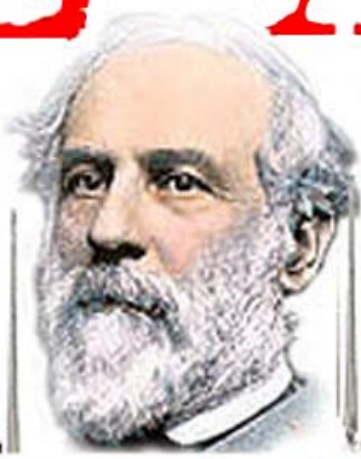


ATLANTIC MONTHLY

July, 1913

LEE AND



HIS ARMY

BY GAMALIEL BRADFORD, JR.

WHAT we have to study in Lee's relations with his army, as in other matters, is the character of the man: how he contrived to hold for three years — and long after — the absolute devotion of scores of thousands of soldiers. Other generals have led loyal and enthusiastic armies from victory to victory. This general held affection and confidence unshaken through defeat, disaster, and final ruin. And the army that loved him was an army to be proud of, 'the best army,' says one of its generous opponents, 'which has existed on this continent.'

Lee built up his army before he commanded it. During the early months of the war he was busy at Richmond getting the troops ready for the field, and it was he more than any one else who transformed a chaotic afflux of volunteers into the semblance of an organized force, which beat another semblance at the first battle of Bull Run. Even those who long doubted Lee's ability as a commander admitted his gift for extracting order out of confusion, his patient industry, his clear system, his tact in smoothing rough tempers and harmonizing wills that jarred. 'In the space of two months,' says Colonel Long, he was able to equip for the field sixty regiments of infantry and cavalry, besides numerous batteries of artillery, making an aggregate of nearly 80,000 men.'

With this constructive experience behind him, Lee continued throughout the war to treat his army, not as a mere fighting machine, but as a human body which must be fed and clothed, — or ought to be, for even his efforts could not accomplish the impossible. He enjoins upon his subordinate officers care for the well-being of their men. 'Do not let your troops run down, if it can possibly be avoided by attention to their wants, comforts, etc., by their respective commanders.' His constant appeals to the Richmond authorities for provisions, with graphic statement of the soldiers' sufferings, are pathetic in their earnestness. Submissive as he was to superior officials, he resented at once any indication that his men were being sacrificed to other com-

LEE AND HIS ARMY

mands elsewhere. 'I have been mortified to find that when any scarcity existed, this was the only army in which it is found necessary to reduce the rations.' The best evidence of his care is that the soldiers trusted him, and were willing to starve, if he bade them. It is recorded that a private once wrote saying that he could not do his work on his rations, and asking if the general knew what they were, as, if he did, it must be that the scarcity was unavoidable and the men would do the best they could. Lee made no direct answer, but explained the situation in a general order. 'After that there was not a murmur in the army.'

So with the less pressing, but not less serious, need of clothing. Near the end of the war, Lee writes that the men 'were greatly exposed in line of battle two days, had been without meat for three days, and in scanty clothing took the cold hail and sleet.' It was on a passage similar to this that Davis noted characteristically, 'these things are too sad to be patiently considered'; but I am not aware that he rose up in wrath and made somebody consider them. Frequently Lee is obliged to allege the utter destitution of his troops as a reason for not making a forward movement, and in doing so he expresses his admiration for all they have been able to accomplish. 'Nothing prevented my continuing in his front but the destitute condition of the men, thousands of whom are barefooted, a greater number partially shod, and nearly all without blankets, overcoats, or warm clothing. I think the sublimest sight of the war was the cheerfulness and alacrity exhibited by this army in the pursuit of the enemy under all the trials and privations to which it was exposed.' And it is with the grief of a mortified parent that he expresses his surprise at finding some of his followers ready to take advantage of the necessities of others. 'It has also been reported that some men in this army have been so unmindful of their obligations to their comrades, and of their own characters, as to engage in the occupation of purchasing supplies of food and other things, for the purpose of selling them at exorbitant prices to their fellow soldiers.'

