

General Robert E. Lee

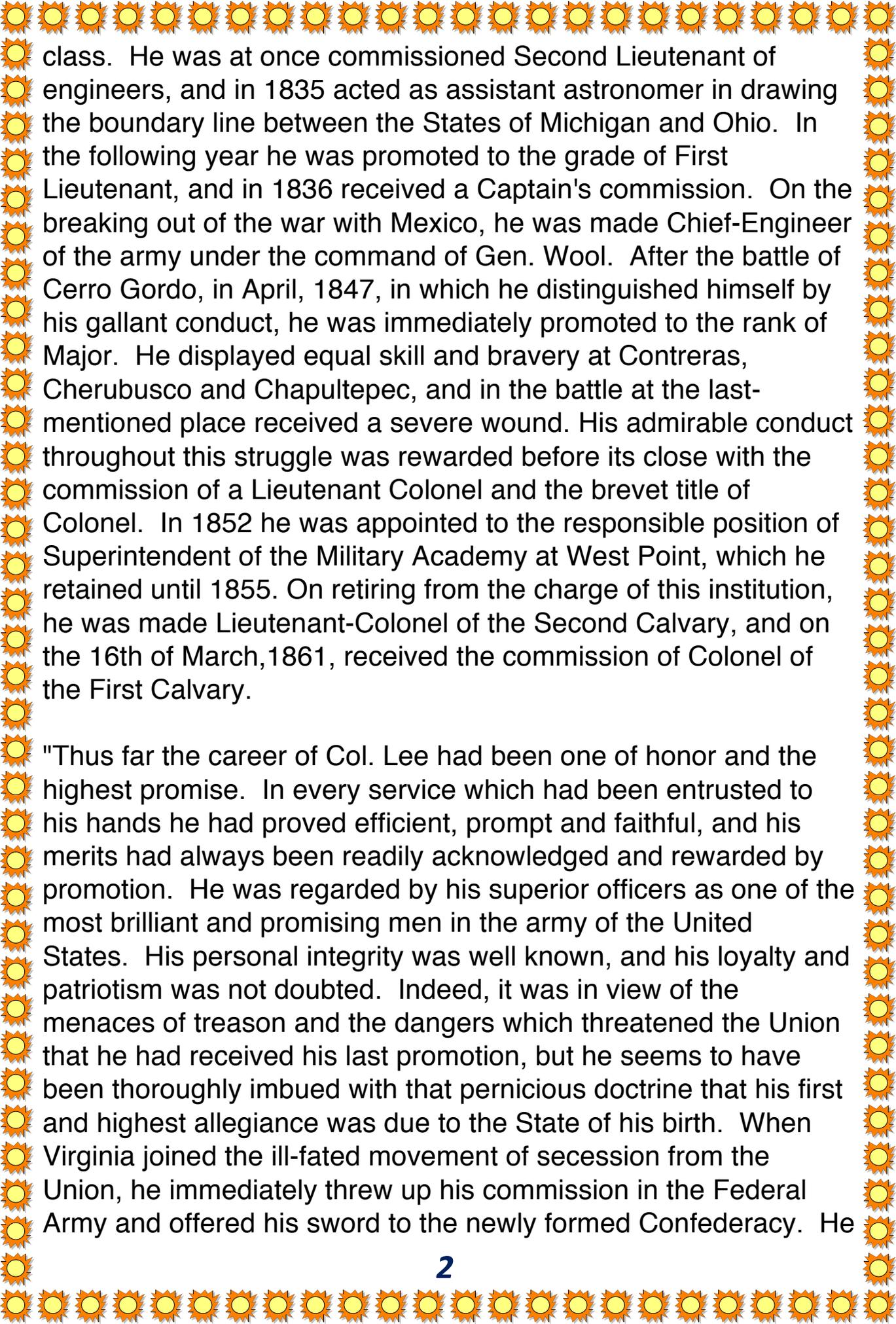
Compiled by D. A. Sharpe

General Robert E. Lee was born January 9, 1807 at Stratfort Hall, Lexington, Virginia. His parents were Henry Lee III and Anne Carter Hill. [Lee is the husband of the great granddaughter](#) of Martha Dandridge Custis Washington, whose second husband, President George Washington, is my 27th cousin, six times removed.

