, totaling 5,100 additional troops: the Confederates had doubled their force. More units continued to trickle in on a somewhat regular basis, Pemberton now being able to concentrate more and more of the available force. But when the decisive action came on

\(^{11}\)O. R., XVII, pt. 1, 681-82.

\(^{12}\)Ibid., 682; Hall, *Story of the 26th Louisiana*, 38.
December 29, the Yankees still outnumbered the Confederates by more than three to one.\(^\text{13}\)

The three extra brigades were spread out along the run of the bluffs with Vaughn in command of the left sector, at the race course; Barton to the center, up to the Indian Mound, and Lee next, from the Mound to Snyder's Mill. Gregg remained in reserve at first, but soon moved into position between Vaughn and Barton. Lee immediately realized that he needed more men in his sector, which contained all three of the most likely routes for Sherman's main attack, and during the night of December 28 he obtained two regiments from parts of units under Barton and Gregg as well as all the additional new troops that had finally beaten a way into Vicksburg. This added about 1,500 infantrymen (at the expense of the lines to Lee's left) and an indeterminable number of artillerymen and cavalry. With the additional troops under his command, Lee now had what was termed a "provisional division," and probably numbered somewhere just under six thousand men. His original brigade of about twenty-seven hundred was assigned the most critical area around Chickasaw Bayou.\(^\text{14}\)

The night of December 28, 1862, was cold and wet. In both camps the shivering troops were exhausted and sought rest to gain strength for the uncertain morning. Thinking back on the charges Sherman had thus far

\(^{13}\)O. R., XVII, pt. 1, 676-79; pt. 2, 824.

made, Lee remarked that the Federals certainly must have had good guides, for they had advanced over every single one of the feasible routes.

Sherman also did some thinking this night. After a personal reconnaissance, he decided that he had no chance of success at the race track, but that the other areas might be vulnerable. He still was determined to take the city, snorting that it probably would cost the Union five thousand men before they got Vicksburg and they might as well lose them here as anywhere else. Everyone and everything possible would be thrown against the Rebels in a grand charge tomorrow.  

Lee felt certain that no real attack would come at Snyder's Mill, and he moved a regiment from there to bolster his line at Chickasaw Bayou. He determined upon the sly trick of allowing an initial progress at the Bayou in order to draw as many Federals as possible into the area. This was certainly the best place for defense on the entire line, and Lee correctly guessed that the greatest Federal effort would be made here.

Federal artillery and sharpshooters cracked sharply in the dim, misty first light of December 29, 1862. The weather was continuously cold, and winds sent a chilling shiver through inadequate shelters. Many of the Yankees were none too happy about where they were anyway,

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16 O. R., XVII, pt. 1, 682.
and must have gazed somewhat apprehensively at the water marks ten feet above their heads on some of the trees.\footnote{17}

Sherman had ordered an assault along the whole line, but at all points other than Chickasaw Bayou, the Confederates easily held his men in check. The charges on the race track were feeble and, although five attempts were made at the Indian Mound, they were all fairly timid. Advantageously placed Confederate artillery stopped the Yankees on their first appearance near Blake's Levee. Then other Rebel artillery units discovered some Yankees busily engaged in an attempt to throw a pontoon bridge across the lake to Lee's left. A murderous hail of shot stopped these operations. Clearly Lee's artillery was doing a more than admirable job; undoubtedly its handling was one of his keenest skills as a soldier.

Nothing further happened, except another Federal attempt to bridge a lake (which turned out to be the wrong one), until about 10:00 A.M. At this time the Yankees opened up a furious cannonade. Lee himself was almost killed as a cannon shot cut his horse down from under him.\footnote{18} This tremendous barrage continued for an hour, then ceased as suddenly as it had begun. The hills echoed mockingly.

In the new silence began the bloodiest part of the campaign: it might well be called "Sherman's folly." Three brigades of the Union division commanded by Brigadier General George W. Morgan advanced three

\footnote{17\textit{Sherman, Memoirs}, I, 293.}

\footnote{18\textit{J. E. Caskill in Confederate Veteran}, XXIII, 128.}
quarters of a mile over fallen timber and reached the wood's edge at Chickasaw Bayou. They already had begun to bunch up due to the narrow front necessary and were suffering considerably from well directed rifle fire. The terrain provided a "Funnel effect," forcing more and more Federals into an ever smaller area. Still, they managed an advance to within one hundred-fifty yards of Lee's pits before breaking and retreating. Six thousand Yankees eventually got in to the fight. They renewed each assault with even greater vigor than the ones before.

In the meantime, on Lee's right, Federal Brigadier General A. J. Smith succeeded in getting one of his regiments across a narrow sand bar in the bayou near Blake's Levee, but then found the bank too steep to get up. These men huddled against whatever cover they could find as the Confederates stepped to the edge of the levee and fired down almost vertically upon them. They were pinned in this muddy spot until dark, completely unable to do anything about their perilous plight.19

Morgan rallied his men and divided his forces, sending a portion to the far right, attempting to flank Lee's line. The Valley Road proved its value to Lee here by allowing two Confederate regiments to be quickly shifted over toward the left. Morgan's second element headed straight into the main Confederate line and directly into the face of a withering and destructive resistance; "a storm of shells, grape and canister, as well as mine-balls which swept the front like a hurricane of fire."20

19O. R., XVII, pt. 1, 608, 628.
20Battles and Leaders, III, 468.
So severe was the punishment here that the Northerners were forced to lay down and seek cover behind logs, trash and the bodies of their fallen comrades. Observing this, the Twenty-sixth Louisiana and part of the Seventeenth Mississippi Regiments stormed forward while their enemy was still face down. The Federals were so stunned that twenty-one officers and three hundred eleven men were captured as well as four stands of color and five hundred rifles. What was left of Morgan's troops fled in mass confusion, leaving dead and wounded behind. (Some years later it was charged that the Confederates then stripped the dead of their clothing, but General Morgan himself branded the accusation as unjust and wrong.)

Sherman's attack was roundly repulsed, both the effort against Lee and that which was aimed at other portions on the line. The Federals had not lost 5,000 men but they had not taken Vicksburg either. Their casualties numbered 1,776 (1,439 of which were from Morgan's division!) The Confederates lost a total of only 207. Thus, the Federals had lost eight for every one Confederate casualty (large and disproportionate loss in favor of the South). In his sector, Lee with about 3,500 engaged had defeated a force of over 8,000 which Sherman managed to deploy in battle.

Night fell, bringing more cold, with rain and sleet falling on the huddled soldiers behind their works and on the dead still lying out

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21 _Ibid._, 470.

on the field. Little groups of Southerners built fires, and gathered to chat, quip and talk of the battle. One group, which had shown great skill and aggressiveness, received a special visit. Up came General Lee, all alone, and with a water bucket half full of whiskey. "Gentlemen, I have come to especially congratulate you," he said, "and also to bring something to warm you."

Sherman floundered about trying to decide what to do, but did little except have his men entrench. On December 31 a truce was arranged for the burial of Union dead. Dense fogs on the next day brought an end to plans that some further attack on Hayne's Bluff might be made with the cooperation of Union gunboats. There was nothing left for Sherman to do but load his men back up and go home. On January 3, 1863, the last of his expeditionary force steamed down the Yazoo to the Mississippi, and headed back to Memphis.

For this engagement Lee received more praise and honors, and his fame continued to spread throughout the Confederacy. The regiments engaged at Chickasaw Bayou were authorized to inscribe 'Vicksburg' on their banners, and Lee was allowed to designate a suitable officer of his staff to carry the captured standards to Richmond. His superior officers wrote of him in their reports with glowing terms; one recommended his advancement in rank and command. Perhaps the most touching

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23W. T. Moore in Confederate Veteran, XX, 553.
tribute he received was the beautiful black stallion one of the regiments purchased for seventeen hundred dollars and presented to him as a token of their admiration.24

He was allowed to keep the "provisional division" for a time and he continued as a sort of acting or temporary major general, with the assignment of "commanding on the Yazoo." (He had and would continue to have a series of "temporary" grades and assignments, which prompted the men of the corps he later commanded to nickname him "Old Temporary.")25

At the Battle of Chickasaw Bayou Lee had done all that could be asked of any infantry commander. Showing sound military ability properly employed, he made the most of a good situation and proved himself to be a capable general. He displayed boldness and a willingness to meet his enemy. Placing defensive troops at the foot of the Walnut Hills rather than on the military crest was a gamble that paid off—and therefore a good one. He made sound decisions when faced with a rapidly changing situation, and he acted quickly whenever speed was required. Personally on the scene, he took charge of the action and influenced its outcome by directing the battle as it progressed. His allowing Sherman's men to make an initial lightly opposed advance, then utilizing the terrain's funnel effect to bunch up the enemy for a big kill, was a remarkable exercise in generalship.


CHAPTER VI

CONFLICT, RATHOLES, AND DEFEAT

Major General U. S. Grant was determined to take the city of Vicksburg. Sherman's Chickasaw Bayou defeat at S. D. Lee's hands did not lessen Grant's tenacity. As 1863 began, the grim Union commander continued with his campaign. He tried various approaches to the city, by constructing new canals, and by utilizing the Federal navy to move troops along rivers and bayous in the vicinity. The first four of these episodes were called, Grant's Canal project, the Duckport Canal project, the Lake Providence Expedition, and the Yazoo Pass Expedition. They all failed due to natural barriers or successful Confederate counter operations. Lee had no direct part in these actions, but remained with his "provisional division," in and around Vicksburg.

Due to the city's geographic location, Vicksburg could not be assaulted from the river. The Confederates had effective forces to the east, but not on the western bank of the Mississippi. Grant's problem was to secure a foothold on the high ground either above or below the city. To prevent this, the Confederates had to defend a front extending two hundred miles both to the north and south. Even though Pemberton did not have sufficient troops to garrison such a line, he could move forces to any threatened point as long as he received adequate intelligence concerning Grant's movements in time. The Southerners, however, had far too little cavalry and no navy.
The Confederates did succeed generally in securing the necessary information to thwart Yankee movements from the north. As far as an invasion from a southern foothold was concerned, the Confederates were safe as long as Grant could not get his naval support past the Vicksburg batteries. (The Federals could not run an expedition up from the south since the Confederacy held Port Hudson just above Baton Rouge, and controlled the entire stretch of river between there and Vicksburg.) An occasional gunboat or transport successfully ran by the city's batteries, but otherwise the artillery blockade functioned successfully. Grant theoretically could move overland in Louisiana to a point south of Vicksburg, but the terrain there was treacherously difficult to move men and equipment over (it was flooded bottom lands, interspersed with bayous, rivers, and lakes)--and without the naval transports, Grant could not cross the Mississippi River.

During the first two and one-half months of 1863, Lee's men manned defensive trenches.¹ Lee himself had some unofficial duties supervising and advising the artillerymen who worked the river batteries.² Their momentary success testifies to his efficient performance. Commanding a "provisional division" and continuing to receive official compliments, it was only natural for him to get the idea, which he did, that he soon


²Hassler (ed.), The General to His Lady, 201; Pollard, The Early Life, 680.
would be promoted to major general. But this honor was not to be his, for some unknown reason, until after the fall of Vicksburg in July. During the campaign, his "provisional division" was reduced to a "reinforced brigade" and early in May he changed commands—to that of a regulation infantry brigade in Major General Carter L. Stevenson's division.

A camp story indicates something about Lee's personality and how he enforced discipline while his men remained on garrison duty. A young sergeant of the Seventeenth Louisiana regiment desired a furlough and sought Lee's approval. The General said sternly, "We cannot spare any of our good soldiers," and he added that in order to increase their readiness for suspected imminent enemy attacks "they should be drilling every day."

"But that does not apply to me," argued the sergeant, "for I am well drilled."

"I shall try you," said Lee. "Take position! . . . About face! . . . Forward march!"

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3 Hassler (ed.), The General to His Lady, 213.


5 C. W. Short, in Confederate Veteran, VII, 103.
The sergeant realized that he was not going to get the leave just about the time he finished marching back to his place in the lines.

The last and in many respects the most extraordinary of Grant's unsuccessful attempts to reach Vicksburg was the Steele's Bayou Expedition (called the Deer Creek Expedition by the Confederates at the time). The Union fleet proposed to approach the city through two hundred miles of narrow, twisting bayous—Steele's, Black, Deer Creek, Rolling Fork, and the Sunflower River into the Yazoo, just above Snyder's Mill.

Lee volunteered to lead a force against this Federal menace, up from Haynes' Bluff along Lower Deer Creek. He received approval and an order to attack on Black Bayou if possible. Further, he was enjoined to create obstructions closing Deer Creek to navigation and to try and get behind the Yankees and pen their fleet within the labyrinth of small waterways.6

Admiral David D. Porter himself commanded the flotilla that ran into Steele's Bayou on March 16, 1863. Natural hazards heavily obstructed the route which frequently was just barely wide enough for passage of the gunboats. Porter's apprehensive subordinates expressed fears that the fleet superstructures would sustain great damage in the

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perilous, closely overhung, waterways, but the admiral boldly replied, "all I need is an engine, guns, and a hull to float them."^7

But the Federals had to contend with Stephen D. Lee as well as the natural obstacles. He made final preparations for launching his counter-offensive on March 22, a Sunday, by issuing orders that three days' rations be cooked and packed. He eventually united three regiments for the operation, the Third, Twenty-second, and Twenty-eighth Louisiana Infantries. The troops moved up the Yazoo River, some in the steamer Peytona, some in the side-wheel mail packet Dew Drop. Farther upstream, the men transferred into a fleet of flat-boats, skiffs, canoes, and "every conceivable small floating craft." Often they had to stop and cut trees which obstructed the passage with intertwined branches.®

On March 25 the Confederates arrived at Wilson's near the junction of Deer Creek and Rolling Fork, and there commenced building earthworks and obstructions in the waterway. The weather was unseasonably cold and the area was sporadically flooded and uniformly muddy—a "cheerless waste of waters," one soldier recalled. Several Negroes had cabins located nearby, and each had a dug-out canoe tied to a door post—supposed by some Confederates to be precautions against rising water.®

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Lee earned great popularity among his men by sharing in the work and by delivering orders in person. "No neatly-dressed aids-de-camp, with their foppish airs and tones of authority" carried his instructions, recalled one admiring subordinate, who also noted:  

We distinctly remember the appearance of General Lee. . . . A huge, rough overcoat enveloped his form, below the knees, pants thrust carelessly into his high, military boot-tops, while his fine, manly features lighted up with smiles beneath his slouched hat as he watched the hilarity and mischief among the men. . . . He liked to see his troops, "full of life," as he put it. And the same observer went on:

His actions and manner, so pleasant and affable, soon won for him the deep admiration and heartfelt esteem of the whole regiment. . . . General Lee was always sincerely respected by all who served under him, as he was thoroughly practical in all he did, and never required what he would be unwilling to perform himself.

Lee's men worked on the obstructions for two full days. Apparently the Yankees had forward observers who noted that Lee had placed enough impediments to warrant cancelling the expedition. So Porter began backing his transports away. Lee was informed of the enemy's movements and sent sixty men to try and bottle-up the Federals by felling trees to their rear.  

Sherman, who had been moving with infantry behind the Union fleet, led his men on an eerie night march to drive off the few Southerners who got in Porter's rear. The Yankees had to march in hip deep water,

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10 Tunnard, A Southern Record, 221.

11 Dated fragment in Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
through a dense jungle-like area, using candles thrust in rifle muzzles for their only light, but they arrived in time.\textsuperscript{12}

Why Lee did not move more of his force to block the Federals in their rear is difficult to explain. It is true that much of the area was flooded, and the Confederates were short on rations. But if some men got through to cut a few trees in the Yankee's retreat path, why could more not get there also? And rations could not have been a devastating problem—one observer remembered an abundance of wild duck in the area as well as a herd of beef cattle, some of which were killed for food.\textsuperscript{13}

Lee remained in position at Wilson's for several days while the Federals continued their withdrawal. Then leaving an outpost on Deer Creek, he moved the remainder of his men back to Haynes' Bluff, and himself returned to Vicksburg, arriving on March 29.\textsuperscript{14} His operation had accomplished its primary objective, thwarting the Yankee offensive. For this he received official commendation from both Major Generals Dabney H. Maury and Carter L. Stevenson.\textsuperscript{15}

On the other hand, Lee had failed to inflict any damage upon the Union fleet. Stevenson exonerated him by saying that "not even the


\textsuperscript{14}Dated fragment in Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{O. R. - Navy}, Series I, XXIV, 499-500.
energy of General Lee . . . could overcome the difficulties in his way. . . . Had it been possible he would have done it."16 It certainly was an unfulfilled opportunity for a significant military achievement. Lee's regiments had been ten miles from the decisive scene. Had he been able to move these forces—or even a sizeable part of them—to clash with Sherman and consummate the bottle-up, the story of Grant's Vicksburg campaign and perhaps of the whole Civil War, might have been substantially different. The episode revealed that Lee lacked something which might be required for greatness. It might partially explain why he was not promoted and given greater responsibility until later.

The Confederates spent the rest of March and the first few days of April, 1863, waiting calmly in their defensive positions, waiting to see what the Yankees would do next. Lee took time to attend a ceremony on the night of April 1, to receive his gift of a fine new horse presented by the Seventeenth Louisiana Regiment.17 He probably caught up on his letter writing, particularly to his friend Pender still in Virginia. Pender wrote his wife in mid-March, "I am still getting Stephen all right" (as a groom for his sister-in-law), but the distance must have cramped Pender's style, for he wrote in late May that if Lee had not gone west, "I should have it fixed by this time."18

16 Ibid., 500.
18 Hassler (ed.), The General to His Lady, 209, 229.
Grant did not leave the Southerners in peace very long. The flood waters already had begun to recede and more dry land appeared. He now could move men and equipment overland on the Louisiana side of the river. If the fleet could run below Vicksburg's batteries, then the Federals could cross the Mississippi between there and Port Hudson and attack. As an aid to his planned operations, Grant formulated several divisionary moves.

The first of these diversions was for a division under Major General Frederick Steele to move by water from Young's Point to Greenville, Mississippi. This Steele did in the first week of April, then he landed and moved overland, reached Deer Creek, and then proceeded south along the west bank of the stream. It was not only a possible threat to Vicksburg, but more importantly, Steele was in the area that served as a primary source of commissary supplies for the Confederates at Vicksburg.19

On April 7, 1863 Lee moved out with a reinforced brigade to try and repel Steele, preferably to engage and defeat the Federals in battle. Lee proceeded up Deer Creek to a position twenty miles above the junction of that stream with Rolling Fork. There at 8:00 P.M. he was informed by his cavalry support that Steele was falling back, leaving a wake of destruction as he went. Lee ordered two regiments to pursue, planning to give battle in the morning.

But Steele chose not to fight, going all the way back to a camp

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19Edwin C. Bearss, Decision in Mississippi Mississippi's Important Role in the War Between the States (Jackson, Mississippi: Mississippi Commission on the War Between the States, 1962), 215.
seven miles from Greenville. He had burned thousands of bushels of corn and carried off large numbers of livestock. Instead of attacking the camp, Lee loaded the salvagable corn and stray cattle on the Confederate vessel Golden Age, and requested reinforcements. On April 12 Steele's men boarded their boats and steamed away.

Lee remained in the area below Greenville for several days more, obviously expecting further Federal operations in the area. While all this was going on, Grant had marched the bulk of the Federal forces overland from Milliken's Bend to a point in Louisiana, south of Vicksburg.

Returning to Vicksburg on April 15, Lee reported on Steele's destructive acts and said, "corn will now be scarce." But corn did not constitute the Confederate's most pressing problem. On the next night Porter ran a part of his fleet past the Vicksburg batteries.

The Confederates received warning of the fleet's approach, shortly before midnight, from pickets in skiffs. But the shock effect of the move, so soon after the Confederate high command had turned all of its attention to the Deer Creek area, undoubtedly lessened the degree of Southern readiness. Porter ran twelve boats past, all were hit and one was sunk. But it was essentially a Federal success.

Lee still had some supervisory responsibility regarding the artillery batteries, but no records indicate that he took any part in

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20 Dated fragments in Lee's diary, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
21 O.R., XXIV, pt. 1, 505.
the April 16 firing. He took a very active part, however, when another significant portion of the Union fleet ran past Vicksburg a week later.

Meanwhile Grant launched two more diversions. Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson led 1,000 cavalrymen on a raid from Memphis to Baton Rouge between April 17 and May 2. At the same time, Sherman's corps made an elaborate feint from the north of Vicksburg, landing at Haynes' Bluff. Pemberton never realized what Grant really was up to, and continued to expect the real attack from above the city.²²

On the night of April 22, five Federal transports, a gunboat, and twelve barges ran past the batteries. The Confederates sounded an alarm at 11:30 P.M., and opened fire upon each vessel as it came into view. All the transports were hit, and one Southern officer reported that "the escape of any seemed miraculous, considering the number of large projectiles sent crushing through them." One vessel ran into the Louisiana shore and was abandoned by its crew, while another sank.

Lee reported that the "firing was generally good," but that it had been lessened in effectiveness because huge clouds of smoke produced by the guns had settled over the water hampering the gunners' vision. Some vessels used these clouds as screens and slipped past unhampered. The two passings, one of April 16 and the other on April 22, demonstrated that the Vicksburg batteries could not stop the passage of boats down

²²Everhart, Vicksburg, 18-20.
²³Q. R. - Navy, Series I, XXIV, 631.
river, Lee wrote in an analysis of the campaign.\textsuperscript{24} It did not make any difference. Grant had accomplished two major feats—he had forces on the west side of the river below Vicksburg, and he had naval power to move him across and to stock him well with supplies before he began an overland march.

Grant tried to cross some of his forces at Grand Gulf on April 29, found the defending batteries to be too strong, and moved south to a point opposite Bruinsburg, and crossed the next day. One of his corps, under Brigadier General John A. McClernand, attacked the Southern forces holding Port Gibson on May 1.

The Yankees attacking had about 23,000 men, while the defending Confederates had only 8,000. But the rough terrain prevented McClernand from committing the mass of his forces at any one time. The battle raged all day with a series of furious engagements, the Confederates slowly falling backward. They withdrew under cover of darkness, each side having suffered about 800 casualties.

At Port Gibson the Confederates lost a brigade commander, Brigadier General Edward D. Tracy, who was killed. Lee's reinforced brigade was manning specific defensive positions in and around Vicksburg by this time, and the Confederate commanders decided to leave these men where

they were. But Tracy's brigade needed a new commander—one considered to be capable of leading it in active campaigning. The job went to Lee.  

Lee's new command was composed of the Twentieth, Twenty-third, Thirtieth, Thirty-first, and Forty-sixth Alabama regiments. It was a part of Major General Carter L. Stevenson's division. Brigadier General Francis A. Shoup assumed command of Lee's old brigade.  

Finally Pemberton assembled an army of 17,500 men with divisions under Stevenson, John S. Bowen, and William W. Loring, to maneuver in the field against Grant. Other Confederate forces remained in Vicksburg, and some were in Jackson, Mississippi, under the nominal direction of the Department Commander, General Joseph E. Johnston. But Pemberton did not launch counter-offensive movements—it was contrary to his selected strategy. He determined to protect the city of Vicksburg and its approaches at all costs, not to try to unite as many Confederate forces as possible and engage Grant before all of the Union troops had massed.

It was a fatal mistake and one that Grant did not let pass. The Yankee general quickly united his own troops and cut loose on a bold audacious inland move without supply lines or rearward communications. He pushed rapidly toward Jackson, planning to defeat the Southern troops

25 Historical Sketch of the Third Brigade, in the Vicksburg Military Park Headquarters.

26 J. D. Hartwell in Confederate Veteran, XXX, 264; and Francis A. Shoup in ibid., II, 172.
there before they either evacuated or moved to reinforce Pemberton.

The Confederates got only a brigade into Grant's line of advance. The Yankees clashed with this relatively small resisting force at Raymond on May 12, pushed past, and reached Jackson by the fourteenth. General Johnston had arrived two days earlier to assume personal command, and as the Federals approached, he decided to withdraw, saving as many troops and supplies as possible. He staged a holding action with part of his forces and sent word to Pemberton to meet him at Canton, Mississippi, where the Confederates would unite forces.

Grant intercepted a copy of this order and immediately moved out of Jackson toward the west. By this time Pemberton's army was a few miles outside of Edward's Station, between Jackson and Vicksburg. Pemberton displayed indecisiveness. He had conflicting instructions from higher authorities. President Davis had telegraphed that he should definitely hold the city; General Johnston wanted him to ignore Grant and move to Canton. He finally decided to obey Johnston's orders, but it was too late. The armies clashed in the Battle of Champion's Hill (also called Baker's Creek), on Saturday, May 16, 1863.

Champion's Hill is a little more than four miles to the east of Edward's Station. The hill is a crescent-shaped ridge, about seventy-five feet in elevation, near where the Champion plantation home was located. There were three roads leading eastward from Edward's Station which eventually went to Raymond. Each of Pemberton's three divisions
covered one of these roads. The Confederate line was about three miles long.

Stevenson's division was on the left. One of his brigades was in Edward's Station with the supply trains. He had three others, plus Waul's Texas Legion and some cavalry about five thousand effectives in his battle sector. Lee's brigade occupied the extreme left flank of the army's line. His men faced east, holding a three-fourths mile front beginning at the intersection of the three roads, a mile from Champion's House. Every brigade had skirmisher's out for about one mile to the front of the main battle line.

Skirmish fire began at daylight, grew very hot by 7:00 A.M., and continued to increase. Lee realized the strategic importance of the crossroads and had emplaced Waddell's battery of six guns there. And Lee also feared that the Yankees might do exactly what they eventually did do in the battle--attack from the north and northeast in an attempt to roll up the Confederate left flank. He sent out a reconnaissance patrol under Lieutenant Colonel Edmund W. Pettus, and received word back from it by around 9:00 A.M. that a strong Union column was approaching from the northeast.

The Yankee forces that hit the Confederate left outnumbered the

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29Bearss, *Decision in Mississippi*, 246, 250.
defenders by two to one. Lee's sound action in suspecting a flanking attack and sending a patrol which gave him advance warning was of crucial importance to the Southerners. While under fire, Lee moved his brigade to the left and turned it so as to thwart the Union threat. He sent word to the brigade commander on his right, explaining what he was doing and requesting support to close the gap thus opened.

As the Yankees continued their massive build-up and firing toward Lee's new front, General Stevenson gradually moved his entire division line in a counter-clockwise direction. The Confederate line of battle thus formed somewhat in the shape of the number 7. Pemberton expected the main attack along the vertical, but it actually came from the horizontal above.

The fighting was bitter. Lee had to maneuver various units from time to time in order to prevent his left from being hit. Stevenson asked for reinforcements from the Confederate right, which Pemberton did not send until after mid-day. On several occasions Lee rallied his various hard-pressed regiments by taking their battle flags and leading the men in person. He had three horses shot from under him, several balls tore through his clothing, and he was slightly wounded in the shoulder.30

As the Federals moved farther and farther to the west, attempting to turn Stevenson's left flank, Pemberton finally shifted Bowen's division to the north. The Confederate battle line then stretched essentially

30Pollard, The Early Life, 680-81; unidentified author in Confederate Veteran, II, 70.
west to east rather than from north to south as it had previously. The added weight of defending troops forced Grant to move more of his own men to the reinforced area.

Meanwhile Lee's beleaguered lines were being forced back in some spots. Certain areas of the battle ground changed hands several times as the day wore on. Finally the Yankees took Champion's Hill, and most of Stevenson's brigade had to retire and form a new battle line west of the crossroads.

Just about the time that Lee's brigade was breaking again, Bowen's division moved in from the south. One of the reinforcing troops recalled that:

> After going in a run for I suppose a half mile, we turned to the fight and took position in a sweet potato patch just in the rear of General S. D. Lee's brigade who was being forced back. . . . General Lee, making a terrible appeal to his men to rally—for God's sake to rally and drive the enemy back.

The man was impressed with Lee's commanding form: "I could see him and hear his voice above the din of battle." He saw the disorganized condition of Lee's lines and doubted that any rally at all was possible but the brigade did reform, "as if by magic," he thought, a "magnificent scene."

Two Federal divisions joined the other attacking Yankees at about 3:30 P.M., and Bowen's division was routed. Confederate division commander Loring moved his men into a holding action while the rest of the

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31 W. T. Moore in The Vicksburg Daily Herald, October 5, 1902, copy preserved in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.

32 Bearss, Decision in Mississippi, 270.
defeated Southerners retreated. With an attack coming from his front, a menace of gradually extending attacks from the left, and finally a gap to his right vacated by retreating Confederates, Lee had to withdraw his own brigade.

He reformed his men and reported to General Loring who was the nearest senior officer, Lee having been cut off from his own division commander, Stevenson. Loring's division and two other brigades, Lee's being one of them, held off the Federals while the main Southern forces crossed Baker's Creek. Lee then conducted his brigade across, but Loring's division could not cross. The Union troops secured all the crossings, and Loring had to march around his enemy, finally to make contact and unite with General Johnston. Thus, Loring was lost to Pemberton for the remainder of the Vicksburg campaign.

The battle of Champion's Hill was the bloodiest action of the series of conflicts near Vicksburg. Lee's brigade had withstood much of the heaviest firing. It was badly battered, many were killed, and almost a whole regiment had been captured. Pemberton had lost nearly four thousand men, while Grant sustained casualties of twenty-five hundred.33

Lee's personal contributions were notable. His sound military knowledge had helped save the Confederates from worse disaster. His actions of the field did much to spur the men to greater effort. As

usual, he received warm compliments and congratulations from his superiors. But nothing could change the fact that Champion's Hill was a victory for Grant—and the Confederates were another step toward losing Vicksburg.

Word got back to the citizenry at Vicksburg concerning the great conflict at Champion's Hill. One of Lee's dearest acquaintances, Emma Balfour, a married resident of Vicksburg, heard that he had been killed. (No doubt because he was cut off from the rest of Stevenson's division.) She wrote in her diary what she had heard about her friend:

General Lee's brigade four times met the shock of battle—going where we were most hotly pressed. . . . General Lee repeatedly rallied his men—appealed to them by all their love of home and country to rally, threatened to shoot the first who ran, but all to no purpose. . . . Lieut. Underhill . . . wept as he related all this, said he never saw such daring, such generalship, but alas it was all of no avail. He said he was not ashamed of his tears, for God never made a purer, braver or nobler man! I too wept. . . .

Later on the same day, May 17, she received more cheering news, and wrote, "General Lee is alive and unhurt. See how God shields the brave!"

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35 Balfour Diary (May 16-June 2, 1863, Typescript copies of the diary kept by Emma Balfour of Vicksburg during the siege, copies at Mississippi State Department of Archives and History and at Vicksburg National Military Park), entry for May 21.
Meanwhile Lee was busy helping the Confederates salvage men and material, moving back toward Vicksburg. Not knowing that Loring's division would not be able to rejoin his force, Pemberton ordered that a stand be made near a bend in the Big Black River—about six miles west of Edward's Station. He hoped to keep the bridges open long enough for Loring to come up and cross. The Confederates occupied a line about a mile long, touching the curving river at both ends.

Before dawn on May 17 the Union army began pushing toward Vicksburg again and immediately came into contact with the defending Confederates. The Yankees at once launched an attack and quickly discovered a vulnerable point. On the extreme Confederate left the earthworks had been washed away by a recent overflow of the river. The Federals easily moved up to this point and threatened to roll up the flank. Seeing this, and being afraid of getting cut off from any escape, the Southerners broke, heading in disorder for the bridges.

Lee's brigade received orders to cover the retreat across the river. He stationed men along the banks and they provided protection for the demoralized retreating army. Lee's troops remained in position, performing creditably, until they were relieved by Baldwin's brigade, the last of Pemberton's force to cross. Lee crossed the river with the bulk of his brigade, but one of his regimental commanders misunderstood the order and remained. The Twenty-third Alabama "gallantly

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engaged the enemy during the entire day," Lee reported, "leaving its position about midnight and joining the brigade at Vicksburg."\(^{37}\)

After the Confederates crossed the Big Black, they burned the bridges and halted Grant's pursuit until repairs could be made. The Southerners moved quickly into Vicksburg and took up defensive positions.

In the retreat, Lee had had a close call. He and his adjutant, Captain William Elliott, considered emplacing troops at one of the bridges that part of Pemberton's forces planned to cross. Lee received word that the Confederates still controlled the road leading to this bridge, and he rode with Elliott to reconnoiter. As they approached, they saw troops nearby. Supposing them to be Confederates, the two officers galloped ahead.

Actually the troops were Yankees. In fact, a Federal company with six pieces of artillery in support had secured the bridge, then deployed in a nearby woods. They saw Lee approaching and decided to ambush him. Two Federal soldiers donned gray shirts and rode out as decoys.

Lee and his adjutant rode up to within six paces of the two enemy soldiers, and within seventy-five yards of the larger body hiding in the woods. "Who are you?" Lee called out, and the Federals replied by repeating the same question. "I am General Lee," he answered.

"All right General, come on." Apparently Lee suspected the trap and began to take action at the same time that the Yankees drew pistols and demanded his surrender.

"No you don't," Lee cried, as the two Confederates put spurs to their horses, wheeled around, and began thundering away.

The Federals discharged their pistols, the infantry in the woods opened fire, and the artillery belched out several charges. Perhaps it was here that Lee received the wound which turned his arm black from elbow to shoulder by the time he got to Vicksburg. But Lee and his companion kept riding. Miraculously they remained unscathed. After Vicksburg's surrender, a Federal officer who had witnessed the incident told Lee that it was impossible to account for such an escape.38

Parts of the Confederate army trickled into Vicksburg all day on May 17. Stevenson's division, including Lee's brigade, got there in the afternoon. All the Confederates able to fight assumed defensive positions in the trenches that surrounded the city, or in the river battery emplacements. The defensive lines ran along a ridge which essentially surrounded Vicksburg, varying from one mile to one and a half miles in distance from the city, and touching the Mississippi both above and below it. The high ground was dotted with a system of redans, lunetts, and one square fort or redoubt. All these installations were

38 Pollard, The Early Life, 681; Balfour Diary, entry for May 21.
connected by rifle pits. The entire line was eight miles long, and Pemberton had something over 19,000 fighting men to face Grant. 39

Meanwhile Grant's troops threw up a pontoon bridge across the Big Black, crossed on the morning of May 18, and surrounded Vicksburg on the same day. The Federals had 71,000 men in all, but a large portion of them had to remain detached and watch for Johnston's force. For an actual assault on Vicksburg, Grant could utilize a maximum of about 35,000. These Yankees spread out in a concentric arc on the outside of the defending Confederate lines. Grant either could proceed with a methodical siege, or he could try to storm the lines and break through them.

Stevenson's division manned the right third of the Confederate line. Lee's brigade occupied the left portion of this sector. His line extended from a cut made for the Vicksburg and Jackson railroad, a vulnerable spot, south to include the square fort. He had 1,268 effectives.40

The Yankees wished to avoid a long siege if possible, and so on May 19 Sherman's corps launched an assault against the northern portion of the Confederate lines. The attack was bloodily and rather easily

39 Stephen D. Lee, "The Siege of Vicksburg," in *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* (Oxford, Mississippi: Printed for the Society, III, 1900), 55-56. Lee states in ibid., 57 that Vicksburg "was full of sick and wounded men, quarter-master, commissary employees and extra duty men, and hangers on of every kind." They were not effective fighting men, but were included in those paroled after Vicksburg's fall. This accounts for the fact that 29,491 received paroles, but supposedly some 10,000 fewer took part in the fighting.