It was indeed always as a parent, not merely as a military superior, that Lee believed in controlling and disciplining his army. This attitude led to a certain freedom of discipline which did not wholly satisfy those accustomed to European methods. 'Two defects as a general were ascribed to him personally,' says a German critic, 'an indifference to discipline, and a too kindly consideration for incompetent officers.' And even Davis remarked that 'his habit of avoiding any seeming harsh-

LEE AND HIS ARMY

ness was probably a defect.' Yet if the object of discipline is to make troops efficient and enthusiastic, it can hardly be said that Lee failed. An eye-witness, by no means uncritical and writing on the spot, says, 'In Lee's army everything is reduced down to the smallest compass, and the discipline and obedience of the officers and men is perfect.' While Hooker, an enemy who had felt the results if he had not watched the processes, testified: 'With a rank and file vastly inferior to our own, intellectually and physically, that army has, by discipline alone, acquired a character for steadiness and efficiency unsurpassed, in my judgment, in ancient or modern times. We have not been able to rival it, nor has there been any near approximation to it in the other rebel armies.'

Some good observers, notably Mr. Eggleston, do not agree with Hooker as to the original quality of Lee's soldiers. Undoubtedly the best intelligence and education of the South went right into the ranks; but this element was naturally outbalanced by poverty and ignorance, and the average Southern soldier was less common-schooled than the Northern, because the same thing was true of the average Southern citizen. In any case, it was a popular army, composed of American freemen; and from the point of view of discipline, Lee, with his perfect human sympathy, at once seized this fact in all its bearings. 'There is a great difference,' he said to Colonel Long, 'between mercenary armies and volunteer armies, and consequently there must be a difference in the mode of discipline. The volunteer army is more easily disciplined by encouraging a patriotic spirit than by a strict enforcement of the articles of war.'

This does not mean that Lee overlooked the absolute need of severity in dealing with refractory soldiers or was foolishly averse to it. 'You must establish rigid discipline,' he writes to a subordinate at the very beginning of the war. He insisted everywhere on order and cleanliness. 'Colonel,' he said to an officer who begged for a visit, 'a dirty camp gives me nausea. If you say your camps are clean, I will go.' He endeavored, so far as possible, to repress camp vices, especially gambling. 'The general commanding is pained to learn that the vice of gambling exists and is becoming common in this army . . . it was not supposed that a habit so pernicious and demoralizing would be found among men engaged in a cause demanding the highest virtue and purest morality in its supporters.' The strictness of his orders in regard to pillage during his invasions of the North is well known; but they were not only strict in form, but were car-

LEE AND HIS ARMY

ried out in fact, as is proved by the testimony of his enemies, to the lasting glory of both army and commander. Violation of these orders provoked Lee's wrath more than anything except brutality, and when he himself detected one soldier in theft, he ordered him shot at once. He was equally ready to inflict the death penalty in cases of desertion when they became too frequent, and had again and again to urge the necessity of rigor upon the Richmond authorities. 'I hope I feel as acutely as any one the pain and sorrow that such events occasion, and I am sure that no one would more willingly dispense with them, if they could be avoided; but I am convinced that the only way to prevent them is to visit the offense, when committed, with the sternest punishment, and leave the offender without hope of escape, by making the penalty inevitable.'

Yet withal he was lenient, perhaps too lenient, and longed, as a father would, to work by persuasion rather than by violence. 'This is a case,' he wrote in one instance, 'where possible error is better than probable wrong'; and doubtless he applied the rule in many instances. When an angry officer wanted to disband a whole company for cowardice, Lee defended them: 'For the bad behavior of a few, it would not appear just to punish the whole.' And always his method was to get work done by kindly urgency, by playful rallying, by sympathetic encouragement, rather than by the spur or the lash. 'General Lee, taking his daily ride about the lines, came on me while the working parties were digging and spading. His greeting was, "Good-morning, my young friend, I feel sorry for you." "Why so, General?" "Because you have so much to do," answered the commander, the gleaming white teeth showing his pleasant humor. . . . He generally had some such words to let one know he expected a lot of work out of him.'