Lee's obituary in the New York Times of October 13, 1870 read:

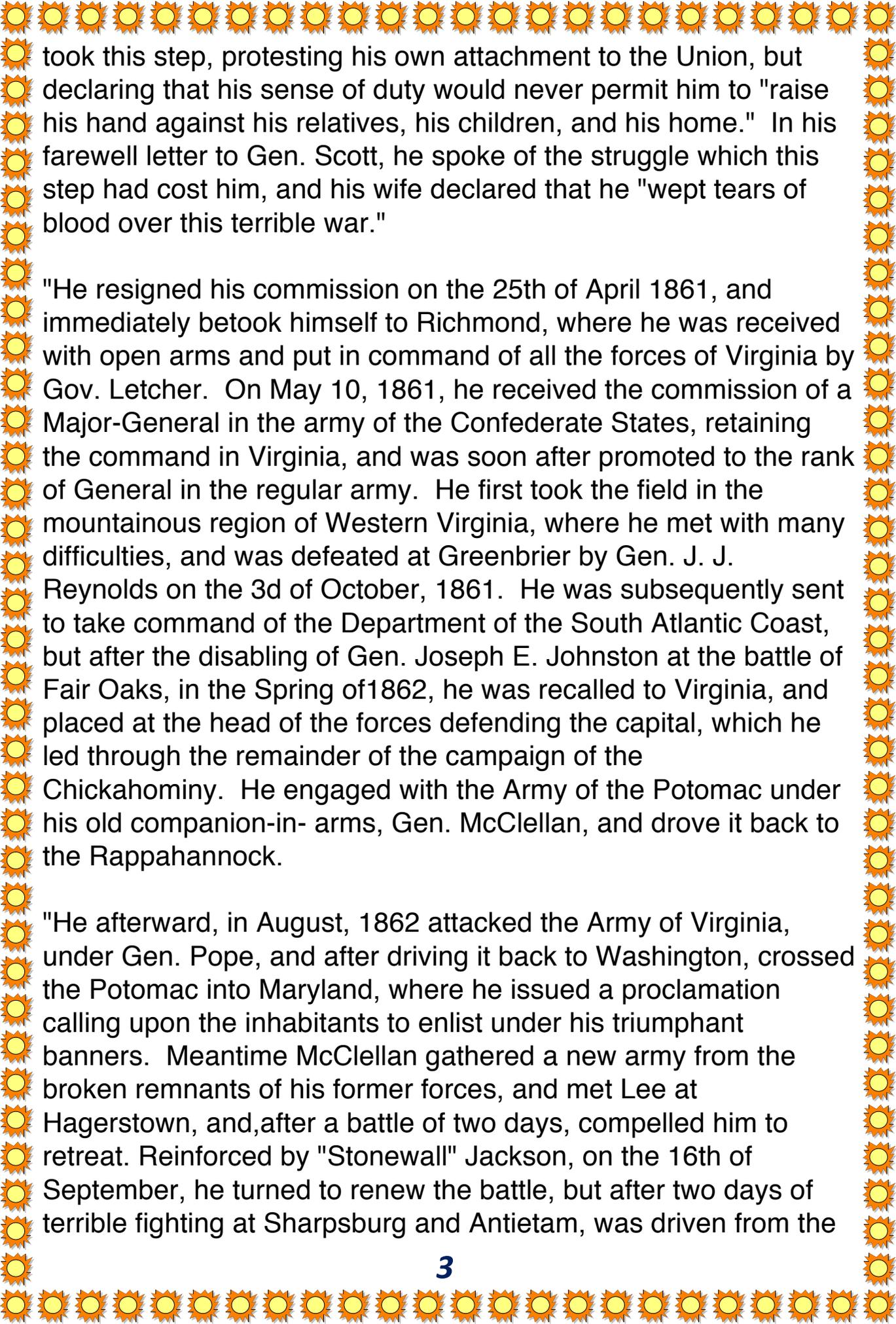
"Intelligence was received last evening of the death at Lexington, Va., Of Gen. Robert E. Lee, the most famous of the officers whose celebrity was gained in the service of the Southern Confederacy during the late terrible rebellion. A report was received some days ago that he had been smitten with paralysis, but this was denied, and though it was admitted that he was seriously ill, hopes of his speedy recovery seem to have been entertained by his friends. Within the last two or three days his symptoms had taken an unfavorable turn, and he expired at 9 1/2 o'clock yesterday morning of congestion of the brain, at the age of sixty-three years, eight months and twenty-three days.