40 *Ibid.*, 64.
repulsed. The Federals lost a thousand men in this operation which accomplished no more than to reveal that the defense lines were very strong indeed. Confederate casualties were slight.\footnote{Everhart, \textit{Vicksburg}, 34-35.}

Grant's other two assaulting corps, under McPherson and McClernand, were not yet in good position for attack, but did advance several hundred yards closer to the siege line. A small but determined charge hit the part of Lee's line through which the railroad cut passed. Mrs. Balfour could view the scene from her gallery. "It was terrific!" she noted in her diary, "I was up in my room sewing and praying in my heart, oh so earnestly for our cause, when (her Negro servant) Nancy rushed up actually pale, exclaiming, 'Oh Mistress, the Yankees are pouring over the hill and our men are running.'" But Lee's men rallied and repelled the attackers. The Yankees renewed their charge and were repulsed three times.\footnote{Balfour Diary, entry for May 20.}

"General Lee's praise is in everyone's mouth," Mrs. Balfour noted.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}} Lee was very much a hero with many of the Vicksburg citizenry. They remembered his victory at Chickasaw Bayou, and they heard reports of his laudible performance at Champion's Hill. Even though the big assault of May 19 did not come at his sector, the populace thought that surely if Sherman attacked, Lee must have been chiefly responsible for the repulse.
Even many of the soldiers thought of Lee as one of their special leaders. One spoke of him in a letter:44

(when the later student of the war) looks at the page that tells of those who struck so nobly and so well in freedom's holy cause, his eye will rest upon the name of none that will shine with a brighter, purer, steadier luster than that of Brigadier General Stephen D. Lee, Vicksburg's noblest, best, and most skillful commander.

During the night of May 19, after the Yankees made their first charge, the Confederates set fire to some houses in front of their lines. The purpose was to remove obstruction from the fields of fire. The former residents of these dwellings, as well as many other people who lived inside the city, moved into caves (there were quite a few in the area). Lee informed his friend, Mrs. Balfour, that "there will be no safety elsewhere." He called these shelters "rat holes," and when he told this to Mrs. Balfour, she replied that "it seemed to me that we were all caught in a rat hole."45

For the next two days, both armies worked to strengthen their lines. Lee wrote that, "all the knolls in front of my line were at once seized by the enemy, and batteries erected thereon for their artillery, their sharpshooters in the meantime keeping up a continuous

44 W. C. Capers in Confederate Veteran, XXXV, 23.
45 Balfour Diary, entry for May 19.
and annoying fire." The Yankees kept up a heavy fire both day and	night, from all along the lines and from boats on the river. Lee esti­
mated that there were between fifteen and thirty pieces directly in his
front. Grant opened up supply lines, while at the same time, his men and
the Union fleet all but completely sealed off Vicksburg. Meanwhile the
Confederates added to various fortifications along their line, built
traverses to protect against enfilade fire, and made covered approaches
from the camps in the rear.

Still Grant wished to try another assault. He feared that a pro­
longed siege would cost perhaps as many men as an all-out attack, and
he wished to secure Vicksburg quickly and then perhaps move with the
mass of his forces against Johnston's army. So he issued orders for a
general onslaught along the whole Confederate line. Noting the momentary
success near the railroad cut on the nineteenth, the Yankees prepared a
heavy concentration to hit that portion of the line guarded by Lee's
brigade.

The Confederates knew that Grant intended to try another assault.
As Lee wrote:

46Lee, "Report of the Siege of Vicksburg," in Southern Historical
Society Papers, IV, 15.

47Samuel H. Lockett in Battles and Leaders, III, 489.

48Lee, "The Siege of Vicksburg," in Publications of the Missis­
sippi Historical Society, III, 59.
(the Federal) preparations did not partake of the slow methods of a siege program, but rather of the hasty preparation for immediate battle. The troops everywhere were being pushed up as near as possible to the Confederate lines, and were being massed under shelter in the deep vales in full view. . . . Nervous tension of all within Confederate limits, was kept to the highest pitch.

Admiral Porter bombarded the city from gunboats all night on May 21-22. Early on the twenty-second the Yankees along the entire front cannonaded for over two hours. Lee recalled that it was "continuous and unceasing; the artillery fire being accompanied by the ringing, steady cracking of the sharpshooters' rifles. We then knew that the assault was to occur."49

The Confederates had prepared the defense well. Grape and canister artillery rounds had been arranged near the guns ready for use. Every trench had a supply of extra rifle ammunition.50 A Federal staff officer remembered how the lines had looked to the enemy:51

A long line of high, rugged, irregular bluffs, clearly cut against the sky, crowned with cannon which peered ominously from embrasures to the right and left as far as the eye could see. Lines of heavy rifle-pits, surmounted with head logs, ran along the bluffs, connecting fort with fort. . . . The approaches to this position were frightful. . . .

"About half past 10 o'clock A.M., as if by magic," Lee recalled, "every gun and rifle stopped firing along Gen. Grant's exterior line. . . . The silence was almost appalling." Then he went on:52

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Catton quoting William E. Strong, in *Grant Moves South*, 450.
Suddenly, there seemed to spring almost from the bowels of the earth, dense masses of Federal troops, in numerous columns of attack, and with loud cheers and huzzahs, they rushed forward, at a run. . . . Their advance over the rough ground which compelled them to open out was a grand and awful sight. . . .

Another account of the scene indicates that:

For a space of three and a half miles a swarm of blue appeared . . . the rough hills and valleys changing color with the regular movement of the advancing Federals. They continued with the determination of a machine gone wild.

The Confederate troops withheld their fire at first. Then upon a signal they all rose in the trenches and began blasting. Reserves fired while others reloaded. Volley after volley poured into the attacking waves. Artillery sent forth double shotted charges of grape and canister. Very quickly the general assault was crushed. As Lee put it, "no troops in the world could stand such a fire."

Yankee troops made only one lodgement in the Confederate line, at the railroad cut in Lee's sector. Since the point had been considered vulnerable, Lee had established the main line of works some eighty to one hundred yards to the rear of a salient fort which guarded the cut. In the fort were forty Southerners.

Four regiments stormed the little fort. The Federal engineers had built forty scaling ladders, fifteen to twenty feet in length, and the attackers carried them forward. Suffering heavy losses, the Federals got several patrols into the fort by sheer weight of numbers.

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Their corps commander, McClernand, sent Grant word of the momentary success. So the Yankees continued the general assault and sent reinforcements to exploit the break-through.

That was a very costly decision for the Federals because there really was no break-through. Lee's lines behind the fort held firm. There were between twenty and thirty Yankee soldiers in the fort, and they managed to hold it for a time. One assaulting party attempted to retake it and every man was shot down.

Colonel Thomas N. Waul's Texas Legion constituted Lee's reserve. Lee requested another assaulting party, made up of volunteers, to storm the fort. Two companies from Waul's Legion agreed to try. Lieutenant Colonel Edmund W. Pettus had been in command of the fort before it was evacuated. He asked for permission to lead the attack, and with three privates from the Thirtieth Alabama Regiment, joined Waul's group.

They charged with bayonets, fiercely and with stunning rapidity. Only three men in the assault party were wounded, none were killed. Fifty Yankees had crowded into the fort by this time, and all that survived the assault were captured—including a lieutenant colonel and a set of colors. Owing to the fact that the first assault party had been wiped out completely, Lee praised Pettus' accomplishment saying, "a more faring feat has not been performed during the war."55

Meanwhile McClernand mistakenly believed that success was within his grasp and renewed the attack. Grant ordered his other corps

commanders to commit their reserves and create diversions in McClernand's favor. The result was a tremendous slaughter of Federal troops, and no breaches of the Confederate defenses. Grant lost over 3,000 on this single day. (Southern losses were much less, but no exact number can be ascertained. Pemberton's army suffered 2,872 casualties--killed, wounded, or missing--during the period from May 19 through June 13, 1863.)

Grant's army settled down to a conventional siege, the unsuccessful assaults of May 19 and 22 having convinced him that it was necessary. Such siege warfare is almost always won by the attacker--unless a relief expedition arrives from the outside. The Yankees conducted this operation very methodically and efficiently. The Confederates did not receive outside help. And the inevitable surrender came after forty-seven days of besiegement.

Supply was an important factor to both sides. Grant continued to receive replenishments of food and ammunition; Pemberton had to rely almost entirely upon what was already inside the city. The Confederates had captured a number of arms from the Federals in the two large assaults--Lee's brigade reported gathering a large amount of ammunition and some "beautiful Enfields" abandoned by the enemy in front of the lines. Southerners outside Vicksburg managed to smuggle in several

56 Kountz, Record of the Organizations Engaged . . ., 61; Everhart, Vicksburg, 40.

57 Historical Sketch of the Third Brigade, in the Vicksburg Military Park Headquarters.
marched by floating them through the Federal fleet on logs. Aside from such exceptions, the defenders had to make do with what they had. There was plenty of food, but Pemberton rationed it, keeping enough in reserve to fully feed his army if he tried a break-out later. The populace had to settle for many undesirable types of subsistence, such as mule meat for example.

Grant's army did try twice more to break the Confederate lines by force, once on May 27 with naval support and once in late June with underground mines. The defenders sank the attacking gunboat and they destroyed the other approach by countermines and by creating a second line of defense works behind the craters which did open. Otherwise the Federals gradually moved their trenches closer and closer to the Confederate lines by digging zig-zag approaches. At the same time the bluecoats kept up a constant harassing fire. "Everything, even the size of a man's hand, was shot at," Lee remembered, and "there was not a quiet hour day or night, when any one could sleep without being disturbed by piercing shot or shrieking shell or sharpshooting." Pemberton ordered that ammunition be rationed. The artillery was all but forbidden to fire except to repel assaults. The infantry was restricted from firing except for one man every ten paces. "This was soon discovered by the Federals," Lee said, "and it made them bolder." He complained that ammunition was being rationed too much, and later

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59Ibid., 66-67.
asserted that "the approaches could have been delayed by a free use of ammunition."^60

Both sides suffered during the siege from exposure to the elements. It rained frequently and the days were hot. Damp fogs and heavy dews added to the soldiers' misery. Both armies lacked sufficient pure water for drinking and many soldiers contracted diseases. Pemberton's men did not even have enough water for washing, and many of his men's bodies became infested with vermin.

But the soldiers were cheerful. They often shouted greetings to their enemies, even exchanging joking remarks. The talking got easier as the siege proceeded, because the Union lines got so close to the Confederate works--only thirty feet at several points to Lee's front by July 4. The Confederates worked to make their trenches more comfortable, wider, and with traverses to prevent the artillery from being enfiladed. They put up head logs and sand bags for protection, and tied blankets up overhead to get some shade from the oppressive sun.^61

Lee spent most of his time with his troops, infusing them with deep loyalty and devotion. He acted toward the men in such a way as to win a high degree of cooperation and willingness. More than forty years later, a veteran corporal remembered Lee's treatment and professed a belief that Lee's characteristics compared favorably with the illustrious

^60 Ibid., 68.

Robert E. Lee. And one who had been a young lieutenant and aide-de-camp to General Stevenson, who recalled that during the siege Lee impressed him "as gallant a soldier as ever wore a sword," later told of Lee weeping over the death of a troublesome little talkative private—a perfect chatterbox. He said, "I saw hot, burning tears trickling down his bronzed cheek."

Although Lee shared many of the men's privations, he found comfort with Mrs. Balfour. She had him and his staff in to lunch on several occasions and every day she sent buttermilk out to them. Some evenings he took tea at her house. Mrs. Balfour had admirable literary talent and no doubt she charmed Lee with her conversation. She teased Lee, asking him not to allow Grant to shoot so near that her flower pots might break, but another entry in her diary reveals what a sensitive, cultured person she was—and also describes the scene during that early summer siege of 1863:

In the midst of all this carnage and commotion, it is touching to see how every work of God, save man, gives praise to Him. The birds are singing as merrily as if all were well, rearing their little ones, teaching them to fly and fulfilling their part of nature's program as quietly and happily as if their fearful work of man slaying his brother man was not in progress. . . . The flowers are in perfection, the air heavy with perfume . . . and the garden bright and gay with all the summer flowers. . . . Nature is all fair and lovely—all save the spirit of man seems divine.

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62 L. C. McAllister, in Confederate Veteran, XII, 473.
64 Balfour Diary, entries for May 26-29.
65 Quoted in Walker, Vicksburg, 171.
Lee was compassionate, but apparently did not share the fraternal spirit that many of his men had with the enemy. For example, the Federal soldiers killed or wounded in the May 22 assault lay where they fell until nearly dark on the 25. Lee called it "one of the most striking incidents of the horrors of war." Finally there was a truce so that the sick could be cared for and the dead buried. A Yankee general engaged Lee in conversation and invited him over for a drink. Lee coldly declined. At one point the Yankee asked how much longer the truce was to continue, and Lee replied that it made no difference; its purpose had been fulfilled in their front and as far as he was concerned, hostilities could commence at once. The blueclad officer apologized for any offense and observed that Lee's lines seemed very strong. "Yes sir," Lee replied, "I think I can hold them ...," and the conversation ended.  

Finally, by early July, Pemberton considered surrender. He called his general officers together in council of war on the night of July 2. He offered two choices, either to surrender or to make a desperate attempt to cut their way out.  

The six week siege had taken a hard toll of Confederate strength. Ten thousand men were so debilitated by wounds or sickness that they no

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67 Balfour Diary, entry for May 30.
longer could man the defense works. All the generals except Lee reported that their commands were too weak or enfeebled to undergo the hardship of an evacuation attempt. And even Lee admitted in his report that "I did not consider more than one-half of my men able to undergo the fatigues of the field." So the question boiled down to "surrender or not?" Brigadier General Francis A. Shoup had taken it upon himself to draft a set of surrender proposals--terms considerably better than those Grant was willing to offer. All of Pemberton's subordinate officers present, except Lee, signed Shoup's proposal. But Pemberton chided them for hoping to get such favorable terms. He knew Grant never would agree to what they requested, and he believed that if they did not surrender soon Grant surely would assault and inflict fearful casualties upon the Confederates.

Beginning with the junior officer present, they voted on the question, "surrender or not." All voted to do so except Brigadiers William E. Baldwin and Lee. Baldwin declared, "I object to a surrender of the troops, and am in favor of holding the position, or attempting to do so, as long as possible." When asked for his reasons, Lee replied, "I do not think it is time to surrender this garrison and post

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68Everhart, Vicksburg, 49; Samuel H. Lockett in Battles and Leaders, III, 492.


70Francis A. Shoup, in Confederate Veteran, II, 173-74.
yet. Nor do I think it is practicable to cut our way out. When it is time to surrender, the terms proposed by Grant are as good as we can expect."\textsuperscript{71}

The vote to surrender was nearly unanimous. Lee's objections that "I still have hopes of Johnston relieving the garrison" and his note of protest through channels to his superiors were not enough.\textsuperscript{72} Pemberton sent word that he would like to meet with Grant to discuss surrender. On July 4, 1863, the Yankees got Vicksburg and all the military stores left, and every Confederate soldier there became a prisoner of war—including Lee.

\textsuperscript{71}\textit{O. R.}, XXIV, pt. 2, 348, 405.

\textsuperscript{72}\textit{Ibid.}, 352.
CHAPTER VII
THE MISSISSIPPI GENERAL

July, 1863 opened with gloom in the South. The twin disasters of Robert E. Lee's defeat at Gettysburg and the fall of Vicksburg weighed heavily upon Confederate chances for ultimate success. But in spite of these major setbacks, permanent turning points in the war, the Southern people still possessed great determination and a will to continue. While Lee was waiting for his parole, a Federal officer questioned him about this remarkable tenacity. Why did the Southern people not give up, the Yankee queried? "Because," Lee replied, "the women of the South would never agree to it."¹

Lee's statement did not encompass his whole reason for justifying the war's continuance. He was merely making conversation with an enemy. Yet Lee did have a tremendous admiration for the Southern women and he always credited them with being an indespensable asset to the war effort. Elocuently he summed up his esteem for them in an 1893 speech:²

Who was it that ran the plantations and farms to make bread and meat for the soldiers in the field? Who nursed the wounded? Who denied themselves gladly to help the cause? . . . Hands unused to toil were put to knitting socks and weaving cloth "for the soldiers." Everything was the "soldiers." . . . (The women) were the inspiration of valor, the soldiers were fighting for them. To be worthy of such women was enough to inspire the most

¹B. L. Ridley, in Confederate Veteran, IV, 106.
²Lee, quoted in the Memphis Appeal Avalanche, April 27, 1893. Copy preserved in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, III.
sluggish to deeds of heroism. In truth, a coward would have had a hard time with the Yankees before him and the women behind.

The Confederate soldiers captured at Vicksburg all received paroles. Although they were released by the Federals, they signed promises that they would not serve in any capacity as soldiers unless and until they were "exchanged." An exchange entailed a formal agreement on both sides that specific persons be released, usually on a one-for-one basis. Since the North had a greater population, it had less reason to want to engage in exchanges, but it did do so in order to get certain persons released from Confederate custody. (Of course, the reason a capturing force placed men on parole in the first place was because the captors did not wish to be burdened with sustaining and guarding the prisoners).

Lee received a parole on July 5, 1863. He signed a written statement "that I will not take up arms again against the United States, nor serve in any military, police, or constabulary force in any Fort, Garrison, or field work . . . nor as guard of prisons, depots, or stores, nor discharge any duties usually performed by soldiers against the United States. . . ."³

Meanwhile the enlisted Confederates who had been captured were moved into a camp at Demopolis, Alabama, and placed under the charge of

³Lee's parole, in Microcopy 331, reel 155 (National Archives).
their own provost marshals. Apparently Lee did not go to the Demopolis camp, since doing so would have been a violation of his parole. But where he did go is not recorded.

At any rate Lee did not have long to wait. He was among the first of those to be exchanged. President Davis had a personal eye upon Lee and determined to make extensive use of him in the future. On July 13, 1863, the Confederate government declared that Lee was duly exchanged. The Secretary of War, James A. Seddon, wrote to General Joseph E. Johnston on July 16 that Lee could be assigned to duty, and Lee himself received notification from the War Department in Richmond that he had been exchanged.

Generals Grant and Sherman were enraged that Lee returned to duty so soon, and the Union officials refuted the validity of the July 13 declaration of exchange. It is not clear whether the Confederacy cheated in the matter or if there merely was a misunderstanding between the North and South. Lee himself acted in good faith, but nevertheless the United States government considered him to be a parole violator until September 12. On that date Lee was listed on another declaration of exchange, and the whole matter was then dropped.

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4Rowland, History of Mississippi, I, 883.
5J. L. Wofford, in Confederate Veteran, XVI, 593; O. R., Series 2, VI, 113.
6Ibid., Series 1, XXIV, pt. 1, 232; XXX, pt. 3, 228.
7Ibid., XXX, pt. 3, 197, 224, 474; Series 2, VI, 234, 241, 273.
8Ibid., Series 2, VI, 280.
Meanwhile Lee had returned to duty. On July 17 Pemberton recommended that Lee be promoted to major general and be placed in command of all the cavalry in Mississippi, saying "in my opinion, nothing will so effectually check Grant as this appointment." Confederate organization in the Western theatre was in a state of flux at this time and for some months thereafter. The authorities decided to try Lee with the cavalry assignment.

At this time there actually was very little cavalry in Mississippi. Pemberton had suffered from its paucity. Grierson's raid had been virtually unopposed due to a lack of Confederate horse soldiers. Lee's first task was to raise more cavalry, and to revamp those units that already existed into more effective organizations. He proved to be very capable and efficient, and his efforts bore fruit.

Lee received his promotion to major general on August 3. In his new assignment, he had a considerable degree of individual responsibility, but he was subject to the orders of his immediate superior, General Joseph E. Johnston, who had overall command of the Department of Mississippi and east Louisiana, with headquarters at Morton,

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9Ibid., Series 1, XXIV, pt. 3, 1011.

10Ibid., XXIV, pt. 3, 1048; XXX, pt. 4, 504.

11Thiele, "The Evolution of Cavalry in the American Civil War, 1861-1865," 175, 459-60.

12Lee's commission as major general, in Stephen D. Lee Museum, Columbus, Mississippi.
Mississippi. Johnston was pleased to have Lee's help, and later he referred to Lee as "that gallant soldier," and "that spirited soldier." At first Lee chose not to maintain any permanent headquarters of his own. Instead he moved from place to place gathering recruits, mostly in the western part of Mississippi. Since this area was very near the Federal forces operating out of Vicksburg, Lee's action had a calming effect upon the nearby Southern populace, and inspired many to enlist. One admiring newspaper man penned a tribute to him:

This gallant officer is constantly in the saddle. He has inspired universal confidence in the people, and contributed greatly to drive away despondency. Always cheerful, always hopeful and confident, his presence in the western part of the State is hailed with joy. The soldiers both love and honor him. Like his great namesake in Va., he carries with him the trust and prayer of all.

Lee's Mississippi cavalry command soon numbered nearly 5,000. He had a division of 2,500 under Brigadier General William H. Jackson on duty between Vicksburg and the Yazoo River and responsible also for the railroad between Grenada and Jackson. The rich grain-growing prairies in northeastern Mississippi were protected by a brigade under Colonel

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15 Unidentified newspaper clipping in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.
William Boyles. Also, there was a small brigade under Colonel L. L. Logan near Port Hudson. 16

The total effective strength in Johnston's department was less than one third the strength of the Federals operating in the same area. Including Lee's cavalry, Johnston had 26,144; Grant's forces numbered over 71,000. But defense always requires smaller numbers, and the Confederates did have a chance to thwart Unionist operations.

After Vicksburg had fallen, the Yankees quickly captured Port Hudson. Then they pushed toward Jackson, but Johnston evacuated that city rather than withstand a siege. The Federals did not occupy the place, choosing instead to make a base at Vicksburg. Their offensive plan was to send out raiding missions from nearby places that they held, including Port Hudson, Vicksburg, Yazoo City, Memphis, and points of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. The object was twofold. First, to cut Mississippi into pieces, starting a wedge horizontally through the entire Confederacy. Secondly, to reach the northeastern Mississippi prairies, the granary sometimes called the "breadbasket of the South," and destroy the crops.

The nature of the Federal plan necessitated that Lee shift his main attention from the western to the northeastern part of the state. He announced to his men that they were to "seek and never to avoid an opportunity of striking a blow against the enemy. . . ." 17 Their task

17 O. R., XXX, pt. 4, 504.
was made more difficult because they were ill supplied, badly clothed, poorly trained, and inadequately disciplined. (A number of them had been recruited after the fall of Vicksburg, only weeks before.) Lee tightened up discipline, granted only a few furloughs, and somehow secured guns for most of the unarmed men.

In spite of Lee's efforts to secure sufficient supplies, his men still were suffering several months later from a lack of essential equipment. On October 30, 1863, one of his subordinates wrote:

For God's and the country's sake make your fair-promising-but-never-complying quartermaster send me skillets, ovens, pots, or anything that will bake bread or fry meat. I want clothing, shoes, and blankets for my naked freezing men. . . . I cannot fight any more until I get something to cook in.

Lee's cavalry units were able to force all of the Federal raiding expeditions during the summer to turn back. The Yankees did not undertake more offensive action in Mississippi for a time. Their big effort was in Tennessee, against General Braxton Bragg's Army. After the battle of Chickamauga, Bragg had lost Chattanooga, and then became hard-pressed to halt any further Federal advances. As the situation eased for the Confederates in Mississippi, they determined to try and take some of the pressure off General Bragg. Lee's area of responsibility for cavalry was enlarged by the addition of west Tennessee. Lee himself organized a raiding force of some 2,500, and planned to try and hit the railroads in middle Tennessee, the Yankee supply lines.

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18 R. V. Richardson, quoted in Confederate Veteran, XXVII, 465.

About this time the man who would soon become Lee's chief of artillery, and after the war would help Jefferson Davis to write his histories, Colonel J. L. Wofford, was paroled by the Federals. He proceeded to travel to join Lee's command, taking a boat at Demopolis, Alabama. Davis happened to be on the same vessel.

During the trip, Davis approached Wofford and said, "Well, I suppose you are on your way to join Stephen D." Being answered in the affirmative, he continued, "You will find him between Decatur and Huntsville, Alabama...," and he added, "I confidently expect to hear most encouraging reports from you and him." He told Wofford that he looked upon Lee as one of the most promising and capable young officers of the army, that he had tried Lee and Lee had always come up to the full measure of his expectations.

The chat ended and Davis asked Wofford to take a "cheerful message to Stephen D." It was: "I have no fears but what my reports from your department will be all I could expect."  

At that time, Lee was trying to disrupt Federal supply lines, and he moved toward north Alabama, reaching the Muscle Shoals area by October 14. He hoped to hit Murfreesboro, and then to join with other Confederate cavalry already in Tennessee, under General Joseph Wheeler,

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and to operate in the area as well and as long as possible. Officials at Montgomery considered the project to be of real importance.\footnote{Lee, "The War in Mississippi. . .," in \textit{Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society}, X, 49; Robert Garlick Hill Kean, \textit{Inside the Confederate Government} (Edited by Edward Younger, New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), 106-07.}

But as Lee reached Muscle Shoals, he met Wheeler leaving Tennessee. Wheeler had been driven out with considerable loss to his command, which numbered even more than Lee had with him. Furthermore, Lee had expected that a brigade under Brigadier General Philip D. Roddy would join him too, and here he discovered that Bragg had failed to give Roddy any orders to that effect.\footnote{Lee, "The War in Mississippi. . .," in \textit{Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society}, X, 49.}

Wheeler thought it unwise to recross the Tennessee River, and refused to take his command back. Lee objected strongly. Roddy was on the other side and soon would be cut off because of rising waters. Of course if Lee and Wheeler crossed they too would be cut off, but with all the cavalry united, Lee supposed that it could operate effectively. Lee urged Wheeler to reconsider. He knew that Sherman was moving slowly from Memphis toward their positions near Muscle Shoals. Soon Sherman's scouts would discover the Confederates and they would have lost all chance for a surprise attack in middle Tennessee.

As a matter of fact, the Federals already had received intelligence reports concerning Lee and Wheeler's cavalry. On October 7
sixteen deserters informed officers of the Federal navy that Lee was on the move (though they did not have accurate information concerning his intent or direction). By October 20 the Federals knew exactly where Lee and Wheeler were and approximately how many men they had.

Lee wisely decided not to cross the river without Wheeler. "I deem it of vital importance that our forces together should go to Middle Tennessee in which case it will be strong enough to whip the enemy," Lee declared, "but circumstances do not warrant my crossing the river alone. . . . (I) will await the reply of Gen. Bragg which I trust will order our crossing."

But Wheeler remained firm in his stand. He and Lee remained in position together for several days, and finally on October 20, Lee reported to Johnston that Wheeler would not join him, and added that Wheeler's command was "much demoralized by plunder." Officers and men, he said "behaved unbecomingly," on their retreat, "thinking more of their plunder than of fighting the enemy."

Lee was being bitter. His remarkable energy and willingness to

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23. R. Navy, Series 1, XXV, 459.

24. Thomas L. Livermore, in Campaigns in Kentucky and Tennessee Including the Battle of Chickamauga 1862-1864 (Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, VIII, Boston: Published by the Society, 1908), 315. Subsequent citations to this series are noted as PMHS.

25. Lee to Wheeler, October 15, 1863, in Microcopy 331, reel 155 (National Archives).

fight sometimes blinded him to difficulties. It probably is true that Wheeler's men engaged in plunder—their supplies were sadly lacking. But that was not the issue anyway. Wheeler deemed it imprudent to try and operate any longer in Tennessee. And on October 19, he received instructions from Bragg authorizing him to move his command to Guntersville, Alabama, and there to await further orders.  

At least Lee was wise enough to cool his ardor and not go on into Tennessee alone with his cavalry. He could have done so since Johnston's orders left him considerable discretionary power.

Lee did find something for his command to do while it was near the Tennessee border. On October 19, 1863, he learned that Sherman was south of the Tennessee River, moving east from Iuka, Mississippi, and repairing the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. Lee clashed with these forces near Cherokee Station. The Federals greatly outnumbered his command, but he harassed and impeded their march for ten days. Sherman then gave up the attempt to fix the railroad, and retraced his march to Bridgeport, where the Unionists crossed to the northern shore of the Tennessee River.  

The Federals then marched unmolested toward the Chattanooga area where they reinforced other Union forces operating against the Army of

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27 Ibd., 109.  
Tennessee. Lee could do nothing about that, but he had prevented Sherman from opening up still another supply line for the blue forces. General Bragg (the Army of Tennessee Commander), believed that Lee's action had been "of great value to us," that Lee had "done noble service in North Alabama." 29

After Sherman's move across the river, Lee returned to central Mississippi. He soon received a notable reinforcement. Brigadier General Nathan Bedford Forrest, truly one of the Civil War's natural military geniuses, was transferred to Lee's cavalry command. Forrest had been having serious difficulties with his previous superior officers, and President Davis determined to give Forrest a new assignment, and at the same time to strengthen the Confederate position in the Mississippi area. One of Forrest's great contributions throughout the war was his amazing ability to recruit and organize new forces, and this was to be one of his main tasks under Lee. 30

Many observers felt that Forrest would not get along amicably with Lee, just as he had been unable to work well under other superiors. Forrest was older than Lee and a non-West Pointer. He was highly unorthodox. Some people even thought that Lee would be jealous of Forrest,

29Ibid., 49-50; O. R., XXXI, pt. 3, 700.

because of his great fame.

But Lee and Forrest worked well together. As soon as Lee learned that Forrest might leave his old assignment, Lee wrote a cordial letter to him:31

Whether you are under my command or not, we shall not disagree, and you shall have all the assistance and support I can render you. I would feel proud either in commanding or co-operating with so gallant an officer as yourself and one with such an established reputation in the cavalry service to which I have been recently assigned.

And Lee promised that he would issue a "general order to my staff officers to fill your requisitions as far as practicable and afford you every facility in your new assignment."32

The Confederates planned to have Forrest go into Tennessee and try to raise new forces there. He reported to Lee with all the troops that he had been allowed to bring with him from his old assignment, a "brigade" which had only two hundred seventy-one men in it. On November 16, 1863, Lee gave him another greatly depleted brigade which raised Forrest's command to about four hundred fifty men.

In order for Forrest to get into Tennessee, and to his intended winter quarters, Jackson, Tennessee, he had to cross the Memphis and Chattanooga Railroad. But this line was one of the principal Federal supply routes, and it was heavily fortified and held by strong Union garrisons. Lee knew that he had to create a diversion somewhere along


32 Ibid., 204.
the road in order for Forrest to cross safely.

So Lee took most of his cavalry with him when he escorted Forrest northward. They separated at Saulsburg, and Lee turned left, appearing to threaten a raid on Memphis. Federal troops, which had been spread all along the railroad, immediately began rushing into a concentration near Memphis. Forrest then passed unnoticed into Tennessee with all four hundred fifty of his men, two guns, and five wagons, and arrived at Jackson on December 6.

Meanwhile Lee destroyed a long stretch of track and burned two hundred yards of wooden trestle bridge at Saulsbury. Since the Federals thought he was attempting to hit Memphis, he had little opposition when he marched rapidly to Moscow and clashed with Union forces there, inflicting sharp losses upon the surprised garrison. In spite of severe rains and flooded streams, Lee managed to move rapidly, and the Federals were vexed considerably by his actions. Lee and Forrest had begun a fruitful partnership.

As things developed, Forrest was unable to remain for the whole winter in Tennessee. He had some success with recruiting, however, and when he slipped back into Mississippi, he was able to bring about three thousand men with him. By this time a major general himself, he

reported to Lee at Holly Springs.

With Forrest's new force, plus the units that Lee already had, the Confederate Cavalry Command in Mississippi numbered 9,970 men on duty at the end of 1863. The military situation in the department had improved greatly for the South since Lee assumed his duties the previous August.

The Confederate government ordered a slightly different command arrangement to begin in January 1864. In December, Joseph E. Johnston had replaced Braxton Bragg as commander of the Army of Tennessee. Johnston's old post as Department head went to Lieutenant General Leonidas K. Polk. The ex-Episcopal Bishop now turned general then divided the cavalry in his department into two sections. Forrest received responsibility for the northern part, and Lee for the southern portion. But Lee as the senior major general, still retained some vague supervisory jurisdiction over all the cavalry in the whole department.

Lee moved his headquarters to Jackson, Mississippi. The cavalry under his direct command was ordered to assume picket duty along the Mississippi and Yazoo rivers. Since Forrest was in the more threatened area, and Lee was not expected by Polk to be there with Forrest, the most serious problem that Lee faced was dealing with deserters, draft dodgers, and civilian renegades who terrorized many counties in

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Mississippi.  

Lee's sector did not remain free of Yankee activity very long. The Union forces had not given up their desire to further subdivide the Confederacy by slicing eastward from some point on the Mississippi. During the later part of January, 1864, the bluecoats began to concentrate forces around Memphis and on the twenty-eighth, they commenced making offensive moves up the Yazoo River.

Lee sent Ross's cavalry brigade to harass these operations and to report all Federal movements. Further, Ross was to attempt to destroy any gunboats that he might get a chance to hit.  

While the Federals were making threatening moves in the Yazoo River area, Lee's old adversary, Sherman, crossed the Big Black River with 25,000 men. It was the main thrust—an attempt to cut Mississippi in two and to capture Meridian. At the same time, a force of 7,000 cavalry under Brigadier General William Sooy Smith moved down from Tennessee, planning to meet Sherman at Meridian. These Federal forces planned to combine and to move against either Selma or Mobile.

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36 S. D. Lee to Dr. W. M. Polk, November 19, 1875, in Leonidas K. Polk Papers, Southern Historical Collection; Joseph H. Parks, General Leonidas Polk, C.S.A.; the Fighting Bishop (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962), 356.

In the following two weeks, Lee constantly threw his available cavalrymen, 2,500 strong, against Sherman's line of advance. But the Federals outnumbered Lee ten to one, and there was little that Lee could do except to impede their progress. Lee's plucky Confederates swarmed about the Yankee column like angry bees. Several times severe skirmishing developed, and occasionally the bluecoats had to deploy in battle line to disperse Lee's blocking force.  

Polk ordered Lee to "detain the enemy as long as possible from getting into Jackson." But that was too tall an order. One day later Sherman pushed Lee through Jackson.

Although Lee was able to delay Sherman somewhat, the Confederates could not prevent the Federals from moving into Meridian. Sherman reached the town four days later than he had planned to. But there he had expected to find Sooy Smith, and Smith was nowhere to be seen.

Meanwhile Lee had started to rush toward Forrest's aid, since there was nothing that Lee could do to stop Sherman. But Forrest met Smith's cavalry at Okolona before Lee arrived. Cleverly deceiving Smith into thinking that he had far more men and guns than he really did, Forrest managed to force Smith to turn around and retreat all the way back to Memphis.  

Sherman waited a week in Meridian for Smith. During that time

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39Henry, Forrest, 217-34.
the Federals destroyed all the railroads leading into the city. Yet Sherman felt that he could not continue to operate with Meridian as a base unless he had the missing cavalry. He sent expeditions out to look for the horsemen, but soon gave up hope. So he burned the city completely and returned to Vicksburg. He left a lot of destruction and desolation behind him, but the primary purpose of his movement had been thwarted.  

As soon as Lee learned that Sherman was retreating, he sent the Confederate cavalry ahead to harass the movement. Sherman's men easily achieved their retrograde move, but they had to slap off several attacks and suffered some losses in the process. While Lee could do no serious damage, he did hinder the Federals somewhat. Sherman himself paid tribute to the opposition he had faced from both Lee and Forrest, saying that "when the resources of their country are exhausted we must employ them. They are the best cavalry in the world. . . ."  