Discipline of officers is a more delicate matter than discipline of soldiers, and requires an even finer tact, sympathy, and divination of character. Here also Lee always remembered that he commanded an army of American freemen, accustomed to vote, and to criticize everything and everybody. He let them say their say, asked their advice often, and occasionally followed it. Yet it is sometimes difficult to reconcile their free-and-easy ways with any idea of military subordination. Take, for example, that hard-fighter and true-hearted gentleman, James Longstreet. I do not wish here to discuss his conduct at Gettysburg. But when I consider that conduct in the light of various passages in his let-

LEE AND HIS ARMY

ters to his chief, I feel myself more in a position to understand it. What would have happened to Ney or Soult, if he had addressed the first Napoleon in this wise: 'I am pleased at all times to have any suggestions that you may make'?

• • •

It becomes necessary to dismiss Early from command, in spite of good service, because he has lost the confidence of his troops. Lee dismisses him, but states the facts so sympathetically that he loses no jot of Early's affection, who could say after the war, 'It is difficult for those who did not know him personally to understand the wonderful magnanimity of character which induced General Lee often to take the chances of incurring censure himself rather than run the risk of doing possible injustice to another.'

Not that Lee could not rebuke, and sternly. When the Confederates were flying from Five Forks, he turned to a general officer and ordered him, with marked emphasis, to collect and put under guard 'all the stragglers on the field,' showing that he meant to include many of his officers as well as men. On another occasion he said to a dilatory commander, 'General, I have sometimes to admonish General Stuart or General Gordon against being too fast. I shall never have occasion to find that fault with you.'

But usually he gave his criticism some turn of sympathetic suggestion, or even of kindly laughter. It is to be noted that the success of this method depends upon the person who uses it, and there are times when one prefers a straight-out, sharp order, to a would-be pleasant, insinuation. I confess that Lee's amiable rebukes sometimes suggest to me Xenophon's remark about Proxenus, that 'he was fit to command the good; but he could not instill fear into the soldiers, and it seemed that he had more consideration for those he commanded than they had for him.' Proxenus could not have won the battle of Chancellorsville, however; and it appears that something in Lee's manner did instill fear, for all his mildness. 'I believe all his officers feared him,' says Major Ranson. 'They loved him as men are seldom loved but they feared him too.'

As to the reprimands, the best-known instance is that of the officer with the condition of whose lines Lee was far from satisfied. As they rode together, the general remarked, 'That is a magnificent horse, General ———, but I should not think him safe for Mrs. ——— to ride. He is entirely too spirited for a lady, and I would urge you by all means, to take some of the mettle out of him before you suffer her to ride him again. And, by the way, General, I would suggest to you that

LEE AND HIS ARMY

the rough paths along these trenches would be admirable ground over which to tame him.' Another interesting case — made a little suspicious by the profanity — is that of the staff officer who took the liberty of altering orders to meet circumstances. Lee made no comment at the time, but later at dinner he told the story of General Twiggs whose staff was always altering orders until he finally remarked to one of them, 'Captain, I know you can prove that you are right, and that my order was wrong; in fact, you gentlemen always are right, but for God's sake do wrong sometimes.'

Among Lee's greatest difficulties in dealing with his officers was, of course, the question of promotion. Apparently every man in the Army of Northern Virginia felt himself perfectly competent to be commander of it except the man who had the honor of filling that office; and Stuart is said to have remarked sarcastically of the troops in general, 'They are pretty good officers now, and after a while will make excellent soldiers too. They only need reducing to the ranks.' 'In an army,' says Dumas, in his rollicking fashion, 'everybody, from the second in command to the rawest recruit, desires the death of somebody.' This is quite legitimate. What is not so is to spend time and temper, not your own, in complaining, fretting, and repining. Too many high Confederate officers, J. E. Johnston among others, showed a sensitiveness and pettiness on the subject, which was as unbecoming as it was thoroughly human.

