GENERAL FITZHUGH LEE, 1835-1905:
A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

Fitzhugh Lee was born on November 19, 1835, in Fairfax county, Virginia. He was the grandson of General "Light Horse Harry" Lee and the nephew of General Robert Edward Lee. His father, Sidney Smith Lee, served as a fleet captain under Commodore Perry in the voyage to reopen Jampan (1852-1854). His mother, Anna Maria Mason, was a granddaughter of George Mason, the author of the Virginia Bill of Rights.

In 1852, "Fitz" Lee entered West Point where he excelled in horsemanship but narrowly escaped dismissal for his pranks. In 1858, he was assigned to the Second Cavalry in Texas. As a subaltern under Major Earl Van Dorn, he distinguished himself by gallant conduct in actions against the Comanches. He returned to West Point as a cavalry instructor in 1860.

Lee opposed secession but when Virginia withdrew from the Union, he followed the examples of his father and uncle by resigning his commission. Thereupon, he entered the Confederate army and spent most of the war as a cavalryman

in his uncle's Army of Northern Virginia. As a trusted lieutenant of General "Jeb" Sturat, he participated in many of the notable cavalry operations. Perhaps his greatest service was at Chancellorsville, where he performed invaluable reconnaissance for General "Stonewall" Jackson. During the war, he proved to be skillful in tactics and reconnaissance and won a reputation as an active leader who conducted hard-hitting campaigns. He was promoted to major general on September 3, 1863, and ended his career by serving as senior cavalry commander during the retreat from Richmond to Appomattox in April 1865.

Following Appomattox, Lee engaged in farming in Stafford county, Virginia. In the 1870's, his conspicuous efforts to bring reconciliation between the sections were counterbalanced by his ardent defense of the generalship of R. E. Lee against all critics. In 1877, his wartime comrades failed to secure the gubernatorial nomination of the Virginia Conservative party for him, but, in 1885, the revitalized Democratic party selected Lee as its gubernatorial candidate.

As governor of Virginia (1886-1890), Lee devoted himself to bringing stability to state finances. In general, he allowed the Democratic-controlled legislature to make policy decisions while he remained aloof from politics. His tenure was characterized by an economic "boom," and Governor Lee was an active participant in the New South movement. After 1890, he headed a company which sought to establish a new industrial city in the Valley of Virginia but the enterprise collapsed

following the Panic of 1893. Concurrent with this economic setback, Lee unexpectedly failed to win the United States senatorial nomination by the Democratic state legislative caucus in 1893. His victorious opponent, Thomas Staples Martin, Jr., emerged as the undisputed leader of the Democratic "organization" in Virginia for the next quarter-century.

In April 1896, President Cleveland appointed Lee consul-general in Havana, where he performed duties of a diplomatic and military character in the midst of the Cuban insurrection against Spain (1895-1898). Although he believed only American intervention would restore peace, he tried to implement the Cleveland policy of non-intervention. His zealous defense of American interests aroused the ire of Spanish officials, but Republican President McKinley retained him in the post. In April 1898, following the declaration of the war against Spain, Lee received a commission as major general of volunteers in command of the Seventh Army Corps. His command did not participate in the fighting, but he served two years with the American occupation forces in Cuba where he worked to aid national recovery. He urged the granting of Cuban independence; however, he expected an eventual voluntary union of Cuba with the United States.

In 1901, he retired from the army and, in 1902, accepted the presidency of the Jamestown Exposition Company (chartered to promote the Jamestown Tercentennial Celebration of 1907). His death on April 28, 1905, cut short this last major venture.

GENERAL FITZHUGH LEE, 1835-1905:

A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

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Doctor of Philosophy

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August

1971

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INTRODUCTION

During his lifetime, Fitzhugh Lee witnessed not only the ordinary events of mankind but also more than a few of the epoch-making ones. He could well have posed the query of Aeschines, an ancient Athenian orator:

> What is there in the list of strange and unexpected events that has not occurred in our time? Our lives have transcended the limits of humanity; we are born to serve as a theme of incredible tales to posterity.[1]

Lee had the good fortune and the bad luck to participate in and, at other times, merely to observe one of the most fascinating periods of our history.

Born in 1835, he was a citizen of a young nation sparsely settled except along the Atlantic seaboard. The country's economy rested on agriculture, mostly subsistence, but with some immense tobacco, rice, and cotton plantations in the South. Although there were settlements west of the Mississippi River, the core of the nation consisted of the area between this river and the Atlantic Ocean. At his birth, America was engaged in one of the most turbulent political struggles since the formation of the Republic--the so-called "Bank War." Fitzhugh Lee, during his Biblical

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[1] Aeschines, "Oration Against Ctesiphon," 330 B. C., quoted by Gerald W. Johnson, Incredible Tale: The Odyssey of the Average American in the Last Half Century (New York, 1950), 2.

three score and ten years, was destined to see many great changes and struggles of which the Bank War was but a tame premonition. In the course of these struggles, and by the time of his death in 1905, Lee's America had become a territorial giant straddling the continent, a major industrial nation, and a world power.

As a boy, he watched his uncle (Robert Edward Lee) and father (Sidney Smith Lee) leave for Mexico to take part in the winning of an empire in the Southwest. Later, his father, by sailing into Yokohama Bay with Commodore Perry, contributed not only to the American transformation but also that of the world. As a young man, Lieutenant Fitz Lee journeyed to the West and viewed the beginning of a new civilization there. Fighting in the Indian wars, he was closely exposed to the opposition to change exhibited by the defenders of an Old Order. Soon after, in 1861, came the watershed of his life. He was intimately involved in the Civil War--the conflict which altered the way of life of a region, the nation as a whole, and, incidentally, of Lee himself. He fought for his beloved Virginia and the South until the death knell of the Confederacy sounded at Appomattox.

With his military career terminated by defeat, the resourceful ex-cavalryman engaged in a myriad of vocations. He was, at one time or another, a farmer, lecturer, politician, administrator, businessman, promoter, and diplomat. After the war, he first turned to farming. His family had roots

in the great antebellum planter aristocracy of Virginia, but he had neither the experience nor the resources of his ancestors. Nonetheless, for the next two decades he wrested his living primarily from the soil. These decades were eventful in his and the nation's life. As a Lee of Virginia, and therefore a Southerner with impeccable credentials, he gained recognition as an outspoken proponent of burying the sectional animosities which resulted from the Civil War. Moreover, he who hated politicians became active in the political arena. Elected governor of Virginia on the Democratic ticket in 1885, he attempted to elevate the status of his state and region both politically and economically. The Panic of 1893 ended his major involvement with the New South movement while, in the same year, his unexpected failure to win the Democratic United States senatorial nomination concluded his political career.

Despite these setbacks, Fitzhugh Lee reappeared on the national scene when he received the appointment of Consul-General in Havana from President Cleveland. He continued in that position under President McKinley and witnessed the origins and outbreak of the Spanish-American War. In 1898, he resumed his most beloved vocation--being a soldier. As the most prominent ex-Confederate general in the United States Army during this period, Fitzhugh Lee was a living personification of the reunion of the North and South. During his subsequent military service, he returned to Cuba as a member of the American occupation forces and then closed his career with a second tour of duty in the West. In 1902, he began his last public venture. As President of the Jamestown Exposition

he was devoted to illuminating three hundred years of American development. His death in 1905 cut short this final undertaking.

He was born a gentleman and died a gentleman, but his delightful digressions from dignity saved him from ever becoming pompous and stodgy. Even in old age he loved a joke--whether on himself or on a friend. In good times and bad, Lee exhibited an animated faith in himself and in his country. Above all, he remained a man--whether facing success or disaster. While one may question if Fitzhugh Lee was blessed with the spark of true greatness, one may certainly note that here was a man who acted his part to the best of his ability in many of the major events of his time.

I have incurred numerous obligations in the course of writing this dissertation. Without the generous cooperation of Mr. Fitzhugh Lee Opie, my biographical study of his great-grandfather would have been seriously jeopardized. Professor Edward Younger suggested the topic and patiently guided this work through its completion. In addition, I owe him a special debt for his many kindnesses to me and my family. I am further indebted to Mrs. Edna S. Hollis, who devoted countless hours to editing and typing. Finally, I appreciate the many years of encouragement and assistance lovingly bestowed by Vada, my long-suffering wife.

CHAPTER I

WEST POINT AND THE WEST

William W. Minor, Jr., a farmer in Albemarle County, Virginia, recorded the following entry in his diary on May 1, 1905:

> General Fitz Lee died very suddenly Saturday of paralysis on his way home from Boston. He was the leading General left from our war & one of the best loved & most useful citizens of the whole country which he has served faithfully & efficiently & most creditably to it & to himself in war & peace & war, still serving when removed by death. He was easily the best liked Southern man in all the North & West & the idol of the South & will be deeply lamented.[1]

The subject of this entry, although born into a great Virginia family, experienced many vicissitudes of fortune before he reached the stature attributed to him by Minor.

Fitzhugh Lee, the first of their six sons, was born to Sidney Smith and Anna Maria (Mason) Lee on November 19, 1835, at "Clermont," the Mason family estate in Fairfax County, Virginia.[2] The blood of two famous families flowed

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[1] Farm Diary, William W. Minor, Jr., Papers, University of Virginia Library.

[2] Lyon G. Tyler, (ed.) Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography (New York, 1915), III, 7; Frederick W. Alexander, Stratford Hall and the Lees Connected with Its History: Biographical, Genealogical, and Historical (Oak Grove, Virginia, 1912), 299-308.

in the new baby's veins. Smith was the second son of General Henry ("Light-Horse Harry") Lee by his marriage to Anne Hill Carter. Like his younger brother Robert Edward Lee, he followed his father's example and chose a military career, entering the United States Navy as a midshipman on December 30, 1820. In 1834, he married Anna Maria Mason, a daughter of General John Mason and a granddaughter of George Mason, the author of the Virginia Bill of Rights and a contemporary of Smith's father in the Revolutionary era.[3]

The marriage prospered and the family increased in size as Smith advanced in his naval career. His service on various vessels for long periods at sea was interspersed with interludes of shore duty at Annapolis, Philadelphia, and Washington.[4] While his younger brother was winning fame in the land battles of the Mexican War, Smith participated in the naval operations along the Mexican coast. By 1852, Commander Lee had sufficiently distinguished himself to be

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[3]Fitzhugh Lee to William F. Carne, June 19, 1878, Joseph M. Toner Collection, Library of Congress; unsigned typescript biographical sketches of S. S. Lee, Fitzhugh Lee Opie Papers, University of Virginia Library. (Mr. Opie possesses the largest collection of Fitzhugh Lee papers and has graciously permitted the author to use copies of the originals.)

[4]Biographical sketch of S. S. Lee, S. Bassett French Collection of Biographical Sketches, Virginia State Library; U.S. Department of Navy, Register of the Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the Navy of the United States for 1855 (Washington, 1855), 24-25.

chosen by Commodore Matthew Perry to command his flagship on the voyage that opened Japan to the western world.[5]

His father was in the midst of this promising naval career while Fitzhugh and his brothers were children. Since the family was frequently unable to accompany the father on his tours of duty, much of the Lee boys' childhood was spent at their Mason grandfather's home and in the general vicinity of Alexandria. While the accomplishments and activities of the two most important males in his life--his father and his Uncle Robert of nearby Arlington--made a vivid impression on the youthful Fitzhugh, there were long periods when his adult world was peopled primarily with females. His mother and Mrs. Anna Maria Fitzhugh, his widowed godmother who lived at "Ravensworth" plantation near Alexandria, were the adults with whom he was most intimate.[6] The ladies could not curtail his addiction to mischief-making, but they were successful in properly developing the boy's natural tendencies of courtesy, gallantry, friendliness, and generosity of spirit.

Fitz--as he was called by his friends--was intelligent but fonder of sports and boyish pranks than of his books. In a neighborhood private school, he became the terror of his austere tutor, the unfortunate Reverend Hugh Smith, for his

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[5]Samuel Eliot Morison, "Old Bruin": Commodore Matthew C. Perry, 1794-1858 (Boston, 1967), 219, 275, 290-299.

[6]As revealed in her letters from 1835 to 1870 in the Opie Papers, the remarkable Mrs. Fitzhugh was a source of strength for all members of the Lee family; see also Clifford Dowdey, Lee (Boston, 1965), 99, 102, 149, 612, 716.

proclivity to disobey school rules.[7] At the age of fourteen, the high-spirited Fitz was sent to St. Timothy's Hall, an Episcopal boarding school located at Catonsville, Maryland. The school was a pleasant institution and by May, 1850, Fitz was firmly established there. Writing to his godmother, he declared, "I like this school very much indeed," and proudly noted that he had advanced to the "senior department first class."[8] He was especially fond of the headmaster, the Reverend L. Pan Bokkelen, whom he called "Mr. Pan." Fitz liked his fellow students, and his gregarious nature was delighted with the number of kindred spirits at the school. His extracurricular activities were no more excessive than those of the other boys and took a constructive turn. Young Lee was also pleased with the school because he was only six miles from Baltimore, the home of various Lee relatives and family friends. His close proximity to Alexandria, which Fitz considered his hometown, precluded homesickness, and he could easily read the Alexandria Gazette "to hear how things are getting on in that part of the world."[9]

While exposed to the classics at St. Timothy's, young Fitz professed little interest in them and readily shunned Shakespeare for other drama and poetry, especially humorous

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[7]Typescript biographical sketch of Fitzhugh Lee by John William Jones, April 22, 1898, Opie Papers.

[8]Lee to Mrs. A. M. Fitzhugh, May 8, 1850, ibid.

[9]Ibid.

verse. He was exhilarated when a poet, a comedian, or an actor--rather than a scholar--gave the schools's regular Thursday night public lecture.[10] His great love during his stay at St. Timothy's was for those activities performed in the out-of-doors rather than scholastic ones. He relished parades, games, and sports, but his overwhelming preoccupation was with horses. Fitz was fascinated with horses and loved to ride them--this interest in all things equestrian would continue throughout his life. His letters of this period reveal that he particularly noticed the equestrian possessions of any person he encountered. His love of horses and an outdoor life, coupled with the family tradition, caused Fitz to dream more and more of becoming a soldier. His elation was boundless when President Millard Fillmore appointed him a cadet to the United States Military Academy on June 30, 1852.[11]

When he arrived at West Point in July, Fitz had not reached his seventeenth birthday. His four years at West Point were momentous ones in his development to manhood because of his impressionable age, the high caliber of instructions he received, and the individuals with whom he came into contact. At the Academy, he not only acquired the benefits of professional training for his future career

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[10] Lee to Mrs. A. M. Fitzhugh, May 10, 1850, ibid.

[11] Certificate of Fitzhugh Lee's appointment as Cadet, ibid.

but also assimilated permanent influences on his character from the system of values prevailing there. Near the end of his third year of attendance, Fitz realized the steps he had made towards maturity as he noted: "I entered this Academy a wild, careless, and inexperienced youth. I shall leave it a wiser and I hope a better man."[12]

During his first year at the Point Fitz was indeed "wild and careless." His love of fun and mischief, though contributing to his immense popularity with his fellow cadets, often brought him into unpleasant contact with the administrative authorities. Beginning with a mad dash across the Academy grounds on a vicious runaway horse named "Quaker," his feats and pranks were soon legion.[13] While his friendliness and escapades made him known as "that gay, gallant, great-hearted, generous Fitz Lee," his class standing (based on a combination of behavior and scholarship) plummetted.[14] Owing to his demerits, he ranked much lower than did his two closest friends, George Bayard and Lunsford L. Lomax; yet his scholarship was sufficient to keep him from joining his forty classmates who were forced to leave.[15]

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[12]Lee to Mrs. A. M. Fitzhugh, April 1, 1855, ibid.

[13]Joseph P. Farley, West Point in the Early Sixties (Troy, New York, 1902), 34-35.

[14]Jones' sketch of Lee, Opie Papers.

[15]George D. Bayard to his mother, July 1, 1855, printed in Samuel J. Bayard, The Life of George Dashiell Bayard (New York, 1874), 77; U.S. War Department, Report of the Secretary of War, 1855, House of Representatives, Executive Document No. 1, 34th Cong., 1st Sess., I, Part II, 220.