General Polk also issued congratulations to Lee and Forrest. Their men had been constantly in the saddle from February 1 to March 4, and had ridden between six and eight hundred miles. Polk said the achievement, "marks an era in this war, full of honor to our arms, and calculated to teach a useful lesson to our enemies." He said he was sure that to his own thanks should be added "the thanks of his countrymen

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41 O. R., XXX, pt. 1, 696.
March 1864 was a month of relative inactivity in Mississippi. Lee coped with such problems as procuring replacement horses, recruiting more men, rounding up deserters, stopping robbery and pillage, thwarting unscrupulous civilians who persisted in illegal cotton trading with the Federals, and enforcing the tax-in-kind laws. 43

On April 2, Lee received a report that the Federals were breaking up their large force at Vicksburg. The Confederates first feared that the Unionists were beginning another raid upon the Mississippi prairie region, but Lee soon became convinced that the Yankees were moving to reinforce Grant in Virginia for a big push upon Richmond. The later surmise proved to be correct, but meanwhile Lee had to take precautions to protect the grain growing country and he moved his cavalry to Columbus, Mississippi. There he maintained constant picket activity. 44

For several months, Lee's men encountered no Federal opposition. Forrest meanwhile moved into Tennessee and stormed Fort Pillow on April 12. The fort garrison included a number of Negro troops. Just before

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44Ibid., pt. 3, 733, 743, 750.
Forrest's charge, the fort commander issued all the liquor rations he had. During the fight, the flag never lowered until a Confederate soldier cut it down. Of the 550 Federals that constituted the garrison, about 150 were captured, 100 more wounded in and around the works and later picked up by a nearby Federal gunboat, and the remaining 300 were killed. 45

There was a tremendous controversy over the Fort Pillow affair. Many northerners called it a "massacre," and believed that Forrest had allowed his men to engage in excessive bloodletting because of the Negro troops. Lee had to contend with some of the official correspondence concerning the matter. The reason was that Lee soon became department commander, replacing Polk, who joined Johnston's forces as a corps commander in the Army of Tennessee. 46

So much was said about Fort Pillow in the northern press and by Federal soldiers, that Forrest wrote to Lee requesting aid in an attempt to bring the true facts into the open. Lee allowed a Union civilian, a judge named Scruggs, to come to his headquarters and aid in an impartial gathering of information. 47

Meanwhile, on June 17, Major General C. C. Washburn, the Union commander of the District of West Tennessee, wrote to Lee requesting an

45 Henry, Forrest, 248-68.
47 O. R. - Navy, Series I, XXVI, 234.
official statement of future Confederate policy regarding Negro Yankee soldiers, "in view of the Fort Pillow Massacre." Lee's temper flared and he wrote a long letter to Washburn explaining the Southern version of the affair. It was such a complete account that it satisfied Washburn and ended the controversy as far as Lee and his counterpart were concerned.

As departmental commander, Lee had to watch the main Federal strongpoints in his area, at Memphis, Vicksburg, and Decatur. There also was a Union force at New Orleans, and it constituted a constant threat against Mobile. The most important points Lee had to defend continued to be the prairie lands of Mississippi and Alabama, and now also included the iron works and arsenals, particularly at Selma and Montevalo, Alabama, and the Mobile and Ohio Railroad, plus of course, the port of Mobile.

On June 1, 1864, a Federal expedition under Brigadier General Samuel D. Sturgis moved out of Memphis. Their object was to cut the Confederacy, and to destroy Forrest's cavalry. Lee and Forrest met at Booneville, Mississippi, on the night of the ninth and agreed upon plans to meet Sturgis. The next day, June 10, Forrest defeated Sturgis in one of the most brilliant and complete Confederate victories of the war,

48Buel and Johnson (eds.), Battles and Leaders, IV, 418.
at Brice's Cross Roads.\textsuperscript{49}

While the situation was soon to change, at least at this moment the Confederates could look back upon a year of gradual amelioration of the military problems they faced in Mississippi. And Lee could claim a good portion of the credit for bringing this about.

\textsuperscript{49}Henry, \textit{Forrest}, 286-304.
CHAPTER VIII

FIGHT NEAR A PLACE CALLED TUPELO

On June 23, 1864, Lee became a lieutenant general. It was three months to the day before his thirty-first birthday. This promotion made him the youngest man on either side in the Civil War to receive a third general's star.

Perhaps one could argue that Forrest deserved higher rank more than did Lee. Forrest was a more successful campaigner, but Lee had a wide competence too. He showed considerable high-level administrative ability and in the position of broader responsibility, he probably was more capable than Forrest. Apparently Forrest himself did not resent Lee being placed in a superior position. Neither of the two men ever displayed any jealousy or dislike of the other.1

The Federals soon presented Lee with his first major problem as a lieutenant general. Sherman decided that the Confederate cavalry in Mississippi had to be destroyed in order that the railroads, the Union supply lines, in middle Tennessee could be kept open and secure. On June 26 Sherman ordered Major General A. J. Smith with fourteen thousand men and twenty-four cannon to move from Memphis and continue until "that Devil Forrest" was dead. (In addition, the Federals sent out expeditions from Vicksburg, New Orleans, and Baton Rouge— all designed to sweep

1Henry, Forrest, 313, 324.
Lee hardly had enough men to contend with any one of the threatening Federal movements. He certainly could not deal with them all at once. Since he received word from Forrest's scouts about Smith's approach before he heard about any of the others, he dealt with it first. When intelligence reports came concerning the other expeditions, Lee already had begun to concentrate forces to meet Smith.

Even those Southern troops that could be gathered for an encounter against Smith were inadequate in number. President Davis, informed of the situation, urged the governor of Mississippi to help by calling out his reserves. At last, Lee and Forrest accumulated about eight thousand men—a little more than half the number they would have to face.

To make matters worse for Lee, Forrest was not in top condition. On June 26, Forrest telegraphed that he was sick with boils, and asked to be relieved of duty. Lee replied that the situation was too critical and pressure upon the department was too great to spare him.

The Confederates did gain some valuable time because Smith moved cautiously, remembering the fate suffered by three previous Federal expeditions repelled by Forrest. In close formation, Smith advanced on through Ripley, New Albany, and Pontotoc. He had good protection from flankers and from Grierson's cavalry force of thirty-two hundred troopers.

On the morning of July 11, Forrest launched the first resistance to Smith's advance. Two Confederate divisions blocked the Federal front, but Smith chose not to push into battle. After brief skirmishing, the Federals disengaged and slipped off to the left toward Tupelo, leaving behind them a ten mile-wide path of burned destruction and desolation.  

Lee was in a hurry to get the fight over with and then to send troops to Mobile—which he thought would soon be threatened. The city was one of the only three ports still open to the Confederacy, and Lee felt that holding it was of crucial importance. He hoped to have a full scale battle with Smith at Pontotoc, but the Yankee general had not let himself be pushed into it. Since Smith slid off to the east, Lee could either try to get another force moved around into Smith's front, or he could harass the Federal flanks, hoping that they would turn and fight. Lee tried both and neither worked. There was nothing left for Lee to do but keep trying to vex Smith, and ultimately force a fight.

Smith moved on to Harrisburg, reaching there by nine o'clock on the night of the thirteenth. The town was deserted, having become a ghost settlement when the railroad was built through Tupelo, five miles east. Smith had his men bivouac in line of battle, and throw up

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breastworks. Grierson and his cavalry proceeded to Tupelo and tore up the railroad track for six miles.

Reports differ as to where the limits of the Federal battle line were. The disagreement concerned the location of the northern and southern extremes of the line, and how strong the breastworks were. The critical portion, the center, was very strongly held, and the position was an admirable one for defense. It ran north and south, extending along the crest of a low ridge, which was in the center of a large open field. From the top of the ridge, looking nearly due west, the surface of the ground gradually descended into a small valley. Farther west there was gently rolling woodland. The Confederates advanced from this direction.

The distance from the Federal line to the edge of the timberland varied. Immediately opposite the center, it was about three hundred yards. The woods were not undergrown, and Southern troops were in plain view for the last five hundred yards of their approach. At other portions of the line, the distance from crest to woods varied from four hundred to one thousand yards. An assault could be opposed by artillery before the attackers even got into small arms range.

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6 Ibid., 302, 317.
7 Ibid., 304, 306.
Eleven thousand blueclad troops occupied the defensive position, in double lines. A unit of artillery occupied each of the commanding points. All during the night of the thirteenth, the Yankees worked to strengthen the breastworks with whatever material they could find. They maintained a watch, remained under arms, and were prepared for an attack by 3 A.M.⁹

Lee insisted that the Confederates continue with plans to attack Smith right away. The decision was perhaps his greatest tactical mistake of the war. The position was too strong and the Confederates were too badly outnumbered. Forrest himself went out on a daring reconnaissance and reported that the defenses were "almost impregnable."¹⁰

Students of the Battle of Tupelo differ as to whether Forrest finally agreed with Lee that the fight should take place. Forrest's best biographer, Robert S. Henry, concluded that it is impossible to decide from the available evidence one way or the other. Henry surmises that Forrest "merely acquiesced in what he could not help."¹¹ The conclusion is as good as any.

The fact is, Lee made a strategically sound decision, but a poor tactical one. His duty as department head received first consideration,

¹⁰Ibid., 322.
¹¹Henry, Forrest, 316-18.
and his goal was to fight Smith and cause the Yankees to turn back—thus relieving the pressure upon the granary region in Mississippi, and then to be able to reinforce other threatened spots. A complete victory was not necessary, merely a fight that might cause Smith to abandon his plans to continue his march of destruction.

Yet it does appear that Lee sincerely believed the Confederates could win the battle. Forrest's troops had been successful against superior forces in the past, why not now? As one student so aptly observed, Lee "forgot that Forrest fought his battles and won them in his own way."12

Lee decided that his main attack would be a frontal assault. Buford's division would launch it, with Chalmers to his rear in reserve. Roddy's division would attempt to get around and hit the Union left flank. Forrest's chief of artillery, John Morton, suggested to Lee that guns be massed in an attempt to breach one point in the Federal line. An experienced artilleryman like Lee should have already ordered such a plan, but oddly, Lee refused to take the suggestion. He ordered a general assault along the whole line, the artillery to be divided among the infantry commands. (Some guns remained with the reserve, and as things turned out, did not become engaged at all.)13 Lee seems to have


been so anxious to fight that he could not think clearly.

Since most of the troops were under Forrest's immediate command, Lee offered Forrest the command of the battle. Lee observed that most of the men had served under Forrest for a long time, and still were fired up from their recent victory at Brice's Cross roads. But Forrest positively declined. He cited his malady with the boils, and pointed out that as Lee was the senior officer and would have to bear the responsibility for whatever happened, it was best that Lee be in command. And Forrest added that he personally considered the Confederate forces inadequate to defeat Smith in his present position. Lee replied, "Then let it be a fight to the bitter end."

Lee offered to Forrest whatever portion of the assault he wished to take charge of. Forrest selected the right, which was to make the flanking move. Lee himself would lead the frontal assault.

Sunrise on July 14, 1864, brought an even greater than usual degree of excessive heat which is typical of mid-summer in Mississippi. Troops on both sides had suffered from its effects during the past few days. Men moved sluggishly, and the Southern officers needed two hours

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15 Lee quoted in Wyeth, *Forrest*, 441-42.

to get all their troops in place. They lined up about a mile from the Federals, under the protective cover and concealment of the woods.

Lee first attempted to lure Smith from the entrenchments by opening long range rifle and artillery fire from the edge of the timber. But Smith was not that stupid. The Yankees sat tight. And the Confederates wasted a considerable amount of ammunition in a useless bombardment. Furthermore, they disclosed the fact that the flanking movement was underway.17

The simultaneous assault was to have begun when Lee fired a signal gun. Students of the battle disagree on whether or not the gun ever fired. Forrest stated in his official report that Lee "gave the order to advance," but did not mention how Lee did this. Lee himself made no report of the battle.

Thirty-seven years later, in a published narrative account, Lee claimed that he did fire the gun, and old partisans of Forrest vigorously disagreed. The entire battle was refought through the mails, and the results then were even more indecisive than they had been on the field. Lee finally ended the matter with a public letter. He never attempted to lay any blame on Forrest. "I am sure he did the best as he saw it," Lee admonished his critics, and declared that "I am sure I did my best as I saw it."18

Why was the question of the signal gun so important? Because the

17 Wyeth, Forrest, 443.
18 Henry, Forrest, 324-25.
battle plan required a high degree of coordination. The whole engagement was at best only a calculated gamble for the Confederates. The flanking movement was absolutely essential if Lee's plan was to succeed. He had ordered the assaulting troops in the center to advance slowly and to hold firm until Roddy was close enough to assault with them in conjunction.

But the center did not execute the plan. When they started forward, one brigade advanced ahead of the others. As these first troops came into the range of Federal fire, they met not only discharges from enemy in their immediate front, but also fire from unengaged Yankees to either side.

The Yankees in the area that Roddy's brigade was supposed to have attacked were especially effective in firing upon advanced portions of the Confederate lines. And Roddy's brigade did not attack at all—not at any time during the entire day. Forrest, of course, was supposed to be leading this charge himself.

In his report, Forrest indicated that he had left Roddy and galloped across the field to select a place for Roddy's troops to line up. "On reaching the front, I found the Kentucky brigade had been rashly precipitated forward, and were retiring under the murderous fire concentrated upon them. I seized their colors, and after a short appeal ordered them to form a new line. . . ."

Forrest was guilty of disobedience to Lee's orders in this case, and his own report gave him away. The Kentuckians were in Lee's sector of the battle, part of the frontal assault. Forrest was supposed to be
leading a flanking attack at the same time that he was meddling with
the premature charge that had begun to falter.

Then Forrest continued, "The terrific fire poured upon the gallant
Kentucky brigade showed that the enemy was supported by overwhelming
numbers in an impregnable position. . . ." In other words, Forrest who
had been offered the overall command and declined, now took it upon
himself to make a decision as if he were the chief. "... wishing to
save my troops from the unprofitable slaughter I knew would follow any
attempt to charge his works, I did not push forward General Roddy's
command when it arrived."\textsuperscript{19} It was a case of insubordination.

Lee later claimed that Forrest even had reported that Roddy was
ready to move before Lee ordered the advance. It appears probable that
this was the truth. However altruistic Forrest's motives, he blatantly
disobeyed Lee's orders at Harrisburg. Apparently Roddy concurred in the
noncompliance, because he had direct and specific orders from Lee to
engage his brigade with the enemy, and he did not do so all day.

In Lee's own narrative thirty-seven years later, he offered one
reason why he did not file any wartime report of the battle. He said it
was because he was transferred so soon thereafter to the Army of
Tennessee. But in a letter he wrote in 1878, he had explained that he
did not report on the battle because he knew it would have precipitated
an investigation of why Roddy's command did not attack as it had been
ordered to do. The blame probably would have had to be laid on Forrest,

\textsuperscript{19} O. R., XXXIX, pt. 1, 322.
and this Lee said, "could have paralyzed him and his command which was much attached to him—and they were the only troops I had to defend the State."\(^{20}\) Probably these were Lee's motives. In almost all other instances, he rendered efficient and copious reports. So by ignoring Forrest's insubordination Lee showed himself to be a very magnanimous man and a wise military commander. He chose the course of action that helped the Confederacy the most; not the one that vindicated himself or brought punishment merely for the sake of correct military form.

At any rate, the battle was fought—and poorly by the Confederates. Lee never got proper control. The Southerners launched several piece-meal assaults. All were unsuccessful, though all were conduced with ardour and gallantry. The lines began forward in good order, but each time as they advanced the men meshed together in a huge mass that more resembled a mob than military units.

Again and again they charged, but they were repelled with blistering canister and rifle fire. Some of the graycoats showed so much determination that they got within less than thirty yards from the Yankee batteries before falling dead. Smith himself said the charge was "gallantly made," though "without order, organization, and skill."\(^{21}\)

The Confederates in the area where both Lee and Forrest issued

\(^{20}\)Lee to J. F. H. Claiborne, April 22, 1878, in J. F. H. Claiborne Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

\(^{21}\)O. R., XXXIX, pt. 1, 252.
orders were even more confused than the rest of the Southern troops. Lee was the overall commander, and the area was in his sector. But Forrest was their immediate leader in the normal scheme of things (which this battle plan had superceded), and he was popular with them. Receiving conflicting orders, some of the men did not know what to do. Little wonder that the fray became known among veterans as "No Man's Battle." (After many years of passing time had erased some of the bitterness, one veteran observed humorously that all the officers had disclaimed responsibility for opening the battle, and laid everything on the bugler who blew the charge.)

Several hours after the Confederates had begun their long series of fruitless onslaughts, Federal Brigadier General Joseph A. Mower advanced about half of his brigade forward and drove back the remnants of the attacking Southerners in his front. This halted the Confederate assault. Mower made no effort at pursuit since the extremely high temperatures were having such a detrimental effect upon his men. In fact, the heat caused troops on both sides to collapse, some being stricken insensible.

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23 O. R., XXXIX, pt. 1, 252, 257.

24 Lytle, Forrest, 314.
Mower's counter-assault ended the hard fighting for the day. The Confederates launched several more small attacks, but none achieved any success. The Union forces simply held their lines tight until dark. Then Smith pulled some of his men out of the lines and had them burn what was left of Harrisburg. (Most of the buildings had been torn apart the previous night to supply material for the Federal breastworks.)

In the eerie firelight, the Confederates launched a furious night assault. One soldier said it was accompanied by "the heaviest small arms fire heard during the engagement." But this audacious move failed too. The Confederates were no longer able to seriously threaten the Yankee defenses, and Smith noted that the night assault had no effect except to keep a large portion of Northern troops under arms for a second night.  

Forrest reported that the entire Confederate casualty list numbered two hundred ten killed and one thousand one hundred sixteen wounded. This was about forty per cent of those engaged—a heavy loss. In comparison, the Federals who had nearly twice the number engaged as did the Confederates, lost only seventy-seven killed and five hundred fifty-eight wounded.  

But Lee got his strategic victory. Smith chose not to press on.

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25 O. R., XXXIX, pt. 1, 327, 281, 293.
26 Ibid., 256, 324; Henry, Forrest, 322.
Instead the Yankees retreated all the way back to Memphis. Smith cited a lack of supply as his reason, but it was a feeble one. The country was rich in provisions—in fact, that was why the Southerners fought so bitterly to defend it.\(^7\)

As for the tactical defeat, Lee shouldered the responsibility himself. He always said he believed Forrest to be a great soldier and Forrest’s men to be of the finest caliber. He had been let down in the battle; it was not fought as he directed nor as he desired. But, as he later wrote to a friend, he had General Robert E. Lee’s example at Gettysburg.\(^8\) Whatever blame was to be borne, was borne by Lee.

\(^{27}\) O. R., XXXIX, pt. 1, 252, 325.

\(^{28}\) Lee to J. F. H. Claiborne, April 22, 1878, in J. F. H. Claiborne Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
CHAPTER IX

A CORPS IN GEORGIA

Since early May, 1864, a Federal army under General William T. Sherman had been campaigning against the Confederate Army of Tennessee under General Joseph E. Johnston. The Yankees secured and used Chattanooga, Tennessee as a base, and proceeded to launch a grand plan to capture Atlanta, Georgia and to slash through the Confederacy dividing it still further. As the summer wore on Johnston gradually fell back before Sherman's superior numbers, and the Yankees got closer and closer to Atlanta.

President Davis, disgruntled with Johnston's cautious defensive policy, and fearing for the safety of Atlanta, decided to name a new army commander. He gave the position to one of Johnston's subordinate corps commanders, Lieutenant General John B. Hood, who assumed command on July 16, 1864.

Hood was less than two years older than Stephen D. Lee, and due to previous combat injuries, he possessed only one leg and only one good arm (the other arm having been badly mangled). In spite of these physical deficiencies, Davis considered Hood "practically the only possible 'successor,'" to Johnston.\(^1\) Davis had entertained thoughts of using Robert E. Lee, James Hardee, Braxton Bragg, Alexander P. Stewart,

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James Longstreet, Ambrose P. Hill, Wade Hampton, Pat Cleburne, and Benjamin F. Cheatham—all of whom Davis ruled out for one reason or another.

There is no indication that Davis even considered placing S. D. Lee in army command, and perhaps it is a bit far fetched to suggest that the junior lieutenant general in the Confederacy was ready for such a position. But Lee was at least as good as several of those men who were considered, and unlike several of them who were deemed unavailable due to a more pressing duty elsewhere, Lee was free enough to take the job. In fact he soon joined the army anyway, as one of Hood’s subordinates.

The Southern populace and press probably would have approved of Lee being given an army command. Just weeks before, upon his promotion to the lieutenant generalcy, many newspapers had made favorable comments about him. The Memphis *Daily Clarion* published a laudatory biographical sketch of Lee, and said:  

> He has won distinction on every field, and when the faithful chronicler of the times closes his book, the part played by Stephen D. Lee will be found among the brightest annals of our struggle.

Another newspaper reporter gave an insightful analysis: 

> The rare military merits of Gen. Lee have always been better known to the army than to the people at large, but unlike some of our leaders, confidence in his capacity, and reliance upon

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²Memphis *Daily Clarion*, June 29, 1864, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

³Unidentified newspaper clipping, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
his judgment, are not confined altogether to the authorities at Richmond.

Wherever Gen. Lee has been in command he has impressed the soldiery under him and the people about him, with a belief that he was fully equal to any emergency. . . .

Perhaps Gen. Lee may not heretofore have flashed quite as resplendent a sword as some others . . . but his has ever been as brave and true as any other. . . . He has generally had to contend against heavy forces with inadequate numbers to oppose them . . . yet, in spite of all obstacles, his services have been conspicuous to all. Lee has, we believe few, if any enemies. He has never had any bickerings or feuds with the officers whom he has to deal. . . .

He is quick and brave--he has never yet failed to exalt himself to the exigencies of the occasion. . . .

Nevertheless, it has to be said that Lee might have made the same mistakes that Hood made, had Lee been given the chance. It was Hood's concept of war to throw frequent onslaughts against the enemy--no matter how strong or well entrenched that opposition was. Hood's was an aggressive, almost mad and savage type of combat. One might almost say that a distinctive part of his philosophy was to use a superior will to try and defeat an enemy. (And while this is desirable, it has to be balanced with other standard principles of war.) Lee frequently seemed to display a similar attitude. Ultimately Lee always was willing to fight, no matter what the odds.

Lee, looking back upon the campaign that he participated in with Hood's army, declared, "I consider it a great misfortune to any army to have to resort to entrenchments; its morale is necessarily impaired from their constant use." To Lee, the most important factor in battle was to have soldiers who were bold and unafraid. "Troops once sheltered from fire behind works, never feel comfortable unless in them," he
said, and "an army, accustomed to entrenchments, has its efficiency impaired as a whole. . . ."

And on the other hand, in the same commentary, he had words to say about offensive action against an entrenched enemy:4

It was my observation and belief that the majority of the officers and men were so impressed with the idea of their inability to carry even temporary breastworks that, when orders were given to attack and there was a probability of encountering works, they regarded it as reckless in the extreme. Being impressed with these convictions, they did not generally move to the attack with that spirit which nearly always ensures success.

So while Lee was correct in his evaluation that the morale of the Army of Tennessee was too low, he perhaps was too certain that higher spirits and greater willingness on the part of the troops were all that the men needed to achieve success in battle. This sort of thinking had been rendered obsolete by the increased firepower which defensive troops could use to repel attackers. As one scholar has concluded, "the evolution of warfare had long since bypassed Hood's [and Lee's] remedy for the Confederate dilemma."5

And yet, by late 1864 the Confederacy had to take some sort of drastic action if it was to continue the war. Hood's offensive tactics might have worked had they been better planned and executed. If that is so, then the army would have had a better chance for success under Lee. Not only was he in better physical condition for active

4Lee quoted in Hood, Advance and Retreat, 38-39, 184.

campaigning—to say nothing of the detrimental effects Hood's appalling injuries must have had upon his mind, but Lee was more popular with the Army of Tennessee troops. Hood never achieved the confidence of these men; Lee made a notable contribution by reinfusing and renewing high morale within his own corps. Furthermore, Lee was a more methodical planner, and probably a better strategist than Hood.

Just how Hood chose Lee for a corps command is not certain. Of course, Hood had known Lee at West Point and in the old army, and they had served together earlier in the war—notably at Second Manassas. Hood believed that he needed some new generals in his army. He considered that none of the present major generals were fit for promotion to lieutenant general (to take command of the corps which he himself had commanded before taking Johnston's place), and he asked President Davis for either Wade Hampton or Lee. Davis deliberated and requested that General Bragg move Lee to the post, but only if he could "be spared from his present command." 6

Hood had engaged his army in two devastating battles between the time he assumed command on July 17, and when Lee arrived on July 25. The first was at Peach Tree Creek on July 20, and the second was the so-called Battle of Atlanta on July 22. They were bitter, hard-fought, and

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6. G. R., XXXIX, pt. 2, 711-12, 719; Dunbar Rowland (ed.), Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalist; His Letters, Papers, and Speeches (10 volumes, Jackson, Mississippi: Printed for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1923), VI, 296.
indecisive. The Federals did not gain their objective, which by this time clearly was to take Atlanta; but the Confederates suffered much more severe losses than did the Unionists.

Lee brought about 2,500 of his old troops with him to Georgia. After assuming command of his corps, he selected a personal escort detachment and staff, and chose a physician, Dr. S. W. Turpin, to take a position as staff surgeon. The Confederacy granted Turpin a commission as colonel on Lee's recommendation.7 Lee's escort was Nelson's Rangers, a crack independent company of Georgia cavalry under the command of Captain T. M. Nelson.8

Lee found the Army of Tennessee in a state of low morale and effectiveness. His own corps had three divisions, one each under Major Generals Patton Anderson, Henry D. Clayton, and John C. Brown (who was replaced on July 29 by Carter L. Stevenson). In addition, Lee had four battalions of corps artillery under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James H. Hollonquist. But the effective strength of the whole corps was only 11,900. Another 4,653 men were present but not fit for duty, and a staggeringly large number were absent: 21,334. The same conditions as in Lee's corps prevailed throughout the whole army—each of the other two corps (under Lieutenant Generals William J. Hardee and Alexander P. Stewart), had more men absent than present.9

7S. W. Turpin obituary, in Confederate Veteran, XVI, 85.

8Amann, Personnel of the Civil War, I, 107; E. A. Banks obituary, in Confederate Veteran, X, 564.

The Army of Tennessee was then in position near Atlanta. Although the men entrenched every time they stopped, they shifted position daily in order to counter flanking movements made by Sherman's Federal army. Sherman's strategy was to hit Hood's main line of supply: the Macon Railroad. The next assault would be led by Yankee cavalry, two elements each moving around an opposite side of the Confederate lines, and converging in a joint attack near Jonesboro.

By July 28, the Federals had extended their right flank as far as Mount Ezra Church, about two and one-half miles due west of Atlanta. Near the church ran a north-south road which was joined by a road running from Atlanta to the village of Lickskillet. The railroads from Atlanta, which ran to the south and southwest, left the city near this Lickskillet Road, and ran almost parallel to it for some distance. So the Federals had only to extend their flank a short way farther, and they would be across the railroad—Hood's supply line.

To prevent Sherman's men from crossing the railroad, Hood ordered Lee's corps to cover the approaches from the west. Meanwhile the cavalry attack began, and Confederate General Joe Wheeler moved to block it.

Lee hoped to secure the crossroads near Ezra Church before the Federals could reach that point, but he was unable to do so. When the first Confederate elements neared the area, early on the twenty-eighth, they spotted enemy soldiers on guard. Lee immediately formulated plans for an attack.

The Yankees had taken up a very strong defensive position on a
wooded ridge overlooking an open slope. A frontal assault had very little chance of success. But that is what Lee ordered. He got his men started by early afternoon, but they quickly were slowed by savage fires. More and more men rushed into combat, but none advanced very far. The battle developed in piecemeal fashion, and Lee's corps never did consolidate and act as a team. One assault after another was beaten back.

Lee tried to rally his faltering men, and he personally led various units. But after six unsuccessful assaults, all with heavy casualties, the men were badly disorganized. The later onslaughts were even less co-ordinated than the first had been. If one brigade attacked, the others that had attacked before would then fail to do so again. Each time, the men in action without support would suffer heavy losses.

When word reached Hood about the battle, he sent Stewart's corps to Lee's support. But it was nearly dark before many of the fresh troops could join in the action. Those that did become engaged were unable to make any progress. Finally, under cover of darkness, the whipped and demoralized Confederates withdrew to their entrenchments around Atlanta.¹⁰

The battle had been a very poor showing for the Southerners. Sherman wrote that for the Federals, it "was the easiest thing in the

¹⁰Ibid., XXXVIII, pt. 3, 630, 762-63; Horn, The Army of Tennessee, 360-61.
world; . . . in fact, it was a common slaughter. . . ."¹¹ Confederate
General Hardee said, "No action of the campaign probably did so much to
demoralize and dishearten the troops engaged in it."¹² And when Presi­
dent Davis heard about the fearful losses, he issued a direct order
that no more frontal assaults be launched against entrenched positions.

The whole affair was perhaps more Hood's fault than Lee's. Hood
had issued orders to drive the enemy from the road. But Lee showed a
lack of discretion in attacking such a strong position for as long as he
did. It was always Lee's belief that troops could assault entrenched
positions if the attack was only launched with sufficient pluck. He
said in his report:¹³

... the enemy had two corps engaged in this affair; still I
am convinced that if all the troops had displayed equal spirit;
we would have been successful, as the enemy's works were slight,
and besides they had scarcely gotten into position when we made
the attack.

Lee had been defeated twice in the same month by troops protected
by the cover of entrenchments. But he still felt that his failures were
due more to the fact that his own troops had been spoiled by themselves
previously fighting from behind such works—not that his attacks had
been unwise, poorly planned, and ill-executed.


¹²Freeman Cleaves, Rock of Chickamauga; The Life of General
George H. Thomas (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press,
1948), 235.

¹³Lee quoted in Hood, Advance and Retreat, 339.
The amazing thing to Lee's credit is that he was able to reinfuse a high degree of morale into his corps after this affair. Following the Battle of Jonesboro, the Atlanta campaign settled down to a siege. The Federals continued to shift and extend their lines toward the right, and the Confederates countered by thinning their defense and gradually extending to their left.

Lee's men occupied the defensive positions and gradually recouped their effectiveness. As usual there was a lot of fraternization between enemy troops where the siege lines were close together. Lee ordered that it be stopped, particularly where the troops were exchanging commodities with one another, he tightened up on regulations regarding the expending of ammunition. The men were enjoined not to engage in wasteful firing. Ammunition was quite low, and resupply was difficult.14

By August 25 Sherman's forces had pushed their lines around the Confederate left as far as Eastpoint, about four miles southwest of Atlanta. Lee's corps occupied the right sector of the Southerners' lines.

Suddenly Lee noticed that the enemy had vacated its position to his front. Lee advanced his forces and occupied the Federal trenches. Sherman had moved south and by the twenty-ninth had breached the Montgomery railroad. General Hardee countered by moving to the left, near Rough and Ready, about six miles due south of Atlanta, and Lee moved his corps over to occupy Hardee's former position. By this time

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it was obvious that Sherman planned to take Jonesboro, a supply depot on the Macon Railroad, about eleven miles below Atlanta.

Hood decided that the Confederates would soon be outflanked completely and left with no supply lines at all. He had to get out of his trenches and launch an attack. Both Hardee's and Lee's corps were placed under the single command of the senior corps general, Hardee, and ordered to move toward Jonesboro. Lee remained with his own corps. Major General Pat Cleburne took Hardee's old post, and Hardee became a sort of deputy army commander, charged with the direction of two corps.

Cleburne's men led the way, with Lee's troops following behind. They received orders to attack, utilizing their entire force, and to drive the enemy into the Flint River. In the event of success, Lee had orders to withdraw his men to Rough and Ready, and there to await a junction with Stewart's corps, and then this force would advance the following morning to attack the Federal flank and attempt to drive them down the river.

Hood's plans ran afoul from the very start. Cleburne was unable to reach Jonesboro until 9:00 A.M. on the morning of August 31, and the last of Lee's corps did not arrive until just after noon. The Federals had crossed the Flint River the evening before, and by this time were strongly posted, behind breastworks, on the crest of an irregular ridge.

But Hardee went ahead with his attack. Cleburne was ordered to begin the assault on the left, while Lee advanced on the right as soon as the firing indicated that Cleburne was fully engaged. It was a very
risky battle plan, and as things turned out, a very poor one.

Lee mistook some heavy skirmish fire to be a signal that it was time for his corps to charge. Consequently his men attacked prematurely and without support. They made some progress at first, and managed to take a portion of the Federal line and capture some artillery. But then the Yankees made a counter-assault and drove Lee's men back.

Late in the afternoon Hardee sent one of Cleburne's divisions to reinforce Lee, but by the time it arrived darkness had fallen. During the night Hood sent orders for Lee's corps to march immediately back to Atlanta. Hardee was to stay at Jonesboro and protect the Macon Railroad as best as he could. Lee marched back through an area occupied by six Federal corps, but somehow he got his columns past unnoticed.\(^{15}\)

So the Jonesboro battle was over. It was another damaging and demoralizing blow to the Confederates. Fourteen hundred men were killed or wounded in the useless venture. The battle sealed the fate of Atlanta. Hood could no longer defend the city and had to evacuate it.

Lee's corps covered the evacuation which began late in the afternoon of September 1, 1864. All the military stores that the troops could not carry with them were burned. The flames, plus the noise made by an exploding train of ordnance supplies, informed Sherman of what was taking place.

The Federals were content to occupy Atlanta rather than to pursue Hood's fleeing army. As soon as the Confederates were sure that there

would be no more action for a time, they bivouacked near Lovejoy's Station, about thirty miles southeast of Atlanta.\textsuperscript{16}

The Southern soldiers suffered considerably in their bivouac. They had inadequate supplies. Many men deserted. Lee's corps strength had lowered to 7,401 effectives by September 10, 1864. Thus in the nearly two and one-half months since he assumed command, his unit had lost approximately 5,500 men.\textsuperscript{17}

The generals of the Army of Tennessee failed to work in harmony while they attempted to rebuild fighting strength within their forces. Hood bickered with his senior corps commander, Hardee, and soon Hardee was transferred out of Hood's command.

Hood tried to take action to strengthen his military position against Sherman in late September. The Confederates moved from Lovejoy's Station to Palmetto Station, hoping to get in the rear of the Federal army, and to cut their supply lines. But they did not become engaged in battle.

Jefferson Davis paid the army a visit while it camped at Palmetto Station. He reviewed the troops, and held conferences with the Army of Tennessee generals. They discussed possible future courses of action. Davis asked each of the generals in private if they thought Hood should be replaced. One or more of the generals indicated that the troops would be happier without Hood, and they suggested either reappointing

\begin{footnotesize}
\bibitem{16} O. R., XXXVIII, pt. 3, 46, 764.
\bibitem{17} Ibid., XXXIX, pt. 1, 828.
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Johnston or giving the job to General Beauregard. Lee's opinion, if he gave it, is not recorded.

Davis did not like the idea of placing either Johnston or Beauregard in army command, so he decided to leave Hood where he was. In further conferences, Davis and the generals of the Army of Tennessee all agreed that the army next should attempt to draw Sherman back into the mountains by harassing the Federal rear.\textsuperscript{18}

On September 28 the Confederates moved to attack Sherman's communications. By the next day Lee got his corps across the Chattahoochee River and occupied a position near Lost Mountain to protect Stewart's planned assault on the nearby railroad. But the attack was never launched.

A week later Lee crossed his corps over the Coosa River and marched in torrential rains toward Resaca. There the corps attacked a Federal garrison but was unable to take the town. It was well fortified and the Yankees maintained a stout defense. So Lee marched his corps on to Snake Creek Gap and secured the pass there while the other two Army of Tennessee corps passed through.\textsuperscript{19}

Some sharp skirmishing developed as Sherman moved troops against Lee's holding force, and Hood expressed a desire to stay and fight. But the corps commanders rendered a unanimous opinion that the army was in no shape to fight any battles at all now—especially against the

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 801; Horn, The Army of Tennessee, 374-75.