Lee himself at all times absolutely disclaimed any eagerness for advancement. 'I think rank of trivial importance so that it is sufficient for the individual to exercise his command.' Again and again he offered to serve wherever and however his superiors thought he could be useful. To say this is easy. To convince others of the truth of it is less so. But I am not aware that any one has ever seriously questioned Lee's sincerity. There was that about him, in manner and still more in action, which proved that he thought only of his country and his duty. Testimony is hardly needed, but Stiles offers a bit, which is impressive, if somewhat astounding. 'I never but once heard of such a suggestion [that Lee acted from other than the purest motives], and then it so transported the hearers that military subordination was forgotten, and the colonel who heard it rushed with drawn sword against the major-general who made it.'

Nor does there seem to be much disposition to accuse Lee of favoritism. He certainly had no hand in the advancement of his own sons, who rose steadily by their merit. He refuses a friend's application for a staff position,

LEE AND HIS ARMY

because 'persons on my staff should have a knowledge of their duties, and an experience of the wants of the service, to enable me to attend to other matters.' It is indeed alleged that he was partial to Virginia, notably in the case of A. P. Hill; but the charge comes from sources too prejudiced to deserve much attention. Even those who complain bitterly of the jealousy and narrowness of the West Point tradition do not seem to include Lee in their animosity. Thus Tyler writes to Price: 'I have found myself laboring under the odium of the little West Pointers in Richmond, and their partisans. They oppose me in the War Office at all points in regard to any and every wish.' But in the same letter he says of Lee: 'Without parade, haughtiness, or assumption, he is elevated in his thought and feeling, and is worthy of the cause he represents and the army he commands.' One thing is beyond dispute: no personal consideration was allowed to enter into his decisions. When he urged the promotion of a certain officer, it was pointed out that that officer had been very free about criticizing the general. Lee answered, 'The question is, not what he thinks or is pleased to say about me, but what I think about him.'

It would be impossible to estimate the time, the strength, the nervous energy, that must have been expended in counseling patience, in soothing injured vanity, in forestalling complaints, and in urging the sacrifice of personal gain, credit, and advantage to the cause which all were bound to serve. He writes to one officer --- and the letter is typical: 'Recognizing as fully as I do your merit, patriotism, and devotion to the State, I do not consider that either rank or position are necessary to bestow upon you honor, but believe that you will confer honor on the position. In the present crisis of affairs, I know that your own feelings, better than any words of mine, will point out the course for you to pursue to advance the cause in which you are engaged.' Without the power to make promotions himself, and obliged even in suggesting to exercise the utmost consideration toward a jealous and sensitive superior, Lee, like Washington, was forced to have recourse to infinite resources of tact and sympathy in order to harmonize the claims that conflicted about him. But he seems to have been more fortunate than Washington in that at least his officers did not conspire and intrigue against himself.

If they did not quarrel with him, they sometimes quarreled with each other, however, and so added to his troubles. Jackson's repeated difficulties with A. P. Hill have been already discussed at length in connection with Lee and Jackson. But among all these high-spirited young men dissensions and jealousies were almost inevitable;

LEE AND HIS ARMY

and, with no tradition of discipline to restrain them, they were perpetually breaking out, to the detriment of the service and the extreme discomfort of the general. An officer very close to Lee writes: 'I have myself heard a major-general send a message back to army headquarters by a staff officer of General Lee, that he didn't see why his division should be expected to abandon the position they had fought for just to accommodate General —, whose troops had fallen back where his had driven the enemy.' In Lee's early days of command he had to reconcile the animosities of Wise and Floyd. He did it in words as noble as they are simple. 'You have spoken to me of want of consultation and concert; let that pass, till the enemy is driven back, and then, as far as I can, all shall be arranged. I expect this of your magnanimity.' Later the bellicose A. P. Hill quarreled with Longstreet over the praise accorded to their respective commands by newspaper correspondents, and it is even said that a duel had been arranged; but Lee's patience and tact averted such an extremity.