Cadet Lee's troubles increased when Colonel Robert E. Lee became Superintendent of the Academy on September 1, 1853. Colonel Lee frequently invited his nephew to dinner but was determined to show no favoritism in enforcing the rigorous rules. Twice Fitz was caught leading a group of cadets to Benny Havens, a popular nocturnal resort, for fun and frolic after taps, and twice Superintendent Lee impartially recommended his dismissal. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis overruled the advice of Academy authorities and, despite their protests, allowed him to remain.[16] His popularity with his fellow cadets contributed to his reprieves since they pledged their good behavior as collateral for his retention. While he was more fortunate than his dismissed comrades, Cadet Lee's social visits to his uncle's quarters became less frequent as a result of his punishments and restrictions. His cousin, Agnes Lee, wrote "I have not seen Fitz to speak to him for almost six months until a few evenings ago. He is so full of mischief he is always getting into trouble."[17]

Fitz's conduct began to improve after Robert E. Lee left West Point in March, 1855. This improvement and a resulting increase in his application to his studies were due to a number of factors. With the departure of his uncle whom he

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[16] Stephen Hess, America's Political Dynasties: from Adams to Kennedy (Garden City, New York, 1966), 70-71; U.S. War Department, Report of the Secretary of War, 1853.

[17] Agnes Lee's manuscript journal, quoted in Margaret Sanbor, Robert E. Lee: A Portrait, 1807-1861 (Philadelphia and New York, 1966), 221.

greatly missed, Lee experienced a twinge of guilt for his past conduct and vowed to apply himself more seriously: "Since I have been here I have not studied near as much as I ought to and have got a great many unnecessary demerits, but I begin to see 'the folly of my ways' and shall try to amend."[18] His interest in his classwork was enhanced because of the added emphasis put on cavalry tactics by Academy instructors during his last two years. Since he was eager for a choice cavalry assignment with Bayard and Lomax after graduation, he became increasingly aware of the policy that future assignments of cadets would be made from the basis of the number of demerits they received while at the Academy. He also applied himself especially to his favorite subject of cavalry tactics, managing to graduate with an over-all rank of 45 out of 49 cadets but first in horsemanship.[19]

Immediately prior to their formal graduation on July 2, 1856, Fitz and his two boon companions, Bayard and Lomax, journeyed to Washington and personally petitioned Secretary of War Davis for cavalry appointments.[20] When they were granted brevet second lieutenant commissions in the cavalry,

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[18]Lee to Mrs. A. M. Fitzhugh, April 1, 1855, Opie Papers.

[19]George W. Cullum, Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York (3rd ed.; Boston, 1891), II, 671-672; U.S. War Department, Report of Secretary of War, 1855, 248-251; Jones' sketch of Lee, Opie Papers.

[20]George D. Bayard to his father, June 8, 1856, printed in Bayard, Life of Bayard, 90-91, 94.

the three young officers enthusiastically celebrated their new status at a series of parties in Washington and Alexandria. Owing to his higher class standing, Bayard was promptly assigned to duty with the First Cavalry Regiment, an active unit in Kansas. Much to their chagrin but to the relief of their mothers, Lee and Lomax learned that they would not be going to the faraway frontier but to tame Pennsylvania. The first tour of duty for these disappointed cavalrymen was to be at Carlisle Barracks, the home of the Cavalry School for Practice.[21]

Being stationed at Carlisle and supervising the training of recruits was not an assignment relished by Lee, Lomax, and several of their fellow graduates. Yet the habit of command, precision in cavalry maneuvers, discipline, and familiarity with garrison life which Lee acquired there would stand him in good stead in subsequent phases of his military career. There were also immediate advantages to being stationed at Carlisle. He liked his principal duty of instructing recruits in horsemanship. Further, as a handsome young officer fresh from West Point, he participated actively in the social life of the post and the town and was soon the favorite bachelor.[22] His good nature and his polite manners

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[21] Ibid., 94-96; Lindsay Lomax Wood, (ed.) Leaves from an Old Washington Diary, 1854-1863, Written by Elizabeth Lindsay Lomax (Mount Vernon, New York, 1943), 54-57; Adjutant General's Office to Lee, August 22, 1856, Opie Papers.

[22] Thomas G. Tousey, Military History of Carlisle and Carlisle Barracks (Richmond, Virginia, 1939), 320-321.

contributed to his popularity with the townspeople, who were exceedingly kind to him.[23] The amiable life during his first months at Carlisle was interspersed with agreeable visits to Alexandria and other cities. In February, 1857, he and Lomax visited in the latter's home in Washington where they joined enthusiastically in the social life of the Capital and squired girls from one party to another. Fitz's personality made him popular with the young and old alike, and his host's mother recorded in her diary: "It is always a pleasure to have dear Fitz with us, he is so light hearted and gay--he will never grow up."[24] But this congenial life became less meaninful to Fitz in subsequent months. His complacency was jarred when Lomax was transferred in April, 1857, to the Kansas frontier where he joined Bayard in fighting Kiowa and Commanche Indians. Their experiences and adventures captured Fitz's imagination, but their hopes of getting him assigned to their unit were frustrated. Promotions continued to go to others and Lee was destined to be the last of the cavalry brevit officers in his class.[25] During his last six months at Carlisle, the young officer, eagerly awaiting his transfer, could only dream of the wild and exciting West.

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[23]Lee to Captain R. Miller, February 3, 1903, printed in ibid., 237.

[24]Wood, Lomax Diary, 64.

[25]Ibid., 70; Cullum, Biographical Register of West Point, II, 654; G. F. Bayard to his mother, December 6, 1856 and Bayard to his sister, December 18, 1856, printed in Bayard, Life of Bayard, 107-110. Fortunately for Lee, this was the last instance in which his many West Point demerits affected his military career.

Near the end of 1857, the fortunes of Fitzhugh Lee improved. He seized an opportunity to go to the frontier and to join what many cavalrymen considered to be an even better unit than the First Cavalry. On January 1, 1858, Lee was given a permanent promotion to second lieutenant and ordered to the Department of Texas to join the Second United States Cavalry Regiment.[26] His chance for glory had come at last! Traveling half-way across the continent, the twenty-two-year-old Virginian reached western Texas and found a world completely different from the one he had known all his life. The Texas frontier had been in a state of flux for a decade. The primitive land was filled with violence as Indian warfare neared its peak. "The Bloody Years" would be the phrase later used to characterize the years 1858 and 1859.[27]

When Lieutenant Lee arrived at Fort Inge for his initial orientation in February of 1858, he was promptly made aware of his elite unit's brief but proud history and its mission in Texas. Conditions on the frontier had been a direct cause of the formation of the Second Cavalry on March 3, 1855. Since the close of the Mexican War, the Army had been attempting to bring order to the western part of the state by maintaining

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[26]George B. Price, Across the Continent with the Fifth Cavalry (New York, 1883), 483, 600; Cullum, Biographical Register of West Point, II, 672.

[27]Avaram B. Bender, The March of Empire: Frontier Defense in the Southwest, 1848-1860 (Lawrence, Kansas, 1952), 131ff.; Walter Prescott Webb, The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense (Boston, 1935), 141-172.

a series of defense posts against Indian raiders. The original posts had been constructed in response to a resolution by the Texas legislature in 1848 asking Congress for the establishment of "a chain of military posts, in advance of the settlements, between Red River and the Rio Grande, and that said posts shall be removed from time to time as the settlements advance."[28] The resources of the Army were inadequate to garrison these temporary posts in Texas as well as those along the Northern frontier. At the insistence of Secretary of War Jefferson Davis and after much debate, Congress had authorized the addition of two regiments of infantry and, for service especially along the western frontier, two regiments of cavalry.[29] One of the cavalry regiments, the Second, was organized near St. Louis under the command of Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston in the summer of 1855. On October 27, the regiment had begun its long trek to Texas, and Colonel Johnston finally arrived at his headquarters in San Antonio on January 14, 1856.[30] When Fitz was assigned to it, the regiment had already established new

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[28]Hans P. N. Gammel (ed.), The Laws of Texas (Austin, Texas, 1898-1902), III, 206; Theophilus F. Rodenbaugh, From Everglades to Canon with the Second Dragoons (New York, 1875), 168-170.

[29]John F. Callan, The Military Laws of the United States, 1776-1858 (Baltimore, 1858), 428-429; Albert G. Brackett, History of the United States Cavalry, from the Formation of the Federal Government to the 1st of June, 1863 (New York, 1865), 140-168.

[30]Charles P. Roland and Richard C. Robbins (ed.), "The Diary of Eliza (Mrs. Albert Sidney) Johnston," The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LX (April, 1957), 466.

posts as the frontier rapidly expanded westward, abandoned the older ones, and distinguished itself in numerous campaigns against the Indians. However, much hard fighting remained to be completed before the Texas settlements would be safe from Indian depredations.

After his orientation at Fort Inge, Lee was transferred to Fort Mason. The latter post was commanded by Captain Edmund Kirby Smith, who impressed the young lieutenant as being an excellent officer.[31] This seasoned veteran also proved to be an able guide in helping the newcomer become quickly accustomed to his new environment. During his first few weeks at Fort Mason, Fitz learned the routine of Army life which prevailed at most of the small, semi-isolated posts in Texas. In May, his commander decided he was ready for more important duties. From May until September, 1858, Lee participated in the continuous patrolling operations of the Second Cavalry. On one patrol he traveled from the Rio Grande to Fort Smith, Arkansas, and back to Mason--a distance of over 1200 miles.[32] Privations and hardships were numerous on the frontier, but the exuberant young officer bore them well. He noted at the close of his first six months of

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[31]Lee to Mrs. A. M. Fitzhugh, September 15, 1858, Opie Papers. For the description and location of various forts, see Robert W. Frazer, Forts of the West (Norman, Oklahoma, 1965), 116-127, and Francis P. Prucha, A Guide to the Military Posts of the United States (Madison, Wisc., 1964), 46-47. (See Appendix for locations of the various posts where Lee served.)

[32]Lee to Maria Wheaton, September, 1858, Opie Papers.

patrol duty that thanks to a "splendid horse and a strong constitution," he was "none the worse" for his experience "except my face [is] a little more tanned perhaps, and my beard more of a mahogany color."[33]

His major problems were those age-old ones of soldiers who must serve far away from their homes--homesickness and loneliness. In an account of his travels in Texas to his godmother, he revealed his nostalgia for Virginia: "Newspapers are constantly praising the beautiful scenery, but I have been now nearly over the whole of this large state, on horseback too, . . . and I have never yet seen such scenery as I have in old Virginia--I am very lonely now indeed."[34] Fortunately, Fitz found many ways to mitigate his loneliness. His love of the outdoors and the endless opportunities to ride, hunt, and fish were crucial factors in keeping him from becoming depressed. His conviviality and wit also enabled Fitz to make new friends and gleefully join them in horseracing and other amusements. Further, his time-consuming and rigorous duties kept his mind from becoming overly preoccupied with visions of far-off Virginia. He was glad to be constantly on the go since movement allowed him to escape the pall of routine garrison duty. The young lieutenant was gratified at being expected to pursue Indian raiders on a moment's notice. The words he attributed to Mrs. Teresa Viele, a contemporary

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Lee to Mrs. A. M. Fitzhugh, September 15, 18585, ibid.

traveler who praised the cavalrymen in a book, caught his fancy and became his motto:

> Ours not to make reply
> Ours not to reason why
> Ours but to do and die.[35]

In the fall of 1858, Fitz engaged in more dangerous tasks. He took part in a duty called by cavalrymen "the rough service of the horse." He led a small party of troops, who were equipped with only the absolute necessities, on a long-range scouting and tracking patrol. Having no fixed direction, the group wandered over the prairies for nearly two months and sought Indian raiders to kill or capture.[36] However, his group was unsuccesful in confronting an Indian war party. Thus, near the end of his first year in Texas, Lee found himself reasonably acclimated to service on the frontier but still denied his coveted chance at combat. Since 1858 was a most opportune time for a soldier desiring a battle, lack of combat was particularly galling to him. More raids occurred in 1858 than ever before, but other soldiers were winning the laurels of confronting the raiders.

Fitz was given an assignment he earnestly desired when he was transferred in December to Camp Radziminski, Indian

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[35]Lee to Maria Wheaton, September 15, 1858, ibid. Mrs. Teresa Griffin Viele traveled along the frontier and described the soldiers' sufferings; see her Following the Drum: A Glimpse of Frontier Life (New York, 1858), 117, 222; Bender, March of Empire, 108-129.

[36]Lee to Mrs. A. M. Fitzhugh, September 15, 1858, Opie Papers; for a contemporary account of this type of scouting duty, see Richard W. Johnson, A Soldier's Reminiscences in Peace and War (Philadelphia, 1886), 124-125.

Territory, under the command of Brevit Major Earl Van Dorn.[37] The transfer was the initial step in the first great military adventure of Second Lieutenant Fitzhugh Lee. He was naturally delighted to serve under Van Dorn, who was considered to be one of the most successful Indian fighters in the Army.[38] Recent exploits of his new commander were well known to Fitz, and he had previously regretted being unable to share in them. In August 1858, against the band of Comanches led by Buffalo Hump, Van Dorn had begun a punitive campaign which culminated in a cavalry victory at the Battle of Wichita Village on the first of October.[39] Despite their losses, the Comanches were not sufficiently humbled to discontinue their depredations. Accordingly, when Army authorities made the decision to continue an aggressive policy against the Comanches, Van Dorn was granted permission to launch a new campaign to end the menace once and for all.[40] During the winter of 1858-59, the additional

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[37] Price, Across the Continent, 275, 483. Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) was a military sector of the Department of Texas. Camp Radziminski was established by Van Dorn in September, 1858; see Stanley F. Radzyminski, "Charles Radziminski: Patriot, Exile, Pioneer," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXXVIII (Winter, 1960), 354.

[38] Rizpah, "Cavalry Fights with the Comanches," The Magazine of American History, XI (February, 1884), 170-173.

[39] Van Dorn to Headquarters, Department of Texas, October 5, 1858, in U.S. War Department, Report of the Secretary of War, 1858, Senate, Executive Document No. 1, 35th Cong., 2nd Sess., II, 272-274.

[40] Robert G. Hartje, Van Dorn: The Life and Times of a Confederate General (Nashville, 1967), 68-74. Van Dorn favored a policy of extermination; for the ambiguity of Federal policy, see Clara L. Koch, "The Federal Indian Policy in Texas, 1845-1860," The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXIX (July, 1925), 98-128.

troops allocated to him--including Lee and Captain Kirby Smith--began to assemble at Radziminski.

Although Lee was familiar with the cavalry mode of campaigning, he was surprised at Van Dorn's extensive and minute preparations for the operation. At Radziminski, the junior officers were assigned the task of drilling the troops in commands and movements until a high state of precision was reached. In conjunction with his friend from West Point days, Second Lieutenant Manning M. Kimmel, and other junior officers, Fitz devoted numerous hours each day to getting the men in proper condition. Unlike his instruction at Carlisle Barracks, the results of his efforts here were expected to be soon visible on the battlefield. Since Lee was appointed adjutant for the proposed expedition, he was also responsible for many administrative chores.[41] As the general administrative assistant to Van Dorn, he was involved in preparing, distributing, and supervising the execution of orders designed to guarantee the expedition's success. Major Van Dorn seemed to adhere to the precept that any glory won under him would be accomplished with a corresponding degree of hard work.

At the close of the especially severe winter, the reservation Indians requested by Van Dorn to accompany him arrived. He shared the belief of other cavalry veterans

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[41] Van Dorn to General Twiggs, May 13, 1859, in U.S. War Department, Report of the Secretary of War, 1859, Senate, Executive Document No. 2, 36th Cong., 1st Sess., II, 365-366.

that "operations against the Comanches cannot be carried on with any effect, without the help of the friendly Indians as guides and spies."[42] With the Indian allies in his camp and the preparations of his men completed, Van Dorn waited for the fulfillment of the third prerequisite of a successful mission--favorable weather conditions. He finally selected April 30, 1859, as the day of departure. By that date the penetrating cold winds had subsided and the grass had reached sufficient maturity to sustain the horses and mules. Early in the morning, the six troops of cavalry moved out of their winter quarters and rode northward for their long-anticipated campaign.[43] The period of waiting for Van Dorn and his subordinates was over.