"Robert Edmund Lee was the son of Gen. Henry Lee, the friend of Washington, and a representative of one of the wealthiest and most respected families of Virginia. Born in January 1807, he grew up amid all the advantages which wealth and family position could give in a republican land, and received the best education afforded by the institutions of his native State. Having inherited a taste for military studies, and an ambition for military achievements, he entered the National Academy at West Point in 1825, and graduated in 1829, the second in scholarship in his



class. He was at once commissioned Second Lieutenant of engineers, and in 1835 acted as assistant astronomer in drawing the boundary line between the States of Michigan and Ohio. In the following year he was promoted to the grade of First Lieutenant, and in 1836 received a Captain's commission. On the breaking out of the war with Mexico, he was made Chief-Engineer of the army under the command of Gen. Wool. After the battle of Cerro Gordo, in April, 1847, in which he distinguished himself by his gallant conduct, he was immediately promoted to the rank of Major. He displayed equal skill and bravery at Contreras, Cherubusco and Chapultepec, and in the battle at the last-mentioned place received a severe wound. His admirable conduct throughout this struggle was rewarded before its close with the commission of a Lieutenant Colonel and the brevet title of Colonel. In 1852 he was appointed to the responsible position of Superintendent of the Military Academy at West Point, which he retained until 1855. On retiring from the charge of this institution, he was made Lieutenant-Colonel of the Second Cavalry, and on the 16th of March, 1861, received the commission of Colonel of the First Cavalry.

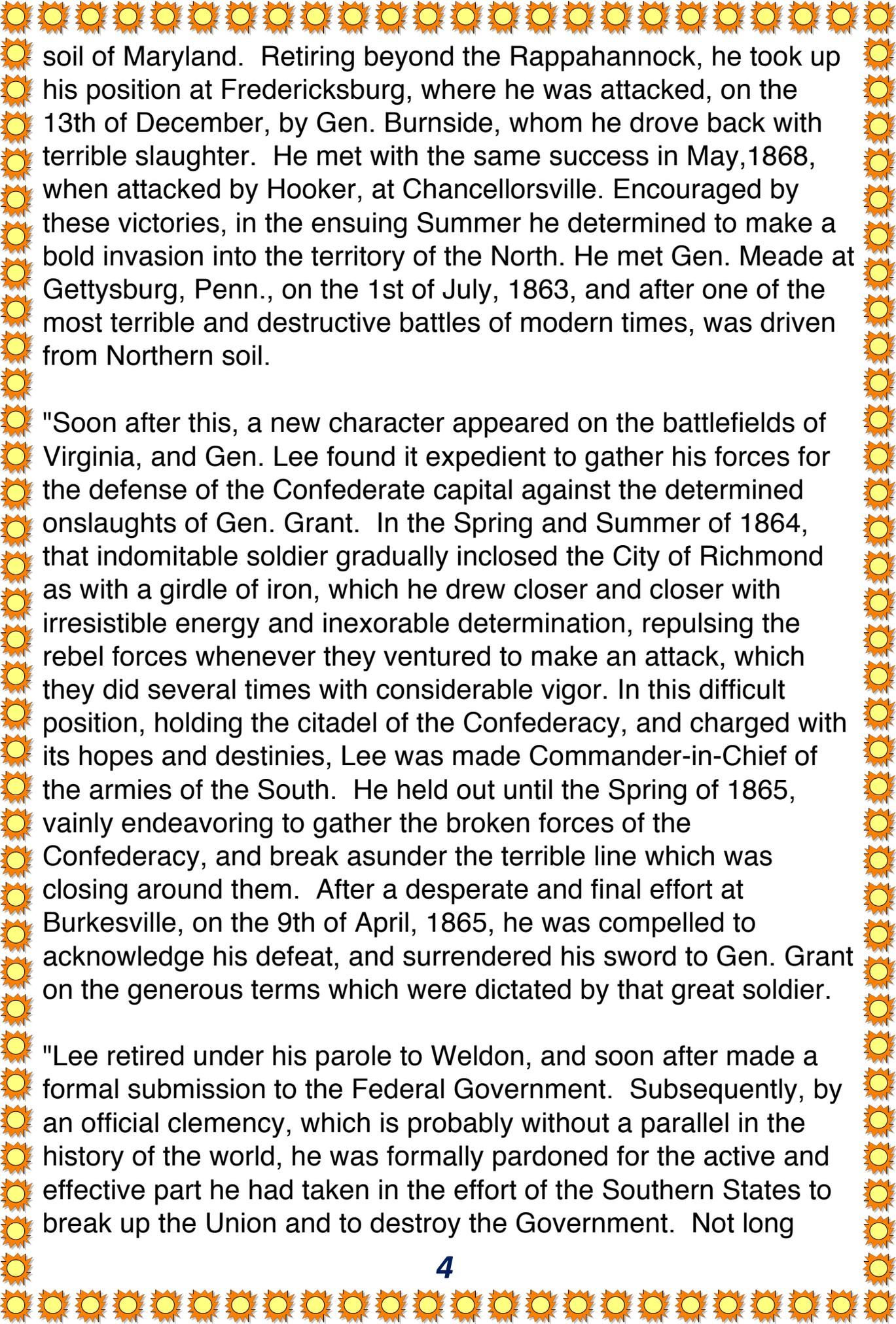
"Thus far the career of Col. Lee had been one of honor and the highest promise. In every service which had been entrusted to his hands he had proved efficient, prompt and faithful, and his merits had always been readily acknowledged and rewarded by promotion. He was regarded by his superior officers as one of the most brilliant and promising men in the army of the United States. His personal integrity was well known, and his loyalty and patriotism was not doubted. Indeed, it was in view of the menaces of treason and the dangers which threatened the Union that he had received his last promotion, but he seems to have been thoroughly imbued with that pernicious doctrine that his first and highest allegiance was due to the State of his birth. When Virginia joined the ill-fated movement of secession from the Union, he immediately threw up his commission in the Federal Army and offered his sword to the newly formed Confederacy. He



