

# LEE AND HIS CAUSE

## The Why and the How of the War Between the States

by  
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Virginia, and Later of Capt. Quirk's Scouts, Morgan's  
Kentucky Cavalry

Ego, verum amo, verum volo mihi dici:  
Mendacem odi!—Plautus

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The Why and the How of the War Between the States  
by John Richard Deering, D.D.

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# DEDICATION



To My Three Daughters and Six Sons

Who have been faithfully taught the Truth of History, the Nature of our Government, and the Love of our Country; in whom I trust to transmit these precious things to coming generations, as they may have the power, for their own sake, and for the honor of those, who at home, in council chambers, legislative halls, hospital wards, prison cells and on hard-fought fields, have taught and toiled, sorrowed and suffered, bled and died, to maintain and establish them.



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# INTRODUCTION



The matter here presented to the reader was first given as a “Memorial Day” Address, before Confederate Veteran Camps, and Chapters of the Daughters of the Confederacy, in several cities and towns. Its original use has modified its final form; whilst to embody more of historic fact, and so enhance the permanent value, its limits have been largely expanded.

There are many and worthy “Lives of Lee,” and some excellent “Histories of the United States,” and still more abundant “Sketches of Battles and Minor Engagements,” with almost innumerable “Narratives of Generals,” and of “Commands and Campaigns.” Many of these are large and expensive, too heavy for handling and too costly for wide circulation, and their readers are correspondingly few and well to do. This is quite unlike any of those. We have also able and elaborate discussions of the Federal Constitution, with their ample deductions learnedly and long drawn out; but little read and less understood. This is not at all like those. It is as simple, I hope, as short, and makes for truth as much as it lacks of beauty.

We have many other books – some of them, like

the down-easter's razors, "*made to sell*," and therefore to suit all sorts of readers all the world over. I am not concerned that this little book shall please everybody. It was made to vindicate but one side. The only important question is, Does it do so? My ambition is to state facts, not to get money. I cheerfully leave conclusions to my readers. They may strike, if they will but hear me!

The historical items recorded here are more or less involved in the solution of questions which have arisen as to the rightfulness of secession; the origin and conduct of its cause; the character, motives and sentiments of the people who espoused and defended it, as well as of those who forced them to fields of blood. I thought to give these facts in form so cheap, and style so terse, as to bring them within the means and times of our busy men and women. I have tried to condense and yet comprehend; to be clear, yet not "too dear" for the common people's purse.

"History, as written, if accepted in future years, will consign the South to infamy," says Honorable J. L. M. Curry. The truth, the only antidote for the poison of falsehood, should be set to work at once, or the evil effects will become incurable. No time is to be lost. Soon the cemetery will hold us all. What shall be then thought of our cause and conduct will depend upon what we leave in the books of our era. Books live on. They should not misrepresent us or our dead. But think of the stream pouring from the press, a stream so strong and so full of ignorance of us, and of prejudice against us – think of the political interests, and sectional rivalries, and financial superiority, and numerical preponderance, and commercial advantages, and the immense Governmental influence, all combined upon the successful side – will poster-



ity ever know who we were, or why we fought? It all depends upon what they read. This book is a soldier's small contribution of something reliable and readable.

It may not be quite needless to say in this place (though I certainly came near forgetting to say it), that the sentiments expressed in this book or justly inferable from it, are such as befit a Confederate soldier's discussion of war times and topics, and might not have been denied or dissembled without the guilt of insincerity or hypocrisy – qualities hated of God and man.

To have given for every statement my authority, and credit for every fact related, to every author consulted, would have made very unsightly pages, and diverted at most interesting moments, the reader's attention. Due acknowledgment is made in another place in a printed list of "sources," and also by the frequent use of quotation marks throughout the text.

I wish to close this prefatory note without other remark, save a saying that I judge worthy in itself, and well suited to my work, from the pen of Rev. Thomas E. Bond, M.D., of Baltimore.

Truth for her own sake – without calculation of probabilities, or hope of results; Truth, solitary, friendless, impotent, on her way out of the world; Truth at the bar of Pilate, dead on the Cross, still in the grave – Truth, always and everywhere, is the one thing to be sought and kept, defended and clung to. Whenever you see a lie rampant, hit it; wherever a truth down, give a hand to it. There is no nobler work in this life than to help the TRUTH.