While serving under Van Dorn on the Washita Expedition, Lee was able to observe the tactics of a resourceful and skillful commander in confronting an enemy. Van Dorn practiced caution and guile during the first days of the expedition's progress. The friendly Indians and a few soldiers, used as scouts and guards, were placed as far as ten miles away from the main body of troops. Deception was also adopted to prevent any prowling spies of the hostile Comanches from observing the cavalry too closely. At sunset

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[42]William E. Burnett to his father, May 26, 1859, printed in Raymond Estep, "Lieutenant William E. Burnett: Notes on Removal of Indians from Texas to Indian Territory," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXXVIII (Autumn, 1960), 303-306.

[43]Edmund Kirby Smith to his mother, June 2, 1859, Kirby Smith Papers, Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina Library.

the main body would set up camp, apparently for the night, but with darkness the command to saddle up and remount would be given. After moving forward several miles, the force would finally make camp for the night.[44] Before these tedious, cautious movements became too monotonous for Fitz and the other young, inexperienced officers, the tempo of the campaign quickened.

On the fourth day out from Radziminski, a detachment on the flank captured a Comanche boy, who admitted that he was a member of a horse-stealing party from Kansas on its way to Texas. By threatening the youth's life, Van Dorn persuaded him to lead the troops to his village.[45] Although the Comanche strongholds were outside the jurisdiction of the Department of Texas, Van Dorn had permission to proceed as far as necessary to destroy them. The expedition reached the flooded Canadian River where the provision wagons were left behind in order to quicken the pace of the campaign. The troops crossed the treacherous river and resumed the march northward. The Cimarron was forded next as the expedition left Indian Territory and moved into Kansas. The Indian guides soon discovered a hunting party of five Comanches, gave battle, and killed one. On May 12, the cavalry column encountered the remains of several recently abandoned Comanche

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[44] Joseph B. Thoburn, "Indian Fight in Ford County in 1859," Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society, XII (1912), 318-319.

[45] Kirby Smith to his mother, June 2, 1859, Kirby Smith Papers.

camps in the valley of the Nescutunga Creek. Scouts discovered a large, fresh trail which the cavalry began to follow the next morning.[46] The trail was followed cautiously with the hope that the Comanches could be surprised in their camp as Van Dorn had done in his previous encounter with Buffalo Hump's band in 1858.

The crucial phase of the campaign began in mid-day. The men were resting under a few trees and the horses were peacefully grazing when the guards discovered three Comanches creeping up to stampede the horses. The guards gave chase and, in the pursuit, spied a large herd of Indian ponies. These horses were stampeded and word was sent to Van Dorn that a group of Comanches, now without horses, had taken refuge in the rugged terrain along a small creek. Van Dorn gave the command "to horse" and the main column moved forward at a gallop. Nearing the creek, Van Dorn divided his force into three squadrons of equal strength. A squadron was placed at each end of the small valley to block possible escape routes. The third squadron, to which Fitz was assigned, was to attack the Indians. At this point, Lieutenant Lee asked and received permission to lead a squad of men against the exposed flank of the Indian position. His force "gallantly charged" through the Indian lines and captured a few warriors

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[46]For the route of the expedition, see the map in J. W. Williams, "The Van Dorn Trails," The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XLIV (January, 1941), 334, 338-339. (See also the map in the Appendix).

and most of the women and children. His charge did not halt until a breastwork of logs was reached.[47]

Lee's charge determined that the position taken by the major group of warriors was "a remarkably strong one for defense, being in a deep ravine, densely covered with a stunted growth of timber and brambles, through which a small stream with abrupt banks, meandered from bluff to bluff on either side."[48] With this knowledge, Van Dorn quickly revised his strategy. Since it was impossible to catch a glimpse of a Comanche until one was within a few yards, the order was given to dismount and charge on foot. Fitz also took part in this second charge. The troops ran forward, sweeping down into the thickets with wild yelling and rapid firing. Officers were at the forefront, and Captain Kirby Smith fell wounded. Lieutenant Lee, "gallantly leading in the thickest of the fight," encountered an Indian crouched behind a log and shot him.[49] The Comanches slowly gave way before the onslaught and retreated into the depths of their stronghold for a last stand.

The next few moments of the battle were nearly fatal ones for Fitz. He later described these minutes to his worried parents as follows:

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[47]Hartje, Van Dorn, 72-73; Martin L. Crimmins, "'Jack' Hayes Story of Fitzhugh Lee's Indian Fight," West Texas Historical Association Yearbook, XIII (October, 1937), 40-49.

[48]Van Dorn's Report, May 31, 1859, in U.S. War Department, Report of the Secretary of War, 1859, 369-370.

[49]Kirby Smith to Captain S. S. Lee, May 14, 1859, Opie Papers.

> I was leading the charge through a dense thicket, had just shot and killed an Indian, and was within a dozen yards of them, dispatching another, he shooting and I shooting, a sort of duel. I had shot at him twice, one ball taking effect in his breast, had him down and was about to fire a third time, having my pistol raised, when an Indian about 10 yards on my right, shot me as I described, I fell, and was taken out of the thicket...[50]

After his removal from the thicket, the surgeons immediately began their seemingly hopeless efforts to save him. As the battle ended in complete victory, a group of soldiers gathered around expecting him--as Lee himself expected--to die shortly. Edward M. "Jack" Hayes, the sixteen year old bugler who had admired Fitz since their days together at Carlisle, tried to comfort him in his supposedly last moments. His chest wound caused the blood to come up through his throat and mouth, making breathing extremely difficult. However, salt water forced into his mouth checked the flow of blood.[51] When Lieutenant Kimmel arrived on the scene, Fitz began to rally and his zest for living reasserted itself. Kimmel mentioned that he had had a close call too and showed a bullet hole in his hat. Fitz's innate humor burst forth as he gasped: "Kimmel, do you wish me to believe that an Indian shot that hole in your hat! Acknowledge the corn, old man; didn't you go behind a tree and shoot the hole in your hat yourself?" After that remark, the onlookers were more hopeful that Fitz would recover.[52]

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[50]Lee to his parents, June 3, 1859, ibid.

[51]Thoburn, "Indian Fight," 323.

[52]Crimmins, "Lee's Indian Fight," 43-44.

Van Dorn assessed the battlefield results. In addition to Fitz and Kirby Smith, ten men were wounded and two were dead. The Comanches lost forty-nine warriors killed and five wounded with another thirty-six taken as prisoners. Learning that the Indians were definitely from Buffalo Hump's band, Van Dorn promptly left with four companies to continue the search for hostiles.[53] Although no more were encountered, the Washita Expedition had accomplished its mission. Major Comanche raids in Texas ceased until the Civil War commenced.[54]

The remaining two companies, under command of the slightly wounded Kirby Smith, stayed at the battle site with the wounded and prisoners. After waiting several days for the condition of the wounded to improve, they began the long journey back to Camp Radziminski--two hundred miles to the south. Fitz, due to the serious nature of his wound, was unable to ride on horseback and had to be placed on a mule litter. On the return march his spirits rose despite his severe pains, and he became a jolly but bored invalid. Addressing his friend, First Lieutenant George Cosby, he smiled and pleaded:

> Cosby, I wish you would have these mules changed and put the old gray in front. Every step he takes

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[53] Van Dorn's Report in U.S. War Department, Report of the Secretary of War, 1859, 366.

[54] Important cavalry engagements of the period and their significance are treated in Robert M. Utley, Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848-1865. (New York, 1967), 108-141. The battle of May 13, 1859, was probably fought at Crooked Creek, which Van Dorn erroneously called Nescutunga Creek.

> his muzzle comes within a few inches of my face and he flaps his long ears in a way that I don't like. Familiarity breeds contempt, you know, and probably the mule feels that way about it, too, but of course he can't say so.[55]

Cosby gleefully hitched the old gray mule in front of the litter thereafter. The caravan retraced its trail, picked up the wagons after crossing the Canadian, and reached its base two weeks later. Though Fitz had survived the return journey, he was still in a perilous condition.

By June 3, Fitz was able to be propped up on pillows and wrote a letter to his parents. He informed them that his recovery was now assured, "contrary to the expectations of the doctors, and a good many other persons including myself even, for....I have been as near to death's door, as it falls to the lot of a mortal to be, and still not enter."[56] Although writing was very painful for him, he hastened to alleviate their worries generated by the newspaper, letter, and word-of-mouth messages about the battle. He was even reported dead in some versions but all accounts were consistent on one item: Second Lieutenant Fitzhugh Lee fought bravely in the thickest of the fighting.[57] Thus his first great military adventure, which nearly ended in death for him, had established his fame as an Indian fighter. His baptism by enemy fire was over. He was now a hero!

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[55]Thoburn, "Indian Fight," 325.

[56]Lee to his parents, June 3, 1859, Opie Papers.

[57]Undated newspaper clippings, 1859-1860, ibid.; William E. Burnett to his father, May 26, 1859, printed in Estep, "Lieutenant Burnett," 303-306.

Fitz moved to Camp Cooper in September to complete his recovery. Here he assumed a few garrison responsibilities and impatiently waited for his strength to return. However, his narrow escape exerted a sobering influence on Fitz. He realized that he had been extremely lucky in the battle; if the day had not been a damp, rainy one, the arrow would probably have pierced him with sufficient force to kill.[58] He wrote to his godmother in a temporarily retrospective and philosophical mood:

> I can now scarcely realize that I have passed through such a severe ordeal. Indian warfare is not the most glorious in the world. Hard fighting after riding miles and miles through the hot sun, often suffering for the want of water and sometimes food, exposed alternately to the heat of the sun and the rains, and getting but little, if any, glory.

But Fitz brightened as he enumerated the advantages of a frontier soldier:

> I must say I like the life however. Apart from the excitement of catching Comanches, there is always fine hunting and fishing, the former of which I am very fond of, and always on scouts [patrols] from here, kill buffalo, deer, turkeys and grouse...Then again there are always plenty of horses, which is a great thing for me you know, and a good deal of my time is taken up in riding...[59]

His morale improved when he was assigned to an adjacent post, Camp Colorado, commanded by his old friend Kirby Smith. Here Lee resumed his full duties as a cavalry officer.[60]

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[58]Lee to his parents, June 3, 1859, Opie Papers.

[59]Lee to Mrs. A. M. Fitzhugh, September 1, 1859, ibid.

[60]Price, Across the Continent, 278; Kirby Smith to his mother, September 5, 1859, and December 24, 1859, Kirby Smith Papers.

Despite their defeats by the Second Cavalry, a few hostile Indians in small raiding parties continued to appear in Texas. From Camp Colorado, Lee regularly led patrols to capture any marauders in the surrounding countryside. Often the results were negligible, but Fitz won further praise and commendation for his success on a mission in January, 1860. In the midst of a Texas "norther" and snow-storm on January 14, word was received that an Indian raiding party had plundered a settler's ranch and driven off several horses. In the middle of the night Lieutenant Lee and his detachment, consisting of Bugler "Jack" Hayes, a non-commissioned officer, and twenty privates, left the post in pursuit of the Indians.[61]

The darkness and the drifting snow impeded their progress, but at last Lee's men found the raiders' trail. After daylight, they rapidly followed it. The Indians, wise in the ways of stealth and plundering, had started south and then circled northward, passing within five miles of Camp Colorado itself. About two hours before sunset, the detachment discovered a dead colt killed by the Indians for meat. Thereafter, the trail became easier to detect since the Indians, feeling safe, took fewer precautions to hide it. The exhausted detachment finally rested for the night after "having been seventeen hours in the saddle with the exception of one halt of an hour

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[61] Report of Fitzhugh Lee, January 20, 1860, printed in Martin L. Crimmins, "'Fitz' Lee Kills an Indian," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, XLI (May, 1937), 386-387; Kirby Smith to his mother, January 15, 1860, Kirby Papers.

and a half."[62] Lee, fearful of betraying their position to the Indians, decreed that no campfires could be built. After a breakfast of hardtack and frozen pork, the cold men renewed the pursuit.

At noon on January 16, young Hayes sighted two Comanches hastily driving a herd of horses forward. Having the advantage of surprise, Lee ordered the troops to shed their overcoats and extra equipment and yelled the command "charge." One Indian was killed instantly but the other, closely followed by Lee and four of his men, escaped to an adjoining woods. After trailing him for six or seven miles through hills and steep ravines covered with a thick undergrowth of cedar, the pursuing cavalrymen discovered his abandoned horse. The party divided and began the "dangerous and by no means easy task" of trailing the Indian on foot.[63] Nearly three hours later, the Indian suddenly ambushed Lee, who jumped aside and barely missed being pierced by an arrow. The arrow broke his carbine as it whizzed on through his coat sleeve. Fitz then pulled his pistol but the Indian grabbed the muzzle and prevented him from firing. In the struggle that ensued, the pistol was dropped and the combatants engaged in dangerous hand-to-hand combat. Fitz desperately tried to prevent the larger and stronger ambusher from using a knife. Young Hayes arrived on the scene but could not fire for fear of hitting

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[62] Lee's Report, January 20, 1860, in Crimmins, "Lee Kills an Indian," 386-387.

[63] Ibid.

his officer. An instant later, the savage was hurled to the ground with the young lieutenant landing on top of him. Lee managed to grasp his pistol, cock it, fire a bullet into the Indian, and then kill him with a second shot. Fitz casually remarked to the excited Hayes that the Indian's brute strength had almost been too much for him. Fortunately, he had remembered a wrestling trick known as the "Virginia back heel" in time to trip his opponent.[64] The detachment then rounded up the stolen horses and triumphantly returned to Camp Colorado.

His second encounter in combat again won Lee praise from his superiors and the public. Kirby Smith, his immediate superior, commended his display of energy and perseverance in tracking down the Indians and recovering the stolen horses.[65] Robert E. Lee, having become the commander of the Department of Texas, reported his nephew's performance as being an illustrative example in reducing frontier raids.[66] The press again devoted considerable attention to the budding hero. Though accounts varied, the newspapers agreed on a key feature of the incident: a young Virginian had confronted a stronger Comanche warrior in the wilderness and vanquished him.[67]

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[64]Alexander, Stratford Hall and the Lees, 307-308.

[65]Kirby Smith to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, January 20, 1860, printed in Crimmins, "Lee Kills an Indian," 388.

[66]U.S. War Department, Report of the Secretary of War, 1860, Senate, Executive Document No. 1, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., II, 195.

[67]Undated newspaper clippings, Opie Papers.

With this second display of leadership ability and bravery, Fitz eradicated any remaining stains from his low class standing and large number of demerits at West Point. As Commanding General Winfield Scott intimated in his public commendation of Lee, promotion would now come quicker and easier. Scott noted the "romantic interest" stirred up by the action but maintained that other results were also important. He emphasized, almost prophetically, that "altho' Lieutenant Lee's command was a small one, it served to exhibit qualities, on his part, which cannot fail to lead to like distinction in operations against an enemy at the head of a much larger force."[68] Lee's success in the Army was assured.

Lee continued to engage in patrolling and scouting duties during the spring and summer of 1860. Though there was little raiding, he was sufficiently occupied to forego a reunion with his lonesome Uncle Robert in San Antonio. His uncle knew that "the fine young soldier" would soon be granted a leave of absence to visit Virginia and then would probably be reassigned to West Point.[69] Fitz finally left Texas in November, 1860, after receiving orders appointing him an instructor in cavalry tactics at the Military Academy. This position was eagerly sought by many cavalry officers, and its bestowal upon him was regarded as a commendation for his

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[68]Winfield Scott to Secretary of War, February 14, 1860, printed in Crimmins, "Lee Kills an Indian," 388.

[69]Robert E. Lee to Mrs. A. M. Fitzhugh, June 6, 1860, Opie Papers.

recent achievements.[70]

Nearly three years of frontier service with the Second Cavalry left an indelible impression on the character of Fitzhugh Lee. He benefitted from serving in a regiment whose roster included these able soldiers: Albert Sidney Johnston, Robert Edward Lee, William J. Hardee, George H. Thomas, Earl Van Dorn, Edmund Kirby Smith, and John B. Hood.[71] Lee reached his maturity during these three years. He had abandoned his wildness and recklessness without losing his joviality. His keen sense of humor and love of life had not been sacrificed to his acquisition of self-discipline. Without diminishing his popularity, his geniality combined with firmness had won him increasing respect from both his fellow officers and his subordinates. He also had gained further astuteness in being a successful officer and a soldier. During his participation in cavalry operations, he had learned new lessons on the importance of training, planning, and leadership in military ventures. His innate courage had been proved in combat, but his tendency toward foolhardiness had been checked by his battlefield ordeal. He had come to Texas as an adventurous second lieutenant and he left as a competent veteran. His sojourn in the West had been rewarding indeed!