took this step, protesting his own attachment to the Union, but declaring that his sense of duty would never permit him to "raise his hand against his relatives, his children, and his home." In his farewell letter to Gen. Scott, he spoke of the struggle which this step had cost him, and his wife declared that he "wept tears of blood over this terrible war."

"He resigned his commission on the 25th of April 1861, and immediately betook himself to Richmond, where he was received with open arms and put in command of all the forces of Virginia by Gov. Letcher. On May 10, 1861, he received the commission of a Major-General in the army of the Confederate States, retaining the command in Virginia, and was soon after promoted to the rank of General in the regular army. He first took the field in the mountainous region of Western Virginia, where he met with many difficulties, and was defeated at Greenbrier by Gen. J. J. Reynolds on the 3d of October, 1861. He was subsequently sent to take command of the Department of the South Atlantic Coast, but after the disabling of Gen. Joseph E. Johnston at the battle of Fair Oaks, in the Spring of 1862, he was recalled to Virginia, and placed at the head of the forces defending the capital, which he led through the remainder of the campaign of the Chickahominy. He engaged with the Army of the Potomac under his old companion-in-arms, Gen. McClellan, and drove it back to the Rappahannock.

"He afterward, in August, 1862 attacked the Army of Virginia, under Gen. Pope, and after driving it back to Washington, crossed the Potomac into Maryland, where he issued a proclamation calling upon the inhabitants to enlist under his triumphant banners. Meantime McClellan gathered a new army from the broken remnants of his former forces, and met Lee at Hagerstown, and, after a battle of two days, compelled him to retreat. Reinforced by "Stonewall" Jackson, on the 16th of September, he turned to renew the battle, but after two days of terrible fighting at Sharpsburg and Antietam, was driven from the



soil of Maryland. Retiring beyond the Rappahannock, he took up his position at Fredericksburg, where he was attacked, on the 13th of December, by Gen. Burnside, whom he drove back with terrible slaughter. He met with the same success in May, 1862, when attacked by Hooker, at Chancellorsville. Encouraged by these victories, in the ensuing Summer he determined to make a bold invasion into the territory of the North. He met Gen. Meade at Gettysburg, Penn., on the 1st of July, 1863, and after one of the most terrible and destructive battles of modern times, was driven from Northern soil.