\textsuperscript{19}O. R., XXXIX, pt. 1, 810.
superior numbers that Sherman had. Hence the army moved on to a position of safety at Gadsden, Alabama.\textsuperscript{20}

There the army settled down in camp and attempted to regain fighting strength. Some new clothes were provided, but many men had no coats. Quite a large number were without shoes. Lee tried to get his inadequately shod soldiers to fashion sandals out of green beef hides, and he had several small groups detailed to construct a few to be used as samples.\textsuperscript{21} Morale began to rise, and supplies began to trickle in, but everything was still insufficient to steel the men for what was ahead this winter.

\textsuperscript{20}Hood, \textit{Advance and Retreat}, 263.

\textsuperscript{21}O. R., XXXIX, pt. 1, 810; pt. 3, 818.
CHAPTER X

TRYING TIME IN TENNESSEE

General Hood finally decided that his army had almost no chance of success if he continued to offer battle against Sherman's forces in Georgia. He adopted a new offensive plan, of which Lee approved,\(^1\) to take the Army of Tennessee on a long march northwestward and attempt to recapture the Federally held city of Nashville, Tennessee. After completely disengaging from contact with Sherman's army, Hood moved his men to Florence, Alabama. There the Confederates spent the first three weeks of November, 1864, refitting and preparing for the new campaign.

Hood did have a chance to inflict decisive damage, if he only could move his army fast enough, and effectively execute his plans.\(^2\) The Federal forces in Tennessee were not united, but instead were scattered all over the middle part of the state. They were vulnerable while divided. Yet there was no way for the campaign to be a quick and easy one for the Confederates. Even the aggressive-minded Lee admitted that the delay at Florence was required for assembling "necessary clothing, ammunition, and provisions."\(^3\) Furthermore, bad weather began to


\(^3\)Lee, in *Confederate Veteran*, XVI, 257.
plague Hood's men. Already it was unseasonably cold, wet with occasional snowstorms.4

The delay was costly for the Southerners because it dulled the shock effect of Hood's bold plan. The Federals had time to begin consolidating and reconcentrating their defenses. Sherman dispatched Major General George H. Thomas into Tennessee, to take overall charge of the Northern forces there being assembled to resist Hood's advance. Then Sherman turned his own army away and went unopposed on a march toward the Atlantic Ocean, leaving a wide path of destruction in his wake.

In spite of the added strength that the Federals also gained while the Confederates were collecting theirs, the Army of Tennessee began to shape up in combat effectiveness. The prospects of doing some more advantageous fighting than they had engaged in against Sherman in Georgia was appealing to the men. Furthermore, many of them had their homes in Tennessee, and a chance to recapture the area gladdened their hearts. Lee remarked that "the spirit of the army . . . was much improved."5

The opposing forces that would clash in Tennessee ultimately were mismatched by a better than two to one advantage in favor of the Federals. Thomas eventually amassed about 55,000 men to defend Nashville. But before the Yankees united, the principal Federal force numbered only 22,000 men under James M. Schofield at Columbia, Tennessee. When Hood began the campaign, he had about 30,000 infantry and 8,000 cavalry

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5Lee to W. T. Walthall, May 20, 1878, in Rowland (ed.), Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalist; His Letters, Papers and Speeches, VIII, 205.
troops. The Confederate army moved toward Schofield, having a golden opportunity to strike at a fraction of the Northern enemy with the full mass of the Southern army.

The three corps of the Army of Tennessee, one each under Lee, Cheatham, and Stewart, began marching on November 19, and by the evening of the twentieth, the entire Confederate army was across the Tennessee River and in bivouac several miles northward. After they finally got started, the Southerners managed to move with remarkable speed, considering the unfavorable weather and poor condition of the roads. Lee's corps marched ten miles the first day and within a week was near Columbia. The army moved along in a cold rain which soon turned into snow and sleet. Where the ground was not frozen, it was a quagmire.

Hood's men made contact with Schofield's forces at Columbia on the twenty-seventh. The two armies drew up in line of battle and lay opposite each other throughout the day. They fired artillery barrages and exchanged small arms fire, but neither side made any charges. Lee was on hand personally to direct some of the cannonading and to inspire the men to be brave and steadfast. One admiring observer recalled:

I have seen General Lee under fire probably fifty times. I have stood in his presence when the earth fairly trembled, and every living thing was in danger of immediate death, but no one

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6Horn, The Decisive Battle of Nashville, 3, 11, 14.
8Unidentified author, in partially identified New Orleans Picayune newspaper clipping, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.
never (sic) saw him display the slightest emotion nor lose his dignified bearing.

The same observer remembered an incident at Columbia on the twenty-seventh: 9

One of Captain Walton's caissons (Forrest's Artillery) was exploded by a shell from the enemy, which, igniting the shells in the caisson, hurled fragments of iron and wood high into the air, killing every man and horse immediately about it, and throwing up a mountain of dirt and smoke. When the smoke had cleared away, every man in the party, including the gallant Chalmers and the redoubtable and only Forrest, were dismounted, except General Lee, who sat like a marble statue on his frightened steed. D. H. Hill, I think, was the only General [who was] Lee's equal in composure.

Schofield chose not to fight Hood south of Columbia. During the night the Federals crossed the Duck River, which ran through the town, and took up a new defensive position on the northern side. The two armies continued to fire at each other with artillery and skirmish fire, but that was the only combat Hood and Schofield offered each other for the time being. 10

Hood meanwhile determined to divide his forces, leaving Lee with two divisions of his corps at Columbia to fool Schofield into thinking the whole Confederate force was still in position, while Hood with the rest of his army marched in a turning movement trying to reach the Federal rear near Spring Hill. Cheatham's and Stewart's corps, plus Johnston's Division of Lee's corps, commenced the movement on the night of the twenty-eighth.

9 Ibid.

10 Hood, Advance and Retreat, 282; Lee, in Confederate Veteran, XVI, 257.
Hood's movement was sluggish from the start. He determined to cross the Duck River only about three miles above Columbia, and he had pontoon bridges to help him. But his infantry did not even begin to cross until daybreak on the twenty-ninth.\textsuperscript{11}

Yet Lee managed to deceive Schofield completely. The Confederates in Columbia kept up "such a continual and noisy demonstration," as one Yankee recalled, that they "believed Hood's whole army" was still in their front.\textsuperscript{12}

Schofield held his entire army opposite Columbia until near noon on November 29, when he began to withdraw slowly to the north. Lee's men saw the first corps begin moving off, the others all remained in position until dark.\textsuperscript{13} So the Federals continued to play into Hood's hands, progressing more and more into the jaws of the pincers, filling the road with crawling wagons.\textsuperscript{14}

By 3:00 P.M., Hood had gotten his lead troops to a spot overlooking the pike from Columbia to Spring Hill and Franklin. He knew that Schofield was occupied fully by Lee in the rear. The roar of Lee's artillery could be distinctly heard. Hood and his generals got sight of the enemy's wagons, and Hood, according to his own memoirs, ordered Cheatham and Cleburne to go immediately and "take possession of and hold

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that pike at or near Spring Hill." Hood also meant that the Confederates should attack the Yankees in the vicinity and destroy them. Supposedly he sent a courier to Cheatham, after he had gotten into the Federals' path, to attack at once. But "through some misunderstanding or physical exhaustion or too much whiskey going the rounds," or something, the order was not executed, and probably not even delivered.

Meanwhile earlier in the day Lee had not only been firing at Schofield's forces across the Duck River, he also had been attempting to force a pontoon crossing. "I had several batteries of artillery put in position, to drive the skirmishers of the enemy from the vicinity of the river bank," Lee explained. Finally "having succeeded in putting a boat in the river, Pettus' brigade of Stevenson's division was thrown across . . . and made a most gallant charge on the rifle pits of the enemy, driving a much superior force and capturing the pits." Immediately Lee had his men lay a pontoon bridge and then he crossed with the remainder of his command.

A strong Federal force resisted Lee's advance until about 2:30 A.M., but then they left his front. "Pursuit was made as rapidly as was prudent in the nighttime," Lee declared. He got his advance columns into Spring Hill by 9:00 A.M., a distance of about ten miles from Columbia. There Lee learned the horrible news: Hood had not attacked and Schofield's

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men had slipped safely past toward Franklin.\textsuperscript{18}

Schofield's lines during the march had strung out for over five
miles. The Yankees required all night to get underway, and it was
nearly daybreak before the last wagon even left Spring Hill. The Con-
federates "remained all night in sound of the voices of the men as they
retreated," recalled one disgusted Southern warrior.\textsuperscript{19} Not a shot was
fired into the passing trains, though "a few rounds of artillery would
have routed the enemy," Lee believed.\textsuperscript{20}

In fact, Lee was utterly disgusted:\textsuperscript{21} "The enemy almost in a
panic passed all night along the pike. . . . Our troops were in bivouac
not eight hundred yards from the pike, seeing and hearing it all. . . .
A simple advance of one division a few hundred yards would have secured
the pike. A few rounds of artillery would have routed the enemy." Some
Yankees actually straggled into the Confederate camps "to light their
pipes and were captured," Lee claimed. "Some one . . . should be made
responsible for the egregious blunder, mistake, or disobedience."

But never did Lee publicly accuse any specific person of the
blame. In 1903 he wrote, "I do not think the record sifted down will
place the blame on either General Hood or General Cheatham, who have

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 67.

\textsuperscript{19}W. D. Gale, in Confederate Veteran, II, 4.

\textsuperscript{20}Lee, in ibid., XVI, 257.

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid.
borne the blame these many years." On another occasion he penned that "at one time I believed General Cheatham at fault; now I do not, and I believe that in his generous nature he shouldered the blame of subordinates which was not justly his own." At any rate, Lee believed that "the conception of the whole [Spring Hill] plan was brilliant and well executed, all but the fighting at the critical moment." In 1878 he wrote that "had the army fought at Spring Hill . . ., Hood's Tennessee campaign would have been a brilliant success." Hood was equally complimentary of Lee, saying that "had Lieutenant General Lee been in advance at Spring Hill . . ., Schofield's army never would have passed that point."

Schofield's men marched easily into Franklin, about twenty-five

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23Lee, in partially identified New Orleans Picayune newspaper clipping, copy preserved in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I. In the same article Lee indicated that "a Tennessee author" had spent many years studying the Spring Hill fiasco and had, Lee believed, solved the problem of where to place the blame. Lee never indicated who the "Tennessee author" was, but perhaps it was Judge J. P. Young. Lee and Young corresponded several times about historical matters. But if that is the case, it is hard to understand Lee's continuing defense of Hood, because Young blamed none other than the commanding general.

24Lee, in Confederate Veteran, XVI, 257.


26Hood, Advance and Retreat, 295.
miles above Columbia, and twelve above Spring Hill. Immediately they began entrenching in a strong hillside defensive position.27

The Army of Tennessee followed in pursuit; Stewart's corps in the lead, Cheatham's next, and Lee's to the rear. The advance guard made contact with the Federals about three miles south of Franklin, and Stewart began to establish a battle line at approximately 3:00 P.M.28

The city of Franklin, located in a bend of the Harpeth River, had been surrounded by lines of entrenchments which touched the shore both above and below the main area of settlement. Schofield had fortified these lines and now occupied them with all twenty-two thousand of his men.

Hood was very anxious for action and decided not to wait until Lee moved up with his corps, in spite of the fact that Lee had almost all of the army's artillery which had been detached for the action at Columbia.29 Even though it was late in the day, Hood thought that an attack should be launched right away. Probably the frustration at Spring Hill caused Hood to act rashly. He began hurling his men against the Federal lines in piecemeal, uncoordinated, and fruitless attempts to break through.

Lee reached the scene about 4:00 P.M. and went ahead of his corps to report his arrival and progress to Hood. The commanding general

28Hood, Advance and Retreat, 293.
ordered him to "go forward and in person to communicate with General Cheatham, and if necessary, to put Johnson's division in the fight." Lee found Cheatham at about dark (a little after 5:00 on this late November day). Cheatham replied that he needed assistance at once, and Lee hurried Johnson's division up and put it in line on the left of the Columbia Pike. Hood had ordered that Lee's other two divisions be moved in supporting distance, to be used if necessary.

Neither Lee nor any of his staff officers had had time to become familiar with the ground, so he asked Cheatham for someone to act as a guide with Johnson's division as it advanced. General Cheatham replied, in effect Lee said, that "he had no one to give him ... and pointing to the front said, yonder line of fire at the breastworks is where you are needed and wanted at once." Lee got the division moving forward about one hour after dark. The scene was pitch-black, the only light coming from "the lurid and rapid flashes from the enemy's works," Lee recalled. Johnson's men charged furiously against the breastworks under a heavy fire of artillery and musketry. Miraculously they began driving back portions of the well-fortified lines. But the position was a strong one that favored the defenders, and the plucky Yankees fought back. There was desperate

30 Ibid., 78.
31 Lee, in Confederate Veteran, XVI, 257.
hand to hand combat.\textsuperscript{33}

As soon as the Federals became aware of Lee's advance in support of the main attack, they opened up artillery fire all along the line. There was a second line of entrenchments, in the rear of the main Federal line, and as Lee's men made progress, these Yankees fired over their own men in the line to the front. Lee remembered the scene as "looking as if the division was moving into the very door of hell, lighted up with its sulphurous flames."\textsuperscript{34}

In spite of frightful losses, Hood never called off the attacks. The Confederates made violent charges as late as 9:00 P.M. Hood did not commit Lee's other two divisions to battle at all, but he did finally get some of the artillery moved up and ordered the guns to fire a hundred rounds each into the Federal works early the next morning, when the troops would then charge again.\textsuperscript{35}

Meanwhile, Schofield evacuated Franklin. Sufficient Yankee units remained on the battlefield to exchange skirmish fire with the Confederates until about 3:00 A.M., but then the last bluecoats moved out toward the safety of Nashville, twenty-five miles northward.\textsuperscript{36} Hood's army had suffered nearly three times the number of casualties as had the Yankees, and was unable to pursue at the moment due to physical exhaustion and disorganization.


\textsuperscript{35}Horn, \textit{The Army of Tennessee}, 404.

\textsuperscript{36}Hood, \textit{Advance and Retreat}, 295.
The Federals had lost 2,326 in killed, wounded, or missing; the Confederates suffered 6,252 casualties including five generals killed, one captured, and six more wounded. Johnson's division, the only unit of Lee's corps engaged, lost 587 men. The battle was a staggering disaster. It was the bloodiest of the entire war considering the time that the men were engaged, Lee pointed out. All of Hood's men had displayed great valor. Lee had special praise for Johnson's division: "I consider the charge of Johnson's division at Franklin the most gallant feat of arms which I witnessed during the war."39

Lee did not say whether he thought Hood was culpable for having fought the battle. He did write that the field was "ill chosen." He observed that the army's morale began to decline after that engagement. But he did not criticize Hood. Apparently he thought that a battle had to be fought and that whomever was responsible for the failure at Spring Hill was also indirectly responsible for Franklin—that is, by making it necessary to fight the enemy on unfavorable ground. Lee never had anything to say about Hood's poorly conceived and ill-executed battle plan. Probably Lee would have done things differently had he been in command,


38Lee, in Confederate Veteran, XVI, 259.

39Ibid., 258.

but since he was not, he had no harsh or critical words for his superior.

Not only was the fighting spirit of the Army of Tennessee now greatly lessened, but also it was left with nearly a third less combat effective troops. Furthermore they were to face a Federal army that continually was getting larger, while the Confederates had all the men they ever were going to get when they left Alabama.

Lee did what he could to restore morale among his men. On the morning after the battle of Franklin he made a few remarks to each of the brigades in Johnson's division, commending them for their heroism. One brigade had suffered so many casualties that a private lamented, "General, our old brigade is gone; its organization can no longer be kept up." Lee promised that as long as he had anything to say about it, the unit would remain in existence.\(^1\) (Soldiers generally had quite a bit of pride in their units and Lee's promise bolstered spirits considerably.)

On the same day, in the afternoon on December 1, 1864, the Army of Tennessee began marching again toward Nashville. This time Lee's corps was in the lead. Lee actually thought of the move as a pursuit, driving against whatever stragglers from Schofield's force that remained on the roads.\(^2\) But the next real fight would be in the trenches around Nashville, against Thomas' united army of nearly fifty-five thousand.

\(^1\)Lee, in *Confederate Veteran*, XVI, 258-59.

\(^2\)Lee, in *Southern Historical Society Papers*, III, 68.
Lee's corps reached the environs of the city at about 2:00 P.M. on December 2. Already the Federals had occupied strongly entrenched defensive positions. The Confederates strung out about a mile below the Yankee lines and also began entrenching. For the next two weeks both armies methodically went about strengthening their emplacements.\footnote{Ibid.}

The Confederate lines were about five miles long. Lee's corps occupied the center, covering the Franklin Pike and extending almost to the Granny White Pike. Stewart's corps was on the left and Cheatham's on the right. Cavalry covered the large area between the left flank and the Tennessee river, and redoubts were constructed to help protect this and the other flank as well.

Time passed, but Thomas made no move to come out of the city and fight. Hood felt his forces were not strong enough to charge the Federal fortifications, so the two armies remained in a temporary stalemate. The Confederates added to their lines an abatis of whatever fallen timber they could find, supplemented by earthworks. On the tenth Hood issued a circular order to all his commanders indicating that it was highly probable a battle would be fought before the year's end. In that event, he ordered, all the wagons except artillery, ordnance and ambulances should be sent to the vicinity of Brentwood, south of Nashville, to be parked. Furthermore, Hood ordered that a second line of defensive works be prepared along the strong points to the rear of the present Confederate position.\footnote{Ibid.}
The armies fired occasional discharges of artillery at each other. Once Hood, Lee, and several other officers stood on Ridley Hill, two miles south of the Federal Fort Negley. A civilian warned the generals that they would attract fire from the fort and consequently they began moving down the hill. Just as they left, a shell exploded on the very spot that they had left.45

But during the first half of December the troops suffered mostly from the elements and from lack of adequate supplies. Lee and the other officers were able to take time out on one occasion to serve as a military escort in the wedding of Major William Clark and Mary Hadley in the Brentwood church.46

By the evening of Wednesday the fourteenth, Thomas was ready to make his move. Hood had foolishly sent most of Forrest's cavalry to Murfreesboro on an independent operation against an eight-thousand-man Federal garrison there. Thus the Yankees could attack the Confederates when the Southerners were without their "eyes" and their most effective flank protection. Thomas ordered an assault for early the next day.

There was a dense fog during the early morning of Thursday, the fifteenth, and it concealed the Yankee troop movements. Even while the enemy was moving toward the Confederate lines, Lee wrote to Stewart that he felt secure in his lines and added "I think you may look out for a demonstration on your left to-day."47 Even as he wrote, a rattle of gunfire began to the westward.

45 B. L. Ridley, in Confederate Veteran, IV, 15.
46 Emma L. Scott, in ibid., XVI, 399-400.
47 O. R., XLV, pt. 2, 691.
Thomas' battle plan called for a strong attack to be made upon the Confederate left, a skirmish advance in the center, with the mass of the troops withdrawing from the center and joining the cavalry for an envelopment of the Confederate left flank, and a feint against the right. It was almost a perfectly coordinated Napoleonic maneuver. The biggest flaw was that the Federal artillery was not particularly well utilized. The weather also dulled the shock effect of the plan because the ice had melted and produced mud which made troop movements necessarily slow.

Hood at first was deceived as to the direction of Thomas' main attack. The feints were successful and soon the heavy blows that the main force hurled against the Confederate left were being felt with telling effect. Just before noon, Lee realized that he was not faced with a major assault and wrote to Hood that "the main line of enemy in my front has apparently but a few men in it." Hood was afraid to use too many of Lee's units for reinforcement on the left because he feared that he might need a reserve on the right, but by 1:00 P.M. he ordered Lee to send Stewart "all the Brigades you can and keep in constant communication with him."


49 Hay, Hood's Tennessee Campaign, 152.

50 Lee to Colonel Mason, 11:45 A.M., December 15, 1864, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

Lee's lines were long and thin, "the greater part of my command being in single rank," he recalled. So he could not send an unlimited number of men to Stewart's support, or he would be unable to maintain contact with Cheatham's corps on the right and the Federals then could break through easily and wreak havoc. Nevertheless, as the day progressed, one by one Lee sent Stewart four of his nine brigades, that is, all of Johnson's division.  

Even with the added strength from Lee's corps, Stewart was unable to check the Yankee onslaught. Just before dark his lines crumbled. The Federals had turned his flank and began driving his men back along the Granny White Pike. The Federals pushed them southward for about two miles and then halted the fighting at nightfall.

Thomas was pleased with his success. With the Confederate flank crushed as it was, he believed that his men easily could finish the job in the morning. Lee analyzed the Federal attack and admitted that "Gen. Thomas's (sic) plan of battle was admirable," but added that "his success was due chiefly to a tactical combination of a superior force." Whatever the reason, Lee knew that the Confederates were beaten that day. "Night is all that prevented Stewart's force being cut off entirely," he wrote.
The Confederates did not just rest during the night and wait for the renewed attacks they knew would surely come in the morning. Lee's corps moved straight south and took up a position on the left of Stewart's men. Cheatham shifted his corps around to the far left and occupied that side of Stewart's corps, thus placing the troops which had borne the brunt of the fighting on the fifteenth in the new center. The whole line was only about half as long as the previous one had been.

Lee's lines now straddled the Franklin pike, which Hood ordered Lee to hold at all costs. The area south of Nashville was mountainous in places, and marshy in others, thus any retreat would have to be along roads. The Franklin pike might be needed as a lifesaving escape route.

Hood's new lines were stronger than those his army had occupied on the fifteenth, but his men were badly dispirited after the all-day fighting. Lee's corps was in the best shape of any that Hood had. There were several reasons for this. First, Lee's men had not taken part in the worst fighting, except for the brigades of Johnson's division that got over and helped Stewart. Secondly, there were physical reasons for Lee's corps having a stronger position. There happened to be a stone fence to his front and his men were able to secure head logs for breastworks. Finally, there was a lot of "tanglefoot" brush about twenty-five paces in front of the works. In addition, Lee's personal presence seems to have influenced his men throughout the day and inspired them to greater feats.

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55 J. A. Dozier, in Confederate Veteran, XVI, 192. It is not known whether all of these natural obstacles were present by coincidence, or if Lee ordered some of them to be moved there.
The Yankees opened their assault on the sixteenth with a two-hour artillery bombardment beginning about 9:00 A.M. Then the main attack hit at Lee's portion of the line. The Federals moved forward in several lines. Lee's men reserved their fire until the enemy was in easy range and then discharged it with terrific effect. Several times the Yankees renewed the assault and each time were repulsed.\footnote{Lee, in Southern Historical Society Papers, III, 68-69.}

Thomas' strategy for the sixteenth was essentially a repetition of the previous day's plan except that the strong frontal assault, the secondary attack, was directed at the Confederate right instead of the left. Hence Lee's corps was much more actively engaged.\footnote{Horn, The Army of Tennessee, 416.}

"The troops of my entire line were in fine spirits," Lee reported, "and confident of success, so much so that the men could scarcely be prevented from leaving their trenches to follow the enemy."\footnote{Lee, in Southern Historical Society Papers, III, 69.} At one point some of them did leave the trenches. A large number of Negro troops were utilized in the assault upon Lee's lines. Judging from the remarks made by some of Lee's men, it would seem that the Confederates fought even more ferociously against the black troops. When one brigade of colored soldiers made a valiant assault and were halted by the fire of Lee's men, several Southerners leaped out of their defensive works and captured the enemy battle flags. One was inscribed "Presented by the Colored Ladies of Murfreesboro, Tenn." When Lee noticed how elated the

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Lee, in Southern Historical Society Papers, III, 68-69.}
\item \footnote{Horn, The Army of Tennessee, 416.}
\item \footnote{Lee, in Southern Historical Society Papers, III, 69.}
\end{itemize}}
men were over capturing it, he had the men around him give three cheers 
and directed that the cheers be passed down the lines—to encourage the 
 Confederates on the left.  

Time after time Lee's men threw back the assaults made against 
them. Their morale was high, and Lee spurred them on. He stayed with 
them and did not seek a position of covered safety while the battle 
raged. Once when conferring with a subordinate officer, fire came so 
close to Lee that a bullet passed through the rim of his companion's 
hat. 

But along other portions of the Confederate lines, the defense 
was not nearly so strong. On the extreme left, the Federals hammered 
away with massed artillery which had been advantageously placed. By 
3:30 P.M. the bluecoats pinned down the Southerners on the left so that 
they temporarily could not fire back without being annihilated, massed 
a division at the base of a mound, and charged suddenly over the Con- 
federate entrenchments. After the lines of Stewart's corps were thus 
pierced, they gave way and broke apart at many points. 

The men of Lee's corps could see many of Stewart's troops fleeing 
toward the rear. Then as soon as the Yankees secured Stewart's old 
positions, they began moving against Lee's left. Lee shifted some of 
his troops and checked the Yankee advance. Then the Federals slipped 

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59 R. H. Lindsay, in Confederate Veteran, VIII, 311.  
60 Ibid.  
61 Hood, in Battles and Leaders, IV, 437.
around to Lee's rear, as well as continuing to hammer away at his left. Gradually his corps lines gave way. The Confederates began to pull back, "in some disorder," Lee admitted, but he soon rallied them and they "presented a good front to the enemy," enough stiff resistance to prevent a rout. 62

Lee continued to remain at the most threatened points, using his personal presence to the fullest advantage in spurring his men. At one point he rushed over and seized a flag from a frightened color bearer and encouraged the men to stand fast. They did stiffen and held their unsupported lines while the rest of the Confederates were breaking. Federal General Schofield later remarked on the resistance that Lee's men maintained, saying, "I doubt if any soldiers in the world ever needed so much cumulative evidence to convince them they were beaten." 63

Meanwhile Stewart's and Cheatham's corps were rushing in confusion toward the Franklin pike, Federal soldiers chewing them up in hot pursuit. Lee got Clayton's division formed into a new battle line between Overton Hill and Brentwood. They held this line while the rest of Hood's shattered army streamed over the wooded hills and swarmed onto the Franklin pike. Heavy rain began to fall and slowed both pursuers and retreaters. Lee's men got some help from Chalmers' cavalry which managed to stave off a charge by Federal General James H. Wilson's mounted men on

62 Lee, in Southern Historical Society Papers, III, 70.

the Granny White pike.64

It was imperative that Lee's men hold their battle lines long enough to allow the Army of Tennessee to get at least some distance away from the Federals. In attempting this, Gibson's brigade of Clayton's division rendered significant service. Once when Lee's lines nearly broke, he rushed up to one of Gibson's color bearers and tried to take the colors and lead the brigade personally. The color bearer refused to give up his flag saying, "no General, you need not expose yourself in this way, just tell us where you want these colors and that is where we will take them." The rest of the regiment nearby shouted agreement, and Lee cried, "Gibson, these are the best men I ever saw. You take them and check the enemy!"65 Gibson did exactly that.

At another instant, Lee rushed over to a faltering group and asked if any of them were South Carolinians. He asked them to rally to him, a native of that state. This started a few men forward and the rest followed. Then Lee helped unlimber the guns of one artillery section and fired a few shots.66 Again his lines stiffened and the Yankees were checked.

A private on Lee's staff recalled Lee's actions throughout the afternoon:67

64Horn, The Army of Tennessee, 417.
65Lee, in Southern Historical Society Papers, V, 130-31; R. H. Lindsay, in Confederate Veteran, VII, 311.
66Ed W. Smith, in Confederate Veteran, XII, 532.
67Louis F. Garrard, in Confederate Veteran, XII, 350.
His example was inspiring. He looked like a very god of war. I recall his words... They seemed to come from his very soul, as if his heart were breaking. One appeal was: 'Rally, men, rally! For God's sake rally! This is the place for brave men to die!' To those who came in contact with him and under the spell of his presence and personal magnetism the effect was electrical. Men gathered in little knots of four and five, prompted by individual gallantry.

Later in the evening it became misty. The Federals tried once again to force through Lee's thin lines. Lee grabbed a terrified little drummer boy and instructed him to beat the long roll. Again Lee had a battle flag in his hands. Other officers and men brandished so many standards that one veteran remembered that it struck him "as a rally of color bearers." Lee's men held firm, and when the long roll sounded some of the Yankees actually believed that a reserve unit was being launched against them, and they halted their advance.68

Just before dark Lee received word that the enemy was near Brentwood, to Lee's rear. He rapidly disengaged his men and moved them in that direction. Reaching Brentwood about dark, he found that the other two corps already had passed that point and temporarily were safe. Lee marched his men further south and halted his rear guard about six miles north of Franklin at 10:00 P.M.69 Thus Lee had succeeded in his efforts to delay the Federals long enough to allow the rest of Hood's men to get started in their retreat.

Lee deserved great credit for his contribution. He was somewhat modest in his accounts of the day, but one of his staff members penned

68 Ibid., 350-51; A. D. Rape, in ibid., XXXV, 179-80.
69 Lee, in ibid., XII, 270.
a fitting tribute: 70

Gen. Lee says his troops were soon rallied. Yes, indeed, they were. But who rallied them? On this point Gen. Lee is silent with his accustomed modesty. He caused them to present a good front to the enemy. Let justice be done. . . . There is not a living man who can deny that Gen. Stephen D. Lee rallied these troops, and to him belongs the credit of saving Hood's army.

Even the modest Lee allowed himself to write that the holding action had been "all that saved Hood's army at this critical moment." 71

The first holding action was by no means the last in the retreat from Nashville. The Yankees maintained one of the most vigorous pursuits of the entire war. Lee believed that "a more persistent effort was never made to rout the rear guard of a retiring column." 72 Nevertheless he knew his men had to have some rest, so he let them go into bivouac at Hollow Tree Gap, just north of Franklin. He kept a small command on watch at the gap in the hills east of where they halted, 73 and he employed a few pickets to keep the road clear of the occasional Federal skirmish lines which tried to advance. The troops snatched whatever rest they could during the uncertain night. Their comfort was lessened still more by the freezing rain that began to fall. 74

70 Louis F. Garrard, in ibid., XII, 351.
71 Lee, in ibid., 270.
73 Lee, in Confederate Veteran, XII, 270.
74 McKinney, Education in Violence, 415-17; Louis F. Garrard, in Confederate Veteran, XII, 351; Ed. W. Smith, in ibid., 532.
Lee saw to it that his defense lines were strengthened during the night. He had only a part of his corps at this point, Clayton's and Stevenson's divisions, two pieces of artillery, and a small cavalry command under General Abraham Buford.75

The Federals launched their first assault against Lee's lines on the seventeenth at 5:00 A.M. Charge after charge hit Lee's stubborn men, but they held. Throughout the morning Yankees occasionally got close enough to capture what eventually amounted to several hundred Confederates, but at the same time, many Yankees were dragged off their horses and the mounts captured by the Southerners.76 Gradually Lee fell back into Franklin and made another determined stand in front of the Harpeth River.

Hood's army had been held up at the Big Harpeth because the wooden trestle bridge was burned and the Confederates had to lay a pontoon bridge in order to get across. Lee formed a battle line on a bluff not far from the pontoon bridge. Both the flanks were sharply refused, so that the line almost formed in the shape of a horseshoe, and somewhat similar to the classic hollow square.77

As the Federals advanced, Lee had his men hold their fire until the last moment. The Yankees approached at a trot. A witness recalled


76Blythe, A History of the Civil War, 311.

77R. S. DeePortes, in unidentified newspaper clipping, copy preserved in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.

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What a moment of suspense and expectation. How the brain works in moments like these! But at last the general, rising in his stirrups as he sat on his grey horse, gave the command in stentorian voice "Fire!"

The musketry went off, but the friction primers of both howitzers snapped from the dampness and did not fire.

. . . . Behind the line of battle, where Gen. Lee, his staff, and escort were, was as warm with carbine bullets, and as alight with flashing sabres as in front, and many of the staff and escort had hand to hand combats in the almost general melee which followed.

Lee's plan of delaying fire at the attacking cavalry and in using the modified hollow square formation paid off. It was a bitter fight but the Confederates were able to withstand the onslaught.

At 1:00 P.M. Lee received a wound in his heel from a shell fragment. It shot off his spur and passed through some flesh, but apparently did not shatter any bone. One of his aides begged him to go to the rear, but he refused to leave the battle. He continued to direct his men in a successful action which held off the Federals until Hood's last wagons crossed the pontoons. Then Lee gradually got his own command across and reached the vicinity of Spring Hill at about nightfall, where the army had encamped. Lee then turned the command of his corps over to his senior subordinate, Major General Carter L. Stevenson.79

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78R. H. Lindsay to Blewett Lee, May 29, 1908, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, III.

Thomas to Rosecrans at Chickamauga. His conduct in the holding actions had been superb. Utilizing the hollow square to repel the strong cavalry charges was an exceptionally brilliant decision, because that formation was not used with much success during the Civil War. Stevenson again employed it with Lee's corps on the night of the eighteenth with equally satisfactory results.

The Army of Tennessee suffered so severely in the Nashville campaign that it no longer was an effective fighting force. Hood's troops sustained terrible losses, but they would have been much greater had Lee not been able to prevent a rout. Lee had the consolation of knowing that he and his men had performed well. Hood wrote that "Lee and the corps commanded by him deserves great credit. . . . Lee displayed superior ability as a corps commander whilst in the Army of Tennessee."\(^{80}\)

A Mobile Tribune editor penned a glowing tribute:\(^{81}\)

The services of this soldier can only be rightfully appreciated when the peculiar circumstances of the retreat are remembered. His heroic valor, his spirited devotion, gleaming like the sun along the field from Nashville to Franklin, have won for him the love and esteem of all his officers and men. . . . He is a soldier, he is a patriot; and next to that great man of the West, who is master of war and prince of the South, stands the worthy, noble, gallant, patriotic, Stephen D. Lee.

Perhaps one of the most touching rewards Lee ever received came years later in recognition of his service in the retreat. R. E. Lee's son Curtis presented S. D. with one of his father's spurs, symbolically

\(^{80}\)Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 139, 332.

\(^{81}\)Partially identified newspaper clipping in Stephen D. Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
to replace the one which had been shot away. A newspaper account of
the presentation declared that if any officer lived who deserved to wear
a spur which belonged to the great commander of the Army of Northern
Virginia, it was Stephen D. Lee.\textsuperscript{82}

Not one to ever forget the men who enabled him to be a success,
Lee took the trouble to issue personal thanks to the soldiers before he
departed to a base hospital. "I beg to assure you that I am not only
satisfied with your conduct in the recent campaign, but that I shall
repose unalterable confidence in you in the future—a future which,
despite the clouds which seem to lower around us, will yet be rendered
bright. . . ."\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{82}Unidentified newspaper clipping, same repository as above.

\textsuperscript{83}O. R., XXV, 706.
CHAPTER XI
INTERLUDE AT WAR'S END

The defeated Army of Tennessee limped into a position of relative safety at Tupelo, Mississippi. Lee got only as far as Florence, Alabama, where he was hospitalized for several days. Just before Christmas, 1864, he wrote to General Beauregard, requested a conference with the Creole, and proposed that they exchange opinions on the recent Tennessee campaigns.1 Apparently the meeting did take place between the two, but the content of their discussion is not in the records.

As soon as Lee could travel, he went to Columbus, Mississippi.2 There he earlier had met the girl who soon would become his bride. She was Regina Lilly Harrison, the grand-daughter of Thomas C. Blewett, probably the wealthiest man in Columbus.3 Both the Lee and Blewett families had South Carolina origins, but Stephen Lee apparently did not know Regina until he met her during the Civil War.