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[70] John W. Jones to J. R. Kean, December 27, 1905, enclosing a typescript biographical sketch of Fitzhugh Lee, Jefferson Randolph Kean Papers, University of Virginia Library.

[71] Brackett, History of the U.S. Cavalry, 145-152; Fitzhugh Lee, General Lee (New York, 1894), 53-54.

CHAPTER II

"THE POLITICIANS' WAR"

In the fall of 1860 Fitz Lee returned to Virginia to enjoy a leave of absence before reporting to West Point. During his furlough, he spent several weeks with his parents, renewed old friendships, and attended various parties and balls in Alexandria and Washington. His disposition was as "light-hearted and gay as ever," and Fitz thoroughly enjoyed recounting his tales of the savage, romantic West.[1] Life was good and he relished it. Unfortunately, the gaiety of Washington's social life--always intricately connected with its political life--receded as a major political crisis loomed before the nation. The talk of war if Lincoln were elected sometimes put a damper on Washington parties, and Fitz observed the subsequent pall over the capital after Lincoln's election. While staying with Lindsay Lomax's family in Washington, he became increasingly concerned with the talk of disunion which permeated the city. Mrs. Elizabeth Lomax was surprised at his moody behaviour, and her diary entry for November 12, 1860, noted: "Things look very ominous politically. Fitz Lee is again with us but not at all his

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[1] Wood, Lomax Diary, 131-132.

usual light-hearted, gay self. I have never known Fitz to have so little to say."[2]

An incurable optimist, Fitz's spirits brightened as he prepared to journey to West Point to assume his new duties. In December he returned to the Military Academy as an officer who, despite his relatively poor academic and disciplinary record as a cadet, had become one of its most successful recent graduates. On December 29 he commenced his duties as the assistant instructor of cavalry in the Department of Tactics.[3] His first few weeks were busy ones as he plunged wholeheartedly into being the type of instructor who participated in all phases of life at West Point. Most of the cavalry instruction fell directly to Fitz. The other faculty member charged with cavalry instruction was Brevet Major John R. Reynolds. Reynolds, an artilleryman, taught artillery tactics and also served as Commandant of Cadets.[4] Consequently, he had neither the training nor the time to do more than approve Lee's ideas, methods, and decisions. Lee's position on the staff thus proved to be stimulating but laden with responsibility.

Fitz soon enjoyed as wide a popularity at the Academy as he had had in his student days. In this instance his

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[2] Ibid., 133.

[3] George W. Cullum, Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York (New York, 1868), I, 45.

[4] Ibid., 42, 44-45.

popularity was more deserved for several reasons. Exhibiting his earlier geniality, courtesy, and love of high-spiritedness, he coupled these with a proper amount of firmness and discipline in dealing with the cadets. Perhaps the cadets could also view him as one who would be more sympathetic towards their pranks and failures than other instructors tended to be--for the cadets were well aware of the "shortcomings," openly admitted by Fitz, which he had exhibited during his student years. Moreover, his success in the West contributed to his stature and esteem in the eyes of cadets and even fellow faculty members. Young Lieutenant Lee became equally popular with the latter group. His colleagues were appreciative of the high caliber of his services, and as national tensions increased in the next few months, they steadfastly urged him to remain in the Army and serve at West Point.[5] Thus, for a number of reasons, by the early spring of 1861, "Fitz Lee was the most popular officer at the Academy."[6]

Unfortunately, the national crisis intensified during Lee's service at West Point. South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 20, 1860, and the states of the Lower South followed her example in the next six weeks. Virginia remained in the Union. Numerous Southern officers resigned their commissions, but Fitz held off from taking this rash action and followed the restraint of his father and uncle. Like

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[5]John William Jones' sketch of Lee, April 22, 1898, Opie Papers.

[6]Stephen E. Ambrose, Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point (Baltimore, 1966), 172.

them, he wished to retain whatever freedom of action remained to him after the dictation of events beyond his control. He was incensed that the New York newspapers in March listed him as one of the Southerners who had resigned and accepted commissions in the Confederate service. Writing to the Adjutant General on March 20, he enclosed one of the newspaper clippings and heatedly disclaimed "any knowledge or acceptance of any such appointment...I also wish to relieve myself from any suspicion of having accepted an appointment in one army, before my resignation had been tendered in the other."[7] While he realized that resignation might be his eventual course of action, he was determined to preserve his sense of honor and resign in a straightforward manner.

The unpleasant newspaper accusations were partially compensated for by his promotion to first lieutenant on March 31, 1861 (primarily due to the vacancies created by resignations of Southerners from the Lower South).[8] His congenial life at the Academy was further enhanced by the arrival of his classmate and old friend, George D. Bayard, who also was assigned as an assistant cavalry instructor.[9] Lee's happiness at West point was a source of strength for

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[7]Lee to Colonel L. Thomas, "Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General, Main Series, 1861-1870," Record Group 94, The National Archives, Washington, D. C.

[8]U.S. War Department to Lee, April 29, 1861, Opie Papers.

[9]Cullum, Biographical Register of West Point (1868), I, 45; see also, Bayard to his father, March 14, 1861, printed in Bayard, Life of Bayard, 183.

him in the ensuing months, but it also made his final decision all the more painful and heartrending.

By the beginning of April, the young officer from Virginia was indeed troubled and perplexed. A frank letter on April 8 to his mother reveals the uncomfortable position in which he found himself. First, he reassured her that he was not "talking secession" although he defended the South when he heard "something exceedingly hard and unjust." He was especially fearful that Lincoln's scheme to reinforce Fort Sumter would result in bloodshed and expressed his opinion that trying to restore the Union by reinforcing Southern forts was "a very shortsighted policy indeed." His personal inclinations also bothered him. Although admitting that he wanted to resign, he promised to wait for the decision of his father and uncle before taking that step. Above all, Lee voiced his puzzlement and anger with the course of recent events and correctly sensed that his life would be enormously affected by them. He could not refrain from blaming the political leaders for allowing the crisis to evolve towards probable war. With bitterness and remorse he unburdened himself:

> The Army, while it rather likes occasionally a little brush with a foreign foe, equally loathes the idea of civil war. And our only wish is to be allowed to stand aside and let the politicians who have got us into all this trouble fight it out. Were that the case--viz: those who gave the orders had the [responsibility of] executing them, the speck of war now visible upon the horizon would

> disappear. It is grand...to sit in offices far from the tumult and order others to fight![10]

Fitz's fears that reinforcing the Southern forts would lead to bloodshed were soon confirmed. The Confederates fired on Fort Sumter while United States troops were trying to resupply it on April 12. Thereafter Lee and his family, along with thousands of others, were helplessly overwhelmed by the tragic march of events. Lincoln issued a call on April 15 for 75,000 volunteers to squelch "insurrection," and Virginia responded by voting to secede on April 17 rather than wage war against her Southern sisters. On April 20, 1861, Colonel Robert Edward Lee regretfully resigned his commission.[11] His nephew at West Point, however, waited a few more days but soon realized his own resignation was also inevitable. Sectional feeling had begun to permeate even the Academy. On the day of Colonel Lee's resignation, some Northern cadets draped their rooms with paper flags, and Fitz aroused animosity by enforcing the strict regulations against all ornaments and ordering their removal.[12] The division was

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[10]Lee to his mother, April 8, 1861, Opie Papers. Many contemporary military men besides Lee blamed muddling politicians for the country's plight; see James G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction (2nd ed.; Boston, 1961), 215.

[11]R. E. Lee to Simon Cameron, Secretary of War, April 20, 1861, "Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General, Main Series, 1861-1870," Record Group 94, The National Archives.

[12]Tully McCrea to Belle McCrea, April 21, 1861, printed in Catherine S. Crary, ed., Dear Belle: Letters from a Cadet & Officer to his Sweetheart, 1858-1865 (Middletown, Connecticut, 1965), 82-84.

further intensified by the increasing number of officers and cadets who were resigning and leaving the Point; one cadet observed: "there has been such a stampede of cadets as was never known before."[13]

In the week following the flag incident, Lee finally decided that he must go to Washington and tender his resignation. The decision to leave West Point and the Army was probably the most painful one he ever made despite his lack of reservation in fulfilling what he felt was his duty towards Virginia. Nonetheless, it aroused an agony and sorrow in him which were sympathetically observed by his colleagues and the cadets. The best description of his departure and the status he enjoyed at West Point is by an Ohio cadet from the company commanded by Lee:

> On Friday night [April 26] the officers serenaded Lieutenant Lee who is a Virginian and has resigned because his state has seceded. He was the most popular officer that I have ever seen at West Point. He was liked by the officers, cadets, ladies, and in fact by everyone that knew him. It was a bitter day for him when he left, for he did not want to go and said that he hated to desert his old flag. But he thought that it was his duty to do as Virginia did. He was the commandant of my company and on Friday evening he came to bid us goodbye. He went to every room and shook hands with every one of us, with tears in his eyes, and hoped, he said, that our recollections of him would be as happy as those that he had of us. When he shook hands with me, I expressed my regrets that he was going away. He said that he was sorry to leave, but as he belonged to the other side of the line, it was time that he was going. On Saturday morning after breakfast the cadets gathered in front of the barracks to see him off. As he passed in the

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[13] Tully McCrea to Belle McCrea, April 27, 1861, printed in ibid., 87-89.

> omnibus we took off our hats and waved them as he passed. This may appear very natural and matter of fact to you, for you do not know enough about military usage to recognize the great difference that there is between an officer and a subaltern. I believe that it is the second time that I ever shook hands with an officer, although it is three years that I have been here.[14]

Lee stopped at Carlisle Barracks en route to Washington and said farewell to some friends in the Second Cavalry.[15] After reaching Washington, he consulted his father and they agreed with Robert that the Lees owed their first loyalty to Virginia. Fitz declared his intentions to the Washington authorities and went to Alexandria where, on May 21, he received the notification that his resignation from the United States Army was accepted.[16] The end of his Army career found him low in spirits and physically ill.[17] Yet once he made his decision, there was no attempt to hedge or procrastinate in his course of action. Sharing the devotion of his uncle and father toward their respective branches of the military

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[14] Ibid. Lee's departure so impressed another cadet, Morris Schaff, that it remained a vivid memory nearly fifty years later; see his The Spirit of Old West Point, 1858-1862 (Boston and New York, 1907), 202-205, 250. See also Farley, West Point in the Early Sixties, 71-72, and Ambrose, Duty, Honor, Country, 172.

[15] Mrs. R. E. Lee to R. E. Lee, May 9, 1861, and Eleanor Agnes Lee to Anne Carter Lee, May 10, 1861, Lee Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

[16] C.S.A. War Department to Lee, April 3, 1861, and U.S. War Department to Lee, May 21, 1861, Opie Papers.

[17] Eleanor Agnes Lee to Mildred Childe Lee, May 23, 1861, Lee Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

service, Fitz loved the Army but felt an even higher loyalty to Virginia. He wholeheartedly intended to meet the obligations entailed by that loyalty and promptly offered his services to the Virginia forces commanded by Robert E. Lee. Previously he had declined a Confederate commission but on the day his resignation was confirmed, he accepted a lieutenancy in the Virginia cavalry.[18] For the next four years, Fitzhugh Lee devoted his abilities to the defense of Virginia and the Confederacy. His ardour for "Southern Independence" was to be unshaken and undiminished until the end came at Appomattox. Though he deplored both the Northern and Southern politicians for allowing sectional differences to degenerate into armed hostilities, once the die was cast he was unswerving in his loyalty to his state and section.

Fitz had little time for rest and relaxation after his resignation. Events were moving at a fervid pace and his destiny, like that of his nation, seemed to be in the hands of others. His initial days in the First Virginia Cavalry were filled with desperate efforts to secure the personnel and equipment necessary for the Commonwealth to defend her soil. A great battle loomed in the offing after Lincoln and Davis called for volunteers, and Virginia anxiously sought to outfit her own armies to augment the forces of her Confederate allies. Governor Letcher and the Secession Convention placed

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[18]Fitzhugh Lee Records, "Compiled Service Records of Confederate General and Staff Officers, & Non-Regimental Enlisted Men," Record Group 109, The National Archives.

this task in the hands of Fitz's uncle. It was not until June 8, 1861, that Fitz and other Virginia soldiers came under the command of the Confederate Government.[19] Though there were several skirmishes between independent Virginia forces and Federals before that date, Fitz did not take part in the battles. His participation in the fighting did not commence until July 21 at the Battle of First Manassas (Bull Run), the first major confrontation between Confederate and Federal forces. Unfortunately, according to his point of view, he missed most of the heavy fighting since General P. G. Y. Beauregard utilized him for staff duty and assigned him as acting adjutant for General Richard S. Ewell.[20]

Cavalryman Lee, however, had little desire to serve on a staff--he preferred an assignment where he could engage directly in the fighting. After Manassas, when it became widely realized that the war might not end in a few days, the need for further expansion of the cavalry was obvious to many; consequently, good officers were in demand and Fitz had no trouble in securing an active command. General Joseph E. Johnston, the commander of Confederate forces in Virginia,

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[19]R. E. Lee to his wife, June 9, 1861, Lee Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society; see also F. N. Boney, John Letcher of Virginia: The Story of Virginia's Civil War Governor (University of Alabama, 1966), 119-41.

[20]U.S. War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington, 1880-1901, 70 vols. in 128), II, 538; (hereafter cited as Official Records and referring to the First Series unless otherwise noted.)

strongly recommended him: "For the lieutenant colonelcy I strongly repeat my recommendation of Captain Fitzhugh Lee. He belongs to a family in which military genius seems an heirloom. He is an officer of rare merit, capacity, and courage."[21] On September 27, 1861, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel in the First Regiment of Virginia Cavalry commanded by Colonel J. E. B. Stuart.[22] Thereafter, for the duration of the war, Fitz was to be engaged in leading fighting units rather than serving in a staff capacity. In the Confederate cavalry Lee found his niche for war service and was indeed fortunate in attaining it in the relatively short time between May and September. Other officers in both the Confederate and Federal Armies were less fortunate--for example, Fitz's Uncle Robert--since the early period of the war was characterized by organizational chaos, personnel problems, and numerous personality conflicts. He reported to Colonel Stuart on September 30 and thus joined the nucleus of the cavalry arm of the future Army of Northern Virginia.[23] Fitzhugh Lee would serve for the duration in this most famous of Confederate armies.

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[21] Ibid., V, 181. (September 14, 1861).

[22] Commission as Lt. Col. of Cavalry to Fitzhugh Lee from Commonwealth of Virginia, September 27, 1861, Opie Papers; Special Orders No. 289, Confederate War Department, September 27, 1861, copy in ibid.

[23] Thomas G. Rhett to Lee, September 30, 1861, ibid. The term "Army of Northern Virginia" was not generally used until General Robert E. Lee assumed command in 1862.

Fitz promptly set about winning his laurels by his own merit and performance. The name he bore had obvious advantages--especially after his uncle became the commander of the Army of Northem Virginia--but it also had a disadvantage. Some contemporaries felt that the host of Lees serving in high positions derived from the family's past accomplishments and present connections.[24] But Fitz proved himself a successful and resourceful cavalry officer while R. E. Lee was still overshadowed by General Johnston. On November 18 he first led a detachment of the First Virginia into battle. In skirmishes at Falls Church and Fairfax near the Washington defense lines, his force surprised the Federal cavalry and captured prisoners and supplies. Winning Stuart's "unqualified praise and commendation" for his success in these engagements, Fitz began a long period of working closely with Stuart and serving as one of the most successful and dependable officers in the cavalry.[25] Until Stuart's death in 1864, this harmonious association was to be as successful--though not so publicized--as that between Robert E. Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson. Fitz was indeed fortunate in serving under Stuart, who not only inspired him but also granted him adequate leeway to make the fullest use of his initiative. While

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[24]For example, see the diary entry for August 8, 1861, in Mary Boykin Chestnut's A Diary from Dixie, edited by Ben Ames Williams (Boston, 1949), 107. Fitz and his family, in addition to their Lee kinsmen, were related to the late George Mason of colonial fame, ex-U.S. Senator James Mason, and Samuel Cooper, Inspector General, C.S.A., the senior Confederate general.