JNO. R. DEERING.

October 4th, 1907.

"Dixie," Lexington, Kentucky.



# CHAPTER ONE

## A Confederate Memorial Address



I believe that, in the end, Truth will conquer  
– Wyclif.

Daughters of the Confederacy, Soldiers, Sailors,  
and Fellow-Citizens:

It is strange to me that I am here to speak to you of Lee and his Cause – the long-lost Cause. A still stranger thing is that you are here to listen to me. My limitations are so limitless! My disabilities are so distressing! As I am a poor preacher, I must of course eschew politics; and I must steer clear of all constitutional questions, for I never studied law or meddled with statecraft; and no matter what was the Constitution, the Amendments 13, 14 and 15, have come to pass and are in force. Why talk about the one, when the others “are it”? (I might reply, simply to know the facts.) Nor dare I mention military matters, for I am unlearned in the science of war, and never practiced the art save as a boy-private on the “far-flung battle line.” The field of history is posted against me, so they say, because it has yet to be written. There is no history of the war, for it must be writ-

ten by men unborn, because they weren't in it and know by experience nothing of it! Our schools are now being filled with histories, so called, yet the men who helped to make history must not dare to write it.

The biographical region is also yet closed, because it is confidently claimed that, we stand too close, we lack the perspective, which posterity will have, of course, in which to view the mighty men of renown, as they should be seen. Just why a man who wasn't born for a century after Lee had gone to God, will be able to see and know and describe him better than the one who camped, marched and fought under him, does not yet appear to me; but I believe it, of course, because I see it so often in the newspapers! In sheer despair, I thought of Lee himself – it is his birthday, and was his cause, as much as ours – might I not venture to speak of him, but one of our chief captains? Could I not be cautiously critical, or critically cautious, modest and moderate, in this solitary instance, and for a single hour, whilst I should speak of him? Why, yes, but alas for me! “Only an Apelles may paint Alexander;” – and had I the skill to do it, where is the time for the task? It would take a year to do the work, and a week to examine and enjoy it, not an hour. Listen, it has already been done. Buy for your winter nights, for your college and city libraries, such volumes as *General Lee*, by Fitzhugh Lee, his nephew and cavalry commander, and *Robert E. Lee and the Southern Confederacy*, by Alexander White, M.A., D.D., Ph.D., and *Personal Reminiscences of General Lee*, by J. William Jones, D.D., his chaplain in camp and in college; and *Recollections and Letters of Lee*, by his son Robert, and *Four Years Under Marse Robert*, by Major Robert Stiles. In these you will find worthy work from able hands and from ample, origi-

nal sources, work that has already won world-wide fame, and recognition of Lee as the greatest captain of this country, or era, the idol of his army, and as President Davis well said, "The high model for the imitation of generations yet unborn."

The Virginia Lees were of early English stock. R. E. Lee was born January 19th, 1807, in Stratford, Westmoreland County. His father was "Light Horse Harry," Washington's Chief of Cavalry. His mother was Anne Hill Carter. His father dying when he was but eleven, Robert was her very own. When he left home for the academy, she said of him, "Oh, how can I live without Robert, he is both son and daughter to me?" He grew up in Alexandria and went from there at eighteen to West Point, in 1825. In a class of forty-six, he graduated second, in 1829, and without a single mark of demerit. The young lieutenant was married, June 30th, 1831, at Arlington, to the beautiful and charming Mary Randolph Custis, great-granddaughter of Mrs. George Washington. He was then twenty-four, past. Five years later, he was in Mexico under General Winfield Scott, who said, "My success was largely due to the skill, valor and undaunted courage of Captain R. E. Lee." Later, General Scott declared, "Lee is the greatest military genius of America, and the best soldier that I ever saw in the field." He also said that, "If opportunity offers, he will show himself the foremost captain of his time." It isn't at all strange, therefore, that Mr. Lincoln, moved by the old commander's judgment, should have sent Lee, a dozen years later, and when he wanted the best man among men, through Mr. Francis P. Blair, an offer of the command of all the United States forces being organized for the invasion of Virginia; nor that General Scott considered him as worth to the Union

cause an army of fifty thousand men; nor can any man wonder that a few days after, Virginia, his noble mother, put into his hands her sword and gave him command of all her troops.