Thomas Blewett was born in 1789. He and his wife moved to Mississippi in 1832. They were always well off financially and prospered handsomely until his death in 1879 and hers in 1890.4 He owned several


2Hood to Lee, January 15, 1865, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.


4Family Tombstone, in Friendship Cemetery, Columbus, Mississippi.
pieces of property in Columbus, a large farm nearby, and five plantations in Lowndes, Noxubee, and Tallahathee Counties, as well as bank and railroad stock, and five hundred slaves. He used the title, "Major"—apparently even before the Civil War. During the conflict he served as a sort of commander of the home guard at Columbus.

Their daughter, Lee's future mother in law, was named Regina. In 1840 she married Judge James T. Harrison, who was a descendant of Benjamin Harrison, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He, too, was from South Carolina, born near Pendleton in 1811. A graduate of the University of South Carolina, he also had studied law under James L. Petigru, and became quite well known for his competence and colorful courtroom technique. One Mississippian said of him: "Although near-sighted, he had a brilliant dancing eye, and what a lawyer he was! He possessed the sarcasm and invective of Voltaire without his venom or infidelity." Harrison moved to Columbus in 1834 and married his wife in 1840. In 1861 he was elected to the convention of Southern states which met at Montgomery, Alabama, and established the Confederate government.

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7 James A. Stevens, quoted in undated newspaper clipping from the Columbus, Commercial, in Scrapbooks, "SDL," III.
Then for the remainder of the Civil War he was an elected member of the Confederate Congress.  

The Judge and his wife Regina had five children to survive them. These were Regina, James, Tam, Allen, and Mary. The oldest child, a daughter, was given the same name as her mother. She was born on February 24, 1841, in Columbus. Lee probably met her in 1863 when she was twenty-two and he a major general of twenty-nine or thirty.

Miss Regina was a remarkable young woman. Newspaperman E. A. Pollard remembered her as "a lady known and admired for her intellectual accomplishments as well as for her large portion of the beauty, wit, and amiability belonging to her sex." In 1860 she was described by the New York Herald:

In the combination of intellect and beauty Mississippi undoubtedly comes first, and at the head of this sovereign State's representatives stands Miss H------n, of Columbus. Her exquisitely chiselled features, soul flashing eyes, fine taste in dress, and calm and confident self possession at all times and on all occasions, mark something more than the mere transient beauty.

Other references indicate that she was widely considered to be truly gifted, accomplished, and charming.

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9 "Background material," in James T. Harrison Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; unknown author, "Story of the Blewett-Harrison-Lee Home," copy provided to me by Thomas C. Read, Charleston, South Carolina.

10 Family Tombstone, in Friendship Cemetery, Columbus, Mississippi.

11 Pollard, The Early Life, 687.


Before and during the war she collected friendly letters from an impressive array of notable figures. These included Jefferson Davis, William J. Harde, Leonidas Polk, and the famous filibusterer—the "gray eyed man of destiny," William Walker.14

During the Civil War there were always many military personnel in Columbus. The town originally had been an arsenal, but most of the arms and equipment later were moved to Selma, Alabama. Then following the Battle of Shiloh, Columbus became a hospital center for Confederate forces operating in Mississippi and Tennessee.15 Lee and other generals had maintained headquarters there from time to time.

Lee and Regina probably each considered the other to be a right good catch. She had been brought into contact with a wide range of prospective suitors, partially through her work as a nurse in one of the hospitals,16 and partially through her family prominence. Her family's wealth and her own considerable personal charms added to her desirability. Lee on the other hand was good looking and also had a certain charisma about him. To be a lieutenant general at thirty-one was perhaps enough in itself to sweep Regina off her feet, but he had even more. He was a proven battle captain and a wounded war hero. She had been

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14 Davis to Regina Harrison, March 8, 1861; Hardee to Regina Harrison, April 12, 1862 and October 11, 1863; Polk to Regina Harrison, May 7, 1864; and William Walker to Regina Harrison, February 20, 1859, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

15 Dr. W. L. Lipscomb, A History of Columbus, Mississippi During the 19th Century, 125-27.

16 Editorial comment, in Confederate Veteran, XI, 514.
collecting newspaper clippings about him ever since he rose to depart­
mental command. At any rate, the romance flourished and they planned
a wedding for February 8, 1865.

One of Regina's disappointed suitors revealed some interesting
facts and insights. He wrote to her, "I commission you to convey my
congratulations to General Lee. . . . I have sometimes heard him called
a pet of Fortune--but never until now, have realized how favored a child
he is of that usually fickle dame." (Obviously the man had heard some
stories which indicated that some people thought Lee was more lucky than
skillful.) Then he went on, "You are much stronger than most of your
sex. I have sometimes thought you talk and write with the mind of a man,
and the heart of a woman." It was a keen insight into the future Mrs.
Lee's character. She had a large influence upon her husband in the years
that followed.

Lee secured the services of several brigadier generals as atten­
dants for the wedding. They included Abraham Buford, Randall L. Gibson,
and Lawrence S. Ross. Lee invited some other generals to attend the
wedding, but they could not do so. Forrest on declining indicated that
he and his wife "express the hope that the bridegroom in worshipping at

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17Packet of newspaper clippings, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

18F. P. Roy to Regina Harrison, January 28, 1865, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

19Gibson to Lee, Jan. ?, 1865, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
the shrine of Venus, will not forget his devotion to Mars. It was a rather colorful literary flourish for a man that many critics considered to be illiterate.

The wedding was a very elaborate affair, performed by the Right Reverend W. M. Green, the Episcopal Bishop of Mississippi. It took place in the Harrison home, a beautiful and interesting building. There was a marble mantle supposedly imported from France, and the windows were a modification of the French type—they had sills which opened as if they were doors. Lee and his bride stood in a huge bay window to exchange vows.

Several of the soldiers present were in less than top physical condition. Lee himself had to stand and walk with the aid of crutches. General Buford was weak from wounds he recently had received, and at one point fainted. The refreshments were being served and he had just reached over to receive a plate of smoking oyster soup when he collapsed, sloshing the soup all over his companion's dress.

\[\text{Footnotes:}\]
\begin{enumerate}
  \item Forrest to Lee, February 7, 1865, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
  \item Miss Mary Billups, "Recollections," tape recorded by the Columbus and Lowndes County Historical Society.
  \item Unidentified newspaper clipping in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.
  \item The Harrison House still stands and is in use today as a Manse for the Presbyterian Church. The occupant was kind enough to allow me to tour it in the summer of 1968.
  \item Unidentified newspaper clipping in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.
  \item Helen R. Garner, in Columbus Chapter U.D.C. (Comp.), War Reminiscences of Columbus, Mississippi and Elsewhere 1861-1865 (Copyright by Stephen D. Lee Chapter Number 34, U.D.C., printed by Sullivan's, West Point, Mississippi, 1961), 14.
\end{enumerate}
But nothing spoiled Regina's enjoyment of her wedding to the man she called, "the fascinating Gen. Lee."26 She wore a beautiful gown "in satin, with magnificent point lace veil. . . , and she was all aglow with diamonds," a friend remembered. And the same friend continued:27

After supper Lide and I sought an introduction to the General. He was dressed very magnificently and looked very handsome. . . . He received us very gracefully and talked very pleasantly. Everything was so grand and gotten up with as much style as the Confederacy could afford. . . . There was a band of music and we 'tripped the light fantastic toe' during the entire evening. . . . I enjoyed it all wonderfully.

Lee remained with his bride for only a short time before he began thinking of a return to the combat areas. While he was in Columbus, he established the reputation of being "in social life a modest unassuming, unostentatious gentleman."28 But he received mail from his comrades which turned his thoughts away from society, entertainment, or rest. One letter indicated that, "the corps misses you very much."29 And another remarkable note from a fellow officer who also was recuperating from a wound:30

26Regina L. Lee, in ibid., 6.
28Unidentified newspaper clipping in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.
29Gibson to Lee, Jan. ?, 1865, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
30Patton Anderson to Lee, January 26, 1865, same repository as above.
I am all this time, the subject of surveillance by the Surgeons, who advise delay etc -- till the weather becomes less rigorous etc. But I am tired--tired to death of looking out of my door daily, yea almost every hour of the day, and seeing Tom who is 'pretty well,' well enough in fact to be with his regiment if he 'could only get the food there, suitable to his stomack' (sic) or Dick whose wound is 'healed' but 'too tender to withstand the winter of Va. or Tenn.' or Harry who 'really would go' but he does not know how he can possible (sic) reach his command when all the rail roads are cut either by Yankees or freshets! !!!! etc. etc. Such spectacles as these superadded to the croaking here, the disaster faction there, and the very general indifference everywhere out of the army, to what I conceive to be the most momentous earthly crisis which men were ever called upon to meet--embitters even the sweets of home to me. . . .

The words constitute quite an idealistic and patriotic denunciation of the shirker class in any war. This was the kind of friend that Lee cultivated and corresponded with. This particular man considered Lee well worthy of emulation. He continued, "I rejoice that you and your corps (at Nashville) did all that skill endurance and courage could do and that the country demanded. The enemy themselves admit as much. Then I may be pardoned the vanity in saying that I am proud to belong to that Corps."

Part of the Army of Tennessee had already returned to active service. Forrest's cavalry remained to guard Mississippi. The remainder of the army, including Lee's corps moved toward Georgia and the Carolinas to unite with other remnants to oppose Sherman's forces. General Carter L. Stevenson remained in temporary command of Lee's Corps. It was the first unit to leave Tupelo, starting at dawn on January 10, on the Alabama and Mississippi Rivers Railroad. They encountered so many obstructions and difficulties that Stevenson recommended that all the other units move by way of Mobile. Hence it took several weeks before
effective forces would be moved into the eastern area. The Federals learned that they were on the way even before they got through Georgia.\textsuperscript{31}

Meanwhile the Confederate Congress refused to confirm Lee's original promotion to lieutenant general. They had never gotten around to considering it, and now when they finally did, they decided not to confirm the appointment because he had "been relieved from the discharge of the duties in the command to which he was appointed."\textsuperscript{32} The action was ridiculous because Lee had served very well in the capacity of lieutenant general until he had been wounded and forced to accept relief. There was no excuse at all for not confirming his promotion.

Only two weeks after his wedding, however, Lee left on crutches to rejoin his corps.\textsuperscript{33} President Davis immediately resubmitted Lee's appointment as lieutenant general, and made no mention of the proposed date of rank.\textsuperscript{34} The original promotion had made the date June 23, 1864. Lee received notification on March 16, 1865, that the Senate had confirmed him to be a lieutenant general with temporary rank.\textsuperscript{35} Again no new date of rank was listed--so for all practical purposes, Lee retained his original date, thereby being the nineteenth ranking Confederate general.

\textsuperscript{31}Suzanne C. Wilson, Column South (Flagstaff, Arizona: J. F. Colton and Company, 1960), 275.

\textsuperscript{32}James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Confederacy Including the Diplomatic Correspondence 1861-1865 (2 volumes, Nashville: United States Publishing Company, 1906-1907), I, 537.

\textsuperscript{33}Unidentified newspaper clipping in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.

\textsuperscript{34}Richardson, Messages and Papers, I, 537-38.

\textsuperscript{35}Lee's second notification of promotion to lieutenant general, now at Lee Museum, Columbus, Mississippi.
Meanwhile on the recommendation of Robert E. Lee, Davis reappointed Johnston as army commander. Davis rationalized that Johnston was "the only officer of rank superior to that of Lieut. General who was available." Stephen Lee sent congratulations to Johnston and happily noted that Davis also had promised Johnston full support. Johnston glumly replied to Lee, "He will not do it. He has never done it. It is too late now, and he has only put me in command to disgrace me."

At any rate neither Lee nor Johnston had any intention of merely going through the motions of service. They were hard-fighting and determined men. Johnston took the field and ordered Lee temporarily to establish a rendezvous camp at Augusta, Georgia. There the stragglers and returning wounded and men coming back from furlough were collected and organized. Lee gathered several thousand soldiers, arranged them in arbitrary non-permanent brigades, and left Augusta with them on March 18. They marched through South Carolina, arrived at Rock Hill on the twenty-ninth, and there boarded a train bound for Johnston's headquarters at Smithfield, North Carolina.

Meanwhile Johnston clashed with his forces against Sherman's men in the Battle of Bentonville, March 19-21, 1865. Lee had not yet arrived, so Daniel H. Hill commanded Lee's Corps. Sherman had a large

36 Rowland (ed.), Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalist, VI, 429.
38 Unidentified author to Lee, March 3, 1865, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I; Buck, Cleburne and His Command, 355.
force of approximately 60,000; Johnston had only about 18,000. Nevertheless the Confederates almost succeeded in achieving a modicum of victory, and had they been able to do so, it would seriously have hampered Sherman's plans for operations in the immediate future.

One of the Confederate's crucial blunders resulted from confusion in Lee's corps, brought about partly by misunderstanding and lack of teamwork among the generals. But the corps itself fought valiantly and showed some of the spirit Lee earlier had infused in it. "No one who witnessed the inspiring sight can ever forget the charge of S. D. Lee's Corps," one observer remembered.

The battle raged for three days. After losing their one chance for success, the Confederates were able only to hold their ground in a bloody stalemate. The Federals lost 1,527 in killed, wounded, or captured; the Confederates suffered far worse losses, 2,606. Both proportionately and in actual numbers, the South suffered another disastrous defeat.

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42Clark (ed.), Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina, IV, 592.

Johnston retained his headquarters at Smithfield, about sixteen miles from the Bentonville battle area. There he began to reorganize his badly damaged army. The Confederacy had collected all of its available personnel to bolster this force—and the high command included a number of notable generals. There were two other full generals, Beauregard and Bragg. Lee finally arrived with the reinforcements from Augusta on March 31. Then there were four lieutenant generals and twelve major generals.44

In the reorganization Johnston divided his army into three corps, one each under Hardee, Stewart, and Lee. The new troops that Lee had brought from Augusta raised Johnston's total strength to about 20,400—just over a third of the number that Sherman had. But the Confederates suffered still another disadvantage: many of them were unarmed. The government did what it could to supply these troops, but even as late as April 10, the day after Robert E. Lee surrendered in Virginia, more than 1,300 of Johnston's men were still without arms of any sort.45

When Lee had marched through Chester, South Carolina, Mrs. Mary Chesnut noticed how forlorn the men had looked. She wrote in her diary:46

44Wellman, Giant in Gray, 175; Bromfield L. Ridley, Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee (Mexico, Missouri: Missouri Printing and Publishing Company, 1906), 455.


Today, Stephen D. Lee's corps marched through.
The camp songs of the men were a heartbreak, so sad and so
stirring. I sat down as women have done before and wept. Oh,
the bitterness of such weeping! There they go, the gay and
gallant few; the last gathering of the flower of Southern manhood.
Most of them probably realized that the Civil War was nearly over.

Johnston himself began to suspect that the end was near, and he
ordered that all executions be stopped. Meanwhile, much of his troop
strength dwindled away as many men deserted. The desertions increased
after word reached Johnston's forces of Robert E. Lee's surrender.
Finally, on April 19 Johnston announced to his men that he had agreed to
a cessation of hostilities while he negotiated with Sherman. Then on
April 26, Johnston surrendered.47

It was Lee's second time to be a prisoner of war, and for the
second time he was paroled. He received his release on May 1, 1865, at
Greensboro, North Carolina.48 The Confederates had been marched there
to turn in their arms. And there Lee had a friendly visit with his
first unit—the old artillery battery from Charleston, South Carolina,
that had given him his first chance for field duty in the war.49

47 Govan and Livingood, A Different Valor, 360; Barrett, Sherman's
March, 201-02; Archer Anderson to Lee, April 19, 1865 and Kinlock
Falconer to Lee, April 24, 1864 and General Orders No. 18, April 27,
1865, in Wilson Letters, Emory University Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

48 Lee's parole dated May 1, 1865, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers,
Southern Historical Collection.

49 A. Wood, in Confederate Veteran, XVI, 585.
The whole affair was a sad one for the southerners. Their country was collapsing, their way of life would never be the same again. Their society and culture soon would be altered by the will of a different people—an experience that no other Americans ever have had to bear. Lee's Chief Engineer, Major S. A. Jonas, rather touchingly and pathetically—if somewhat ineptly—testified to the feeling that many of the men had. He wrote on the back of a Confederate Bill:

Representing nothing on God's earth now
And naught in the water below it,
As a pledge of a Nation that's dead and gone,
Keep it, dear friend, and show it.

Lee went home and never again saw active military service. He ended nearly fifteen years of life as a soldier and closed a war career that never has been fully understood or properly appreciated. What sort of general was he? Certainly he did not belong in the same category with the Civil War's only great generals, Grant and Robert E. Lee. But was he among the near greats, like perhaps William T. Sherman, Nathan Bedford Forrest, or Stonewall Jackson? Or should he be relegated to the "very good" category, which might include James Longstreet, George H. Thomas, and James H. Wilson?

Lee cannot be rated as good a general in every respect as the near greats, because he lacked a certain spark for major innovations—or perhaps a partial element of genius that these men possessed. One is

50 Unidentified author, in *ibid.*, III, 4.
tempted to say that Lee belongs between the near greats and very goods. But if he must be categorized, then he should be rated as only very good. Yet, he belongs at or near the top of this third group. He accomplished more than most of these men with less resources and less rank in the beginning. He showed more potential, and he was younger than any of them. Given a later war, or an earlier birthdate and more military experience, Lee might well have achieved near greatness.
CHAPTER XII

A NEW LIFE

The years from 1865 through about 1877 constituted a middle period in Lee's life. Although he did not isolate himself completely from the outside world, he engaged in far fewer and less important outside activities than in the decades thereafter. He established his permanent home in Columbus, Mississippi, and he devoted most of his energies to carving out a new life.

Not quite thirty-two years old, Lee was still a young man. It was destined that he would outlive most of his Civil War contemporaries, since the average age of the former Confederate leaders who survived the contest was about forty-five. For various reasons, however, Lee did not enter public life until after Reconstruction had almost ended.

Compared with many Southerners, Lee and his wife had an easy time during Reconstruction. Major Blewett had lost his slaves, but many of them stayed to work on his lands. Soon after he returned from the war, Major Blewett gave Lee and his wife a plantation. Blewett referred to it as "York Plantation" in a letter to Regina, but a later scholar indicates that the plantation Lee operated belonged to Mrs. Lee.

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and was called "Devereaux."

Whether Lee shared in the ownership of the land, or whether it belonged solely to his wife is not important. They both lived on it.

The place was in Noxubee County. The courthouse in Macon, Mississippi has records which indicate that Major Blewett gave his granddaughter two hundred seventy acres which later was increased by the purchase of five hundred more acres. Lee farmed for about ten years, perhaps sometimes on his own, but usually on a sharecrop basis—presumably with black croppers.

He was not a successful farmer, and when he gave up farming, he was disillusioned about the prospects of making a living on the soil. He had some specific criticisms of conventional agricultural methods then used in the South, and he based many of his later ideas to improve these methods upon the lessons he had learned after the war. But more than poor techniques had hurt Lee as a farmer. He had tried the occupation in a turbulent time. Cotton prices fluctuated frequently, and the labor supply was always undependable.

Lee at first had good relations with his Negro help, as Major Blewett credited Lee's presence on York Plantation with prompting the blacks to remain. But gradually many of the workers left. This may

2Blewett to Regina Lee, January 30, 1866, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection; Bettersworth, People's College, 49.

3W. J. Love to Hattaway, July 29, 1968, in my possession.

4Blewett to Regina Lee, January 30, 1866, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
have been partly Lee's fault, as he was convinced that all blacks were lazy: "It is a fact known to those best acquainted with the Negro race since the war, that more and more of them are becoming idle, and are not giving us as good work as they used to do."  

To some extent Lee was anti-Negro. It was not usually a big issue to him, and he devoted very little attention to the race problem. But he definitely had a basic concept that the South was a white man's country and that the Negro was an inferior human being. Later he would take an active part in the 1890 movement to disenfranchise the blacks in Mississippi.

Lee's only child, a son, was born on March 1, 1867. The baby was named Blewett Harrison Lee--the surnames of his mother's father and grandfather. Regina's father wrote, "poor little thing, it little knew what a world it was coming into, or the prospects in the future, or it would not have been in such a hurry in getting into it." Mr. Harrison, a politician and not a military man, was perhaps less inclined than Lee to look toward a brighter future.

Lee loved the boy very much and was extremely proud of the little

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6Blewett Lee's application for membership in Sons of the Revolution, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

7Harrison to Regina Lee, March 10, 1877, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
fellow. He sent ex-President Davis a bottle of whiskey to drink to the lad's health, and he wrote boasting letters about him to Wade Hampton and other friends.  

As the child began to grow, Lee spent a lot of time with him. They were warm companions, often reading and studying together, and obviously enjoying each other's company. One woman recalled seeing them frequently out on excursions. Lee's friends generally regarded him as a wise father.

Aside from his happy home life and the financial help of his wife's grandfather, there was another factor that helped Lee to enjoy peace of mind. Like most military men, he displayed little bitterness over losing the war. In an application to President Andrew Johnson for a pardon, Lee wrote that he "fought out the war upon open, fair, and manly principles and according to the modern usages of war." He had surrendered and now considered "the contest at an end." He took the amnesty oath and said he was "now ready to defend the Constitution and yield obedience of the laws."

After Reconstruction became more harsh, and Johnson left office and Grant became president, Lee still did not turn bitter. In fact, Lee always spoke highly of Grant. He respected and deferred to Grant's

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8Davis to Lee, July 17, 1878 and Hampton to Lee, May 13, 1867, and other letters on the same subject, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

9Mrs. Georgia P. Young, in Confederate Veteran, XVI, 383.

10Lee to Johnson, July 9, 1865, copy in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
military victory. Lee's son recalled in 1927 that "during the whole of the reconstruction period . . . the burden of the defeated South was made more tolerable by the steady kindness and the understanding, one might almost say the sympathy of General Grant." Obviously the son did not hear Lee speaking bitterly of Grant. In fact, he went on to say, "I cannot remember . . . to have heard a harsh word spoken in our own section about General Grant." 11

Lee also kept aloof from the quarreling between former Confederates that raged occasionally. Thus Lee never joined in when many Southerners castigated Jefferson Davis, blaming him for the South's defeat. "I have always been of the impression," Lee declared, "that no other Southern man could have held the Confederacy together as long as did Mr. Davis." 12 In later life Lee was a warm friend, staunch supporter, and frequent correspondent of the ex-president. But Lee also consistently honored and respected Robert E. Lee. He was not as close to R. E. Lee as to Davis, but he corresponded with R. E. and always lashed out at any critics of the Virginian. As S. D. Lee aged, he developed a personal philosophy that was a blend of the "lost cause" reverence exhibited by most of Davis' other followers and of the "progressive New South with emphasis upon modern education" that R. E. Lee preached.

11 Speech by Blewett Lee at 1927 celebration of Grant's Birthday, copy in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
12 Unidentified newspaper clipping, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, II.
Although Lee took part in some extra-legal activities designed to "enforce the peace" during Reconstruction, he apparently did not belong to the Ku Klux Klan. No evidence exists to prove or disprove his membership, but his son recalled in a 1927 speech that "as a child I have been by my father led to his plantation gate so that I might see the long procession of the Ku Klux riding past, mysterious, silent and white." Thus, if Lee stood at his gate with his son and watched the Klan riding by, he could not very well have been a member himself—at least not at that moment. Nevertheless, the fact that he wished to stand outside and watch them with his son might indicate that he did not disapprove.

Lee's son also recalled the night patrolling of Negro areas that Lee and many whites engaged in during Reconstruction:

Night after night my mother held me, a babe in her arms, as she watched my father ride away to join in the patrol of the roads through the dark hours, so that there might be no re-enactments upon the prairies of Mississippi of the terrible deeds done during the race insurrection on the island of San Domingo.

Such activities probably were unnecessary in militarily occupied Mississippi. It is certainly possible to construe that Lee joined in terrorizing activities against Negroes. But given his character and his other known actions, that probably was not the case. More likely he and his companions feared outbreaks of violence—perhaps by whites and Negroes...

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13Speech by Blewett Lee at 1927 celebration of Grant's Birthday, copy in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

14Ibid.
both--and they took steps to prevent such occurrences.

For some years Lee and his wife enjoyed a very happy home life and were able to socialize on occasion. Regina loved to entertain, and one of her friends recalled her as "a queenly woman in appearance and gracious in bearing" and possessed of three highly admirable qualities, "beauty of person, cultivation of mind, and loveliness of character."\(^{15}\)


Suddenly tragedy struck. Sometime in 1868, at the age of twenty-seven, Mrs. Lee's health began to fail.\(^{17}\) She had dropsy, with which for the rest of her life, another thirty-five years, she suffered intermittently. Her mind remained sound and she was a help to Lee in many respects, but she ultimately became a semi-invalid, only getting about with great difficulty. She and Lee took many trips to try mineral

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\(^{15}\) Lucille Webb Banks, "Lieutenant General Stephen D. Lee," unidentified article, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.

\(^{16}\) Various letters 1865-1867, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

\(^{17}\) Lee to Thomas J. Green, January 14, 1869, in Thomas Jefferson Green Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
springs, or other medical remedies, but nothing helped. As the years passed, she appeared less and less in public.\textsuperscript{18}

Lee remained devoted to his wife and tenderly ministered to her. The illness probably was the catalyst that prompted him to join the Baptist Church. Perhaps he had been contemplating it for a long time. He began to profess a belief in God during the Civil War. At any rate, he received baptism and became active in church affairs, beginning sometime around 1868.

At about the same time the Lees took up residence in Columbus, going only occasionally to the plantation. Their first home in the town, "Hickory Sticks," was a beautiful and large edifice on a hilltop. They lived in the town until the 1880's, when Lee became the first president of the Mississippi A. & M. College, and then they moved to Starkville.

During his middle period Lee engaged in several activities that were indicative of his future interests. He joined with other Confederate veterans to cooperate in various projects—mostly efforts to erect monuments and memorials to those who had fought or died in the war; and he became impressed with the need to preserve the history of the war, at this time trying to persuade others to write it.

At some point during his farming career Lee joined the Patrons of

\textsuperscript{18}\textsuperscript{18}Sarah D. Neilson to Thomas C. Read, May 16, 1964, the original is in possession of Read, a copy was supplied to me; Mrs. Georgia P. Young, in Confederate Veteran, XVI, 383.
Husbandry, better known as the Grange. The organization had originated in 1867 as a nonpolitical, fraternal group dedicated to effectuating the self-improvement of farmers. The first Grange in Mississippi was formed at Rienzi on May 20, 1871, but at first the organization functioned only in the northeast part of the state. In 1872 a state-wide organization was achieved, and during the next years the organization spread throughout Mississippi.

The Grange supported some rather far reaching reforms—things which people who harked back to the "Old South" would not find desirable. Lee heartily endorsed these progressive ideas. Soon after he became discouraged with farming, in early 1876, he told a South Carolina newspaper reporter that "the efforts to keep up the systems of large farms which contain thousands of acres . . . have reduced the people to bankruptcy." Lee said that the condition of the agriculturalist in Mississippi was "deplorable, and growing worse every year." And he had a solution to suggest:

The only remedy I can conceive of is to reverse the order of affairs under which it is all brought about, reduce the large farms to small ones, introduce citizens from the Northern States by inducing them to come with their capital and buy our surplus lands. The Grange of Mississippi, of which I am a member, is exerting itself to this end. . . . Speedier and better results will follow from the introduction of Northern immigrants into our midst than from any other source.

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19 Lee, quoted in an unidentified South Carolina newspaper interview, copy in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.


21 Lee, quoted in an unidentified South Carolina newspaper interview, copy in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.
Lee would later make some real contributions toward bringing these and other progressive goals to fruition, but as far as he personally was concerned, he had had enough of farming. "I have been assiduously engaged in farming in Mississippi, with such unsatisfactory results that I became demoralized and have rented my lands," he declared.\(^\text{22}\)

Actually Lee had been trying for some years to get a satisfactory position in some business. He began corresponding with James Longstreet as early as 1866 on the matter. Longstreet wrote to Mississippi Governor B. G. Humphreys recommending Lee for the presidency of the Mobile and Ohio Railroad, calling both Lee and another candidate, "very superior men."\(^\text{23}\) Lee himself wrote to Humphreys asking for the position of vice president,\(^\text{24}\) but the job went to someone else.

Meanwhile Longstreet tried to find a position for Lee in New Orleans.\(^\text{25}\) He wrote Lee, "I think it quite likely that I may have a good opportunity to bring your name forward at a favorable moment for

\(^{22}\)Ibid.

\(^{23}\)Longstreet to Humphreys, February 23, 1866, in Volume 78, Governors Records, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

\(^{24}\)Lee to Humphreys, March 15, 1866, same repository as above.

\(^{25}\)Longstreet to Lee, March 27, 1866, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
some more pleasant business than your life as a planter." He promised, "I shall look for a good paying and comfortable place for you." And he revealed what Lee had intimated to him as his motive: "I think it a wise conclusion on your part to seek some position that will bring you in contact, more, with the world."\(^26\)

Longstreet continued his efforts to help Lee. In May 1866, he wrote that "there is so little of business now that all enterprise seems to lag. So that I doubt whether anything pleasant for you will open before fall or winter."\(^27\) And when winter came, Longstreet still had nothing for Lee, but he promised that "I have now fixed upon a plan . . . we can secure your election as Secretary of our insurance company."\(^28\) Longstreet indicated that his real goal was ultimately to make Lee president of that company, Longstreet's own present position, because "I have two offers of something else." But ultimately all of Longstreet's efforts in Lee's behalf failed.

So Lee continued to farm, but six years later he still was interested in the insurance business. He corresponded with his old friend Dabney Maury, who was also in that field. Maury did not offer Lee a position, but he gave Lee some instruction concerning the proper conduct

\(^{26}\)Longstreet to Lee, May 2, 1866, same repository as above.
\(^{27}\)Longstreet to Lee, May 12, 1866, same repository as above.
\(^{28}\)Longstreet to Lee, December 17, 1866, same repository as above.
of an insurance company. 29

Finally in early 1876, at the age of forty-two, Lee secured the office of superintendent of agencies for the Alabama Gold Life Insurance Company. The business was headquartered at Mobile, Alabama, and operated in all of the Deep South states. A New Orleans newspaper noted that "the company is one of the soundest and most prudently managed corporations in the South..." 30 Lee was the only former high military figure among the executive personnel, and presumably it was expected that his main contribution would be the influence and lustre that his name might add, and the new customers it would bring in.

The job required Lee to travel a great deal, and often in towns where he was stopping he was invited to make a speech. He still cut an impressive figure and was considered to be quite a good speaker too. One reporter described him as "tall and commanding in appearance, and with the soldierly bearing and polished address and grace of manner peculiar to the Southerner of the best type, added to a strikingly handsome face and a stalwart physique." 31

Lee's first business trip was through Georgia and South Carolina. Since the year, 1876, was the United States centennial year, there were

29 Maury to Lee, December 22, 1872, and December 30, 1872, both in same repository as above.

30 Unidentified New Orleans newspaper clipping, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.

31 The same description appeared in the Dallas Herald, the Mobile Register, and several other newspapers. Copies of these items are preserved in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I and II.
many public gatherings and celebrations. Lee usually was invited to attend—and often to participate in an official capacity. In South Carolina his friend Wade Hampton did not "take any stock in the Centennial," but Lee was an enthusiastic partisan in the patriotic proceedings. At Charleston he deeply impressed a reporter, who wrote that Lee "proved what we have so often declared, that those who were first in war would be first in peace—real peace of equality and mutual benefit."  

Lee went on a long trip through Texas in the summer of 1876. There he worked in conjunction with another Alabama Gold employee, Cornelius Baldwin Hite, and the two men sold a number of policies. Hite was particularly pleased, since he shared in the profits of policies that Lee helped him write up. Lee's military reputation was a magnet to customers. Hite had been what he called only "a high private" in the war, but newspaper reporters writing about his trip with Lee called him "captain." He wrote his wife that "no one here is below the rank of Captain." Lee's affable manner undoubtedly also helped his salesmanship. Hite wrote that "Lee is a nice gentleman . . . , a successful canvasser of life insurance." In Dallas a number of the "first men" of

32 Hampton to Lee, January 31, 1876, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

33 Partially identified newspaper clipping in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.
the city honored Lee at a champagne toasting party which, Hite said, "passed off very happily for all parties concerned."\footnote{Hite to Mrs. Hite, June 18, June 25, and July 1, 1876, in Conelius Baldwin Hite, Jr. Papers, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.}

As successful as Lee was in the insurance business, he soon had to give it up. His wife's illness flared up again, and he feared that his long absences depressed her. Just prior to this latest relapse, Mrs. Lee had been active in various endeavors. She had served as president of the Monumental Association (a Confederate monument erection and preservation society in Columbus), and she had been elected Honorary President of the Daughters of the Confederacy. The New York Herald included her in a nine hundred ninety-four name list of "the most beautiful women now on earth."\footnote{Lipscomb, "General Lee . . .," in \textit{Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society}, X, 16.} After the relapse Lee returned home to take her on a trip to White Sulphur Springs, Virginia, but she did not improve. Lee never rejoined the insurance company.

Perhaps Lee wanted to try something else now anyway. A new period in his life soon began. He entered politics, became a college president and launched a career in public life that he would continue for another thirty years.

\footnote{Lipscomb, \textit{A History of Columbus, Mississippi}, 132; unidentified newspaper clippings in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.}
Lee took his place among the ranks of the "Redeemers"—the men who captured Southern political offices and brought Reconstruction regimes to an end. Historians call the last quarter of the nineteenth century in the South "the Rule of the Brigadier Generals" because so many high ranking ex-military officials held public positions. As a former lieutenant general, perhaps Lee had an easier time in the competition for some of the posts that he wanted. At any rate, he not only was among the youngest, but also was among the most prominent of the fifty former Confederate leaders who made significant contributions to Mississippi's postwar economic and political life.

When Mississippi historians notice the New South Lee, they usually say that he developed the outlook of a Southern Bourbon. It is true that Lee's thinking fermented and matured in the twelve years after the Civil War ended, but if he was a Bourbon then he was a special kind. The Southern Bourbon generally was an entrepreneur who encouraged or established new industry and mechanization in the South. Invariably he was a friend of Big Business, but often he took advantage of opportunities to line his own pockets—even if in shady deals. The Bourbon was basically a conservative, in spite of the fact that he knew when to accept certain changes. Lee's attitudes did frequently link him intellectually with the Bourbons, but there was a streak of altruism and reform in him too that the typical Bourbon did not possess. Lee never would have enriched himself in a questionable deal. He had elements of self-giving and love for his region that do not fit the Bourbon stereotype. He did what he did in the years that followed because he genuinely believed that his actions were right and best for all concerned.
CHAPTER XIII

POLITICIAN

One scholar who studied S. D. Lee's life concluded that "it was inevitable" the general should "sooner or later become involved in politics." Few things are inevitable, but this scholar has high probability on his side. Large numbers of ex-Confederate leaders did enter the political arena particularly in Mississippi, which elected a larger number of Civil War veterans to office than did any other Southern State. Nevertheless, it is rather interesting that Lee ever offered himself to the electorate as a candidate, because in 1876 he had told a newspaper reporter:

"Excuse me from making any allusion to the subject of politics. The extent to which official corruption has been carried is a disgrace to the 19th century, and the very mention of the subject is revolting. The whole subject may be defined as an official attack on the liberties and rights of the people."

But by the fall of 1877 Lee had changed his position. The state senate seat in his district became vacant when its holder, W. H. Simms, was appointed lieutenant governor. Lee decided to seek the Democratic nomination for the place. At this time the Democratic Party was predominant in the state, and as one of Lee's friends observed, the general

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1 Bettersworth, People's College, 50.
3 Unidentified South Carolina newspaper clipping, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.