The most fruitful source of all these differences was of course the incurable human disposition to put the blame for one's failures on somebody else. No doubt Lee's noble example in constantly refusing to do this himself had a wide influence on others. It is reported that after the war he told a publisher that he could not write his memoirs, because to do it honestly would ruin too many reputations. This does not ring quite true to my ear; but we know that after Gettysburg he wrote as follows to Pickett with reference to the latter's official report of the battle: 'You and your men have crowned yourselves with glory, but we have the enemy to fight, and must carefully, at this critical moment, guard against dissensions which the reflections in your report will create. I will, therefore, suggest that you destroy both copy and original.' And Pickett did it.

As to Lee's personal relations with his officers, I doubt if any of them ever felt entirely at ease with him. They were mostly younger men than he; but even in his early days he seems to have had few intimate associates, and age probably softened his natural dignity and gravity rather than increased it. Not that there was any stiffness about him, or any pretense. I imagine that in his secret heart he envied the young fellows their careless ways, their idle jests, their trifling laughter. He liked Stuart's rollicking nonsense, liked to listen to the Irish banjo-player, Sweeny. One night when the singing was unusually uproarious, he stepped out of his tent and noted with a smile a black jug perched on a boulder. 'Gentlemen, am I to thank General Stuart or the jug for this fine music?' He liked occasionally to pass a quiet joke himself. Still,

LEE AND HIS ARMY

he was no talker, no story-teller, knew nothing of the fine art of being idle; and even in the midst of a hundred thousand men who loved him I think he was very solitary.

This does not mean that he secluded himself, or kept apart, absorbed in his own thoughts. He discussed his plans freely with those in whom he had confidence, and would ask a young officer's advice on great questions with a frankness as winning as it was sincere. 'Colonel Long,' he is reported to have said before Gettysburg, 'do you think we had better attack without the cavalry? If we do, we will not, if successful, be able to reap the fruits of victory.' Also he was constantly attentive to the comfort of those about him. On the retreat from Pennsylvania he rebuked his aide, Colonel Venable, for telling bad news too loudly. Venable was high-spirited and did not like it, nor did a kindly invitation to drink buttermilk entirely soothe him. Shortly afterwards the aide, worn out with running and watching, lay down to sleep in the mud and rain. When he awoke, he found that the general had spread his own oilskin over him.

As to the ease of approaching the commander-in-chief on matters of duty accounts differ. Grant understood that he was 'difficult of access to subordinates.' Tyler, in his invaluable letter to Price giving an account of Lee's army, says the commander is 'almost unapproachable, and yet no man is more simple, or less ostentatious, hating all pretension.' Unapproachable—yet 'the scouts compared him [Jackson] with Lee. The latter was so genial that it was a pleasure to report to him.' The explanation of these contradictions is simply that Lee mistrusted his good nature. He knew that a complainant, once admitted, would waste his time, his strength, and his nerves; and he trained his aides to do needed snubbing vicariously. As Colonel Venable writes, 'General Lee had certain wishes which his aides-de-camp knew well they must conform to. They did not allow any friend of a soldier condemned by a court-martial to reach his tent for personal appeal. . . . He said that, with the great responsibilities resting upon him, he could not bear the pain and distress of such applications.' And when officers came to find fault in regard to their promotion, he would turn them over to an aide, with the old-fashioned phrase, 'Suage him, Colonel, suage him.'

By these methods Lee kept a certain remoteness, which did not hurt his popularity, and helped his dignity. Men loved to gaze on him. 'It is surprising to see how eager the men of this army are always to get a good view of General Lee, for though a person has seen him a hundred times, yet he never tires looking at him,' is the naïve comment of a correspondent of the *Richmond Dispatch* in 1863. On the other hand, the element of distance is most happily

LEE AND HIS ARMY

suggested by an officer's remark to Mrs. Pickett: 'Lee was a great soldier and a good man, but I never wanted to put my arms round his neck, as I used to want to do to Joe Johnston.'

