

## ROBERT E. LEE

. . . OF all the men I have seen he was the best entitled to the epithet of distinguished; and so marked was his appearance in this particular, that he would not have passed unnoticed through the streets of any capital. Reserved almost to coldness, his calm dignity repelled familiarity; not that he seemed without sympathies, but that he had so conquered his own weaknesses as to prevent the confession of others before him. At the outbreak of the war his reputation was exclusively that of an engineer, in which branch of the military service of the United States he had, with a short exception, passed his career. He was early sent to Western Virginia on a forlorn hope against Rosecrans, where he had no success, for success was impossible. Yet his lofty character was respected of all and compelled public confidence. Indeed, his character seemed perfect, his bath in Stygian waters complete; not a vulnerable spot remained; *totus teres atque rotundus*. His soldiers revered him and had unbounded confidence in him, for he shared all their privations and they saw him ever unshaken of fortune. Tender and protecting love he did not inspire; such love is given to weakness not to strength. Not only was he destitute of a vulgar greed for fame, he would not extend a hand to welcome it when it came unbidden. He was without ambition, and, like Washington, into whose family connection he had married, kept duty as his guide.

Nevertheless, from the moment Lee succeeded to the command of the Army in Virginia, he was *facile princeps* in the war, towering above all on both sides, as the pyramid of Ghizeh above the desert. Steadfast to the end, he upheld the waning fortunes of the Confederacy as did Hector those of Troy. Last scene of all at his surrender, his greatness and dignity made of his adversary but a humble accessory; and if departed intelligences be permitted to take ken of the affairs of this world, the soul of Light Horse Harry rejoices that his own eulogy of Washington, "first in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen," is now, by the united voice of the South, applied to his noble son.



## THE ACADIANS

THE upper or Northern Teche waters the Parishes of St. Landry, Lafayette, and St. Martins—the Attakapas, home of the “Acadians.” What the gentle, contented creole was to the restless, pushing American, that and more was the Acadian to the creole. In the middle of the past century, when the victories of Wolfe and Amherst deprived France of her Northern possessions, the inhabitants of Nouvelle Acadia, the present Nova Scotia, migrated to the genial clime of the Attakapas, where beneath the flag of lilies they could preserve their allegiance, their traditions and their faith. Isolated up to the time of the war, they spoke no language but their own *patois*; and, reading and writing not having come to them by nature, they were dependent for news on their *curés* and occasional peddlers, who tempted the women with chiffons and trinkets. The few slaves owned were humble members of the household, assisting in the cultivation of small patches of maize, sweet potatoes and cotton, from which last the women manufactured the wonderful Attakapas *cottonade*, the ordinary clothing of both sexes. Their little *cabanes* dotted the broad prairie in all directions, and it was pleasant to see the smoke curling from their chimneys while herds of cattle and ponies grazed at will. Here unchanged was the French peasant of Fénelon and Bossuet, of Louis le Grand and his successor, Le Bien-Aimé. Tender and true were the traditions of La Belle France, but of France before Voltaire and the encyclopædists, the Convention and the Jacobins, ere she had lost faith in all things, divine and human, save the *bourgeoisie* and *avocats*. Mounted on his pony, with lariat in hand, he herded his cattle, or shot and fished; but so gentle was his nature that lariat and rifle seemed transformed into pipe and crook of shepherd. Light wines from the Médoc, native oranges and home-made sweet cakes filled his largest conceptions of feasts; and violin and clarionet made high carnival in his heart.

On an occasion, passing the little hamlet of Grand Coteau, I stopped to get some food for man and horse. A pretty maiden of fifteen springs, whose parents were absent, welcomed me. Her lustrous eyes and long lashes might have excited the envy of the “dark-eyed girl of Cadiz.” Finding her



alone I was about to retire and try my fortune in another house; but she insisted that she could prepare "monsieur un diner dans un tour de main," and she did. Seated by the window looking modestly on the road, while I was enjoying her repast, she sprang to her feet, clapped her hands joyously and exclaimed: "V'la le gros Jean Baptiste qui passe sur son mulet avec *deux* bocals. As! nous aurons grand bal ce soir." It appeared that *one* jug of claret meant a dance, but *two* very high jinks indeed. As my hostess declined any remuneration for her trouble, I begged her to accept a pair of plain gold sleeve buttons, my only ornaments. Wonder, delight and gratitude chased each other across the pleasant face, and the confiding little creature put up her rose-bud mouth. In an instant the homely room became as the bower of Titania and I accepted the chaste salute with all the reverence of a subject for his Queen, then rode away with uncovered head so long as she remained in sight. Hospitable little maiden of Grand Co-teau, may you never have graver fault to confess than the innocent caress you bestowed on the stranger.

It was to this earthly paradise and upon this simple race that the war came, like the tree of the knowledge of evil to our early parents.