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was "by nature a Democrat." Lee's candidacy did not evoke favor from the regular Democrats of the district. Probably the reason was that the conservative planter-oriented Democratic leaders considered Lee was too liberal. His membership in the Grange undoubtedly hurt him, since the organization never was popular with the majority of the Bourbon leaders.

The nomination would be decided by the Democratic district convention, representing the senatorial district of Lowndes, Clay, and Oktibbeha counties. This gathering was under the influence of its executive committee, which brought about the nomination of its chairman, W. W. Humphries, of Lowndes. The disappointed Lee then decided to run anyway, as an independent on a separate "Democratic-Conservative" ticket. He had a chance, because the convention's action had divided the district. The planter class was most strongly represented in Lowndes county, and politicians in Clay and Oktibbeha saw the committee's action in pushing Humphries' candidacy as an aristocratic attempt to dictate to the rest of the district. This provided a rallying point of anti-Lowndes sentiment around Lee, even though he also lived in Lowndes.

The campaign was a heated one. At one point Lee announced that he did not wish to run. His statement seemed to breathe lofty resignation, but actually it was a clever political ploy. He was trying to avoid an image as a selfish officer seeker, so he wanted to explain why he had chosen to crusade against the regular Democratic Party. In a

4W. D. Pickett, in Confederate Veteran, XII, 328.
5Bettersworth, People's College, 51.
letter to the editors of several newspapers he wrote: 6

While I would not decline to serve my fellow citizens and be proud of their preference for me, if it be their evident and manifest wish, I will certainly never from desire of office trouble them to provide for me. I submit the whole matter to the judgement and consideration of the people of the District.

The result was that many letters flowed into the editors' mailboxes warmly supporting Lee. So naturally he did not withdraw from the race.

The anti-Lee forces finally resorted to the race issue. They charged that on election day the independents planned to bring crowds of Negroes to the polls, in the evening, just before the polls closed. "Lee's tickets are already in the hands of the negroes," they asserted. 7 In truth, Lee made no bid whatever to the blacks. He did not have to. His strength came from the war-veteran element and from the support that he got from members of the Grange.

Lee won the election. Humphries carried Lowndes, but Lee got a big enough majority in the other two counties. 8 Stephen Lee, at the age of forty-five, was a state senator. He received his commission of office on February 1, 1878, and three days later went to Jackson to assume his seat in the recently convened legislature. 9

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6For example, in the Columbus Index and other newspapers; clippings in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.

7The Columbus, Mississippi, Independent, January 26, 1878, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.

8My account of the senatorial election is based upon numerous clippings in the Blewett Lee Scrapbooks.

9Lee's commission as state senator, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.
Lee remained in Jackson for the next few months. Mrs. Lee did not accompany him. Records of his activities in the legislative sessions are scant. His biggest effort was directed in support of the bill to create an Agricultural and Mechanical College. He also supported a bill to organize a Department of Immigration and Agriculture, and he fought one which attempted to reorganize the judicial districts. He was on the winning side in every vote in which he is known to have taken part.10

Meanwhile, in Columbus, a controversy developed between the defeated regular Democrats and the Lee supporters. A regular Democrat leader, Bob Banks, reportedly had made libelous public statements about Lee personally, and either he or Lee proposed that they meet in a duel. Lee sent his wife out of town temporarily and went about the business of trying to straighten things out. In an effort to find out what Banks had said, he wrote to the newspaper editor who most strongly had opposed his election, and to Banks himself. Mrs. Lee's uncle acted as Lee's confidant and messenger. Finally the whole thing blew over. Lee satisfied himself that although Banks was bitterly critical, he had not been libelous. Although the duel was not fought, the incident illustrates that Mississippi politics were still highly personal.11

Lee served only two years in the senate, filling out an unexpired

10Bettersworth, People's College, 51; Lee to Mrs. Lee, February 14, 1878, in Stephen Dill Lee Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

11Various clippings in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I; Lee to Mrs. Lee, July 17, 1878, in James T. Harrison Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
term. Then, in 1880, he gave up politics to accept an appointment as president of the A. & M. College he had labored to create. (Lee's career as an educator is treated in Chapter XIV.) But although he had left politics, he still felt its tug, and at intervals he would consider returning to the political arena.

Thus in 1887 Lee considered running for governor. The campaign would not get under way for two years, but already people were putting forward his name. Various newspapers endorsed him. One editor stated that it was a rarity for the men of talent to attain high office; hence Lee should not be allowed to "languish in obscurity . . . he is ably fitted to be governor . . . he is worthy to fill any position in the gift of the people." 12 Another article indicated that Lee should be considered because he "has been prominent of late in building up the waste places of Mississippi." 13

Obviously much of the support for Lee came from persons interested in improving farming methods. Some of it came from the recently formed Farmers' Alliance, which at this stage of its development was concerned primarily with pushing scientific agriculture. Lee was known to be sympathetic to the goals of the Alliance.

12 Lee County Standard, May 28, 1887, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, II.
13 Columbus Dispatch, undated clipping, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, II.
The boom for Lee aroused immediate opposition. Some critics sneered that Lee should not be thought of as a farmer. Said one: "He is in the college president business . . . , and only indulges in a little fancy farming at the expense of the state." Lee also received opposition on the grounds that he was "too closely connected with the [present] Lowry administration for his own good."

Lee's supporters replied to the critics. One of them said, "We are glad that Gen. Lee is in the college president business, and we believe it to be a fortunate thing for the state . . . , and the farmers of the state especially, have in him an earnest, able and faithful friend." Another declared that "it would be absurd and foolish for us to attempt to convince any well informed man that Gen. Lee is a farmer, because that fact is too well known." Then the same man continued, "it is however, supremely ridiculous to try to associate him with the Lowry administration . . . , having nothing whatever to do with politics, Gen. Lee is a pure and good man."

Some observers doubted that Lee was seriously interested in running. One of them, Frank Burkitt, who became an arch critic, charged that the general was letting his name be used only to arouse support for

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14 Bettersworth, People's College, 165.
15 Chickasaw Messenger, June 9, 1887, in John K. Bettersworth private collection.
16 Oktibeha Citizen, June 16, 1887, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, II.
17 Lee County Standard, July 2, 1887, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, II.
larger monetary appropriations for his college. This thought may have been in Lee's mind, but it is probable that he really wanted to be governor. He could have cut off discussion of his candidacy by asking the newspapers not to print letters advocating it. Instead he remained silent, and during the next two years the letters continued to appear. The authors were persons evidently representing all classes.

By and large these letters were laudatory of Lee. A typical comment ran, "he has all the elements fitting him for the post of Governor—learning, ability, integrity, and far seeing statesmanship." One of the most remarkable letters was from an anonymous "farmer," who said:

Gen. Lee has been an untiring worker since he surrendered epaulets in 1865 for everything calculated to develop the material interests of our State. He was one of the few men who pointed our people into the prosperity of this day. To him the farmers, and all classes of the State, owe the profoundest acknowledgements for his able and patriotic direction.

The farmers generally seemed to be swinging to Lee, and apparently the Farmers' Alliance backed his candidacy. (Lee was not a member of the Alliance, but at first he exhorted others to become members. Later when it went into politics as the Populist Party in the 1890's, he broke with it completely.)

By early 1889 the Lee boom was at its height. Lee's supporters

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18Chickasaw Messenger, September 15, 1887, in John K. Bettersworth private collection.
19Columbus Dispatch, February, 1888, clipping, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, II.
20Unidentified newspaper clipping, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, II.
announced that he was "a man who would be regarded by every Sheriff and tax receiver and Supervisor in every county in the State as ever present with them, overlooking and revising their work."\textsuperscript{21} A statement like that perhaps did not win over many sheriffs or tax collectors, but it was popular with the people. Finally in April Lee himself openly announced his candidacy. Since he felt an obligation to his work at the Mississippi A. & M. College, he declared that he "could not, under any circumstances consent to . . . make a canvass of the State,"\textsuperscript{22} but he would run.

His announcement struck a theme that he would return to: "I would be the Governor of the whole people, and use my utmost endeavors to unite all classes of our citizens in one progressive industrial movement."\textsuperscript{23} Then on June 15, 1889, he spoke at the court house in Columbus. In his speech, he revealed several tenets of his basic political philosophy. He first dispensed with the race question:

The question of white supremacy is no issue. That battle has been fought some time ago and won, that the white people should rule, not this State alone but the whole South. . . . But united as the white people are upon the subject, still there are divisions among them, and divisions among them mean division in the ranks of democracy. . . .

Then he touched upon his economic ideas:

Other Southern States are forging ahead to greater wealth and greater importance than we, and we must exert ourselves not

\begin{enumerate}
\item N. D. Guerry, in unidentified newspaper clipping, January 3, 1889, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, II.
\item Various newspaper clippings, dated April 29, 1889, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, II.
\item Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
to be outstripped by them.

Enormous fortunes have been amassed, the rich have grown richer, the poor poorer, and the lines have been drawn between these two classes very strongly, and to the advantage of the rich.

... Nine-tenths of the people are engaged in agriculture in this State, and yet most of the laws that have been passed have been for the benefit, directly or indirectly, of capitalists. This is not as it should be.

But he hastened to add that as governor he would not favor the agrarian class over any other. Rather, it "should advance equally with any other branch of industry. If farmers are not making money, then no part of the State can be prosperous. . . ."

On the subject of public education, he again showed himself to be somewhat unique among the Bourbon leaders: "Our colleges, high schools and common schools should be thoroughly taken care of."

Finally came the crux of his platform: "The thing we need most and above all others is white immigration. . . . Not the promiscuous immigration from foreign countries, but men who are already accustomed to the laws of this country. The people in the western and northwestern States. . . ."24

The program was remarkable even in spite of its leaven of racism and nativism. It squared with most of what his supporters claimed for him, that he was "an advanced thinker--a man of progress--abreast with the needs of the times--patriotic--sagacious. . . .," but it is rather difficult to see how the same supporters could in all honesty then

24 Jackson Clarion-Ledger, June 20, 1889, in John K. Bettersworth private collection.
conclude with their one final attribute: that Lee was "conservative," by which they apparently meant standpatism.  

Lee said that he would now enter the campaign in earnest, and following commencement exercises at his college, he would make appointments for speeches all over the state. But two days later he received a letter from four members of the college Board of Trustees, imploring him not to run, but to remain on his job as president. Reluctantly, Lee agreed to withdraw.

It is very difficult to assess the reason for Lee's decision not to continue with the race. Perhaps he sensed an insufficiency of support, but that is doubtful. It appears that he genuinely loved his work at the college, as he claimed, and that he became convinced that he could serve the people of Mississippi better as college president than as a gubernatorial candidate. Moreover, his flirtation with politics greatly improved his position with regard to securing what he wanted at the college. Within three months he received a fifty percent increase in salary, and in the years that followed he achieved success in his battles with the schools critics and with those in the legislature who wished to decrease its appropriations.

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25Ibid., June 13, 1889.
26Ibid., June 20, 1889.
27Various newspaper clippings, dated June 17, 1889, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, II.
28Bettersworth, People's College, 167.
Just one year after withdrawing from the gubernatorial race, Lee was elected to a political position. Oktibbeha county chose him to be one of its representatives at the 1890 Mississippi Constitutional Convention. Oktibbeha county was the county in which his A. & M. College was located, and local pride in the general-educator explains the choice of Lee. Also, his known views on the race question made him popular with the white voters. In the county within the past decade the white population had increased only by 650 as compared to 2,630 more Negroes. By sheer numbers the Negroes posed an ever growing problem for those whites who considered it essential that they remain in some way supreme over the blacks.

At the convention, Lee the supposed conservative sided with the supporters of various reform measures. He was chosen as chairman of the education committee, and that group succeeded in establishing a renewed and larger system of free public schools—a step forward after the post-Reconstruction regression that many districts in Mississippi had had to endure. But Lee made his most sensational contribution by suggesting a remarkable innovation: female suffrage.

Many people in the state opposed the proposal, including a number of newspaper editors, and Lee knew that he would have to advance strong arguments for his plan. He declared:

29 Thomas Battle Carroll, Historical Sketches of Oktibbeha County (Gulfport, Mississippi: The Dixie Press, 1931), 166.

30 Handwritten personal memoranda, August 15, 1890, in Charles K. Regan Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.
Women are entering all the professional and business spheres . . . , women pay taxes. Some say that we do not wish to bring women into the mire and filth of politics. If politics are so corrupt, let us inject something that will purify it.

He perhaps showed the influence of living with his well-informed wife by adding, "Let us recognize the fact that our wives and daughters are our equals intellectually. . . ." Then offering another justification, he displayed a streak of naivete: "It is objected to as virtually giving plural voting to the husband. That need not be the case, for they can have separate polling places."

Lee's most persuasive reason for giving women the suffrage was that this would be a better means to secure white supremacy than by attempting to deny Negroes a vote. "We must retain our representation in Congress and the electoral college. We must either submit to negro rule, adopt the shotgun policy, or change our franchise laws." While Lee was adamant about preventing what he considered Negro rule, he could make the staggeringly ironic assertion that "if we be just and prudent there is no reason why the whites and blacks may not live together in all times in perfect peace and harmony."32

Lee's thinking on the question of Negro suffrage was more subtle than that of most convention delegates. He believed that Congress ultimately would insist that the Negroes be allowed to vote, and more importantly, he knew that the Negro wanted to vote. "Let us not fool ourselves. We know that the negro appreciates, and is proud of, his right to vote. He will undertake more trouble, and go further, to

32Ibid.

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exercise this privilege than the white man." Lee's solution was not to deny the black man a vote, but to assure that the whites always could outvote him by enfranchising the taxpaying white women as well as the men.

Lee was not able to carry the delegates with him on his plan to maintain white dominance through the female vote. Instead, the convention proceeded to disenfranchise Negroes, imposing a complex series of measures that included residence requirements, prior payment of a poll tax, literacy tests or the alternative of "understanding" the constitution, and evidence of registration. In addition, numerous crimes became grounds for disqualification as a voter. Nevertheless, Lee apparently thought that the 1890 Mississippi Constitution was essentially a good document, one to be proud of. He had lost out on his big effort, but he perhaps was more convinced of the necessity that white supremacy be assured than of the necessity to institute other desirable reforms. He did not desert the cause of women's rights, however, and as late as 1906 he made a speech in favor of female suffrage and salary equalization.

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33 Ibid.


35 Unidentified newspaper clipping, October 4, 1906, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, III.
The urge for office tugged at Lee once again in the mid-1890's. He permitted, or perhaps launched himself, another newspaper campaign for the governor's chair. Again his motives were complex. The A. & M. College critics once more were threatening to cut appropriations, and Lee's candidacy provided a threat and a sounding-board for fighting these men. But as before, he apparently had a genuine thirst for the job, and as before, his boom collapsed. At about the same time, some of his supporters began to talk him up as a candidate for the U. S. Congress. Now sixty-two years old, Lee seemed to relish his renewed popular image, and probably he really would have run this time but for the tragically failing health of his wife. It was for her sake that he withdrew in June, 1895, from consideration for any future political office.

Almost ten years later, in 1904, some editors spoke of Lee as available for the Democratic Vice Presidential nomination. It was a graceful tribute to the aged warrior, but one that went no further than mere mention. He had finished his political career.

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36 Bettersworth, People's College, 169.
37 Columbus Dispatch, June 10, 1895, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.
38 Unidentified newspaper clipping, in Stephen D. Lee Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.
CHAPTER XIV

EDUCATOR

Just how Lee came to be considered for the presidency of the Mississippi A. & M. College is not known. To hazard a guess, he probably wanted the job and maneuvered to get it while he was a state senator. The legislature established the institution during his term in office. Soon afterwards the Board of Trustees began holding meetings and construction of buildings got underway. But the school was not opened and the president was not selected until 1880. By then a considerable amount of popular sentiment had developed in favor of Lee for the post. On April 1, 1880, the board met and elected him. Various factors were in his favor—he was well known and popular with the people, he was a champion of progressive agricultural methods, and he had established himself as a friend of the farmer.

He began his career as an educator with an open mind and a willingness to learn, but most importantly, he was determined to be successful. During the spring of 1880, just after his selection for the presidency, he and his wife toured colleges in Michigan and Iowa, gathering ideas and suggestions. He recruited a number of the first Mississippi A. & M. faculty from these northern schools, and thus both Lee and

1Minutes of the Board of Trustees, April 1, 1880, in College Archives, Mississippi State University Library, Starkville, Mississippi.

2Ibid., April 2, 1880, May 16, 1879.
the board commendably showed that they cared more for a successful establishment of their institution than they did about any sectional bias.

The date for opening the college had to be changed several times, but it finally was set for October 6, 1880. The dormitory was not yet complete, so Lee turned for help to the Starkville residents and asked them to board the boys temporarily. (During Lee's time, the college was for men only.)

In his inaugural address, he spoke of industrial education as a necessity. He stressed the money value of an education, and indicated that a great many people earned their living in agriculture. But, he continued, the farming class was at a disadvantage when contrasted with other workers. Therefore the farmers and mechanics had a right to have a college especially dedicated to training them to be better in their callings. He predicted that the South was on the verge of a great industrial development, and he enjoined all those present to recognize and take advantage of it. A reporter on the scene described the speech as "eminently practical" and well received by the crowd.

Many persons interested in the college argued whether or not Lee had an overall plan to develop the institution. Unquestionably he did have a plan, indeed many plans, and he found it necessary occasionally

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3 Ibid., May 7, 1880.
4 Southern Livestock Journal, October 7, 1880, in John K. Bettersworth private collection.
to change them as situations developed. But regardless of plan, he certainly had a clear purpose. It was to make the college an excellent agricultural school, and then, if possible, a mechanical school—but never anything but practical in whatever it inculcated. Lee carefully thought out every step that he took, and probably discussed each one with his remarkably bright wife. Thus there developed a favorite joke among campus wags that, "General Lee runs the college, and Mrs. Lee runs General Lee."^5

The first curriculum was designed to give the students a sound but agriculturally-oriented college education, culminating with a Bachelor of Science degree after four years of work. The subjects included mathematics, zoology, bookkeeping, history, drawing, English, horticulture, chemical physics, physiology, entomology, psychology, political economy, geology, civil engineering, agricultural chemistry, and meteorology.®

In addition to "book" study, both dormitory and day students were required to do manual labor two or three hours, five days a week, and more if they wished to earn extra money. The labor system was a source of great pride for Lee, and in June, 1881, he proclaimed that the students "were as earnest in work as in their studies.... The youth

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^5 Bettersworth, People's College, 58.

® Ibid., 75-76.
of Mississippi are capable of anything where they are properly guided. If this College does not succeed, it is not their fault.\textsuperscript{7} Not only did the students complete many desirable projects for the college, and earn part of their way, but the work system also had a democratizing effect. Everyone was required to do something, and this caused the students to have more respect for labor and laborers. "Bold," said Lee, "is the youngster who will make a slighting remark about work."\textsuperscript{8}

Another requirement that all persons at the college had to endure was military training. Lee greatly admired the West Point curriculum, and indeed some observers felt that he had taken it over intact, though in reality it was not the letter but the spirit of the West Point system that he adopted. He tried to mold the program with a singleness of purpose. Much to his credit, he looked upon military training at the college as a means to instill an attitude of mind, and not something that had to be tolerated if ever it led to meaningless regimentation.\textsuperscript{9} As he said, the military should furnish only "the machinery of discipline, besides giving the boys a manly bearing."\textsuperscript{10}

Lee made certain that he would have the last word in matters concerning the military system. The school's first commandant, First

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{7}Ibid., 60-62; Jackson Weekly Clarion, December 23, 1880, in John K. Bettersworth private collection.
\item \textsuperscript{8}Okolona Chickasaw Messenger, December 23, 1880, in John K. John K. Bettersworth private collection.
\item \textsuperscript{9}Bettersworth, People's College, 65.
\item \textsuperscript{10}Jackson Weekly Clarion, November 15, 1882, in John K. Bettersworth private collection.
\end{footnotes}
Lieutenant Edwin B. Bolton, quickly ran afoul of General Lee over an interpretation of his duties. Apparently Bolton's ideas of discipline did not adapt well from the battlefield to the college campus, and Lee had to censure him for issuing demerits punishing non-military offenses. Bolton stood his ground, gathered his share of supporters, and a bitter controversy erupted. The "clash of jurisdiction" required a meeting of the Board of Trustees for settlement, and the result was that the school requested Bolton's recall by the War Department. Lee got along better with the subsequent commandants, but his ideas about discipline continued to prevail.\textsuperscript{11}

The library made a rather poor start under Lee. It was not one of his pet interests at first, but he gave it some attention. Inadequate funds necessitated that many of the early goals for the college be delayed. Most of the initial library items were gifts, and after five years of operation, Lee reported that the total expenditure for books had been only $2,200.00. He began encouraging both the board and the legislature to spend more on books for the college, and two years later he criticized them both for being "penny wise and pound foolish."

Finally, in 1893, the board yielded to his insistence, and thereafter allocated a matriculation fee of five dollars for library use.\textsuperscript{12}

In the early years of the school, however, most of the students

\textsuperscript{11}Bettersworth, \textit{People's College}, 66-68.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 70-71.
had less need for a reference library than they had for a better background in the fundamentals of learning. Free public education was still quite new in Mississippi, and many secondary school graduates discovered, to their chagrin, that they were not adequately prepared to do college work. Lee was soon lamenting in the press about the lack of thoroughness that he saw in the free public school system, but improvements could not be accomplished instantaneously. In the meantime, the A. & M. College established a preparatory department, which in time proved to be a major part of the institution. Lee hoped to abolish the department eventually, but it remained as a necessity during his entire administration as president.

One of the first academic problems that Lee faced was a controversy between advocates of traditional college curricula and those persons who favored radical innovations toward a more practical approach. For example, Lee wished to omit teaching Latin and Greek. Much to his amazement, he found opposition from many parents and even a large number of the faculty. A sort of compromise was reached during the school's first year by offering the classics, but making them elective. Lee won out, however, and in the years that followed the Department of Ancient Languages perished from a combined lack of funds and interest.

The issue over the classics had been only the most significant of

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13 Okolona Chickasaw Messenger, December 23, 1880, in John K. Bettersworth private collection.

14 Bettersworth, People's College, 73-74.

15 Ibid., 77-78.
several struggles between the traditionalists and the innovators. In spite of the first victory being won by the new-idea men, considerable controversy on other subjects continued until 1882. Actually, a number of matters came to a head about that time, and during the academic year which began in the fall, practically the whole faculty was made over.  

Lee was pleased with the results. He finally had obtained a uniform group of men who shared his opinions. "It is an able Faculty," he boasted, "there is not a discordant element in it. . . . They believe in industrial education." (Actually the industrial aspects of the curriculum continued for some years to be secondary to the evolving agricultural courses. By "industrial," Lee meant a pragmatic emphasis.)

Lee's ideas about agricultural education were progressive and forward looking. He asserted that successful farmers in the future "have got to bring brains and education to bear upon Agriculture. . . . We have to introduce the improved machinery of the Northwest." Lee became an advocate of the "New South," as preached by men like Henry W. Grady. The concept of mechanization was paramount to him because, as he said, it was vital "to get the greatest amount of work with the

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17Board of Trustees, Mississippi A. & M. College, Biennial Report, 1883, 7, in John K. Bettersworth private collection.

18Jackson Weekly Clarion, November 15, 1882, in John K. Bettersworth private collection.
His scrapbooks contain numerous samples of Grady's printed writings and speeches, frequently with underlining or notes added by Lee. Undoubtedly he used much of this material in his own speeches and presentations to the students.

Lee encouraged the experts on various topics among his faculty to engage in continuous experiments and determine what crops, or livestock, or agricultural practices would be best for the various areas of Mississippi. One project that particularly interested him was educating Mississippi farmers to make the best possible use of poor soil areas. His goal was to determine "the cheapest and most permanent plan of renewing the fertility on worn-out lands." He believed that cotton seed could be the answer, and he persuaded the Board of Trustees to authorize the purchase of 10,000 bushels of the seed for use as experimental fertilizer. He also was interested in recuperative crops, and in 1881 the school began tests by sowing large portions of poor land in cow peas. The results were so satisfactory that Lee admonished cow pea cultivation as something that "every farmer in this State who has not the capital to buy fertilizers can do in improving his lands."20

In some instances Lee meddled with faculty projects to a degree that angered some of his otherwise cooperative professorial staff. For example, he differed with the opinions held by the head of the creamery. Lee wished for the dairy herd to be larger than his subordinate believed

19Ibid.

20Bettersworth, People's College, 89-91, 93-95.
it should be, but Lee finally gave in. Then the two men argued even more over what type of forage crops should be grown. Lee had a keen interest in lespedeza, a grass which he once described as the "compensation for our loss of negro slaves."21 How that argument turned out is not known, but the general probably insisted that some lespedeza continued to be grown.

Although Lee took too strong a personal interest in certain activities at the college, his zeal assured that the institution consistently increased its services and its ability to contribute beneficially to the people. In 1888 he fired the livestock overseer in order to obtain a better educated man, competent to conduct feeding experiments. He wrote to a new applicant for the job, "Unless you mean business & work you had better not accept."22

Lee labored for a long time to get a department of veterinary science established. In 1885 he strongly urged that the legislature make an appropriation for such a chair, and two years later the Board of Trustees did allocate some money for this purpose, but the amount was inadequate to attract anyone qualified to the position. Finally, in 1891, the college created a chair of veterinary science, with the aid of federal funds.23

21Ibid., 99; W. C. Welborn to Lee, May 20, 1898, in College Archives, Mississippi State University Library.

22Lee to W. R. Barry, November 9, 1888, in President's Letter Book, College Archives, Mississippi State University Library.

23Ibid., 100-01.
Another business activity which Lee hoped to introduce and aid in Mississippi was the silk industry. In 1882, when the Department of Horticulture was established, the first orders to the professor enjoined him to engage in Silk-Worm culture at the college. Lee hoped that the project would "open the silk industry to the ladies of the state." But apparently the experiment was abandoned at an early date.

Lee molded the college into an institution which was dedicated to helping not only its students, but also all the farmers of Mississippi. This practice was not just public relations work. Lee and the trustees who supported him in these endeavors appear to have been convinced that public service work by the college was an integral part of the institution's purpose.

The Patrons of Husbandry had been influential in helping to get the college started, and Lee never forgot the debt. He had warm relations with Put Darden, master of the State Grange, and Darden replied in kind: his annual addresses nearly always included favorable comments about the college. Whenever the state organization met, Lee or some high-ranking representative from the school attended.

One service that the Grange desired was for the college faculty

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24 Ibid., 101; Southern Livestock Journal, October 12, 1882, in John K. Bettersworth private collection.
25 Bettersworth, People's College, 111.
26 Ibid., 112-13.
members occasionally to serve as lecturers at local agricultural meetings. Lee encouraged the professors to do this, and soon the demand was greater than the college could supply. A farmers' short course was instituted at the campus in 1884, but also in the same year another more remarkable and helpful practice began. The school organized "farmers' institutes." Six such institutes came to be held each year at various locations throughout the state. Generally a team of two or more professors (and occasionally some outstanding students) would go to the selected community and present a series of lectures and demonstrations to any organized group of interested persons who needed and requested the service. Response was instantaneous and enthusiastic, and institutes were held regularly until the late eighties when they practically had to be abandoned due to a lack of funds. Lee worked continually to revive them, and although it took him almost ten years, they were thriving again in the late nineties. 

Still another goal that Lee had for the college was the establishment there of an experimental station. Agitation for it began early, but like so many projects, fruition required a long time. In 1884 Lee still was seeking financial aid through Congressional action, and meanwhile he tried to prove to Mississippians that the college was doing experimental work with or without the desired station. In 1885 he announced through the press that the college had accumulated results on experimental work in "feed crops, grasses, ensilage, cotton seed and

27 Ibid., 113-18.
meal farming, field tests of fertilizers, feeding, drainage, vegetable and small fruit growing, milk and butter making, and the determination of the value of feed stuffs and fertilizers." The results, he said, were available to any organized body of farmers or newspapers which solicited them.28

Finally the Hatch Act, signed by President Cleveland on March 2, 1887, solved the problem. It provided $15,000 annually in federal funds for each state or territory establishing an experiment station. Apparently Lee and others feared that the state legislature might divide the experiment station funds, giving a share to the all-Negro Alcorn A. & M. College. Consequently Lee addressed the legislators, arguing that the experimental station should be a "centralized operation." If any of the lawmakers needed convincing in the first place, Lee succeeded. The Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station, to be built at Mississippi A. & M. College, was created by legislative act on January 26, 1888.29

From the start, Lee played an active role regarding the station's administration and operation. He hired Samuel M. Tracy as director, and at first the two men got along well and frequently worked closely with one another. Lee advised Tracy to visit the University of Wisconsin, Yale University, and Rutgers, and to solicit advice from the specialists

28Ibid., 118-19; Southern Livestock Journal, June 22, 1882, in John K. Bettersworth private collection.

29Bettersworth, People's College, 120; Southern Livestock Journal, June 29, 1882, in John K. Bettersworth private collection.
in experimental station work that those institutions employed.\textsuperscript{30} By 1893 Lee had five men working full-time at the station, and reported that several of the other faculty were giving part of their time to it.\textsuperscript{31} One of the first projects that the station staff embarked upon was to establish branch stations to conduct specific experiments on the spot in Mississippi's various soil areas. The first such branch was set up at Holly Springs in 1890, and several others operated later in Lee's administration.\textsuperscript{32}

Apparently Lee conceived the original idea for one particular experiment. This was a plan for a series of irrigation tests designed to "eliminate disasters incident to temporary drouths in portions of the State where rolling or valley lands can readily supply water from creeks or ponds." He hoped that soon even farmers with small areas "will be independent of dry weather. . . ."\textsuperscript{33} Although the results did not constitute a panacea, they did show a number of improvements that Mississippi farmers could achieve, and both Lee and the man he chose to conduct the tests expressed considerable enthusiasm.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[30] Bettersworth, People's College, 120-21; Minutes of the Board of Trustees, March 10, 1885, in College Archives, Mississippi State University Library.
\item[31] Lee to W. B. Montgomery, October 3, 1885, in President's Letter Book, College Archives, Mississippi State University Library.
\item[32] Bettersworth, People's College, 122-23.
\item[33] Ibid., 124; Minutes of the Board of Trustees, March 22, June 16, 1886, in College Archives, Mississippi State University Library.
\end{footnotes}
Lee did not entrust this project to Tracy, but gave it instead to the head of the horticulture department. Tracy apparently was miffed by this, and he probably was sharply critical of the way the experiment was conducted. In any event, another personality clash ensued, and the following year the board requested and received Tracy's resignation.\(^{34}\)

In spite of his inability to harmonize with some of his subordinates, Lee generally had excellent relations with his faculty. The instances when men had to be peremptorily dismissed merely indicate that Lee was taking a significant role in many facets of the college operation. It was natural that not everyone could fit into the scheme that he insisted be established. The Board of Trustees always expressed complete confidence in him, and occasionally when he desired a personnel change, they were glad to honor his request.

Lee was so committed to bettering the agricultural aspects of the curriculum that at first he neglected the mechanical area. His position was to encourage only enough mechanical training as might be useful to a farmer.\(^{35}\) In 1882 one of the professors requested that Lee find funds to obtain equipment for engineering work, and Lee replied that it was not yet possible to begin developing in that direction. But by 1883 he admitted that popular pressure was growing for an engineering course,

\(^{34}\)Bettersworth, *People's College*, 124-25.

\(^{35}\)Lee to Putnam Darden, November ?, 1882, in President's Letter Book, College Archives, Mississippi State University Library.
and although he never was enthusiastic about it, he began to indicate in the next few years that he was willing to go ahead with mechanical training if the legislature granted additional revenues to support it.

Public sentiment continued to mount in favor of engineering courses, and in 1889 Lee took a positive stand and attempted to induce the legislature to recant from its continued parsimony. He even went to the trouble of quoting provisions of the Morrill Act and of a state law passed in 1878, both of which required that land grant colleges offer mechanical training. In 1891, when the legislature still had not acted, the trustees took it upon themselves to earmark a portion of some unallocated funds to create a mechanical department.36

Organization proceeded quickly thereafter, and in 1892 Lee asked the legislature for $10,000 to finish setting up "the mechanical feature" and got it.37 Less than a year later a clamor had arisen for additional technical courses, particularly in electricity, and Lee asked the legislature in his 1893 report for another $10,000 to electrify both the campus and the engineering course. It was "important," he explained, "that the boys of Mississippi be instructed in an electrical laboratory to fit them for the industrial pursuits now just ahead."38

36 Bettersworth, People's College, 131-33.

37 Southern Livestock Journal, May 1, 1884, in John K. Bettersworth private collection.

38 Jackson Weekly Clarion, January 30, 1884, in John K. Bettersworth private collection.
Lee did not get the second $10,000, and the campus had to do without electricity for several years more. But he refused to give up. He complained in 1895, "Every State is establishing schools and laboratories for the instruction of its youth, so they can keep up and get employment in all industrial work... Mississippi boys are going out of the State to get this instruction..." By the end of 1896 no progress had been made toward securing electricity, but Lee continued waging his campaign. "Two years ago," he chided, "I urged the Legislature as to the importance of this matter, since that time almost every village and town in the State has been lighted by electricity, and the work has been done by men imported from the North and adjoining States," But Lee's arguments fell on deaf ears. It was not until 1897 that the Board of Trustees reallocated revenues from the fertilizer fund and ordered the establishment of an electrical plant and laboratory.

Lee's single greatest problem as college president for the entire nineteen years of his administration was defending the institution from its enemies and preventing them from choking it to death by getting its appropriations cut. The detractors of the school found their leader in an Alliance and Populist Party political leader, Frank Burkitt. This man was the exact opposite of everything that Lee stood for. Burkitt

39 Bettersworth, People's College, 138.
was an anti-intellectual rabble rouser. He wore a wool hat and a Confederate uniform, and he appealed to the common people's baser instincts. He used all his powers as a public figure and as a member of the legislature to try and destroy what he called the overly "expensive" and wasteful school for "bookfarmers." Perhaps he based part of this philosophy upon conviction, but spite and a desire for greater personal power also spurred his actions.41

The maneuverings that Lee employed to fight Burkitt included a careful handling of press releases; frequent checks to assure that the school gave maximum service to the industrial classes for which it was created, particularly the farmers; the compilation of statistics to refute Burkitt's charges of extravagance and waste; and personal appearance before the legislature to defend the school and its accomplishments. Maybe it was Burkitt's attack on A. & M. College that prompted Lee to flirt with the possibility of running for various offices himself, particularly the governorship. Lee's motives for entering politics always were complex, but they frequently seemed to contain an element of calculation that the action somehow would make the college appropriations safe. His first consideration was how best to serve the people.

During the lean years, when Burkitt was achieving the greatest portion of his destructive goals, many members of the faculty deemed it

41In his People's College, 144-75, Professor Bettersworth relates the Burkitt attack upon the school in considerable detail. My discussion is based upon his account.
necessary to leave for better paying positions elsewhere. Lee even hired some of the college's own graduates, but they also soon found higher pay at other schools. However, the institution had its staunch supporters. Many newspapers, including some very influential ones and especially the agricultural press, rallied to the defense. The list of out-of-state newspapers which wrote complimentary documents about the school grew to impressive length. Certain individuals who were prominent in state and national affairs gave what help they could. But the mass of common farmers, as represented in the Grange, provided the strongest volume of praise.