Yet when occasion brought him into close contact with even the common soldier, his manner was absolutely simple, as of equal to equal, of man to man. Once in a crowded car a wounded private was struggling to draw on his coat over a bandaged arm. An officer, seeing his difficulty, came forward and tenderly assisted him. It was the commander-in-chief. At another time Lee had sat down to rest in the shade of a great tree. A busy surgeon wished to establish his headquarters there. 'Old man, I have chosen that tree for my field-hospital, and I want you to get out of the way.' Then he discovered his mistake. But Lee gently relieved the embarrassment of the situation: 'There is plenty of room for both of us, Doctor, until your wounded are brought.'

Even when they knew him, the soldiers sometimes took incredible liberties. On the hottest of July days one of them left the ranks and approached the general. The staff tried to stop him, but Lee put them aside and asked what he wanted. 'Please, General, I don't want much, but it's powerful wet marching this weather. I was looking for a rag or something to wipe the sweat out of my eyes.' 'Will this do?' said the general, handkerchief in hand. 'Yes, my Lordy, that indeed!' 'Well, then, take it with you and back quick to the ranks; no straggling this march, you know, my man.'

In more serious matters Lee was equally ready to show the most democratic feeling. A devout Christian himself, he thought of every man in his army as a soul to be saved, and in every way he could encouraged the mission and revival work which went on all through the war with constantly increasing activity. Even in the midst of urgent duty he would stop and take part in a camp prayer-meeting, and listen to the exhortations of some ragged veteran, as a young convert might listen to an apostle.

One thing doubtless helped his hold on the soldiers, as it helped Napoleon's: an extraordinary memory for names, faces, and characters. The value of this in dealing with his officers was, of course, inestimable. 'Lee knew his army man by man almost, and could judge of the probable results of the movement here announced by the name of the officer in command.' With the privates the advantage gained was less direct, but quite as solid. 'I have frequently seen him recognize at once some old soldier whom he had barely met during the war, and who would be as surprised as delighted that his loved commander had not forgotten him.' Lee himself is reported to have said that

LEE AND HIS ARMY

'he had never been introduced to a soldier of the Army of Northern Virginia whose face and name he could not instantly recall.' This I doubt, in view of his not too courteous remark to Grant, at the time of the surrender, that he had frequently endeavored to recall his features from their acquaintance in Mexico, but could never succeed in doing so; and from another anecdote, to the effect that he was extremely annoyed at not recognizing a man who was introduced to him after the war. 'I was really much ashamed at not knowing the gentleman yesterday; I ought to have recognized him at once. He spent at least an hour in my quarters in the city of Mexico just after its occupation by the American army [twenty years previous], and, although I have never seen him since (and had never seen him before), he made a very agreeable impression on me, and I ought not to have forgotten him.'

What is of most general interest in this business of Lee's memory of individuals, is his own assertion that it was not a special gift, but purely a matter of attention, which recalls Lord Chesterfield's theory that attention is the most exquisite element of courtesy: 'Want of attention, which is really want of thought, is either folly or madness. You should not only have attention to everything, but a quickness of attention, so as to observe, at once, all the people in the room, their motions, their looks, and their words, and yet without staring at them and seeming to be an observer.' Only Lee would have completed Chesterfield's idea of courtesy by that other element, love, which Chesterfield knew nothing about.

Again, like some other great commanders, and unlike others, Lee won the hearts of his soldiers by living as they did. He managed the business of his position with as little fuss and parade as possible. Foreign officers were struck with the absolute simplicity of his arrangements. There were no guards or sentries around his headquarters, no idle aides-de-camp loitering about. His staff were crowded together, two and three in a tent, and none were allowed to carry more baggage than a small box each. Tyler writes to Price: 'Your own headquarters are more numerous and bulky. He rides with only three members of his staff, and never takes with him an extra horse or servant, although he is upon the lines usually from daylight until dark.' His ordinary dress was of the simplest, though neat and tidy; no braid or gilding, nothing but the stars on the collar to indicate his rank. He was perfectly Spartan as to his abiding-place, almost never leaving his tent for solid walls; and he was especially particular that there should be no intrusion upon peaceful citizens for his com-