[25]Official Records, V, 442-443.

Stuart was a superb strategist as well as a good tactician, especially in offense, Fitz complemented the team by being a reliable subordinate, an able battle tactician, and a determined fighter. He also became the cavalry's expert in delaying and blocking tactics--an ability that rose in importance as the Army of Northern Virginia was steadily weakened by a horrible and ceaseless attrition. The Stuart and Lee duet was destined to participate in most of the great battles of that justly renowned army.

The continuing expansion of the Confederate armies, and of the cavalry in particular, brought about promotions for many officers and the assignment of additional ones. These personnel changes required time to be assimilated if the cavalry were to operate as an efficient organization. In September 1861 Stuart was promoted to brigadier general and William E. ("Grumble") Jones succeeded him as colonel of the First Virginia.[26] Jones heartily disliked Stuart (and consequently his protégé, Fitz) but was equally disdained by the men of the regiment. Stuart found it difficult to coordinate effectively with Jones and preferred to utilize Fitz whenever possible in dealing with the regiment. This awkward situation was not terminated until April 1862. The exasperated men held an election and designated Lee as Colonel with only four dissenting votes. His election was a confirmation of his esteem in the eyes of the well-liked Stuart and also

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[26] Ibid., LI, Pt. 2, 316, 320.

demonstrated the respect and confidence which his subordinates held for him. Most important, the men of the First Virginia had selected Lee as the commander to lead them into the battles awaiting them.[27]

The first major operation in which Colonel Lee acted as Stuart's trusted lieutenant occurred in June 1862 during the Peninsular Campaign. The Federal forces of McClellan were before Richmond facing the Confederates under General Robert E. Lee, who had assumed command on June 1, 1862. General Lee assigned to Stuart the task of reconnoitering the right flank and rear of McClellan's position and gave him detailed instructions concerning the pertinent information desired.[28] Though the Commanding General was not receptive to Stuart's grandiose proposal of a circular ride around McClellan, much leeway was left for the cavalryman to execute his instructions.[29] Stuart picked 1,200 of his best troops and designated Fitz as his second-in-command. The expedition started northward from Richmond on June 12 with Lee and his regiment leading the column. Reaching the Pamunkey River safely, they turned southeast to begin a route that would circle McClellan's force and lead to a return to Richmond from the south. Fitz

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[27]Douglas Southall Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command (New York, 1942), I, 279-280; Edward A. Pollard, Lee and His Lieutenants (New York, 1867), 552. W. W. Blackford, in his War Years with Jeb Stuart (New York, 1945), noted "the contrast between our ugly, surly Colonel [Jones] and our handsome, dashing Lieutenant Colonel Lee," 50-51.

[28]Official Reports, XI, Pt. 3, 569, 590-591.

[29]Ibid., Pt. 1, 1038.

and Stuart's other lieutenants caught their commander's enthusiasm for the audacious but dangerous reconnaissance plan. On the second day they came in contact with several Union soldiers but captured only a few. It was ironic that several of these captives rushed to Fitz with grins of recognition and shouts of "Lieutenant." The captives were members of the Fifth United States cavalry, formerly the Second, and had served under him in his Texas service days. Colonel Lee of the Confederate Army had an excellent visit with the Federal prisoners and much news and gossip were exchanged concerning old friends of former days.[30] This congenial visit occurred despite the precarious position of Lee and the other Confederates deep behind enemy lines--the war had not yet become so deadly grim. After this nostalgic encounter Fitz nonetheless determined to defeat his old regiment, and Stuart granted him permission to attack. The First Virginia rushed forward but the Federal cavalry had completely fled, although numerous supplies were left behind. Fitz's troopers--ever practical--took a keg of whiskey and burned the remainder of the camp.[31] After several other skirmishes, the column reached the Chickahominy River on June 15. Fitz and five of his men were the last to cross to safety, just as Federal pursuers opened fire. While Stuart hurried on to report to General Lee, Fitz was left to lead

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[30] Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, I, 285.

[31] Ibid., 286.

the column back to Richmond. On June 16, the cavalry rode into Richmond to receive a conqueror's welcome.[32]

The results of this ride around McClellan's forces were several-fold. In the first instance, invaluable military intellignece was gained on the disposition and supply routes of the Union army. Primarily on the basis of Stuart's report, General Lee determined to bring "Stonewall" Jackson's troops from the Valley and then attempt to drive McClellan away from Richmond.[33] This offensive, known as the Seven Days' Battles, started on June 25 and resulted in the removal of an immediate threat to Richmond although McClellan escaped.[34] Other results were less tangible and more long-range but no less important. The cavalry had successfully been used by General Lee in his first major campaign and thereafter it was to remain a vital component of the remarkable organization Lee assembled. The ride was an invaluable experience in working together in perilous situations for Stuart and his subordinates. In particular, Fitz, who matched Stuart in daring and boldness, and his commander developed an affinity for close cooperation and harmonious teamwork. The ride contributed immeasurably to the high esprit de corps of the

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[32]G. W. Beale, A Lieutenant of Cavalry in Lee's Army (Boston, 1918), 31.

[33]Douglas Southall Freeman, R. E. Lee: A Biography (New York, 1934), II, 100-104.

[34]Mark M. Boatner, III, The Civil War Dictionary (New York, 1959), 633-634.

cavalry in general. In addition, Stuart's exploit caught the fancy of the Southern people and brought fame to him and his troops.[35]

Fitzhugh Lee also won a measure of fame for his expolits during "the ride" and in the subsequent Seven Days' Battles. Stuart praised him and recommended his promotion for his distinguished service. "In my estimation," Stuart wrote to General Lee, "no one in the Confederacy possesses more of the elements of what a brigadier of cavalry ought to be."[36] In the general reorganization of the Confederate forces in northern Virginia in July, Fitz was promoted to Brigadier General at the age of 27.[37] He was given the second brigade of cavalry with five Virginia regiments--the First, Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Ninth--under his command. These troops were to be the core of the forces subsequently led by Lee until Appomattox.[38] With his promotion, Fitz continued to be closely associated with Stuart (by now a major general), and the young brigadier performed with sufficient merit to be

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[35]William P. Show, Southern Generals, Their Lives and Campaigns (New York, 1867), 380-382.

[36]Official Records, XI, Pt. 1, 1041.

[37]C.S.A. War Department to Lee, July 25, 1862, and Stuart to Lee, July 28, 1862, Opie Papers; Fitzhugh Lee Records, "Compiled Service Records of Confederate General Officers," Record Group 109, The National Archives.

[38]Official Records, XI, Pt. 3, 657; Special Orders No. 165, Department of Northern Virginia to Fitzhugh Lee, July 28, 1862, Opie Papers.

commended even by the Commanding General of the Army of Northern Virginia.[39]

In August 1862 the efficiency of the new cavalry organization was not as finely honed as it would later become. At the beginning of those movements against General Pope (McClellan's successor) which resulted in the Second Battle of Manassas, the remaining rough edges of the Stuart-Lee team appeared and a nearly disastrous misunderstanding occurred. Young Lee, upon becoming a general, had gained an added independence, and lost none of his boldness; but initiative on the part of a subordinate usually pleased Stuart. However, at the opening of the campaign against Pope, Fitz used the discretion allowed him to the fullest and failed to arrive at Raccoon's Ford near the Rapidan River on August 17, the place and time that Stuart had indicated. From that point, Stuart hoped to launch a movement that might eventually trap Pope. Stuart was greatly disappointed with Fitz and strongly believed that the trap envisioned by himself and General R. E. Lee would have succeeded if Fitz and his troops had arrived on time.[40] Instead, Pope escaped while "Jeb" Stuart lost his temper and unjustly lambasted his favorite lieutenant. The

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[39] R. E. Lee refrained from mentioning his relatives in laudatory orders whenever possible during the early months of his command; for example see Official Records, XI, Pt. 1, 1042. However, he exhibited a private proudness in his nephew's accomplishments and wrote Fitz's father: "I consider him one of our best cavalry officers." in R. E. Lee to S. S. Lee, July 31, 1862, Opie Papers.

[40] Official Records, XII, Pt. 2, 725-726; ironically, Pope had begun to retreat on the sixteenth; see ibid, Pt. 3, 940.

delay was probably as much Stuart's fault as anyone's because of his vague verbal orders to Fitz.[41] Stuart's ire was raised by the fact that he himself had nearly been captured and indeed his plumed hat was seized by Federal raiders. Fitz wisely ignored the intemperate criticism and the flareup was soon forgotten by all concerned parties.[42] The incident is illustrative of the frictions and disappointments that occasionally arose in the trying circumstances of the War. What is remarkable is that this was the last major criticism voiced by Stuart against his closest subordinate. Thereafter, Stuart's and Lee's camaraderie grew and their efficiency in battle increased. Their personal relationship was even strengthened, and they generally rode together whenever possible while "their songs and peals of laughter could often be heard far down the column."[43]

If Fitz had severely disappointed Stuart in mid-August, he would more then redeem himself in the next few days. He

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[41] Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, II, 61; Fitzhugh Lee, General Lee, volume in The Great Commanders Series, ed. James G. Wilson (New York, 1894), 183. Unknown to Stuart, Fitz was having difficulties with his exhausted horses and promptly notified General Lee of his problem; see Official Records, XII, Pt. 3, 934.

[42] Henry B. McClellan, The Life and Campaigns of Major-General J.E.B. Stuart, Commander of the Cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia (Boston and New York, 1885), 91.

[43] Major Robert W. Hunter, "Fitzhugh Lee. An Address Delivered on Fitzhugh Lee Day at the Jamestown Exposition," Southern Historical Society Papers, ed. by R. A. Brock, XXXV (1907), 143.

joined Stuart in the daring raid of August 22-23 on Pope's headquarters which cost the Federal general his personal papers and baggage. Fitz made certain that Stuart received the Yankee's coat to compensate for the recent loss of his hat.[44] More important, this raid at Catlett's Station gave General (Robert) Lee vital information enabling him to initiate the decisive maneuvers of the Second Manassas campaign. In that battle, Fitz and his brigade "rendered most important and valuable service" and received the praise of his uncle and even Stuart.[45]

After inflicting a tactical defeat on Pope and forcing his withdrawal towards Washington, the Army of Northern Virginia moved northward to carry the war to the enemy's country. The Army advanced rapidly but eventually encountered Federal forces and fell back to the vicinity of Sharpsburg, Maryland. During the night of September 13-14, Fitz superbly covered the withdrawal of the forces under Longstreet and D. H. Hill and after the Battle of Sharpsburg (Antietam) performed the same task again when the Army recrossed the Potomac River. For these covering operations he rivaled Stuart in the praise received from the Commanding General, but "Jeb" exhibited no jealousy of the chief of his second brigade and himself warmly praised Fitz.[46]

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[44] Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, II, 71-72.

[45] Official Records, XII, Pt. 2, 558, 726.

[46] Ibid., XIX, Pt. 1, 147, 148, 151, 810 and 820.

After Sharpsburg the cavalry corps of the Army of Northern Virginia assumed a more or less permanent model of organization. Directly under Stuart, Fitz and Wade Hampton divided the regiments equally between them.[47] Unfortunately, Hampton did not achieve the close kindred spirit shared by Stuart and Fitz. Stuart was less warm in his praise for Hampton than for his fellow Virginian, and Hampton eventually became jealous of Lee.[48] This jealousy dampened the relations of the three chief cavalrymen, but since Hampton generally muted his criticisms of Fitz, the three managed to work together fairly harmoniously from Sharpsburg to Gettysburg. During this period the cavalry performed exemplary service with the increasingly outnumbered and hard-pressed--but usually victorious--Army of Northern Virginia. Fitz shared in these cavalry successes and won additional renown for his specific achievements. His successful attack at Kelly's Ford on March 17, 1863, and his invaluable reconnaissance prior to the Battle of Chancellorsville were highly praised by Uncle Robert and Stuart.[49]

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[47] Ibid., XII, Pt. 2, 550. General Beverly Holcombe was given some Virginia regiments to form a third brigade, which was sent to North Carolina.

[48] For example, see ibid., XIX, Pt. 1, 817-819 and Chestnut, Diary from Dixie, 395-396, 405.

[49] Official Records, XXV, Pt. 1, 58-59, 889, and Pt. 2, 686. In these two engagements, Fitz Lee demonstrated the boldness, daring, and resourcefulness that characterized his cavalry career. At Kelly's Ford, the advancing Federal forces were thrown into disarray when Lee, although heavily outnumbered (2,100 to 800), launched a strong surprise attack which stopped the advance and led to the eventual Federal withdrawal. At Chancellorsville, Lee's troops not only guarded Jackson's maneuver from the right to the left of the Confederate positions but also found the best point for Jackson to launch his heavy attack against the Federal right flank.

Coincident with his success on the battlefield, Brigadier General Fitzhugh Lee attained the final style and character of leadership that he retained as long as he was a soldier. Although his experiences since the War began had naturally tempered and seasoned him, much in his manner was similar to that which he had exhibited in his Texas days. The successful techniques of command acquired there while leading a platoon were refined by him for leading his brigade. His tactfulness and competency, enhanced by his natural gaiety, were pleasing qualities to his superior officers. From his equals and subordinates Fitz commanded respect while winning their affection.[50] Even Hampton, despite his professional jealousy, liked Fitz personally. Lee developed a remarkable rapport with his men in the ranks. His discipline, while not stern, was adequate. Their confidence in him was of such a caliber that his men willingly followed him on daring and dangerous escapades. In addition, Fitz was instrumental in building an esprit de corps within his brigade that sustained it through all the discouraging times until Appomattox. He constantly praised and encouraged both his officers and enlisted men for their services, individually and

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[50] Charles Minnigerode, an aide to Fitz, wrote: "He is such a nice little fellow. I love him like the mischief," Minnigerode to his mother, September 6, 1863, printed in Marietta Minnigerode Andrews, Scraps of Paper (New York, 1929), 139-140. Fitz, ever conscious of his youth, allowed his beard to grow longer in an attempt to appear older.

collectively.[51] In doing so, he helped instill in them personal and unit pride.

Probably the most outstanding characteristic of Lee's personality during the war years was his continued gaiety and high-spiritedness. Even in the midst of numerous trials and tribulations, he retained an optimism and a zest for enjoying life. On friend and foe alike, he still enjoyed pulling a prank. An anonymous writer in 1862 described Fitz as "ruddy and laughing, his eyes bright, penetrating, and full of humor," and as a general who, "rode to battle with a smile on his countenance and a joke or a song on his lips, while his camp was always made the abode of music, fun, and frolic."[52] For his levity and the escapades of his men, Fitz was sometimes criticized by civilians at home but seldom by soldiers in the field.[53] While allusions were occasionally made to Fitz's

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[51] Official Records, XI, Pt. 1, 1042-1043 and XXV, Pt. 1, 62. Regarding discipline, General (Robert) Lee was not especially pleased with either his nephew or Hampton: "I should admire both more if they were more rigid in their discipline, but I know how difficult it is to establish discipline in our armies and therefore make allowances." Ibid., XXVII, Pt. 3, 1069.

[52] Quoted in Jones' Biographical Sketch of Lee, Opie Papers; see also Benjamin LaBree, ed., Camp Fires of the Confederacy (Louisville, Ky., 1898), 37-40, 227.

[53] Chestnut, Diary from Dixie, 396. Like many other cavalrymen, Fitz found time for the ladies in the midst of war and usually impressed them with his dashing gallantry and devil-may-care manner. See Andrews, Scraps of Paper, 110, 112, 119; Mrs. Burton (Constance Cary) Harrison, Recollections Grave and Gay (New York, 1911), 98-103, 174, 177, and Fitz to Agnes Lee, January 8, 1865, Lee Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

seeming impropriety, in reality no one was more aware of the agony and suffering of the war than Lee. Writing to his mother in June 1862, he sincerely regretted the "horrors of war" but expressed the practical belief that one must become accustomed to them in order to continue the effort.[54] Moreover, he exhibited much sympathy towards the suffering of men on both sides, especially the wounded, and tried to alleviate their misery whenever possible. His attempts at levity were often merely one manifestation of this compassion. In balance, Fitz Lee's natural gaiety was an integral part of his general leadership ability. This characteristic was an invaluable quality to possess as he led his men under increasingly adverse conditions and contributed in no small measure to the high morale of the cavalry during the last years of the war.

