



Robert Edward Lee was born in Westmoreland County, Va., January 19, 1807. He was a son of General Henry Lee, who was called "Light-horse Harry" during the war of the Revolution. He was graduated at West Point in 1829, standing second in his class and commissioned in the engineers. He served as chief engineer in the Mexican war, and his skill as such secured the frequent commendation of General Scott. At the close of that campaign he had reached the brevet rank of colonel. In 1852-55 he was commandant of the military academy at West Point, and he is credited with introducing a considerable number of improvements into that school. He was then made lieutenant-colonel of the Second Cavalry, and sent to the Texas frontier. In the autumn of 1859 he commanded the force that was sent out to suppress John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry. On April 20, 1861, three days after the Virginia convention adopted an ordinance of secession, he resigned his commission, went to Richmond, and was almost immediately made commander-in-chief

of the State forces. These were at once turned over to the service of the Confederacy, and when the Confederate Government was removed to Richmond, he was appointed one of four full generals. He commanded at first in West Virginia, where his forces were defeated in several small engagements by McClellan, afterward served in engineering work on the coast of South Carolina, and early in 1862 returned to Richmond. When General Johnston was wounded in the battle of Seven Pines, the command of the forces there devolved upon General Lee, who was

the ranking Confederate officer, in all the subsequent operations in Virginia, including the invasions that were extended northward to Maryland and Pennsylvania. The story of these campaigns is told elsewhere with reasonable fullness in this volume, and cannot be repeated on this page even in outline. The Army of Northern Virginia commanded by Lee was finally destroyed in the campaign that began in the Wilderness in May, 1864, and ended at Appomattox, April 9, 1865, when Lee surrendered to Grant, and practically closed the war. Believing that the Southern people, being thoroughly defeated in the tribunal to which they had appealed should honestly accept the result, General Lee set an example for Confederates of lower rank by applying for pardon under the terms of the act of Congress. He was made President of Washington College at Lexington (which now bears the name of Washington and Lee University) and spent the remainder of his life there, closing his days on the 12th of October, 1870.

R. E. Lee
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