As he stood in her Convention to accept this trust, he was thus described: – “Tall, straight, strong, brown-eyed, of gentle and benevolent countenance, and of remarkable beauty, of unaffected dignity and gravity. In robust health, and of almost boundless powers of endurance, a perfect and beautiful model of manhood.” Ladies, I am no artist, but I may hold up a sketch that is as lifelike as it is elegant. I do it with pleasure, for you will enjoy it immensely. It is by the Honorable Ben Hill of Georgia: –

Lee possessed every trait of other great commanders without their vices. He was a foe without hate, a friend without treachery, a soldier without cruelty and a victim without murmuring. He was a public officer without vices, a private citizen without wrong, a neighbor without reproach, a Christian without hypocrisy, and a man without guilt. He was Cæsar without his ambition, Frederick without his tyranny. Napoleon without his selfishness, Washington without his reward. He was as obedient to authority as a servant, and a royal in authority as a king. He was as gentle as a woman in life, pure and modest as a virgin in thought, watchful as a Roman vestal, submissive to law as Socrates, and grand in battle as Achilles!

Such was our hero – “great in his goodness, and good in his greatness,” far beyond his fellows. A careful writer says: – “Such a character for balance, for charity, for affection, for gentleness, for sufficiency, for restraint, for silence, for simple piety, for unconscious greatness, this world has seldom seen.”

Mr. W. W. Corcoran, of Washington, a name honored, and revered wherever big-hearted benevolence and the graces of the Christian religion are recognized, was invited by the Committee in charge of the laying of the cornerstone of the Lee monument in Richmond to be present on that occasion. The venerable philanthropist, finding that he could not accept, wrote the letter quoted below in which he thus advisedly speaks of General Lee:

It was my good fortune to have been honored with the immediate acquaintance and close friendship of General Lee during the whole period of his public career; and whether I recall him as he moved in the social sphere, which he adorned by his virtues and graces, or as he towered above his contemporaries on that higher stage where the luster of his great qualities shone in the eyes of the whole civilized world, I can truly say, with no small experience of my fellow-men, that of all the men I ever knew, he always seemed to me the most remarkable for the grandeur as well as for the symmetry of the elements which composed the strength and beauty of his peerless character. For such was the natural constitution and such the harmonious blending of these elements that, in the gentleness and benignity of his demeanor, he was seen to be as great in his goodness as he was good in his greatness.

Like all truly great and good men, General Lee had in the highest degree that simplicity of character which springs from purity of heart as well as from the perfect transparency of a clear intelligence. Endowed with an understanding which was as calm as it was penetrating and profound, he always possessed his soul in a patience which never murmured, and a serenity which was never ruffled, whatever might be the duties he was summoned to perform, or whatever might be the perils he was called to face.

No duty ever found him unprepared. No trial ever shook his steadfast mind. Intrepid in all assaults of fortune, and the very soul of honor, he was the Chevalier Bayard of his day – a knight without fear and without reproach, because in him all that was soldierly in conduct met and mingled with all that was blameless in life. With an integrity which rooted itself in the very fibre of his moral constitution, and which, therefore, never gathered spot nor stain throughout the whole of his long and eventful career, he yet had not the slightest trace of censoriousness in his nature, but walked before men with the modesty and humility born of a deep religious spirit.

It is only those who knew him well in all the serene depths of his mental and moral being, who can account for the heroism he displayed after he had sheathed his sword and bowed, without repining, to the decree of an overruling Providence.

Although the life and example of such a man may justly seem to belong, in some special sense, to the State and section which stood in the clearest sight of all his greatness and all his goodness, yet the whole country may rightly claim its share in the heritage of that renown which all generous minds are quick to accord to exalted virtues wherever found, and to magnanimity of soul wherever it is inspired by a conscientious sense of right.

President Roosevelt, in his life of Thomas H. Benton, says: –

The world has never seen better soldiers than those who followed Lee, and their leader will undoubtedly rank as without exception the very greatest of all the great captains that the English-speaking people have ever brought forth; and this, although the last chief of his antagonists may himself claim to stand as the full equal of Marlborough and Wellington.