During the winter of 1862 and spring of 1863, Lee participated in many cavalry raids and skirmishes and enhanced his reputation as a hard-hitting, dashing leader. In the summer of 1863, his participation in the Gettysburg campaign further added to this reputation. Although he was ill (with the rheumatism that was to continue to plague him) and consequently missed the great clash of cavalry at Brandy's Station on June 9, 1863, he thereafter participated fully in the cavalry operations as the Army of Northern Virginia moved northward to Pennsylvania. With Stuart, he supervised the

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[54]Lee to his mother, June 9, 1862, Opie Papers: see also R. E. Lee to Fitz Lee, July 15, 1862, ibid.

burning of Carlisle Barracks--the scene of his former period of happy but frustrated service. His solicitude for the civilian inhabitants of Carlisle was probably based equally on his innate kindness and a twinge of nostalgia.[55] The cavalry dashed on to Gettysburg but unfortunately arrived in time to perform service only at the close of that decisive battle. Fitz helped cover the retreat back to Virginia and performed creditably in the remaining operations of the cavalry arm of the Army of Northern Virginia during 1863.

After Gettysburg there was a general reshuffling which produced a reconstructed organization of the cavalry. The number of brigades was increased and divided into two divisions, each of which was to be commanded by major generals with Stuart continuing as the commanding general of the cavalry corps. Lee and Hampton were the natural choices for the division commander positions and both were recommended by Stuart and General Robert E. Lee for promotion. Uncle Robert, well aware of his nephew's fine service at Kelly's Ford and Chancellorsville, abandoned his fear of being charged with nepotism and wrote: "I do not wish to speak so positively, but I do not know of any other officer in the cavalry who has done better service."[56] Both promotions were confirmed and on September 3, 1863, twenty-eight year old Fitzhugh Lee became a major -

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[55] Lee to his mother, July 26, 1863, ibid.; Lee to R. Miller, February 3, 1903, printed in Tousey, History of Carlisle Barracks, 236-237, also see 320-321.

[56] Officer Records, XXVII, Pt. 3, 1069; see also Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, 206-216.

general.[57] Young Lee, in the months from his promotion to the Battle of Yellow Tavern in May 1864, fulfilled commendably the onerous responsibilities of his position. The occasional minor errors of judgment were insufficient to mar his outstanding accomplishments in the ceaseless combat and reconnaissance operations of the cavalry.

On May 11, 1864, Fitz's good friend and leader, "J.E.B." Stuart, was wounded at the cavalry battle of Yellow Tavern and died the next day. When Stuart fell, he placed the command on Lee and encouraged him as follows: "Go ahead, Fitz, old fellow. I know you will do what is right!"[58] As Stuart lay dying, he probably expected that Fitz would be his successor and accordingly reassured his men by calmly saying, "but don't worry, boys: Fitz will do as well for you as I have done."[59] However, Stuart's expectation for his trusted lieutenant would not be realized until the closing months of the war. Instead, Wade Hampton, having a slight seniority of rank over Fitz, was eventually confirmed as chief of the cavalry corps after considerable delay by General (Robert) Lee. Since Gettysburg Hampton's jealousy had intensified

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[57] Fitzhugh Lee Records, "Compiled Service Records of Confederate General Officers," Record Group 109, National Archives. Lee's date of rank was August 3, 1863, the same as Hampton's. Stuart to Lee, September 4 and 10, 1863, Opie Papers.

[58] "Speech of General Fitz Lee at A.N.V. Banquet, October 28, 1875," Southern Historical Society Papers, I, No. 2 (February, 1876), 102.

[59] J.R. Oliver, "J.E.B. Stuart's Fate at Yellow Tavern," ibid., XIX, No. 11 (November, 1911), 531.

and become whidely known. He had criticized not only Fitz (for ordering a charge of Hampton's troops at that battle) but also Stuart (for seeming infringements on his divisional commander's prerogatives). Hampton made numerous petty complaints including the charge that Stuart "always manages to give them [Fitz's brigades] the lightest duty."[60] General Robert Lee was aware of the serious threat that such feeling posed for the cavalry's élan--Hampton even protested informally to the Commanding General--and postponed choosing Stuart's successor. That wise leader hoped time would ease friction between Fitz and Hampton since the two remained outwardly on good terms. Accordingly, he ordered that they, along with "Rooney" Lee, would report directly to him.[61]

Fitz, who was more accommodating and adaptable than Hampton, soon fulfilled his uncle's hopes that successful cooperation in the cavalry could be achieved. With Hampton acting as commander, the Confederates defeated Sheridan's cavalry at Trevilians Station on June 11-12, 1864. Hampton reported that "Major General Fitzhugh Lee co-operated with me heartily and rendered valuable assistance."[62] Fitz's devotion for

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[60]Hampton to James B. Chestnut, March 11, 1864, quoted in Manly Wade Wellman, Giant in Gray: A Biography of Wade Hampton of South Carolina (New York, 1949), 136-137; see also 128-131. Hampton was a brigadier general two months before Lee.

[61]Chestnut, Diary from Dixie, 395-396, 405; Official Records, XXXVI, Pt. 2, 1001. After a prisoner exchange, "Rooney" Lee was given a division by taking brigades from the two initial divisions of the cavalry corps.

[62]Official Records, XXXVI, Pt. 1, 1097; see also W. G. Ryckman, "Clash of Cavalry at Trevilians," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXXV, No. 4 (October, 1967), 443-458.

"The Cause" was thus demonstrated in one of his finest hours. In August 1864 Hampton was confirmed as chief of cavalry. His jealousy had been checked and fears that his age (forty-six) would handicap him proved groundless. The two men were actually well-matched to provide overall direction for the cavalry with Hampton's restraint finely balancing Lee's initiative and aggressiveness. Douglas Southall Freeman maintains that "if Fitz hoped to outshine Hampton, he was too good a soldier and too honorable a patriot to withhold full support."[63] While he served under Hampton, personality problems were to be the least of those problems confronting them and an admirable coordination was achieved.

Unfortunately for the Army of Northern Virginia, there were far greater problems than personality conflicts between cavalry commanders. The shortages in men and material were becoming acute in the confrontation of the ever-expanding, well-provisioned Federal forces of Generals Grant and Sheridan. In late August Lee was sent to Jubal Early's forces in a vain attempt to block Sheridan's invasion of the Valley. Fitz gave skillful aid in directing cavalry maneuvers and bringing some order to Early's disorganized cavalry. But the badly outnumbered Confederates suffered a disastrous defeat at Winchester on September 19, 1864. In that battle the odds against Fitz--after countless narrow escapes during the thick of fighting for three years--caught up with him.

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[63] Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, 523.

After having three horses shot from under him, Fitz fell dangerously wounded by a minié ball in the thigh. Carried to Charlottesville, he was completely incapacitated by his painful and hard-to-heal wound. Unfortunately, the wound became abcessed and Fitz had to postpone his anticipated return to duty several times during the next four months.[64] For him, the war was temporarily over, although he was eager to return to his hard-pressed men and impatient with his vexing confinement.

Fitz Lee returned to duty in January 1865 and Wade Hampton was sent to South Carolina on the nineteenth to aid in stopping Sherman's advance. As a result Fitz acted as senior cavalry commander of the Army of Northern Virginia for the remainder of the war. Though the cavalry was vastly reduced in resources, Fitz's irrepressible optimism gave him hope that the Confederacy might yet achieve success. After all, he had been plagued by acute shortages since 1863, but his men were still a viable force in the field.[65] As the superior forces of Grant and Sheridan gradually pressed General Robert Lee's forces into static positions around Richmond, the cavalry

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[64] Official Records, XLIII, Pt. 1, 46ff., 552; Hunter, "Fitzhugh Lee," 143; Fitz to W. W. Gilmer, September 25, 1864, S. S. Lee to Carter Lee, September 30, 1864, and Fitz to R. E. Lee, December 20, 1866, Opie Papers. In the Valley, Fitz was ably assisted by his friend L. L. Lomax, by then a cavalry brigadier.

[65] The problem of shortages was almost insurmountable but Fitz Lee was resourceful in alleviating them; see his letters of March 23, April 28, and July 27, 1863, Opie Papers.

could not be used extensively as before. Nonetheless, Fitz and the cavalry were to be at the center of the stage in the final weeks of the war in Virginia. As Grant tightened his siege of Richmond-Petersburg and extended his lines southwest around Petersburg, the position of the Army of Northern Virginia became increasingly untenable. The impending catastrophe was hastened by Sheridan's success at Five Forks, a vital point in Confederate lines southwest of Petersburg, on March 31-April 1 against Fitz's cavalry and Pickett's infantry. Lee and Pickett were feasting at a shad-bake--their first delicious meal in days--when the attack came. The cavalry under General Thomas Munford, whom Fitz had left in command, was badly mauled while Pickett's men suffered irreplaceable losses at the hands of Sheridan's "fresh, victory-flushed" troops.[66]

After Five Forks and other reverses the collapse of Richmond's defenses appeared imminent. In the subsequent rapid development of events, the Commanding General decided to withdraw the Army from Richmond on April 2. During this last week of the War in Virginia, Fitz was one of the key figures in the attempted but unsuccessful escape. The

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[66] Official Records, XLVI, Pt. 1, 1298; U.S. War Department. Proceedings, Findings, and Opinions of the Court of Inquiry in the Case of Gouveneur K. Warren, Late Major-General U.S. Volunteers (Washington, 1883), Pt. 1, 439-455, 466-484. An interesting but exaggerated interpretation of the importance of "the shad-bake" is found in Otto Eisenschiml and E. B. Long, As Luck Would Have It: Chance and Coincidence in the Civil War (New York, 1948), 240-258.

cavalry was called upon to protect the slower-moving infantry in numerous instances and fought "heavily all the way" to Appomattox Court House. Despite the odds against them and their fatigue and hunger, his cavalrymen acquitted themselves well as Fitz noted: "They fought every day from the 29th of March to the 9th of April, both inclusive, with a valor as steady as of yore, and whose brightness was not dimmed by the increasing enveloping clouds of adversity."[67] But the Army could not escape. On the night of April 8 at the last council of war of the key commanders--General Robert E. Lee, Lieutenant General James Longstreet, Major General John B. Gordon, and Major General Fitzhugh Lee--it was decided to allow Gordon and Fitz to attempt a breakthrough unless they encountered enemy infantry. At daybreak on the ninth, Gordon's infantrymen formed the line of battle while Fitz's men charged the enemy cavalry and drove them off, but Federal infantry arrived which "necessitated the returning to our lines."[68] The Army of Northern Virginia surrendered to Grant that day.

The Army was surrendered because the infantry, exhausted and without provisions, could not hope to escape through the ring of Grant's superior forces. The cavalry, however, could move faster and might still escape if it were allowed to

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[67]Lee to W. H. Taylor, April 22, 1865, and to R. E. Lee, April 22, 1865, Opie Papers. These manuscript reports cover the cavalry activities from March 28 to April 9, 1865.

[68]Lee to Taylor, April 22, 1865. ibid.

abandon its mission of protecting the infantry. Fitz arranged for Gordon to signal him if the infantry had to give up, and thus allow him to ride on through, since he still possessed the "fond, though forlorn hope, that future operations were still in store for the cavalry."[69] While the infantry prepared to stack arms, the cavalry corps made good its escape only to find that it was included in the terms of the surrender and parole. Learning of this provision, Fitz abandoned the idea of trying to join Johnston's force in the Carolinas since, as he later wrote to his uncle, "a few days convinced me of the impracticality of longer entertaining such hopes, and I rode into the Federal lines and accepted for myself, the terms offered the officers of the Army of Northern Virginia."[70] For Fitzhugh Lee, the war was over.

Lee justly deserved the reputation he won for his almost four years of service for Virginia and the Confederacy. His rapid rise in rank and shouldering of commensurate responsibilities were not unique but were by no means commonplace. His success in the war more than fulfilled the high expectations that General Winfield Scott had voiced in 1860 concerning his achievements in Texas. His contemporary reputation as a soldier was high, and that judgment has prevailed since the War. For example, Douglas Southall Freeman and others note that he is

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[69] Lee to R. E. Lee, April 22, 1865, ibid.

[70] Ibid.; Official Records, XLVI, Pt. 1, 1303-1304; War Department, Proceedings in the Case of G. K. Warren, Pt. 1, 450-451. Fitz surrendered to Federal officers at Farmville, Virginia, on April 14, the day Lincoln was assassinated.

justly ranked among the first dozen cavalry officers born in America.[71] While his strategical contributions to the art of war were few, his tactical maneuvers, initiative and aggressiveness, and his élan and leadership ability were solid contributions in sustaining the cavalry corps under adverse conditions. His high-spirited zest for life and his devotion to duty continued until he surrendered. Partially because of his natural temperament, Fitz was not as embittered by the war as were many other Southern veterans. He managed to retain his compassion for the enemy soldiers even as his ardour for states' rights and Southern independence heightened. It is a measure of his character and magnetism that he could retain his sense of humor and instill it in others around him under the most adverse and despairing circumstances. Finally, the war for Fitz was indeed a personal tragedy. Although he and his family had no slaves and little other property to lose, the results of the war closed the military as a career for him, his father, and his brothers.[72] For him, loss of the opportunity to practice his beloved profession of soldiering was almost overwhelming. But, like countless other Virginians in 1865, he was confronted with the task of building a new life for himself and the Old Dominion.

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[71] D. S. Freeman, "Fitzhugh Lee," Dictionary of American Biography, XI, 103-105; Ellsworth Eliot, Jr., West Point in the Confederacy (New York, 1941), 374-376; R. Ernest Dupuy, Men of West Point: The First 150 Years of the United States Military Academy (New York, 1951), 69.

[72] Smith Lee and his six sons served either in the Confederate Navy or Army; see T. C. DeLeon, Belles, Beaux, and Brains of the 60's (New York, 1909), 435-440. Only Fitz and his father, however, had prewar military careers.

CHAPTER III

RECONSTRUCTION, RECONCILIATION, AND RESTORATION

The two decades between the War's end and his election as governor of Virginia in 1885 were years of readjustment, recuperation, and rejuvenation for Fitzhugh Lee, just as they were for the beloved South for which he had borne arms for four long years. Fitz, like the nation itself, had survived perhaps his most harrowing but greatest experience. These two decades have been given the least attention by Lee's biographers, and in obituaries, eulogies, and biographical sketches, his activities during these years rate little space.[1] Lee was less in the public eye during this period, of course, than in any other during his adult life, but he was far from being a recluse. He was aware of many of the great developments of his day and, indeed, participated directly in them. He appeared before large audiences as a speaker at great public commemorations and actively engaged in certain contemporary public controversies. He could not, and did not, stay out

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[1] Walter L. Fleming (ed.). Biography, Vol. XII of The South in the Building of the Nation (12 vols.; Richmond, 1909), 70-71; J. W. Jones, "Fitzhugh Lee," Annual Reunion of the Association of Graduates, USMA (West Point, New York, 1905), 101-113; New York Times, April 29, 30, 1905; Atlanta Constitution, April 29, 30, May 1, 1905; Mary Vowell Smith, Virginia, 1492-1892: A Brief Review of the Discovery of the Continent of North America, with A History of the Executives of the Colony and of the Commonwealth of Virginia (Washington, 1893), 399-402.

of the limelight. However, his private or personal activities during these decades make these years equally momentous ones in the life of the man. These activities had as much effect on determining the course of his life as many of the public ones. During these years he experienced many of the joys and heartbreaks that fall to the lot of mankind in the day-to-day task of living one's life, and his manner of encountering them was comparable to his behavior in dealing with successes or reverses on the battlefield.