Lee employed several methods to enlist the farmers on his side. His most successful tactic was to invite them, and organizations that represented them, to investigate the college and its work. In another effort he tried producing some of his own propaganda. He wrote a lengthy series of articles for the newspapers, which eventually were published together in 1889 as a pamphlet: The Agricultural and Mechanical College of Mississippi, Its Origin, Object, and Results Discussed in a Series of Papers.

The Burkitt forces finally were vanquished during the 1890's. Lee won his battle with the college critics, and legislative appropriations became somewhat more liberal thereafter. The most recent historian of Mississippi State University credits its survival from Burkitt's onslaught to "the resistance of the Mississippi farmer to agitation and to the generalship of Stephen D. Lee."42

42 Ibid., 144-45.
Lee remained steadfast and loyal to the school in spite of hard and frustrating times, and tempting offers from other colleges. In 1899 both Tennessee and Georgia schools tried to induce him to take positions there, offering a considerably higher salary than he received in Mississippi. Then in 1890 Clemson tried to get him to accept its presidency, but the general would not accept.\(^{43}\)

He finally retired as college president in 1899. Even after so long a time in office, many persons lamented his leaving. H. Dent Minor, a member of the first graduating class, wrote one of the most touching tributes: "The man who won fame in fighting for the Confederacy has my admiration. But he is of small importance when compared to the man who has made the A. & M. College."\(^{44}\)

\(^{43}\)Minutes of the Board of Trustees, June 16, 1890, in College Archives, Mississippi State University Library.

\(^{44}\)Minor to Lee, February 25, 1899, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, III.
CHAPTER XV

ORGANIZING THE VETERANS

The organization of Union Veterans that existed after the Civil War, the Grand Army of the Republic, has received extensive treatment in historical literature. An organization of Confederate Veterans existed at the same time, the United Confederate Veterans or UCV, but it has been hardly noticed in history, even in books dealing especially with the New South. The few references to it that do occur dismiss it slightly.

Lee was a charter member of the UCV and played a significant role in it. With all his forward looking ideas and efforts, he never forgot the cause for which he had fought in war. He always added a word in his speeches to youth audiences, admonishing them "to preserve and defend the record of your forefathers." This, he said, "is not in any way incompatible with true and loyal allegiance to our government as the issues of the great war are settled and accepted by all."\(^1\)

Most Confederate veterans required a number of years after the close of the Civil War before they became interested in revering the "glorious conflict." Their first goals as veterans revolved around more urgent problems like decent burials for the dead, care for the families left without a breadwinner, and aid to the indigent. In 1870 one

\(^{1}\)Hesseltine and Gara, "Mississippi's Confederate Leaders after the War," in Journal of Mississippi History, XIII, 98.
survivor's association opened a drive for money to rebury the Confederate dead at Gettysburg, which had been placed in hastily dug, shallow, unmarked graves.\(^2\) It was later, in the decade of the 1890's, when even then fifty per cent of the Confederacy's former leaders still were alive, that most of the organized veteran's significant activities took place.

Southern women were the first to organize. In an associated effort they established an annual floral Memorial Day (which began supposedly in Columbus, Mississippi), and they paid for the construction of numerous monuments to the Confederate dead.\(^3\) One of the first organizations which included veterans as well as ladies among its members was the Northeast Mississippi Confederate Veteran Association, founded April 26, 1866. Although it sponsored some social activities, its primary purpose was cemetery improvement and maintenance. It continued to have a separate existence, unaffiliated with other organizations, and was still going strong in 1894, when Lee served as its commanding officer.\(^4\)

Far more typical were the many fragmentary organizations that ultimately merged into the United Confederate Veterans. Many company

\(^2\)William W. White, *The Confederate Veteran* (Confederate Centennial Studies, Number 22, Tuscaloosa: Confederate Publishing Company, 1962), 10-11, 101. This work contains a number of errors and can be used as a source only with caution.


\(^4\)P. M. Savery, in *Confederate Veteran*, II, 180.
associations were organized in areas where whole units had been mustered at a single place. Other veterans soon came to desire the same kind of fellowship and association enjoyed by the company groups, so they began to form veterans' organizations that were based upon geographic divisions. Memphis, Tennessee, had one as early as 1866. Men who lived close to one another found joy in getting together, and did so through convenience without regard to where they had served during the war. County veteran associations were in considerable prominence during the 1870's and 1880's.5

One of the first groups successfully to organize with membership based upon service in a large unit was the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia. It grew out of the R. E. Lee Memorial Association and originally had as its sole purpose the erecting of a suitable monument to their late commander in chief. On November 4, 1870, the group met and decided to continue in existence as a fraternal association. In addition to fellowship, they took as their primary goal the collection of historical materials, muster rolls, and all other information relative to the Army of Northern Virginia. General Jubal A. Early was selected as the first president, and each state represented in the organization provided a vice president. Lee served as the first one from Mississippi.6

5White, The Confederate Veteran, 14-19.

6John William Jones, Army of Northern Virginia Memorial Volume (Richmond: J. W. Randolph and English, 1880), 8-10, 44-46.
Another large-unit type of veteran's organization was the Benevolent Association of the Army of Tennessee, Louisiana Division. It was founded in 1887, with General P. G. T. Beauregard as its head. As is stated in its Charter, its aims were strictly social, historical, and benevolent. It hoped to spread and establish a large division in all states, with membership made up of veterans who had served in the Army of Tennessee. But although some interest appeared in other areas and a few more divisions were formed, all were small in membership.

The UCV was born in 1889, at New Orleans, Louisiana, in a meeting of fifty-two delegates from nine separate veterans' organizations. The two large-unit groups mentioned above constituted the basic nucleus. The number of members that the UCV had then or later is not known because the organization never published exact information on its total membership. The top number reached was probably 80,000. Official records reveal only the number of local units, called camps. A mere thirty-six camps were represented at the second national reunion meeting in 1891 at Jackson, Mississippi, but the number increased to one hundred eighty-eight at New Orleans by the following year. Rapid growth continued throughout the 1890's until a peak was reached in 1898, with 1,555 camps being represented at the reunion. After a decline which lowered the number of camps to 1,200 at the 1899 reunion, the organization grew until another peak was reached around 1903 or 1904. The veterans began to die

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7 White, The Confederate Veteran, 22.
8 Evans (ed.), Confederate Military History, XII, 512c-512e.
off rather rapidly thereafter, and the UCV went into a gradual but permanent decline.⁹

One of the most important factors that gave the United Confederate Veterans growth and permanence was the monthly magazine which became its official organ, the Confederate Veteran. Founded as an independent publishing venture in January, 1893, by a little known footsoldier veteran, Sumner Archibald Cunningham, it was adopted by the UCV the following year.¹⁰ Many veterans penned recollections or articles for publication in it. Cunningham personally edited the magazine for twenty-one years and bequeathed almost his entire estate to insure its continuance.¹¹

The magazine was of a high quality, yet always low in price, and circulation was wide. The first issue had thirty-two pages and cost only five cents. The price went to ten cents per issue for most of the run, but it never became higher than fifteen cents though the size and quality continued to increase through wars and depressions. Readership always greatly exceeded circulation because many camps and soldiers'
homes received one or two copies to be read by a great many men. An average of between 6,000 and 7,000 copies of each issue was printed during the first year of publication, for example, but Cunningham estimated that 50,000 people read the twelfth issue. Lee gave a personal testimonial to the magazine's value, saying that "such a means of communication is absolutely necessary."\(^{12}\)

At the first annual reunion, the original officers were reelected by acclamation. This started a precedent of reelecting any incumbent officer for as long as he would serve. The veterans chose General John B. Gordon as the first commander in chief. There were two department commands, one headed by W. L. Cabell and the other by Edmund Kirby Smith.\(^{13}\) Lee does not seem to have had any position of prominence at first, but there were camps named in his honor.\(^{14}\)

The UCV, like any proper American organization, felt it had to outline its purposes and structure in a written Constitution. They based the pattern upon military lines. Veterans holding appropriate UCV ranks officered and staffed echelons of command from General Headquarters at the top to local camps (companies) at the bottom. The whole

\(^{12}\)Ibid., I, 91, 97, 353.

\(^{13}\)Ibid., XVIII, 153.

\(^{14}\)The first was at Maben, Mississippi and another was at Anderson, South Carolina. See ibid., I, 251, and Evans (ed.), Confederate Military History, XII, 512c.
membership met annually in a general convention and reunion, presided over by the commanding general.\textsuperscript{15}

The department level (there were two at first and later three) corresponded to an army corps. They were headed by a lieutenant general, UCV, and were ultimately named after the various Confederate armies. The department was primarily an administrative entity and held no functions of its own. On the next lower level were the divisions, commanded by a major general and they conformed to state lines. These units often held their own annual meetings in addition to the general conventions. Next came the local camps, the real centers of interest for the mass of the veterans. Many camps had their own buildings or clubrooms which served as social centers, and most of the really significant relief work done by the UCV was accomplished by these local units.\textsuperscript{16}

Although the organizational structure of the UCV was mock-military, the group's announced purposes were emphatically non-military—to foster "social, literary, historical, and benevolent ends."\textsuperscript{17} The annual reunions served as aids to the UCV for accomplishing these goals. The affairs continued to be held long after the UCV membership peak had been passed and gradually increased in attendance, length, and

\textsuperscript{15}White, The Confederate Veteran, 29-31.
\textsuperscript{16}Evans (ed.), Confederate Military History, XII, 512b.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.
splendor. Many Southerners considered them to be major social events. The convention city would make elaborate preparations and go all out to put on a bigger spectacle than the previous hosts had done. Numerous veterans brought their families and friends along too, and the crowds were often huge.

The cities made every effort to show the visitors a good time and to keep things jovial and pleasant. The police usually were instructed to go easy on any veterans who got into trouble, but nobody topped a welcomer in Louisville who declared "the law is suspended."18 The old soldiers took to all this attention with great gusto. A newspaper reporter captured the flavor with his description of the typical veteran at the Charleston reunion in 1899: "His broad shoulders are stooped, his black slouch hat droops over a heavily bearded face, there is plentiful gray in his hair and whiskers, no fashionable tailor cut his plain suit of gray jeans, but the band is playing Dixie and the old man steps like an emperor."19

High points came at two conventions with the presentations of special gavels to the commanders in chief. General Gordon received one that had been made from a tree cut down by bullets on the Chickamauga battlefield.20 Later, when Lee became the commander in chief, his gavel was made out of wood from a log that had been a part of Fort Sumter.

At the eighth annual reunion a woman member was received into the

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18 Minutes U.C.V., III (14th), 16, 18; III (15th), 16.
19 Ibid., II (9th), 8.
20 Editorial, in Confederate Veteran, XVIII, 154.
UCV. Mrs. Emma Johnson (nee Sanson), who had served briefly as a scout for Nathan Bedford Forrest when she was only fourteen, presented herself to the convention and promptly was made a full member of the organization. Another bit of excitement came in 1900 when the See-Noo-Kee Camp of Indian Veterans marched into the hall, carrying their bullet-riddled flag. They had belonged to an all-Cherokee regiment, and the veterans received them with great enthusiasm. But all previous demonstrations must have paled into insignificance when little Laura Talbot Gault was presented to the 1904 convention. As a Louisville schoolgirl, she had refused to sing "Marching Through Georgia," with her class.

As the reunions became more popular and were attended by more and more veterans, many persons began to show up who could not afford a place to stay, or who even had to ask for free meals. The organizations reached a marvelous solution to these problems at the 1907 reunion (the last one Lee attended). They set up a temporary tent city, "Camp John W. Gordon," Camping out was extremely popular among the veterans, and large numbers of them decided to sleep there too, even if they could afford places in town. One veteran said, "when I came out here and saw all these tents, and when I saw how everything is arranged in the old army fashion, I just could not resist it." The whole

21 Ibid., 155.
22 Ibid., 156.
23 Minutes U.C.V., III (14th), 50.
24 Ibid., IV (17th), 13-15.
thing went over so well that it was repeated at subsequent reunions. Several times the United States Congress voted to lend the necessary tenting, bedding, and other equipment from military stores.

In spite of the fact that the UCV accepted certain benefits from the United States government, such aid was not one of their primary goals. Actually one of the most marked distinguishing differences between the Northern and Southern veterans' organizations was that the GAR placed first importance upon securing more and better government pensions. The UCV officially concerned itself with pensions only occasionally. Many Confederate veterans genuinely came to need a pension of some sort as the years passed. The UCV aimed its appeal at the various Southern states rather than to the Federal government, and most states responded generously.

The UCV was happy with state action and sought Federal aid only indirectly. For example, they attempted on several occasions to try and get the United States government to return the cotton tax which had been collected after the war. The veterans thought that the states then would

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28 Perry M. DeLeon, in Confederate Veteran, XXIII, 255.
use this money to finance a more liberal pension program.\textsuperscript{29} They also urged an increase in the benefits that the Federal government paid to veterans of the Mexican War and their survivors.\textsuperscript{30} (Confederate veterans who were eligible for Mexican War veterans benefits did receive them.) Once, a group of UCV members attempted to persuade the organization to itself pension maimed or helpless Confederate veterans, but their motion was not carried. Thereafter the UCV limited its action in favor of benefits to a specific program of urging state help, and carrying on a public information program to identify areas where more was needed.\textsuperscript{31}

Although the UCV declared themselves to be non-political, they did dabble in politics to some extent. Candidates for office quickly realized the potential power of such an organization, and often they sought to win concerted support of the veterans. Of course, a goodly number of the candidates were themselves veterans and could attend UCV functions as members. But the strength of their vote which could elect certain candidates was not what primarily interested the veterans. They had specific goals which included state pensions, soldiers' homes, and relief for the needy. They used political tactics and pressure to secure these things, but they rationalized that their goals transcended politics and were humanitarian rather than political in nature.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{29}White, The Confederate Veteran, 89.
\textsuperscript{30}Minutes, U.C.V., II (10th), 80.
\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., I (3rd), 54; Editorial, in Confederate Veteran, XXIII, 255.
\textsuperscript{32}White, The Confederate Veteran, 44, 86-87.
Lee's role in the UCV continued to become more and more significant each year from the time he joined until his death. In 1893, at the age of fifty-nine, he was elected to command the Mississippi Division. Under his administration, which lasted a little more than a year, the division grew from sixteen to forty-eight camps. He had nine men on his general staff, each one from a different part of the state.33

This was the same time as the beginning of the rapid growth of the whole organization, and Lee seems to have increased in prominence concurrently with its progress. By 1894 there was talk of redividing the UCV into three departments. Wide support in favor of Lee as commander of the new department developed almost immediately.34

At the 1894 reunion, the veterans voted a new constitution into effect. It included the change to three departments. Kirby Smith, one of the original department commanders had died in 1893, so there were two new slots to be filled. W. L. Cabell continued as commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department, Fitzhugh Lee was elected to head the Department of the Army of Northern Virginia, and S. D. Lee was elected commander of the Army of Tennessee Department.35

Some veterans questioned the desirability of the new constitution as a whole, however, and after the convention General Gordon refused to

33Editorial, in Confederate Veteran, II, 54, 325.

34Ibid., II, 125.

35Ibid., II, 156; XVIII, 154.
promulgate it. He ordered that the old constitution remain in effect at least until the next reunion. Among other things this required going back to having only one department east of the Mississippi River, and Gordon had to decide between Fitzhugh and Stephen Lee as to who would command it. Gordon's decision went in favor of the Mississippian.

As soon as Lee was sure of his appointment to head a department, he issued his first general order, and gave at the same time some indication of what he conceived to be the central purpose of the UCV. He thanked his comrades who had thus honored him and, said it was especially appreciated:

... coming as it does from loyal Confederates who cherish the memory of their dead comrades, and are now engaged in the preparation of unbiased history which is sure to perpetrate their matchless deeds, and correctly record the heroic sacrifices of the Southland.

Lee's and the UCV's activities in behalf of history constitute a separate story.

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36 It is not possible to analyze the new constitution because its text has not been preserved.


38 Editorial, in Confederate Veteran, XVIII, 154.
CHAPTER XVI

PATRON OF HISTORY

The UCV soon revealed that it had a strong interest in history, and especially in the compilation of a certain kind of history. At the third reunion, in 1892, J. A. Chalaron of Louisiana proposed the formation of a "Historical Committee." He apparently was motivated by an interest in the collection and preservation of historical data and a desire to have the UCV aid in such a worthy endeavor. He also suggested that the committee "seek how best to stimulate the writing of a history or histories of the Confederate struggle . . . ;" and "apply itself to the elucidation and vindication of obscure and controverted points. . . ."¹

W. H. Brooker of San Antonio, Texas then arose and offered an alternate resolution. He wanted the Commanding General to appoint a "Committee on Statistics and History: and his words indicate what interested some of the veterans:²

... no concerted action has been taken to write our history, and place our time, the age in which we live--and fought, save by those who are antagonistic to us and our posterity, who are prone to moderate our valor, and the victories we won. . . .

The Committee on Resolutions offered a substitute motion, which

¹Minutes U.C.V., I (3rd), 98. Chalaron is referred to in newspaper accounts as "General" but he did not hold that rank during the Civil War. He ultimately became the secretary of the Louisiana Historical Association.

²Ibid.
passed. It created a "permanent committee of seven comrades, skilled and experienced in such matters," and gave them a broad charge:

... That said committee select and designate such proper and truthful history of the United States, to be used in both public and private schools of the South, and that said committee shall, as soon as possible, put the seal of their condemnation upon such as are not truthful histories of the United States.

Four months after the reunion, General Gordon appointed the first Historical Committee. He obviously had tried to select men who were identified with education and scholarship. The chairman, Edmund Kirby Smith, had received his early training at Benjamin Hallowell's preparatory school and at West Point. After the Civil War he had been a teacher and had established a military academy which he served for a time as president. In 1870 he was made chancellor of the University of Nashville, and at the time of his appointment, he was a distinguished professor of mathematics at the University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee. He had contributed an article on "The Defense of the Red River" to Battles and Leaders.

Most of the other members also had impressive qualifications. They included Lee, who still was serving as president of the Mississippi A. & M. College. Among the others, Ellison Capers had been educated at the South Carolina Military Academy, and had served as an assistant

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3Ibid., 99.
4Mickle (ed.), Orders U.C.V. General and Special, I, G. O. No. 75.
5Warner, Generals in Gray, 279-80; D.A.B., X, 426.
6Buel and Johnson (eds.), Battles and Leaders, IV, 369-74.
professor there from 1850 to 1860. He later entered the ministry and in 1894 would be elevated to be Bishop of South Carolina in the Episcopal Church. He wrote profusely, was an energetic member of the Southern Historical Association, and was a champion of higher education as a function of both church and state. In 1904 he would become chancellor of the University of the South.⁷ Alonzo Hill of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and James M. Stubbs of Woods' Crossroads, Virginia, were each referred to in the appointing orders as "professor." James W. Nicholson, the president of Louisiana State University, was eminent in the field of mathematics, the author of at least eleven textbooks, and later would publish *Stories of Dixie* in 1915. A final member was H. L. Bentley of Abilene, Texas, of whom little is known.

As one of his first official acts, Kirby Smith tried to collect various bits of information and advice on how to determine what was good in historical writing.⁸ He called a meeting of his committee to gather in New Orleans in March of 1893. Joining him there were Lee, Bentley, and Nicholson plus the president of Tulane University, William Preston Johnston, who was allowed to participate fully even though he was not officially a member of the committee.⁹ During the two days of

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⁸ Kirby Smith to Stephen D. Lee, October 8, 1892, *Stephen Dill Lee Papers*, Southern Historical Collection.

deliberations Kirby Smith told a *Times-Democrat* reporter, "The matter is one that must of necessity proceed slowly. Why, I reckon there are fifty different histories of the U.S., and every day we have fellows coming into our houses telling us what magnificent histories they have got."  

Meanwhile, Lee admitted that he himself did not know a great deal about how to judge a history book, and he suggested that the committee solicit the help of experts. The committee approved of this idea. Each member was assigned to read several histories and to prepare a written report on each one, and in every case to seek competent assistance in doing so. It was also agreed that the chairman should correspond with and seek the aid of "the best informed historical experts in the country."  

Some Committee members felt that perhaps the UCV ought to choose and commission a Southern literary man to write a new history of the Civil War. Nicholson liked the idea and suggested Thomas Nelson Page. But Johnston pointed out that such a project was likely to produce a work biased in favor of the South, and the committee generally agreed that this would be as undesirable as the situation they were trying to correct. They even admitted that Jefferson Davis's and Alexander H. Stephens's writings were unsatisfactory when taken as a whole because

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11 Lee to Kirby Smith, October 17, 1892, E. Kirby-Smith Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

the books were either "colored history," or "marred by personal prejudices."\textsuperscript{13}

Kirby Smith and Hill both died later in 1893. Gordon appointed Clement A. Evans and William Robertson Garrett to take their places, and he made Lee the chairman.\textsuperscript{14} Evans had been educated at the Georgia Law School in Augusta, was licensed to practice before he was nineteen, and was a judge at twenty-two. After the Civil War he entered the Methodist Episcopal ministry, but had retired in 1892 and devoted the rest of his life to writing, editing, and to the affairs of the UCV.\textsuperscript{15} Garrett had been educated at Williamsburg Military Academy, William and Mary College, and the University of Virginia, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in 1858. He was granted an honorary Ph.D. from the University of Nashville in 1891. Later he would become a professor and a dean at Peabody Normal College, write several books, and edit a scholarly quarterly.\textsuperscript{16}

While Lee had no formal training in historical scholarship, he approached his task as chairman with zeal. He got help in performing his duties from the faculty at the Mississippi Agricultural and Mechanical College.\textsuperscript{17} He collected writings of prominent American historians,\

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid.; New Orleans Times-Democrat, March 4, 1863.

\textsuperscript{14}Mickle (ed.), Orders U.C.V., I, G. O. No. 118.

\textsuperscript{15}Warner, Generals in Gray, 83; Who's Who in America; A Biographical Dictionary of Notable Living Men and Women of the United States (35 volumes to date, Chicago: Marquis Who's Who Incorporated, 1899----), VI, 607.

\textsuperscript{16}Who's Who in America, III, 544.

\textsuperscript{17}Lipscomb, "General Lee . . .," in Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, X, 14, 16-17.
for example, those of Herman E. von Holst. In the process Lee became quite a writer himself, and contributed many articles, mostly narrative accounts of Civil War episodes, to the Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society. He also served as the Society's first president.

The UCV held no reunion in 1893, but the Historical Committee continued its work and made a lengthy report in 1894. It declared that "justice to the South imperatively demands a different presentation" of history. Lee later explained that the feeling chiefly was that the South had produced no competent historians of its own since the Civil War. So, as the committee said, "Northern men . . . have . . . given undue prominence to what was done by their section to the omission and corresponding fair statement of what was done by the South." The veterans declared impartiality to be the essence of history, and they charged that many books were "so unfair, so sectional and untrue," that the South could be permit the record to stand as it was.

Specifically, the committee objected to the treatment that school

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18 Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, III.

19 This report was originally published separately but it was included in Minutes U.C.V., I, following the minutes of the 1894 reunion.

20 Minutes U.C.V., I, Historical Committee Report, 4.

21 Lee to S. G. French, January 21, 1899, in S. G. French Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.

22 Minutes U.C.V., I, Historical Committee Report, 4-6.
textbooks gave to state sovereignty, nullification, slavery, and secession. The committee went on to list several tenets that it considered to be essential axioms for true historical interpretation of these subjects: that withdrawing from the union was not a political crime, that the term "rebellion" should not be used as one of reproach, "that the whole country and not the South alone was responsible for slavery, the system prevailing in the North as long as it was found profitable," and "that the slave trade was made possible only by New England vessels manned by New England crews." Then they concluded with a declaration that "the true cause of the war between the States was the dignified withdrawal of the Southern States from the Union, to avoid the continued breaches of domestic tranquility, guaranteed but not consummated by the constitution."^23

The committee classified history books intended for use in schools into three groups. The first was comprised of those books issued in the first ten or fifteen years following the close of the Civil War, "dictated by prejudice and prompted by the evil passions that time had not then softened." They deemed all of these books unacceptable.^24 The

^23Ibid., 6-7. Veterans usually distinguished themselves from many other groups of Southerners in that they tended to accept military defeat without bitterness and to turn themselves more readily toward the future. In this particular case, the Veterans obviously were being bitter, but it is certainly not surprising that they felt as they did. Even though they probably were making valid criticism of historical interpretation then in vogue however, they cheapened their case with such a positive stand for an equally unbalanced and incomplete analysis.

^24The committee noticed a definite favorable change in historical writing coming about 1880. This observation is in agreement with Thomas J. Pressly's contention that books written before 1880 all tended to
second category was a catch-all grouping of books which were generally unacceptable, but which contained "many excellent features." The category included Northern-authored histories that were apparently fair, made so either through a revision of an earlier edition or a censoring, in an "effort to curry favor with the text-book patrons of both sections"; those histories with separate editions for North and South; and those histories "written and published in the North in which an honest effort is made to do justice to the South," but which failed to emphasize the distinctive features of the South or to emphasize its place in the history of the country as a whole. The third category consisted of books which the committee itself had examined and found acceptable.\textsuperscript{25} Eight textbooks and one supplemental reader were in the list of approved works.\textsuperscript{26}

The committee listed its criteria for judgement. Many of the measuring scales had to do with practicality or with physical features, claim one single cause for the war, while those written thereafter tended to expound a complexity of factors. Cf. Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War (Originally published 1962, paperback reprint with a new introduction, New York: The Free Press, 1965), 145-46.

\textsuperscript{25}\textit{Minutes U.C.V.}, I, Historical Committee Report, 9-10.

\textsuperscript{26}The supplemental reader was The Civil War, by Mrs. Ann E. Snyder, of Tennessee. The approved textbooks included Grammar School History of the United States, by L. A. Field, of Georgia; Hansell's Histories, by Prof. H. E. Chambers, of Louisiana; History of the American People, by J. H. Shinn, of Arkansas; four books entitled History of the United States, one each by Blackburn & McDonald, of Maryland, Robert R. Harrison, of Virginia, George F. Holmes, of Virginia, Alexander H. Stephens, of Georgia, and J. T. Terry, of Georgia. At least one of the books soon had advertisements which capitalized on the endorsement, in Confederate Veteran, III, (May, 1895), inside front cover.
but some were specific points of interpretation. No one could disparage the first question asked: "Is the historic value impaired by inaccuracy?" But acceptable books also had to indicate that the Southern people were motivated only by a desire for independence and self-government in the Civil War, that the war was "a conflict between the states," not a "rebellion," and due notice had to be given to "the unparallel (sic) patriotism manifested by the Southern people in accepting its results."\(^{27}\) Naturally, all books which met these standards happened to have been written in the South by Southerners.

But a higher and more objective tone also appeared in the report: "We need a 'renaissance' of history throughout the South." We must, they said, "stimulate historical research; create historical taste; produce not only one work, but many works; employ not only, one mind, but many minds." The veterans were not interested only in school histories, "but also State histories, magazine articles, historical essays, popular sketches, local history, etc." And the committee gave an additional boost to state and local history by saying, "here is a mine rich in unexplored history and poetry. We need workers in the field. . . . We need a separate history for each State."\(^{28}\)

The committee also had laudable suggestions as to how these goals should be sought.\(^{29}\)

\(^{27}\text{Minutes U.C.V., I, Historical Committee Report, 10-11.}\)

\(^{28}\text{Ibid., 8.}\)

\(^{29}\text{Ibid.}\)
There is but one agency which can compass all the purposes, and can add to these another of great value—that agency is our leading Southern universities. They have the means, the prestige, the appliances, the undying life. They could put work into immediate operation, and continue it forever. We therefore suggest . . . every university in the South to establish a chair of American history; that this chair be not overloaded with additional work, but its occupant be allowed leisure and be provided with appliances for historical investigation and authorship; that the occupant of this chair be selected with special reference to his fitness for historical authorship, and also for inspiring students with a spirit of original historical investigation. . . .

Finally, the association should petition the legislature of each Southern state to require the public schools to teach state history for one year and United States history for one year. The same goals should be recommended to all private schools and academies.\(^\text{30}\)

The veterans heartily approved of the report and adopted its provisions unanimously.\(^\text{31}\) Exactly what was to be done at levels below national headquarters remained vague; the Historical Committee suggested "that the association provide the proper organization" for carrying the program into effect. A provision in the adopted committee report authorized the association (presumably at lower echelons) to "appoint suitable committees to memorialize the several Legislatures and authorities of universities and schools and to request the co-operation of State

\(^{30}\text{Ibid.}, 8-9.\) It is difficult to evaluate the effect that this action may have had. It seems safe to conclude that the UCV achieved no immediate positive results or they would have reported them in the Confederate Veteran or in subsequent Historical Committee annual report. None of the standard secondary sources on public school law consulted for this study shed any light on the matter. But even if no state did respond to these requests, the fact that the UCV was making them has significance in itself. It provides further insight as to the character and goals of the organization.

\(^{31}\text{Ibid.}, 12.\)
historical societies, State literary societies, the press, etc."32 The veterans did announce that they would aid and encourage all efforts to publish histories of the various states, and to aid in the building up of Southern publishing houses.33

Interestingly, the veterans also voted a new UCV constitution into effect at the 1894 reunion. Among other things, it did away with the Historical Committee, and "inaugurated a new system of action."34 There were at least two possible (and opposite) motives. Some veterans may have wanted more radical action than the Historical Committee was willing to perform. Or, the members may have been less interested in having the organization dabble in history.

In any event, Commander-in-Chief Gordon refused to promulgate the new constitution and issued orders that the old one would remain in use at least until the next convention.35 Speakers at the 1895 meeting agreed with Gordon's decision, contending that the new constitution was

32Ibid., 9. Perhaps it would be interesting to know more about these regional, state, and local activities. Such a study is beyond the scope of this study and might be a worthwhile subject for another essay.

33Ibid., 8-9.

34Unfortunately the text of the "new constitution" was not preserved. Minutes U.C.V., I (4th), 12, gives only the discussion pertaining to the passage of the 1894 constitution. Ibid., I (5th), 27-28, contains the debate at the next convention which resulted in a vote to uphold Gordon's decision.

too vague, poorly worded, and had been passed in haste at the last minute before the preceding reunion had ended. Gordon then appointed Lee as chairman of a group to draft still another constitution. This agency did its work during the 1895 convention and presented a "simpler and clearer" document for consideration. The veterans adopted this new draft unanimously with applause.36

The veterans seemed to pass everything "unanimously," at least according to the published records, so it is possible to construe that there was some opposition to the new constitution and the Historical Committee, to which it gave continuance. At worst, the UCV high command maneuvered unanimous approval for an institution of which all the members were not in favor. But no veterans opposed the Historical Committee and its work on anything like a continuing basis. The rank and file appears to have supported all that was done at upper echelons, and they left no records of negative sentiment. Yet the general membership probably did respond to ideas and guidance given by the more active members. It is certainly likely that most UCV men did not understand the significance of the Historical Committee as well as it is reasonable to expect most of those who served on it did.

Just one year after the Historical Committee made its first report, it happily noted some progress resulting from its efforts in

36Minutes U.C.V., I (5th), 28.
in behalf of history in the universities. In both Virginia and Tennessee the UCV state divisions established rapport with the State Teachers' Associations and some other interested organizations. In Tennessee the legislature responded favorably to lobbying operations of these groups and appropriated money for a chair of American history at Peabody Normal College. And shortly thereafter, the college also began publication of a scholarly quarterly called the *American Historical Magazine*. 37

Although the committee expressed faith that all other southern states would follow the example set by Tennessee, no other colleges received chairs as a direct result of UCV efforts. The committee regretfully acknowledged this failure by 1899, but it also proclaimed that it had achieved a partial victory. 38 The veterans believed they had played a significant part in generating much new interest in history throughout the South, and successive progress reports told of their pleasure over it.

Regardless of how small a part of the impetus was provided by the UCV, a definite change for the better did take place in Southern colleges over the same period that the Confederate Veterans carried on their crusade. Of course, not all Southern colleges had been without history course offerings before these years, but very few came up to the standards advocated by the UCV. History was still considered to be an

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38 *Ibid.*, II (9th), 147.
academic subject of secondary importance in the late nineteenth century and usually was taught as a sideline by a professor in some other discipline. There were probably no full-time teachers of history in the South in 1880 or 1885, and only about a half dozen by 1895. By 1903 history was being taught in every Southern institution, and in one-half of them the instructors were "ambitious young men, of special training, graduated from the best universities of the land." 

The committee endorsed two more books in its second report, but it also registered some strong complaints. There was still too much being written, the committee said, by authors who had a "lack of catholic sympathy for all sections of the country."

We cannot too strongly urge upon our people the great importance of avoiding, . . . the purchasing and disseminating of books and literature which are unkind and unfair to the South, which belittle our achievement, impugn our motives and malign the characters of our illustrious leaders. 

The committee generally declined to name and condemn specific works, but it did so this time, and cited the Encyclopaedia Britannica as "a work

40 Ibid., 4-5; Frederick W. Moore, "The Status of History in Southern Colleges," in South Atlantic Quarterly, II (April, 1903), 169.
41 These were both by Virginians: History of the United States, by Susan P. Lee, and The South Constitution and Resulting Union, by Dr. J. L. M. Curry. They are mentioned in Minutes U.C.V., I (5th), 17, 24.
42 Minutes U.C.V., I (5th), 15.
of exceptional merit in many particulars," but one which "abounds in such a distortion of historical facts in reference to the South as could have emanated only from ignorance or malignity." 43

On the whole, the material in the edition the Veterans must have seen, the ninth (1875-1889), was rather well balanced. But it is possible to identify certain passages to which the Veterans objected. For example, this was said about slavery: 44

The introduction of the commercial element into the slave system of the South robbed it at once of the patriarchal features which had made it tolerable. . . . The development of a class whose profits were merely the extorted natural wages of the black labourer was certain . . . and the party was finally committed to . . .--the suppression of the black labourer's wages.

The section on secession stated: 45

Under what claim of constitutional right all this was done passes comprehension. . . . To send delegates to meet those of other States and form a new national government, which could only exist by warring on the United States, is a novel feature in American constitutional law. It was revolution or nothing.

But the Veterans were not successful in bringing about change of these passages in either the tenth or the eleventh editions.

The ninth edition discussion of nullification was judicious and factual. And the concept of State's rights, recognized in this

probably pleased the Veterans. But the tenth edition said, "the State, important as it is in the constitutional scheme, is both economically and sentimentally a declining factor in the public life of the nation." Hence the Veterans undoubtedly were pleased even less with the tenth edition than they had been with the ninth, but it is interesting to note that this sentence was eliminated from the eleventh.

The stand taken by the UCV with respect to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* indicated that they felt the need of a continuous and uniform watch over school book selections. They expanded their effort in two dimensions. They intensified activity at the state and local level, and they increased the Historical Committee membership to fifteen, so as to include a member from each Southern state. This later move was also designed to diversify and strengthen the committee. Up to this point, only five men had done most of the work: Lee, Stubbs, Garrett,

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46 Ibid., 741.
49 For examples, see Micajah Woods Scrapbook, clippings from the *Daily Progress* and other unidentified clippings, University of Virginia Library; and UCV, S.C. Division, General and Special Orders 1895-1902, First Order, Series 1897, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.
50 Mickle (ed.), *Orders U.C.V.*, I, G. O., No. 147.
Among the eleven new members, at least four had some scholarly qualifications. John Overton Casler of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Territory, had graduated from Springfield Academy, West Virginia in 1859, and in 1893 had published *Four Years in the Stonewall Brigade*. Basil W. Duke, educated at Centre College and Transylvania University Law School, had a distinguished career as a lawyer, legislator, editor and author after the Civil War. His own *Reminiscences* and his *Morgan's Cavalry* rank high in both charm and reliability. He also became the editor of *The Southern Bivouac: A Monthly Literary and Historical Magazine*. Frederick S. Ferguson of Birmingham, Alabama, had been educated at Florence Wesleyan University, taught school, and studied law. Samuel Gibbs French of Pensacola, Florida, was a West Pointer who would publish his very interesting and valuable autobiography, *Two Wars*, in 1901.