"Soon after this, a new character appeared on the battlefields of Virginia, and Gen. Lee found it expedient to gather his forces for the defense of the Confederate capital against the determined onslaughts of Gen. Grant. In the Spring and Summer of 1864, that indomitable soldier gradually inclosed the City of Richmond as with a girdle of iron, which he drew closer and closer with irresistible energy and inexorable determination, repulsing the rebel forces whenever they ventured to make an attack, which they did several times with considerable vigor. In this difficult position, holding the citadel of the Confederacy, and charged with its hopes and destinies, Lee was made Commander-in-Chief of the armies of the South. He held out until the Spring of 1865, vainly endeavoring to gather the broken forces of the Confederacy, and break asunder the terrible line which was closing around them. After a desperate and final effort at Burkesville, on the 9th of April, 1865, he was compelled to acknowledge his defeat, and surrendered his sword to Gen. Grant on the generous terms which were dictated by that great soldier.

"Lee retired under his parole to Weldon, and soon after made a formal submission to the Federal Government. Subsequently, by an official clemency, which is probably without a parallel in the history of the world, he was formally pardoned for the active and effective part he had taken in the effort of the Southern States to break up the Union and to destroy the Government. Not long

after his surrender, he was invited to become the President of Washington University, at Lexington, Va., and was installed in that position on the 2d of October 1865.

"Since that time he devoted himself to the interests of that institution, keeping so far as possible aloof from public notice, and by his unobtrusive modesty and purity of life, has won the respect even of those who most bitterly deplore and reprobate his course in the rebellion."

About the Christian faith of Robert E. Lee, light is shed through this website:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-33/christianity-and-civil-war-gallery-of-fighters-of-faith.html>

Robert E. Lee's piety, morality, and compassion were apparent to all who crossed his path. As one historian has written, "Robert Lee was one of the small company of great men in whom there is no inconsistency to be explained, no enigma to be solved. What he seemed, he was—a wholly human gentleman, the essential elements of whose positive character were two and only two, simplicity and spirituality."

A "low church" Episcopalian all his life, Lee received religious training at home. He observed that his mother, who influenced him greatly, was "singularly pious from love to Almighty God and love of virtue." His father, "Light Horse Harry" Lee, had won fame in the Revolutionary War.

Lee daily read the Bible and prayed, and these lifelong practices were not greatly altered during the war. Unlike his Union

counterpart, General Grant, he was noted for self-denial and self-control.

President Franklin Roosevelt once declared, "We recognize Robert E. Lee as one of our greatest American Christians and one of our greatest American gentlemen." But Lee described himself as "nothing but a poor sinner, trusting in Christ alone for salvation."