The chief traumatic strain placed on Lee by the War's outcome was the cessation of his career as a cavalryman. In one respect, he was unfortunate in being a relatively young man in 1865 since being a soldier was more than a mere profession to him--the military service represented a way of life to him now closed. While he did not regret his commitment to the"lost cause," he did regret its effect on his occupation. To Fitz, as an officer in a defeated army, peace was more than the end of a great epoch in history. It meant rather that the type of existence he had envisioned was now thwarted. In some ways, he embarked on a journey in the wilderness for the remainder of his days on earth, or at least until he rejoined the Army in 1898. His broken heart would mend, but the scars would always remain. His resolution, however, was not suicidal in 1865 but rather an expression of determination to withstand and overcome his misfortune. Eventually, the process of time plus his natural optimism and zest for living were sufficient to make his adjustment satisfactory, although occasional

lapses of nostalgia for his former profession would continue to burden him.[2] In making the adjustment to his changed environment, he became intimately involved in events which contributed to the shaping of not only his destiny but that of his state and nation as well.

It was well for the thirty-year-old veteran that pressing problems confronted him in the months after Appomattox. The emotional pangs of remorse he suffered had to be relegated to the background while he dealt with more practical matters accruing from the Confederacy's dénouement. Defeat not only placed an emotional burden on him; it also jeopardized his personal freedom and terminated his means of livelihood. His personal freedom was an acute issue for only a few months but it remained a chronic one until 1869. His status was dissimilar to that of the random Southern veteran for a variety of reasons. After Lincoln's assassination, many Northerners cried for vengeance and retribution, and certain politicians eagerly responded to these voices and determined to punish leading Confederates. Fitz was not, of course, the General Lee but he was nonetheless a Confederate general who had ended his service as the cavalry commander for his uncle's famous army. Further, he was also in a precarious position because he had

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[2]Interview with Mr. Fitzhugh Lee Opie, Alexandria, Virginia, September 21, 1967; Stephen Hess, America's Political Dynasties: from Adams to Kennedy (Garden City, N.Y., 1966), 76-77, 80, 540; Lee to General Joseph E. Johnston, September 30, 1866, Franklin Stringfellow Papers, Virginia Historical Society (by this date Lee referred to the late military conflict as the struggle for a "lost cause"!).

graduated from West Point and served in the Army until secession. Army officers who had resigned their commissions in 1861 were held by many to be more traitorous than other "rebels." Consequently, Fitz and other Confederate officers in this category were usually excepted by the presidential pardons and amnesty acts in the 1860's as well as by the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution.[3]

When Fitz left Appomattox for Richmond, he was protected only by the terms of Grant's parole for members of the Army of Northern Virginia. Lee hoped this act by the commanding general of the Union armies would be sufficient to leave him unmolested as long as he respected its terms and ceased fighting for the Confederacy. Lincoln's assassination and the Northern reaction to it made him feel that some additional guarantee was needed, especially after he, his Uncle Robert, and others were indicted for treason (in violation of the terms of Grant's parole) by a Federal grand jury in Norfolk on June 7, 1865.[4] While he had little fear from the Union officers stationed in Virginia--he expected his fellow soldiers to be as honorable with him as he would have been with them in a similar situation--he was apprehensive about some of the

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[3]Jonathan T. Dorris, Pardon and Amnesty under Lincoln and Johnson: The Restoration of the Confederates to Their Rights and Privileges, 1861-1898 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1953), 35, 111-113; Randall and Donald, Civil War and Reconstruction, 580-586.

[4]Nash K. Burger and John K. Bettersworth, South of Appomattox (New York, 1959), 23-53.

inflammatory panegyrics of Congressional Radicals. Accordingly, he reluctantly decided to follow his uncle's example and seek a direct pardon from President Johnson. In July, he wrote Johnson a straight-forward note, giving a dry recital of his associations with the United States Army and later the Confederate Army and asking for a pardon.[5] He was particularly galled by having to take this action for a number of reasons. He was by no means thankful that the Confederacy had collapsed and could not sincerely request forgiveness for his decision to participate in the rebellion (or, as he viewed the matter, to fight for Southern independence). Nor did he relish having to deal with civilian authorities over what he considered an affair between soldiers. It irked him to realize that politicians might cancel an agreement reached by soldiers in the field.

As time passed and Lee's earlier fears of vindictive action against Confederate soldiers by the politicians failed to materialize, he decided that the manner in which amnesty matters had been handled immediately after the War was an unnecessary humiliation heaped on the vanquished. In late 1866, he wrote to a comrade from his frontier days and urged this Confederate friend to return from voluntary exile in Mexico. Fitz stressed that, despite the fears engendered by the course of Radical Reconstruction in the months following

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[5]Lee to Johnson, July 7, 1865, Opie Papers. Lee's movements were somewhat restricted by the Department of Virginia, U. S. Army; see Edward Smith to Albert Ordnay, October 5, 1865, ibid.

Lincoln's assassination, pardons had proved to be needless:

> I have heard of no old army officer who resigned and came south, who has since been reported or arraigned as a deserter. There was no desertion in the matter nor could they i.e. the War Department authorities--with all their petty malignity--make out such a case. . . . Don't ask for what is commonly called a pardon, though it is a mistake a great many have made and amounts to nothing except an increase in humiliation on your part.[6]

As his letter revealed, his original distaste for the unpalatable act of requesting a pardon was compounded by his later realization that his personal freedom had not been seriously threatened. Finally, his repugnance with the entire amnesty process was increased by the fact that the formal dismissal of the treason charges against his uncle, his two cousins (Custis and W. H. F. Lee) and himself was delayed until February 15, 1969.[7]

Fitzhugh Lee faced another equally burdensome problem contemporaneously--finding a new means of earning a living. Most of Smith Lee's savings had evaporated during the War, and the family had depended on the military pay he and his sons received as the basic portion of income. Fitz and his brothers, all without any experience except in military service, had to begin to support themselves and their parents at once

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[6]Lee to M. M. Kimmel, August 12, 1866, ibid.

[7]Douglas Southall Freeman, R. E. Lee: A Biography (New York, 1935), IV, 381; see also Dorris, Pardon and Amnesty, 119-134, and Paul H. Buck, Road to Reunion (Boston, 1937), 125-126. Lee showed little interest in the events which specifically pertained to Virginia during Reconstruction. Perhaps his lack of interest in Reconstruction in the state resulted from his indictment by officials at the national level. Although he made no public statements, he was critical to his intimates of the general Reconstruction policies which affected all Southern states.

since there were no reserves to draw on. (Smith Lee, in poor health, could no longer seek active employment.) Although Fitz's family had no funds, his family suffered less hardship and impoverishment than did many Southern families in like circumstances owing to the generosity of Mrs. A. M. Fitzhugh, his godmother and a close friend of the family. This wealthy Virginia lady had some money in Baltimore banks and retained extensive tracts of land despite the vicissitudes of war. She allocated Lee's family the use of "Richland," her estate located forty miles south of Washington near Aquia Creek in Stafford County. "Richland," despite its isolation and disrepair, presented the family with an opportunity to regain security and build a new life.[8]

With the family's arrival at "Richland," Fitz became acting head of the family because of his father's age and infirmity. He at once assumed the responsibility for making the farming venture a success. While he had no experience in farming, he was familiar with the operation of his maternal grandfather's estate and, with his proclivity for working outdoors, directly supervised or performed the multitude of tasks confronting him and his brothers. His time for pleasure and recreation was minute since he proudly shouldered his responsibilities by noting: "I have a father

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[8]Lee to Henry C. Lee, July 31, 1869, Robert Carter Lee Papers, Virginia Historical Society; Lee to R. E. Lee, September 7, 1865; R. E. to S. S. Lee, April 16, 1867, and July 1, 1867; all in Opie Papers; "Mother of Gen. Fitzhugh Lee," The Confederate Veteran, VI (1898), 501-502.

and mother and five grown brothers to support. . . ."[9] Though his brothers knew no more of farming than he, they joined in supporting his efforts during the crucial (for the Lees) years immediately after Appomattox. His Uncle Robert early encouraged Fitz to do as well as possible on his farm and was glad that Fitz was settling in Stafford County. Although life at "Richland" would be far tamer and less exciting than his previous years in the military service, Fitz assured his former Commanding General that farming would have some personal compensations: "I expect soon to settle down as Squire Lee of Stafford and although not as famous as Randolph of Roanoke yet I expect to be a happier man."[10]

Lee and his brothers had little with which to commence their operations except an abundance of good land. Mrs. Fitzhugh generously allowed them to cultivate the whole estate, comprising over 3,300 acres, and also sent them money for cash items. Consequently, they were as well off, if not better, than many of their other neighbors suffering from a similar "genteel poverty." Yet their existence was precarious until a successful harvest could be made. They planted wheat and corn as their staple crops but devoted some attention to various vegetables for table food and hay for animal fodder. With their limited resources, Fitz and

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[9]Lee to Nannie Enders, September 23, and April 8, 1866, Opie Papers.

[10]Lee to R. E. Lee, September 7, 1865, and R. E. Lee to Lee, September 1, 1865, ibid.

his brothers found themselves performing nearly all the required manual labor. Fitz--far from being the "Squire Lee" he had imagined--was extremely "busy ploughing and mowing, reaping and sowing" in an effort to become a successful farmer. Until a good harvest was made in 1866, existence at "Richland" was somewhat threadbare, but thereafter the family's material progress was fairly rapid. After the farming operations became profitable, the youngest brother (Henry Carter) was sent to matriculate under Uncle Robert at Washington College while the remaining brothers except Fitz were launched on new careers.[11]

Fitz remained at Richland to provide a home for his parents and his brothers if they wished to return. He enjoyed working alongside his growing number of employees in the fields, and his affability and cheerfulness were soon equal to ante-bellum days. Thus, in the first four years after the surrender, Fitz made a remarkable readjustment to his environment. By 1867, he was exhibiting pride in his work and boasted: "I raise more corn than I ever got from the Quartermaster." His mind was still conscious of cavalry affairs, however, and he deplored the low standard of horseflesh he possessed at Richland.[12] His satisfaction with his farming

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[11] Lee to M. M. Kimmel, August 12, 1866, and October 1, 1867; Lee to Nannie Enders, April 8, 1866 and October-21, 1869; R. E. Lee to S. S. Lee, April 16 and June 26, 1867; ibid. See also J. H. Chataigne, Virginia Gazetteer and Classified Business Directory, 1880-81 (Richmond, 1880), 485-487.

[12] Lee to Kimmel, October 1, 1867, Opie Papers. The employees with whom he worked in the fields consisted of five freedmen, an immigrant, a woman, and two boys.

achievements was enhanced by the renewal of old friendships and the beginning of new ones. With financial security assured for his family, he made brief jaunts to Virginia cities, resorts, and homes of old friends. On these occasions he was once again a dashing gallant who impressed young ladies and enjoyed himself immeasurably. His father and Uncle Robert hoped that Fitz would soon marry, and the latter jested about his nephew's social activities: "Fitz will never settle down till he is married. . ., tell him he must ask his sweethearts to let him marry one at a time. In that way he may accomodate them all. He cannot marry them all at once."[13]

His father's death in July 1869 curtailed temporarily this revival of Lee's social life. He not only continued his own responsibilities but also tried to ease the loss for his mother and brothers. Though not unexpected, his father's demise saddened Fitz and heightened his realization that his former mode of life was gone forever.[14] The death of his beloved brother caused Robert Edward Lee to redouble his interest in his nephew's affairs. Fitz received numerous letters concerning finances and other family affairs from his uncle who wrote: "I am pretty pleased my dear nephew that you are possessed of so good and profitable a farm. With

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[13]R. E. Lee to S. S. Lee, February 20, 1869; see also, Lee to Nannie Enders, October 25, 1867, January 3, February 18, March 7, and July 5, 1869; ibid.

[14]Unmailed letter from Lee to unknown recipient, July 31, 1869, R. A. Brock Papers, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, Calif.; Lee to Henry C. Lee, July 31, 1869, Robert Carter Lee Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

your industry and energy I am sure that you will make a happy home for yourself, mother, and brothers."[15] The gentle chiding on the subject of young ladies was also continued. In 1869 and 1870, Fitz received advice and comments on other matters from his illustrious uncle. In addition to discussions of their war-time experiences, General Lee worked to convince his nephew that reestablishment of harmonious relations between the North and South was a necessity for the country's salvation. Although Fitz joked about being an "old rebel" and "unreconstructed," General Lee had personally committed himself to a conciliatory course and wanted Fitz to follow in his footsteps. In a confidential letter to "my dear Fitz" he expressed the reasons for his resolution: "I thought it wiser not to keep open the sores of Civil War, but to follow the examples of those nations who endeavored to obliterate its marks and to commit to oblivion the feelings it engendered."[16] Much of Fitz's subsequent efforts to achieve true national unity sprang from these letters and contemporaneous conversations with his uncle. When his beloved uncle died in October 1870, Fitz sustained a loss nearly comparable to that of the earlier death of his father.

Despite the subtle urging of his father and uncle during their last year, Fitzhugh Lee did not marry until 1871. Prior

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[15] R. E. Lee to Lee, September 7, 1869; see also R. E. Lee to Lee, October 1, 1869, January 29 and July 22, 1870; ibid.

[16] R. E. Lee to Lee, August 5, 1869; see also R. E. Lee to Lee, July 29, 1869, and March 9, 1870; ibid.

to that date, he carried on a voluminous correspondence with a number of female friends and enjoyed their accounts of various social events, especially in Alexandria and Richmond. However, since he felt bound to remain at "Richland" during the ploughing and harvesting seasons, his social life was spasmodic and often limited. In the months after his father's death, Lee experienced sporadic moments of loneliness and a feeling of isolation as his brothers accepted employment away from home. His complacent life at "Richland" was sometimes palling for the worldly ex-cavalryman, and he implored from one female friend: "Give me the Richmond news, you know we thirst for news in the country."[17] His mind dwelt on marriage at times but it was not until June 1870 that he fully concentrated his attentions on an eighteen year old Alexandria belle, Miss Ellen Bernard Fowle. After a year's courtship the thirty-six-year-old ex-cavalryman and war hero married his young bride on April 19, 1871.[18]

Lee brought his bride to "Richland" and his loneliness evaporated as he embarked on a happy and satisfactory marriage. For the first dozen years of their union, the Lees lived there but they made frequent journeys to Alexandria. From 1871 until he became governor, their personal life was typical of prosperous post-war Virginia farmers in the Tidewater section. The years were happy ones for the couple--though there were

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[17] Lee to Nannie Enders, November 16, 1869, ibid.

[18] Alexander, Stratford Hall, 389; see also Lee to Ellen Fowle, June 5, 1870, and two undated notes (ca. 1870), Opie Papers.

periods of heartbreak early in their marriage when two babies died in infancy--and they became the proud parents of three daughters and two sons. As Fitz entered into a contented middle-age, his appearance changed from a slender, dashing cavalryman to a stout, jovial husband and father--but he still sat well on a horse. Being a natural storyteller, this convivial man spent countless hours telling his wife and children the stirring and entertaining experiences of his frontier and war years with the cavalry of two nations. These stories influenced Nellie (Ellen's nickname) to become active in the ladies' auxiliaries of various Confederate organizations and instilled Lee's love for the cavalry in his children. His two sons served in the Seventh United States Cavalry Regiment and his three daughters married officers in that same regiment.[19] Fortunately for Fitzhugh Lee, his personal life was never subjected to reverses comparable to those he received in his professional and in his later public life. Moreover, the family prospered materially, and after the death of Mrs. A. M. Fitzhugh (in 1874), Lee was financially independent. His godmother made Fitz a principal beneficiary and one of her three executors. His bequest amounted to a total value in excess

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[19] Lee to R. A. Brock, June 22, 1888, Brock Papers, Huntington Library; "Mrs. Fitzhugh Lee," The Confederate Veteran, V (1897), 125; Hess, America's Political Dynasties, 77; J. W. Jones to J. R. Kean, December 27, 1905, J. R. Kean Papers, University of Virginia Library.

of $100,000, which of course enabled him to devote more attention to other interests beside farming.[20]

While the deaths of three persons who had influenced him since his childhood impressed the finality of the past on him personally, Lee reappeared as a public figure because he instigated a dispute that stirred memories of a bygone era. The dispute revolved around General George H. Thomas (the "Rock of Chickamauga"), a fellow Virginian who had become a Union general and a Northern hero. During the War, Southern newspapers had scathingly denounced Thomas as a traitor to his state and section while printing the accusation that Thomas did not resign because the Southern offer for his services was not as high as the Union one.[21] Fitzhugh Lee, who had served with Thomas (then a major) in the Old Second Cavalry Regiment, considered him an honorable soldier and did not publicly subscribe to the extreme wartime journalistic allegations made against Thomas; yet it was Lee who launched the postwar "Thomas controversy" which alternately flamed and smouldered for over a decade among soldiers, newspapers, and

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[20] The amount Fitz inherited after Mrs. Fitzhugh's death on April 4, 1874, is based on her will and the following documents pertaining to her estate found in the Opie Papers: tax statement to M. B. Harlow, treasurer of Alexandria, October 16, 1877; M. B. Harlow to Lee, January 13, 1880; Lee to John E. Massey, Auditor of Public Accounts, July 4, 1881; Massey to Lee, July 21, and August 24, 1881; Charles Kerr, G.W.C. Lee, and Fitz Lee to S. Brown Allen, Auditor of Public Accounts, undated.