The other new members included W. P. Campbell of Little Rock, Arkansas, Graham Daves of Asheville, North Carolina, W. Q. Lowd of Washington, D. C., William Montgomery of Romney, West Virginia (interesting that the Veterans considered this a "Southern State"), H. A. Newman

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51 Lee to S. G. French, May 2, 1896, in S. G. French Papers; Minutes U.C.V., I (4th), 12 and (5th), 25.
of Huntsville, Missouri, Winfield Peters of Baltimore, Maryland, and D. M. Wisdom of Muskogee, Indian Territory.56

This enlarged committee chose some worthy goals. The members were men who sincerely believed that the kind of history they advocated would be acceptable to right-thinking people in every part of the country. Lee felt that he had "conservative, level-headed men" serving under him, and he announced that "the South wants no history in her schools that cannot be taught to the children in every state in the Union."57 What the committee desired to do was to:58
direct the ambition of our Southern youth to explore the mines of historic wealth, which now lie hidden in legends in scattered records, in unpublished manuscripts, and in the memories of a few old pioneers, who still linger amid the institutions they have helped to create.

In order to achieve this result, they compiled a list of sixty-eight approved titles, which included some of the best published works on the Civil War period and many important reminiscences, and they recommended that these works be purchased by public and school libraries throughout the South.59

Perhaps inevitably, the committee decided to take part in a publishing venture itself. A prominent member of the UCV, Clement A. Evans (who would succeed Lee as chairman of the Historical Committee in

57Lee to Ellison Capers, July 14, 1896, in Ellison Capers Papers, Duke University; Confederate Veteran, V (September, 1897), 452.
58Minutes U.C.V., I (6th), 38.
1904), was selected in 1895 to edit a twelve-volume Confederate Military History. A large number of variously qualified authors, all Southern participants in the Civil War, contributed passages. Evans edited each chapter and then submitted them to one or more Historical Committee members for further revision. The set was published in 1899 and contained some rather good writing. It has some value to historians today, but modern scholars consider it on the whole to be biased and one-sided, unfit to be trusted as very accurate source material. The committee, on the other hand, regarded the volumes as the "standard exposition of our cause," and heartily commended them to the Southern people.

Other veterans produced historical works on their own. John William Jones, for example, wrote A School History of the United States, and Evans himself authored A Military History of Georgia. Both these men wrote with a strong nostalgic bias and under the guise of history, they earnestly and persistently penned personal tributes to the Confederacy's purity and glory. But the Historical Committee could not see these shortcomings.

The ultimate failing of the committee members was in being unable to realize that the kind of history they advocated was not objective. It could not gain general acceptance in the Northern states or weather the tests of time and later historical scholarship. The immediate

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60 Ibid., 39.
61 Ibid., I (9th), 153.
62 Hesseltine, Confederate Leaders in the New South, 51-54.
result of the UCV efforts was that the veteran elements in both North and South were driven further apart. The two groups waged an embittered literary and verbal war against one another and each struggled to see that history books were slanted to favor their section. Of course, each side believed that what it wanted was truth in history, and neither saw that there might be some truth and some error in each position.

The late 1890's marked a turning point in this enmity. Bad feelings reached a peak and began to decline, while at the same time, the thrust of American historiography started to slant toward the body of ideas now called the "nationalist tradition." The new history stressed that both sides had been right in the Civil War, it helped to create the so-called "cult of Lincoln and Lee," and ultimately its concepts became the dominant mood of the era.

The immediate results pleased the UCV considerably more than the Grand Army of the Republic. The GAR appears to have considered pensions and other Federal remuneration far more important than correct history, and they probably feared that they would receive less for themselves if the UCV continued to gain ground. Somebody got the idea that if the

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64 Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War, 221-23.

65 Dearing, Veterans in Politics, 481, 485; Reconciliation came slowly and the Northern and Southern veterans organizations did not establish fully amicable relations until after the turn of the century. Even Paul Buck in his interpretive study on this matter had trouble making up his mind about when and to what extent the GAR and UCV aided reconciliation. Cf., Paul Buck, The Road to Reunion, 1865-1900 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1947), 237-38, 241-43, 246.

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UCV could not be stopped, perhaps they could be checked, by jumping on their bandwagon. So in 1897 the Union veterans proposed that a "commission of distinguished educators" from the ranks of both sides get together and write a history of the period from 1861 to 1865 that would be mutually satisfactory. The UCV Historical Committee looked upon this proposal with disfavor, and it stated the reasons why:66

History is not a mere product, and can no more be written by commissions or committees than can . . . dramatic compositions. Such a body would be apt to produce a colorless, compromised work. . . . The only views with which a historian is concerned are those which are the conscientious result of his investigations, free from the color of preconceived opinions. . . .

Toward one northern historical project, the UCV showed a benign attitude--the plan of the federal government to publish the official records of both the Union and Confederate armies. They believed that the ready accessibility of so large a body of factual material would bring about more accuracy in future writing about the Civil War and would provide a convenient means of checking and proving errors. Lee publicly thanked the editor, General Marcus J. Wright and the Secretary of War, Elihu Root, for the excellent job that he thought was done in putting them together and making them available for use.67

Later, in 1904, the UCV discussed the United States government project to publish rosters of the Confederate and Union armies. The veterans decided to thank publicly those federal officials involved and

66Minutes U.C.V., I (7th), 50.

67Confederate Veteran, XXXI (February, 1923), 50. The volumes of the official records appeared over the years 1880-1901.
to aid the work by contributing as many pertinent old records as could be found in Southern hands. After some investigation, many members discovered that some rosters had been destroyed, and they began an effort to supply the missing rolls from memory. When Lee learned of these attempts, he issued a stern admonition that only official and original manuscripts be used. When attempts to pad the existing rolls continued, Lee requested the press to give wide publicity to his order against supplying spurious information. 68

The Historical Committee reported in 1898 that "the renaissance of history throughout the South, referred to in the report of 1895 as a hope, was in some degree fulfilled." The entire field of history, they thought, was being explored, and its neglected facts more carefully gathered and portrayed. 69

They still voiced some objections. Occasional publications referred to the whole Southern people as "rebels," and to Jefferson Davis as an "arch traitor." The committee felt that such terms were "wholly useless in writing history and unquestionably irritating." 70

The perennial game, still going on, of attempting to get a specific new name adopted for the Civil War also attracted the UCV. They officially endorsed the title "War between the States," and they vigorously urged

68 Ibid., XII (April, 1904), 183-84; Minutes U.C.V., III (13th), 76, 83.

69 Minutes U.C.V., II (10th), 48. The sentiments expressed in this quote are superbly illustrative of C. Vann Woodward's "divided mind" of the New South thesis.

70 Ibid., II (11th), 64-70.
its use, but they showed frequent inconsistency, the Historical Committee itself often using the term "Civil War."

In the next year, the Spanish-American War caused a wave of unified nationalistic patriotism to sweep the country. The Historical Committee noted this occurrence in its 1899 report and equated the change with a new perspective being shown by historians. This happy turn reduced the committee's duties to "little more than to keep watch upon the histories of the day." To this end, the veterans formed a sub-committee with three members from each state to examine regularly each new history text arriving in the schools, public or private. In 1900 the UCV passed a resolution to raise money to aid the sub-committee's operations.

In 1900 the Historical Committee called for a study to be made of "The Confederate Soldier in Peace." They said:

... arduous though the struggle has been, yet great has been the victory. The stupendous task has been performed. ... He has built the New South--for there is a New South. ... It is a healthy expansion of forces from within. The New South is the work of the Confederate soldier, as the Old South was the work of his father. The Confederate soldier loves both.

The 1901 report contained a long and laudatory review essay by Louisiana State University President J. W. Nicholson of President Woodrow Wilson's Division and Reunion. In 1902 the committee recommended that the UCV

\[\text{Ibid.}, \ II (12th), 55-56. \text{ My italics. It is strange that they did not mention Robert C. Wood, Comp., Confederate Handbook (New Orleans, 1900).} \]

\[\text{Minutes U.C.V., II (12th), 58.} \]

\[\text{Minutes U.C.V., I (8th), 47.} \]

\[\text{Ibid., 48-49.} \]
make an effort to bring about the publication of a source book pertaining to the South. Other reports remarked favorably on similar works, like Albert Bushnell Hart's *American History told by Contemporaries*, but complained that none of them properly set forth "the rich achievements of the South in thought and deed."\(^75\)

The committee was again enlarged in 1902 by the addition of a second member from each Southern state. This new member was to be either the son or a near relative of a Confederate veteran.\(^76\) Obviously this partially indicates a growing concern of the veterans for their advancing age and a desire to perpetuate the watchdog activities on school books. But the organization again distinguished itself by selecting an admirable group of men. They included: for Alabama, Thomas M. Owen, Director, Department of Archives and History; for Virginia, Prof. R. N. Dabney, Chair of History, University of Virginia; for Mississippi, Prof. Franklin L. Riley, Ph.D., Chair of History, University of Mississippi; for Louisiana, Prof. A. T. Prescott, Chair of History, University of Louisiana; and for North Carolina, Prof. Daniel H. Hill, Jr., Agricultural and Mechanical College of North Carolina.\(^77\)

The last report submitted by the Committee while Lee was chairman, in 1903, contained another condemnation of a specific book. Ella

\(^{75}\) *Ibid.*, II (9th), 144-47.

\(^{76}\) *Ibid.*, 151-52; II (10th), 80-81.

\(^{77}\) *Ibid.*, III (13th), 62-63. The other new members had impressive, but lesser qualifications.
Hines Stratton, in *Young People's History of Our Country*, "a book which is generally fair in other respects," enraged the veterans with her discussion of the Fort Pillow affair. "The Committee is pained at this late date to see such paragraphs, breathing "all the bad blood of the bitterest war of the centuries," they wrote. "Until those paragraphs are expunged by the author, your Committee states that the book should not be bought or allowed in the home of any Southern family." 

Actually, the book was biased. Exactly what happened at Fort Pillow still has not been settled to the complete satisfaction of all historians, but Miss Stratton took a staunchly anti-Southern position. "No Indian massacre could rival the scene," she said, and added:

... Even the sick in the hospitals were murdered. ... Nor was this all. The human fiends seemed to delight in dealing out the most cruel deaths that they could think of. Men were shot in cold blood, drowned, even crucified, burned alive, and nailed to houses, which were then set on fire. The Confederates won the victory of war at Fort Pillow, but Forrest and his men lost the victory of principle and the respect of a whole world.

The Committee understandably identified this passage as a "misrepresentation of history." 

But except for glaring exceptions, like the Stratton book, by

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78 *Ibid.*, III (13th), 64.

79 Ella Hines Stratton, *Young People's History of Our Country* (Philadelphia: American Book and Bible House, 1902), 258. The book also was published under several other similar titles.

80 *Minutes U.C.V.*, III (13th), 64.
this time the Committee had become satisfied with the course that history was taking. As the years passed, the Historical Committee reports contained fewer and fewer new suggestions. For the most part, the reports came to be reiterations of earlier goals and accounts of progress. Sometimes while Lee still was chairman, and more frequently thereafter, the reports themselves were primarily research papers on selected subjects about the Civil War or the New South.

Lee became commander in chief of the UCV in 1904, and Clement A. Evans succeeded him as chairman of the Historical Committee. The veterans engaged in very little agitation thereafter, and the Historical Committee reports all tended to be much shorter than those of earlier years. This probably indicates that Lee had been the driving force on the Committee.

During Lee's term as national head, the UCV itself published two items that are of some use to historians. Both appeared in 1907. The first was a little pamphlet which delineated the correct size and color of all the Confederate flags and banners.\(^1\) It was prepared in response to a feeling among the veterans that publications of all kinds were depicting the various insignia inaccurately, and that manufacturers of flags and badges had begun to distribute unauthentic replicas. The second item was a book entitled *Well Known Confederate Leaders and their War Records*.\(^2\) It contains nearly three hundred pictures and

\(^1\) *The Flags of the Confederate States of America* (New Orleans: United Confederate Veterans, 1907).

identifications of each person, five to seven lines in length.

The UCV benefitted history in the South by publishing history, encouraging a more widespread interest both in writing and reading it, and aiding in the preservation of accurate historical fact. Lee took a prominent part by helping and guiding the organization in all these endeavors. The organization in general, and Lee in particular, deserve criticism for their unobjective views and for much of their agitation to have those views adopted as standard, but the beneficial effects achieved by their efforts were praiseworthy, and perhaps more lasting.
CHAPTER XVII

PARK COMMISSIONER AND VETERAN CHIEF

To the end of his life Lee continued to display that apparently divided mind and sentiment that was characteristic of the leaders of the South after Appomattox. He never wavered from the New South doctrine which he had embraced and was always staunchly patriotic toward the United States government. Yet he also always revered the South of the past and urged Southerners to honor the memory of the Confederacy and its soldiers.

Glorifying the faithful, courageous, and heroic fighting men of the Southland, he said, in no way contradicted allegiance to the re-united country. "In honoring the vanquished we honor also the victor," he told an audience in Chicago. This was in 1895 at the dedication of a monument to Confederates who had died there in prison. Continuing, he revealed a second major tenet:¹

We invite you to invade us again, not this time with your bayonets, but with your business. Let the voice of your commercial travelers be heard in our land, the flying columns of your goods push into our furthermost strongholds, and the smile of the tourists make glad the waste places of our health resorts. We shall welcome you . . . heartily.

Many of the things that Lee wanted people to realize and to understand can be discerned from a series of endorsements which he granted to certain new books as they appeared. In 1897 he gave a glowing tribute

¹Lee, quoted in Confederate Veteran, III, 176-77.
to Mrs. Davis' Memoirs of Jefferson Davis by his Wife. There was a
certain loyalty, Lee said, which every Southerner owed to the old
leaders. In 1905 he endorsed two books which lauded the Southern
women. Of one volume, he said it "tells in modest style of that superb,
noble race of Southern women who suffered with us," and in the other
endorsement, "no women were ever truer, braver, or more devoted to a
cause and displayed more fortitude and sacrifice than the women of the
South." Two years later he wrote about a study which dealt with the
mistreatment of prisoners during the war: "although it is not pleasant
to recall what you have so faithfully recorded, yet it is history and
should be truthfully recorded." Finally, and perhaps most significant
of all, Lee wrote in a recommendation for Gaul's Portfolio of Pictures:

The 'Portfolio' should be not only in every Southern but in
every American family. These paintings, with their pathos,
their tragedy, and the great sorrow of the great war period,
will perform a duty in directing the younger generation to
avoid getting into channels which might provoke a like repeti-
tion to that of our great Civil War.

The older Stephen Lee remained "physically robust" in appearance,
one of his friends observed. His head was "shapely and set forward
firmly on broad shoulders," his gaze was "searching and somewhat rest-
less," his face was "clear, kindly and serious," his stride was

\[2\text{Ibid., XVIII, 155.}\]
\[3\text{Ibid., XIII, 378.}\]
\[4\text{Ibid., XIV, 376.}\]
\[5\text{Ibid., XVI, 424.}\]
"military." But the same man also remembered that "Lee was given to introspection; and, as if reflected from his early life and accentuated by the loneliness incident to much enforced separation from his invalid wife, an almost melancholy cast gradually settled on his countenance and a suggestion of sadness prevailed in the tones of his voice."\(^6\)

Lee and his wife eventually acquired Major Blewett's beautiful house in Columbus. The major died in 1871 and willed it to his daughter, Mrs. Mary Blewett Wooldridge. But she soon found that she could not keep the place up, and she sold it to Mrs. Lee's mother, Mrs. James T. Harrison, who owned and lived in it until her death in 1890. She in turn willed the house equally to her own two daughters: Mrs. Lee and her unmarried sister, Mary. Apparently the Lees divided their time, living both at the president's home on the A. & M. College campus and at the house in Columbus. When the general retired as president in 1899, they established their principal residence at the Blewett house.\(^7\)

Mary Harrison moved in with them, and was a great help to Lee as his wife became less and less able to help herself. Finally, in 1903, Mrs. Lee died, and Mary Harrison remained with Lee, to keep house for him. Mrs. Lee willed her share of the house to Lee, and thus he and Miss Harrison were co-owners. They each willed their shares to Lee's son, Blewett. He in turn sold it for a very nominal figure to the city.


of Columbus. The house now is a civic center and museum.

An earlier biographer of Lee said that during the general's later years, he became "a national figure." To some extent, this assessment is correct. Lee became more eminent as he aged. His work at the A. & M. College attracted attention in many parts of the country, and some of his admirers even claimed that he deserved the title, "Father of industrial education in the South." His work and influence in the UCV continued to have an effect and to gain attention in an ever widening area. He received much publicity as a pallbearer at Jefferson Davis' first funeral in 1889, and as head of the Mississippi delegation to the group that assisted in moving Davis' body for re-burial in Virginia in 1893. And national political leaders recognized Lee once when he was appointed to a federal job as a member of the Vicksburg Military Park Commission, and again when he was spoken of as a possible Democratic Party vice-presidential nominee.

Lee was a charter member of the Vicksburg National Military Park

8Lucille Webb Banks, "Lieutenant-General Stephen D. Lee," unidentified article in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, I.


10Ibid., 22.

Association, a private group originated in 1895 for the purpose of agitating congressional action to establish the park. The organization elected him to serve as its first president. The UCV gave an official endorsement to the Association's work and aided it with the lobbying. Congress looked with favor upon their requests and passed the necessary bill, which President McKinley signed into law on February 21, 1899.12

Even before the final passage of the bill, Lee began maneuvering to secure a place for himself on the park commission. In early February he wrote to several influential senators. One of his friends in Washington circulated a request that the senators join in supporting Lee, and about thirty of them signed recommendations for him. One of Lee's sponsors, Benjamin Ryan Tillman (the famous "Pitchfork Ben") wrote him "I hope you will get the position as I know of no one half so worthy to fill it."13

Lee's campaign for the job was successful. He was one of the first three park commissioners. The others, William T. Rigby and James G. Everest, were both Union veterans. The three men held their first formal meeting in Washington on March 1, and they elected Lee to be chairman. Thus Lee, the man who had served as a general for the cause of state's rights, now was not only the holder of a federal job, but he

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12 Pamphlet, William T. Rigby to Secretary of War, November 6, 1909, in Record Group 92, entry 175 (National Archives).

had become the first ex-Confederate to serve as head of a United States military park. To add to the irony, he became a pioneer in federal conservation. The national park movement was then in its infancy, but it eventually would include millions of acres. Majestic expanses of natural beauty and places which are important parts of America's military and cultural heritage now are preserved and enshrined for future generations. Lee played a significant role in developing one of these areas, the Vicksburg Military Park.

The Commissioners established an office in Vicksburg on March 15, 1899, and immediately began work. Their first task was to secure contracts with the various civilian land-owners. Acquisition proceeded rapidly at first and by the end of September, the commission had secured approximately nine hundred and ten acres.15

Soon Lee had to request more money from the War Department. He was rather clever in presenting his case. The first land purchases had been primarily for areas where the Confederates had had positions. He implied that proper commemoration of the United States troops would suffer if funds remained short. The Secretary of War, Elihu Root, mildly slapped Lee's hand for purchasing land without specific approval from the War Department for each individual tract. The criterion for past purchases "though perhaps not unreasonable, is not in accord with

14Lee's report, September 30, 1899, in Record Group 92, entry 715, box 233 (National Archives); editorial, in Confederate Veteran, VIII, 169-70.

15Ibid.

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the present views of this Department," he wrote. But sufficient money eventually was granted, although as late as 1901 the commission estimated that another five years would be required to complete the park.16

From the first Lee was determined to make the park authentic and complete in every possible detail. The initial authorization from Congress did not allow the purchase of any guns for the park, and Lee immediately began urging that the War Department give guns to the park from existing stores of unused weapons. Lee also wanted to restore the water batteries, saying that the U. S. Navy had served key roles in the Vicksburg campaign and should receive its share of honor and recognition.17 Several years were required, however, before even a part of these goals could be accomplished.

Around 1901 Lee began suffering from periodic physical maladies (rheumatism and an occasional carbuncle), and he curtailed some of his activities. Rigby relieved him temporarily, and in April of 1902, Lee resigned as chairman, whereupon Rigby was elected to the position. Although no longer chairman, Lee remained a member of the commission for the rest of his life.18

16Lee's report, May 22, 1899; Root to Lee, November 15, 1899; Rigby to War Department, January 3, 1901, in Record Group 92, entry 715, box 233 (National Archives).

17Lee's report, May 22, 1899, in Record Group 92, entry 715, box 233 (National Archives).

18Rigby to John C. Schofield, April 24, 1901; Rigby to Secretary of War, May 10, 1902, in Record Group 92, entry 715, box 233 (National Archives); Lee to Rigby, September 12, 1901 and January 14, 1902, in Papers of the Vicksburg Military Park Commission, Vicksburg National Military Park Headquarters, Vicksburg, Mississippi.
He continued to exert a strong influence in park business. By 1904 the War Department had allocated one hundred twenty-five guns for the park, and Lee took an active part in deciding where they should be placed. He and Rigby disagreed not only upon the placement, but also upon whether to be satisfied with the number of guns received, or whether to agitate for more. Lee desired to have more guns than he could get, and complained that the other national parks had gotten all they had wanted. Speaking of the Vicksburg Park, he said, "the very nature of a siege and defense required a large number [of guns] to illustrate the conditions. . . . We will get more. . . . I will certainly press this matter." 19

On other occasions Lee argued with Rigby about the text of the commentary to be placed upon the various historical markers in the park. Lee always took great pains to be certain that justice was done to the Confederate side. He usually buttressed his position with documentation, so one can not say that he demanded unreasonable commentaries. But he was adamant. Once when he and Rigby could not resolve their differences, Lee determined to ask the Secretary of War for a reconsideration. 20

It should be said, however, that Lee and Rigby actually were warm friends. In 1907 during the great religious revival in Columbus, Lee wrote to him, "I wish my Dear - Dear Friend I could see your noble heart touched with love to God . . . approaching your loyalty and love for

19Lee to Rigby, August 10 and 15, 1904, in same repository as above.

20Lee to Rigby, August 26, 1904, in same repository as above.
the work that is so near to both of our hearts." Only a few months before Lee died he learned about the plan to erect a statue of him in the park. Rigby took him out to the spot upon which it would stand and had him assume a military stance. Then Rigby told him that his friends were going to erect a statue of him in that same pose. "Rigby, you are all mighty sweet to me," Lee said.

At the same time that Lee was working to help establish the Vicksburg Military Park, he was serving as a prominent officer in the UCV. There were three significant tasks to which he thought the veterans should apply themselves in the time remaining to them. One of these was the continued erection of monuments, with more concentration upon dedicating memorials to the private soldiers, for it was they "who made our leaders immortal," he said. The second was to assure that each veteran lived the remainder of his life proudly, never bringing shame or regret to anyone because he also had been Confederate soldiers. The last was to help take care of the veterans who now were hard-pressed financially, to aid the poor and needy.

As a top leader in the UCV, Lee was a tireless worker. He gave speeches wherever there were interested persons to listen. Always he

\[21\] Lee to Rigby, March 22, 1907, in same repository as above.

\[22\] Unidentified newspaper clipping, in Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, III.

\[23\] Minutes U.C.V., III (16th), 30-32.
added a word of urging that more monuments be erected, "first, for the sake of the dead, but most for the sake of the living, for in this busy industrial age these tablets and stone to our soldiers may stand like great interrogation marks to the soul of the beholder."  

One of Lee's most ardent efforts was to help the movement which had as its goal the erection of a suitable memorial to Jefferson Davis. The impetus began in 1894 with the establishment of the Confederate National Memorial Association, an organization which hoped to raise $200,000 for the project. Lee supported the effort from the beginning. While in command of the Mississippi Division, UCV, he issued General Order No. 4—a public encouragement for support.

The cornerstone for the monument was laid in 1896. Lee, because of his vigorous support for the project, was given the honor of delivering the principal address. Friends considered the oration to be one of his best speeches. One account said it "portrayed in chaste style and eloquent words the character, public services and personal virtues of the great President of the Confederate States." The monument finally was completed by 1907, and the unveiling at Richmond was attended by perhaps the largest crowd ever to be present at a Confederate monument dedication.

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24 Lee, quoted in Confederate Veteran, XXII, 487.
25 Ibid., III, 8-9.
27 Evans (ed.), Confederate Military History, XII, 512f.
28 White, The Confederate Veteran, 95.
Lee left a legacy of impetus for still another Davis memorial. In years past there had been a bridge across the Potomac River, with a plaque honoring Davis for his services as Secretary of War under President Pierce. But during the Civil War the plaque had been removed. A crusade began to restore the plaque, and Lee gave it his personal endorsement at the 1907 reunion. By 1909, the year after Lee's death, the goal was reached and the plaque was put back in place.\(^29\)

Some Union and Confederate veterans urged from time to time that the two organizations hold a joint meeting. One group announced in 1904 that it had the support of both Lee and the head of the GAR.\(^30\) Lee, however, disclaimed any connection with the movement and further went on to caution against holding such joint meetings until after the appointment of committees by the UCV and GAR commanders to study the matter; even then the question should first be presented to, and discussed by, the two organizations at an annual meeting, and full approval secured.\(^31\)

Lee referred to "unpleasant happenings" at other similar joint gatherings and probably was thinking of a 1900 meeting in Atlanta. There the commander in chief of the GAR had berated Southerners for "the keeping alive of sectional teachings as to the justice . . . of the cause of the South, in the hearts of the children." General Gordon, then heading the UCV, had replied angrily that he would never teach his

\(^{29}\) Editorial, in Confederate Veteran, XVII, 123, 140.  
\(^{30}\) Ibid., XII, 373.  
\(^{31}\) Ibid., XII, 502.
children that what he had fought for was wrong. 32

At the Louisville UCV reunion, held during the same year, several veterans offered resolutions that the Northern and Southern organizations exchange fraternal greetings. A number of members bitterly objected. Lee took the floor and made an eloquent speech in favor of the proposal. He said, "Let us do nothing to hinder the good feeling which should exist all over this broad land." The resolution was carried with only one dissenting vote, but Lee apparently realized from the incident that any future joint meetings would have to be well planned. 33

Thus Lee closed the consideration for a joint meeting in 1904 by saying, "I feel we had best consider the matter more maturely before acting in haste, unadvised, and possibly injudiciously." 34 But he continued making efforts to foster good feeling between the Northern and Southern veterans, and a joint reunion finally was held at Gettysburg in 1913. The Confederate veterans rendered a tribute to Lee, and gave him much credit for having laid the foundations for the meeting. 35

Lee loved the reunion meetings, and once he tried to explain why,

32 Dearing, Veterans in Politics, 495.
33 Minutes U.C.V., II (10th), 111-13.
34 Lee, quoted in Confederate Veteran, XII, 502.
35 Ibid., XXIV, 437.
the veterans continued to gather each year: "We come together because we love the past, because our lives have been linked together by a great experience. With us now, all passion and bitterness has passed away. We are holding only to all that is sweetest and best and tenderest in living." Both Union and Confederate veterans often spoke this way about their Civil War memories. The war had been their greatest experience. No matter what happened to them afterwards, it remained the great moment in their lives. Lee would have agreed with Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. who said: "Through our great good fortune, in our youth our hearts were touched with fire."

At the 1903 reunion Lee supported a resolution that the UCV give notice that they would not expect from future host cities the "splendid and lavish hospitality" which they had been receiving. He said, "We do not want to impose burdens which would make other cities hesitate to invite us." He also was thinking of the advancing age and declining financial security of most veterans, both of which made it more and more difficult for them to continue spending very much at the reunions.

Some veterans complained about all the young girls who always were present at reunions. They served as "sponsors," but the veterans objected to the fact that the girls received all the comforts and attention instead of the old soldiers. Lee announced that he would discontinue the practice of choosing a general sponsor at the national level, but he pointed out that the various sub-echelons should decide for

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36 Minutes U.C.V., III (13th), 85.
themselves. With this change, and by limiting the entertainment pro-
vided for the sponsors to that supplied by each individual escort, the
matter was amicably settled.\footnote{Editorial, in Confederate Veteran, XV, 7, 152; XVI, 205.}

Probably the biggest welcome given Lee at a convention city was
at Richmond in 1907, the last he attended. A tremendous crowd met him
at the railroad station and remained about him for nearly two hours,
singing and cheering until he retired to his apartments. Looking
vigorous, hearty and hale, in spite of his seventy-four years, Lee
smiled with pleasure.\footnote{Minutes U.C.V., IV (17th), 10-12.}

During his last months he made occasional speeches in the Vicks-
burg Military Park. Once he told a gathering of ex-Yankee soldiers,
"We do not regret our part in the great struggle . . . the question [of
sovereignty] . . . in this country was decided by the sword. We have
accepted that solution in good faith." Then he continued:\footnote{Lee, quoted in Confederate Veteran, XVI, 9.}

The Revolution was glorious, but the Civil War was sublime.

War is hell indeed, but in times of war the great values of
life shine forth and manhood is not counted in terms of money. . . .

There is something very inspiring to me in the fact that Union
and Confederate soldiers want to meet each other. I don't hear
of any Franco-Prussian celebrations, and I fear there will be no
Russo-Japanese reunions. . . . But we meet on a different footing;
we are fellow-citizens of the great republic. . . . These meetings
signify that our country's wounds have knit together again.

In great modesty Lee once spoke of his high standing in the UCV
and declared, "I am only chief because my comrades have gone before me." Truly, he had been a worthy leader of the veterans, just as he had been a significant contributor to the postwar welfare of the Southern people. He epitomized the duality which can be seen in many of the greater Southern leaders of his era. He rose high in defense of the Old South, and then he surpassed all his former efforts in helping to build the New South.

40 _Ibid._, XVI, 384.
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PART I

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY ON MANUSCRIPTS
AND SELECTED PRIMARY SOURCES

The largest and most useful collection of primary materials pertinent to this study is the Stephen Dill Lee Papers, in the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. There are nine folders, containing several hundred relevant items. The bulk of this material falls within the period after 1860 and consists mainly of military and personal correspondence.

Smaller collections, with the same title as the one above, are located at the following repositories: Manuscript Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina; Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson; North Carolina State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh; and the South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia. Another collection, the Lee Family Manuscripts, has some S. D. Lee letters and is located at the Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

The Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, has numerous other manuscript sets which contain some useful material. The collections cited in this study include: E. Porter Alexander Papers, Ellison Capers Paper (one item), J. F. H. Claiborne Papers, Confederate Papers (Misc.), Thomas Jefferson Green Papers, James Thomas Harrison Papers, Hillary A. Herbert Papers, E. M. Law Papers, William Porcher...

The Manuscript Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, also has a large number of manuscript sets each of which contains one or more useful items. These include: George William Brent Papers, William Lowndes Calhoun Papers, Ellison Capers Papers, I. H. Carrington Manuscripts, Confederate Veteran 1786-1933 Papers (Military Prison Records Division), C.S.A. Archives Army Military Telegrams (Mississippi), John W. Daniel Papers, R. G. M. Dunovant Papers, Nathan Bedford Forrest Papers, Wade Hampton Papers, Hemphill Manuscripts, Conelius Baldwin Hite, Jr. Papers, Charles Colcock Jones, Jr. Papers, Charles Edgeworth Jones Papers, Munford-Ellis Papers (Thos. T. Munford Division), Thaddeus Kosciuszko Oglesby Papers, Daniel Ruggles Papers, and the M. J. Solomons Scrapbook 1861-1865.

The South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, has several useful collections, especially pertaining to the United Confederate Veterans. These include: Matthew Calbraith Butler Papers, Ellison Capers Papers, Joseph B. Kershaw Papers, United Confederate Veterans, S. C. Division, Charleston, General & Special Orders, 1895-1902, and United Confederate Veterans Confederate Survivor's Association, Camp Hampton, Richland County Records.

Second in value and scope only to the Southern Historical Collection holdings are the pertinent Lee materials at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi. The following collections yielded additions to this study: Samuel G. French Papers,

The Special Collections Department of the Emory University Library, Atlanta, Georgia, has several useful sets of letters which include: Candler Letters, Confederate Miscellany IIb, Miscellaneous Literary Manuscripts, Taylor Letters, and Wilson Letters.

Six other repositories have small holdings in Lee or UCV material. These include the University of Alabama Library, Tuscaloosa (Gorgas Family Papers), Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (Louis T. Wigfall Papers), South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina (Headquarters Papers, 1861-1865, James Gasden Holmes Collection 1890-1903, and B. H. Teague Collection), The Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia (Holmes Conrad Papers, 1812-1950 - Section 7, and Elizabeth Byrd Nicholas Papers), the Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville (Warren H. Biggs Family Papers and the Leigh Robonson Papers), and the E. G. Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia (Warner T. Jones Papers).

Three collections of useful Lee items belong to private individuals. The author owns one which consists mainly of correspondence between himself and S. D. Lee's grandson, Mr. John G. Lee of Farmington, Connecticut, and correspondence with other historians regarding their candid opinions of S. D. Lee. The second collection is owned by Dr. John K. Bettersworth, vice-president for academic affairs at Mississippi State University. It consists mainly of items relating to Lee's
academic career. The third belongs to a genealogist who requests that he be cited as Thomas C. Read, "compiler of *The Descendants of Thomas Lee of Charleston, South Carolina 1710-1769*" 37 Broad Street, Charleston, South Carolina; and the items are primarily genealogical, or descriptive of the homes that Lee occupied.

The Department of Archives at Mississippi State University, Starkville, has the President's Letter Books, 6 volumes extant, all covering the period when Lee served as president of that institution, and the Board of Trustees Minutes.

There is a huge unnamed collection of correspondence at the Vicksburg Military Park Headquarters, Vicksburg, Mississippi. It embraces letters to and from members of the Vicksburg Military Park Commission, but Lee and others wrote copiously and sometimes quite freely on a variety of subjects while supposedly tending to park business.

Of inestimable value are the Scrapbooks of Blewett Lee, 4 volumes, re-assembled by Mrs. John G. Lee, 1967 and the Scrapbooks "SDL" 2 volumes, all now at the Stephen D. Lee Museum, Columbus, Mississippi. These large scrapbooks contain a number of varied items, including some letters, but the vast bulk of the material is a myriad of newspaper clippings. Many of the clippings are identified; some unfortunately are not. There are passages about Lee and others that are written by him. His own scrapbooks also include clippings on various subjects that were of interest to hi, although they do not pertain to him directly. He penned notes next to some of these.
Other scrapbooks of some use include those of Mrs. Florence S. Hazard, 2 volumes (she is director of the Columbus and Lowndes County Historical Society, Columbus, Mississippi), the Micajah Woods Scrapbook at the University of Virginia Library, and some unnamed collections at the Evans Memorial Library, Aberdeen, Mississippi (which also has one Lee letter).

Certain historical markers have been of value to the author in reaching a better understanding of Lee as a military figure. Further, the military parks, particularly those at Antietam, Manassas, and Vicksburg are rich in information that can be obtained in no other way than by a visit.

Lastly, very useful and interesting material on Lee was found in the National Archives, Washington, D.C. Most of this, of course, pertains to the period when Lee was at West Point or later in the U. S. Army. There is a small collection of Civil War documents which was captured at the "Rebel Archives" when Richmond fell, and there are several Lee items in the Federal Pension file for Indian War Veterans.

PART II

ALPHABETICALLY LISTED SOURCES

Diaries, Memoirs, Documents

and

Other Contemporary Sources

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Writings by Stephen Dill Lee


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EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Herman Morell Hattaway

Major Field: History

Title of Thesis: Stephen Dill Lee: A Biography

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

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