LEE AND HIS ARMY

fort. On one occasion Colonel Long had established the headquarters in a yard, but the general insisted on moving lest they should annoy the residents. Long thereupon, rather vexed, picked out another spot that had little to recommend it; but Lee was perfectly contented. 'This is better than the yard. We will not now disturb these good people.' At another time Colonel Taylor made everything as agreeable as possible, but sighed over his chief's indifference: 'It was entirely too pleasant for him, for he is never so comfortable as when uncomfortable.' This same Colonel Taylor ventured to rally the general a little on the subject. It seems that Lee had the best bedroom, while his aide was obliged to put up with the parlor. "'Ah, you are finely fixed,'" remarked the great soldier, as he looked in upon his subordinate. "Could n't you find any other room?" "No, but this will do." He was struck dumb with amazement at my impudence, and vanished.

The table was as simple as the dwelling-place. Neat tin camp-dishes answered for the service, and the food was plain as well as the table-ware. Very frequently there was actual scarcity; for the general was not willing to have special effort made for him when the soldiers were starving. The dinner often consisted of cabbage boiled with a little salt. Sweet potatoes and butter-milk were luxuries, and when the commander-in-chief offered his luncheon to a major-general, it was found to consist of two-cold sweet potatoes, of which Lee said he was very fond. Even when better was provided, the general refused it, sending delicacies to the hospitals, perhaps not always to the contentment of his young and hungry staff. On the last march to Appomattox Mrs. Guild writes: 'When we would camp near a house, they would prepare their best for General Lee; but he would sleep in his tent or on the ground with his staff, and say that I must go and have what was prepared for him.'

That Lee was beloved by his army it is, then, hardly necessary to say; immensely beloved, beloved as few generals have ever been. In the first place, officers and soldiers trusted him. They trusted him in victory, knew that he would spare their toil and spare their blood as much as was possible, would make no move for barren glory, but only for their good and his country's. What is far more, they trusted him in defeat, knew that he would do everything that could be done, and would save them from further damage if human skill could contrive it. They trusted him after Gettysburg. 'We've not lost confidence in the old man, this day's

LEE AND HIS ARMY

work won't do him any harm.' 'Uncle Robert will get us into Washington yet; you bet he will.' They trusted him in the dark days of the Wilderness, and in the darker days of Petersburg. If he could not help them, no one could. Even the hard-headed and critical Longstreet believed that Lee was the man. 'We need some such great mind as General Lee's,' he writes from Tennessee. When the final disaster came, the universal trust was still unshaken. What he decides is right, what he says is the thing to do must be done. One of the coolest of Confederate authors writes of the surrender: 'Men fairly raved with indignation, and declared their desire to escape or die in the attempt, but not a man was heard to blame General Lee. . . . On the contrary, all expressed the greatest sympathy for him, and declared their willingness to submit at once, or fight to the last man, as he ordered.'

An army may trust the general without loving him, however. This army loved him. I have sought far and wide for expressions of jealousy, of hostility, of lukewarmness and criticism. They are rare indeed. In the early South Carolina days some disaffection appears. 'I do not know if it prevails elsewhere in the army,' writes Governor Pickens to the President, 'but I take the liberty to inform you that I fear the feelings of General Ripley toward General Lee may do injury to the public service. His habit is to say extreme things even before junior officers, and this is well calculated to do injury to General Lee's command.' Occasionally an individual frets over some disappointment or hindrance, as G. W. Smith in North Carolina: 'What I mean to say is that General Lee in command of an army at Fredericksburg is not in the same point of view, and evidently does not see things precisely as they appeared to him when General Johnston commanded that army'; or the petulant A. P. Hill in the Wilderness: 'It is arrant nonsense for Lee to say that Grant can't make a night march without his knowing it. Has not Grant slipped round him four times already?'