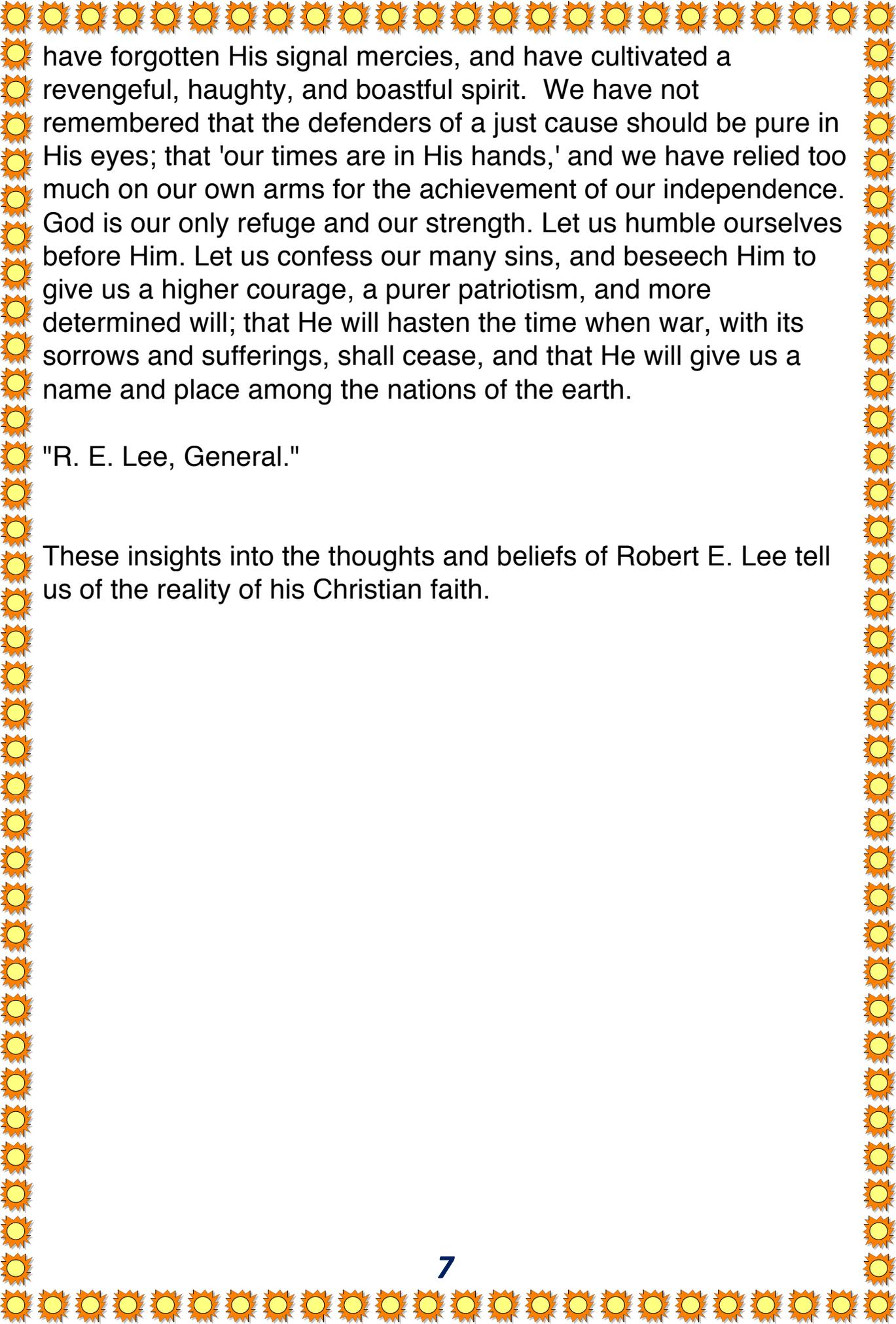
Another source describing the Christian faith of Robert E. Lee is:

http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/Lee_Religious_Views.htm

In studying Robert E. Lee for over 10 years, it has become crystal clear to me that Robert E. Lee was a devoted follower and humble servant of Jesus Christ. The teachings of Christ and the words of the Holy Scriptures shine forth in the walk and life of Robert E. Lee. Robert E. Lee was a man of Prayer and Devotion. In addition, his own writings demonstrate his profound faith. There is extensive documentation that Robert E. Lee was a man of faith, and a man of prayer.

"I, therefore, can anticipate for you many years of happiness and prosperity, and in my daily prayers to the God of mercy and truth I invoke His choicest blessings upon you." **Excerpt from a Letter from Robert E. Lee to his son dated 1867**

"The President of the Confederate States has, in the name of the people, appointed August 21st as a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. A strict observance of the day is enjoined upon the officers and soldiers of this army. All military duties, except such as are necessary, will be suspended. The commanding officers of brigades and regiments are requested to cause divine services, suitable to the occasion, to be performed in their respective commands. Soldiers! we have sinned against Almighty God. We



have forgotten His signal mercies, and have cultivated a
revengeful, haughty, and boastful spirit. We have not
remembered that the defenders of a just cause should be pure in
His eyes; that 'our times are in His hands,' and we have relied too
much on our own arms for the achievement of our independence.
God is our only refuge and our strength. Let us humble ourselves
before Him. Let us confess our many sins, and beseech Him to
give us a higher courage, a purer patriotism, and more
determined will; that He will hasten the time when war, with its
sorrows and sufferings, shall cease, and that He will give us a
name and place among the nations of the earth.

"R. E. Lee, General."

These insights into the thoughts and beliefs of Robert E. Lee tell
us of the reality of his Christian faith.

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