But these mild and scattered notes of discordance are completely lost in the general choruses of love and loyalty. The officers, high and low, vie with each other in their expressions of enthusiasm, none being more complete and touching in pregnant brevity than that of Longstreet. 'All that we have to be proud of has been accomplished under your eye and under your orders. Our affections for you are stronger, if it is possible for them to be stronger, than our admiration for you.' But to me the simple and almost inarticulate devotion of the common soldiers is

LEE AND HIS ARMY

even more beautiful than that of their superiors. The loving, familiar nicknames, the quaint anecdotes, the eagerness to see, and to hear, and to obey, mean more than volumes of eulogy.

Curious testimony to the quality of the feeling of the soldiers is furnished by several independent observers.

When he appeared in the presence of the troops, he was sometimes cheered vociferously, but far more frequently his coming was greeted with a profound silence which expressed more truly than cheers could have done the well-nigh religious reverence with which the men regarded his person.' This is, I think, a phenomenon somewhat rare in the psychology of crowds. Another interesting bit of out-of-the-way evidence is furnished by a writer in the *Richmond Examiner* in August, 1864. It had been proposed to offer a one hundred dollar bond to all old soldiers who had served faithfully; but this correspondent, writing from the army, says, 'The soldiers would prefer a strip of parchment in the shape of a certificate, setting forth their good conduct and soldierly qualities, signed by General R. E. Lee. This would be indeed a treasure to keep in after years.'

If we seek the cause of this extraordinary personal devotion, we shall be told that it was magnetism. Doubtless there was some intangible element in the matter, something in the man's bearing, something in his words, something in his lofty and passionate appeals, which won hearts and held them. A concrete instance of this power appears in General Alexander's account of his desire to persuade Lee into keeping up a guerilla warfare at the time of the surrender, and of the effect of Lee's answer. 'I had not a single word to say in reply. He had answered my suggestion from a moral plane so far above it that I was ashamed of having made it. With several friends I had planned to make an escape on seeing a flag of truce, but that idea was at once abandoned by all of them on hearing my report.'

I think, however, the general explanation of the soldiers' love for Lee is much simpler, elementary, in fact, and is contained in the nursery rhyme recording the adventures of Mary and her little lamb. Lee loved his men and trusted them. It is curious to read Wellington's expressions of disgust and contempt for his Peninsular army, and then to turn to the words, ever varied, in which Lee declares over and over again his confidence in his soldiers and affection for them. After Gettysburg he says to them, 'You have fought a fierce and sanguinary battle, which, if not at-

LEE AND HIS ARMY

tended with the success that has hitherto crowned your efforts, was marked by the same heroic spirit which has commanded the respect of your enemies, the gratitude of your country, and the admiration of mankind.' Without rhetoric, writing privately, he says of them, 'History records but few examples of a greater amount of labor and fighting than has been done by this army during the present campaign.' And again, 'I need not say to you that the material of which this army is composed is the best in the world, and if properly disciplined and instructed, would be able successfully to resist any force that could be brought against it. Nothing can surpass the gallantry and intelligence of the main body.'

His soldiers were his children, and he mourned their loss with a parental passion of grief. 'The loss of our gallant officers and men throughout the army causes me to weep tears of blood, and to wish that I could never hear the sound of a gun again.'

Is it any wonder that his men loved him, or that their love grew with years; and that after the war they haunted him with offers of service, offers of protection, offers of actual food, touching and pathetic, even when they were mixed with ill-timed drollery. Of all the numerous anecdotes bearing on this point, one in especial is full of tragic significance. Lee was riding alone through the woods on his beloved Traveler, when he met an old Confederate. 'Oh, General,' said the fellow, 'it does me so much good to see you that I'm going to cheer.' The general protested the utter inappropriateness. But the man cheered just the same. And as the great soldier passed slowly out of hearing through the Virginia forest, it seems to me that his heart and his eyes must have overflowed at the thought of a high cause lost, of fidelity in ruin, and of the thousands and thousands who had cheered him once and in spirit would go on cheering him forever.