[21] Thomas B. Van Horne, The Life of Major-General George H. Thomas (New York, 1882), 25; Richard O'Connor, Thomas: Rock of Chickamauga (New York, 1948), 115-119.

other interested segments of the population.[22] The controversy deserves a brief mention for two reasons: first, it involved Fitz intimately, and secondly, it reflected the spirit of his times--the passions of war were all too easily revived with Appomattox only five years behind, and Fitz was directly and indirectly affected by the reactions of others to these passions.

When Thomas died in March 1870, Fitz was asked to comment on proposals in Northern newspapers for the erection of a Thomas monument in Virginia. Lee was still avidly interested in military matters and wrote a candid letter which was published in the Richmond Dispatch on April 23. In the letter he stated that since General Thomas had fought against Virginia, the state could hardly be expected to erect a monument to his memory. After disposing of this suggestion, however, Lee gratified his desire to criticize those obituaries stressing that Thomas was "a Virginian who never faltered in his allegiance to the Union." He wrote that Northerners should leave that part out since Thomas "told me in New York City, in 1861, as I was on my way--to resign my commission--that he, too, intended to resign, and would soon follow me." The résumé of this conversation was followed by a statement of Lee's belief that Thomas had offered his services to John Letcher, the wartime governor of Virginia. While this portion of his letter created an uproar, in reality the last paragraph of the letter (which was largely ignored) was more expressive

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[22] Ibid.; see also F. N. Boney, John Letcher of Virginia: The Story of Virginia's Civil War Governor (University, Alabama, 1966), 106, 166-167.

of Lee's feeling at the time:

> He [Thomas] was an upright, kind-hearted man and fought well against us. Let him rest in peace; and let Virginia keep her vials of wrath to be forever poured out upon the heads of some few of her citizens who would not fight upon either side, but who stayed at home and made money by being paid by the North as spies, guides, and informers, or who, after having fought, have acted as if they were ashamed of their past record.[23]

As the letter demonstrates, Lee's bias in favor of soldiers withstood the sectional political schism as long as he believed a soldier had acted honorably.

The recital of his conversation with Thomas was pounced upon by Northern journalists and ex-Union soldiers, who immediately accused Lee of reviving the wartime charges against the dead "Rock of Chickamauga." Abuse was heaped on the "ex-rebel"; specifically, it was claimed that he was a slanderer of the dead, an "unreconstructed rebel," and a prevaricator of the worst sort.[24] Even though Fitz declined to take further public part in the matter, other Southerners were less reticent in replying to the Northern outcry and soon his account was supported or condemned by other participants in the controversy.[25] No positive evidence was ever unearthed

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[23] Richmond Dispatch, April 23, 1870; see also William Mahone to John Letcher, February 6, 1861, and Letcher to Fitzhugh Lee, June 20, 1870, John Letcher Papers, Virgina Military Institute.

[24] W. W. Foote to Lee, May 9, 1870, with enclosed undated newspaper clipping and W. F. Dimkaid to Lee, May 24, 1870, with enclosed newspaper clipping dated May 13, 1870, Opie Papers; see also Wilbur Thomas, General George H. Thomas: The Indomitable Warrior (New York, 1964), 133-135, 606.

[25] "Notes and Queries," Southern Historical Society Papers, X, (1882), 524-525 and XII (1884), 568-570; Francis H. Smith to Mrs. George H. Thomas, February 8, 1876, Opie Papers.

to prove or disprove Lee's statement, albeit some inconclusive evidence against Thomas was offered by Governor Letcher (which added fuel to the fire).[26] Perhaps an editorial in the San Francisco Examiner came closest to giving a national explanation of the controversy and Lee's role in it--at least, this editorial was nearer to Lee's true feelings on the subject than any other. The editorial, written at the beginning of the furor, emphasized that at least Fitzhugh Lee thought what he had written was the unvarnished truth; further, his statement that Thomas had considered resigning was not slanderous since the first "natural impulse of every true man" would be to side with his state. The Examiner hoped Thomas had been doubtful about remaining with the Union since such doubt made him less "cold-blooded" and more of a man. The writer concluded with a plea to end sectional animosity and the use of "loyalty as a cloak for robbery and an apology for the hugest crimes" ever perpetuated by politicians.[27]

The bitterness of the Thomas controversy shocked Lee to some extent since he himself had little vindictiveness against his former foes on the battlefield. His primary interest at the time was the desire for historical accuracy; hence, he was surprised at the minor whirlwind he had sown. He was--like many other generals and soldiers, both Northern and Southern--interested in getting the facts (as he viewed them) of the late conflict recorded properly not only for his own generation but

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[26]Boney, John Letcher, 106, 266-267.

[27]San Francisco Examiner, May 10, 1870.

also for posterity. He was acutely conscious in 1870 that the record should be as complete as possible because he was actively engaged in a minute examination of unsubstantiated charges of incompetence against himself concerning the battle at Five Forks.[28] Probably this consciousness for detail led him to challenge the statements in some Thomas obituaries. In any event, the Thomas affair heightened his interest in examining the war's history, led him to take a more active role in Confederate memorial organizations, and impressed upon his mind how braod the chasm was between Northern and Southern veterans.[29]

In the 1870's, the ex-Confederate general gradually committed himself to the task of doing whatever he could to restore unity to his country--to eradicate those sources of discord between the sections which had been vividly impressed upon him after the release of his Thomas letter. The treatment of his parole by Washington authorities and the whole amnesty program amplified his feeling that Radical Reconstruction was the chief contributor to sectional rancor. Yet he agreed with General Robert Edward Lee that the War was over and former Confederates should devote their talents to restoring

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[28] General George Pickett to Lee, May 24, 1870, and Thomas Munford to H. C. Lee, August 2, 1870, Opie Papers.

[29] By the late 1870's, Fitz was a popular speaker to audiences interested in the War, although his speeches contained a voluminous amount of historical detail; see especially his address "Chancellorsville," first delivered to a group of Confederate veterans on October 29, 1879, printed in John Wm. Jones, Army of Northern Virginia Memorial Volume (Richmond, 1880), 293-333; New York Times, December 26, 1882.

Southern fortunes within the framework of the Union. While retaining his belief that the Southern cause had been right and just, he accepted the dictum that victory on the battlefield meant that the Northern concept of the Union would prevail.[30] His stance as a proponent of reconciliation at times seemed paradoxical and inconsistent; but one should note his subjection to such diverse influences and pressures as his name and ancestry, his war experiences, the loss of his career, his views of politicians and their handiwork during the secession crisis and Radical Reconstruction, his friends and comrades, his intelligence in perceiving that many persons had a vested interest in sectional disharmony, and the national political scene from 1865 to 1898. Nevertheless, from the 1870's until his death, he sincerely pleaded for true national reunion while he sought to improve the status of his state and section within that nation.

In no way had Lee acted as a "fire-eating" Southerner during the Thomas dispute but, nonetheless, his stature did rise among those Southerners who viewed him as an able opponent of Northern attempts to falsify history. His credentials as a pillar of the Old Order were augmented when he became president of a veterans' organization in 1871. It is ironic that he initiated his efforts on behalf of reconciliation in

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[30]For example, see his introduction to a biography of his ancestor: Kate Mason Rowland, The Life of George Mason (New York, 1892), I, vii-xi; and Charles G. Sellers, Jr., "The American Revolution: Southern Founders of a National Tradition," in Arthur S. Link and Rembert W. Patrick, (eds.), Writing Southern History: Essays in Historiography in Honor of Fletcher M. Green (Baton Rouge, La., 1965), 60-61.

in the very bastion of supposedly "unreconstructed rebels." At the Capitol in Richmond in November 1871, he presided over the formation of a Virginia division for the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia and was elected its first president. Among the members were his army intimates such as Generals T. T. Munford (his ranking subordinate during most of the War) and W. H. F. Lee (Uncle Robert's son) as well as the budding politicians, Major John W. Daniel and Colonel F. W. M. Holliday.[31] With these men and others who had actually fought, "General Fitz" spent many hours of delightful camaraderie and pleasant but argumentative discussions of former battles. Indeed, attending gatherings of this and similar groups was one of his chief forms of recreation during the postwar decade.[32] From these conversations with his former comrades, Fitz reached the conclusion that veterans were possibly the least vindictive segment of the Southern populace regarding the sectional conflict. It was to these men that he voiced his appeals that although Southerners should not forget the memories or deeds of their dead, they should be "willing to let the dead past bury its dead so far

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[31] "Ledger and Minutes of the Virginia Division of the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia, 1871-1894," in the collection entitled "Items from Cooper's Old Book Store, Richmond," University of Virginia Library.

[32] New York Times, December 20, 1874; John A Cutchins, A Famous Command: The Richmond Light Infantry Blues (Richmond, 1934), 181; Lee to President of Richmond City Council, April 9, 1873, Brock Papers, Huntington Library; Proceedings of the Second Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Society (Richmond, 1874), 3.

as the animosities of the war are concerned." He especially urged his fellow veterans to reciprocate the sentiments of various "soldiers of the Federal Army to bury the hatchet."[33]

The dramatic event which gave Fitzhugh Lee national recognition as one of the leading Southern proponents of reconciliation was his appearance in Boston for the Bunker Hill Centennial Celebration. Many Americans hoped the Revolutionary centennial observances would not only honor the nation's birth but also dilute the estrangements caused by the Civil War. The first Northern celebration, at Lexington in April 1875, was attended by several Southerners including a contingent of South Carolina Confederate veterans.[34] The note of harmony which appeared at Lexington (and Concord) encouraged the planners of the Bunker Hill rites. Confederate regiments were invited to participate in the parades while Fitz was requested to be the principal Southern speaker. Lee and his fellow Southerners participated fully in all the ceremonies, and their presence was loudly cheered by the Northern crowds. Fitz himself received a place of honor alongside Henry Wilson (Vice-President of the United States),

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[33]"Ledger of Virginia Division, Army of Northern Virginia," in "Items from Cooper's Book Store." Fitz also renewed some pre-1861 friendships with U.S. cavalrymen, including Bugler Hayes; see George Armes, Ups and Downs of an Army Officer (Washington, 1900), 393.

[34]Proceedings at the Centennial Celebration of the Battle of Lexington, April 19, 1875 (Boston, 1875), 47, 49-50, 100, 108, 135-136.

General William T. Sherman, and other dignitaries.[35]

On June 16, the eve of the celebration, Fitz made his principal address and it--along with the responses from Northerners to his words--set the tone of conciliation which prevailed throughout the proceedings. Fitz opened his remarks with a statement to the assembly that he was a Confederate but "when I reflect that I am an American citizen--that I, too, am a descendant of those men who fought on Bunker Hill--I feel that I, too, have a right to be here to celebrate their splendid deeds." He reminded the audience that his Virginia had furnished George Washington and others "in those days of darkness" when the country was threatened. He emphasized his belief that now the nation would again stand united against its foes and bind up its wounds. "When my eyes look on yours, beaming with friendliness and heartfelt goodwill toward me and mine," he continued, this belief was confirmed. Lee also stressed that many Southerners were anxious for reconciliation and appreciated recent Northern overtures towards restoring sectional harmony:

> We are here to show by our actual presence that we are fully in sympathy with the sentiment which found expression upon the recent Decoration Days, when loving hands entwined beautiful flowers about the graves of the soldiers of both armies without distinction.[36]

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[35] New York Times, June 20, 1875; Celebration of the Centennial Anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill (Boston, 1875), 36, 47.

[36] Celebration of Bunker Hill, 42-43.

Throughout the three days of the celebration similar sentiments were exchanged, especially among the veterans of both armies.[37]

Upon his return to Norfolk with the Light Artillery Blues who had accompanied him, Fitz addressed a reception of Virginians and stated that he believed their trip had accomplished some good for "our State, our people, and all sections of a common country." His Norfolk speech was far too optimistic and melodramatic, but he did voice the hopes of countless Americans when he described his reception in the North and speculated on its importance:

> Do you know what all that means? It means at that end of the line (Boston) precisely what the outpouring of your people at this end of the line to meet us upon our return means, viz.: that the people of this country have taken this matter of reconstruction out of the hands of the politicians. That the crust which separated them has been broken at last and men of the North and South are at last allowed to see each other face to face.[38]

Of course, Lee's fond expectations and desires for immediate reconciliation between the sections was not realized, but his feeling and his subsequent speeches in later years, along with the activities of other men of similar outlook and stature, were instrumental in restoring the unity of the nation during the generation after Appomattox. Not all Southerners were pleased with Fitz's efforts--including some

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[37] Ibid., 43-47, 117-124, 138; for a general account of the celebration's significance, see Paul H. Buck, The Road to Reunion (Boston, 1937), 134-137. Harpers' Weekly and The Nation devoted extensive coverage to the 1875 celebration.

[38] New York Times, June 25, 1875; miscellaneous newspaper clippings, June 1875, Opie Papers.

of his personal friends in Virginia such as General Jubal Early--but he remained a sincere champion of sectional harmony. For the thirty years he lived after his Bunker Hill address, he expressed these sentiments publicly before audiences in the South, North, and West, as well as in private.[39]

While he worked for national accord, Lee also sought other ways to benefit his state and section. As he viewed the matter, the South's salvation lay jointly in attaining full political participation in national affairs again and in acquiring Northern investment capital.[40] Although he hoped to propel the South into the mainstream of economic progress enjoyed by the nation, his efforts were first concentrated on improving the economic conditions of his neighborhood. As President of the Rappahannock and Potomac Immigration Society, he launched a campaign in 1875 to bring to the Fredericksburg (Virginia) area Northern farmers who possessed sufficient capital to restore the worn-out soil and to experiment with agricultural techniques. With the good wishes of Commonwealth authorities, Fitz spoke to a

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[39] James L. Kemper to Lee, November 4, 1875, Opie Papers; E. G. W. Butler to Jefferson Davis, April 11, 1883, printed in Dunbar Rowland, Jefferson Davis: Constitutionalist, His Letters, Papers, and Speeches (Jackson, Miss., 1923), IX, 207-208.

[40] His views on the South's need for integration into national economic and political life made him receptive to the concept which was later popularly labeled--primarily as a result of publicity initiated during the 1880's by Henry Grady, an Atlanta journalist--the "New South" creed. Lee's role in the New South movement in Virginia during his gubernatorial and post-gubernatorial years is discussed in Chapter VI.

national meeting of immigration societies in New York and stressed the Virginia need not for more "carpet-baggers" but for immigrants who were interested in making long-term investments and becoming permanent residents.[41] His interest in reviving Virginia and Southern agriculture eventually expanded to include all kinds of commercial ventures. By December 1878, as President of the Convention for the Promotion of American Commerce (held in New Orleans), he was an ardent booster of all phases of economic endeavor.[42] For the remainder of his life, in both a public and private capacity, he retained his interest in advancing the material progress of Virginia and the South.[43]

Despite his pleas for sectional accomodation and his efforts to change the traditional economic patterns of the South, Fitzhugh Lee remained a symbol of the Old South to most Southerners during the last forty years of his life (1865-1905). One of the reasons for the persistence of this image was his well-known attitude towards the sectional conflict--he believed that sectional animosities should be

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[41] "Speech made in New York by Gen. Fitzhugh Lee on Immigration," The Southern Planter and Farmer, XXVII (January, 1876), 13-15; "Synopsis of Gen. Fitzhugh Lee's Address Exhibiting His Plan to Secure Immigration to Virginia," The Southern Planter and Farmer, XXXVII (February, 1876), 118-122; Addison Borst to J. L. Kemper, August 16 and 18, 1875, and Borst to State Board of Immigration, August 23 and 19, 1875, Brock Papers, Huntington Library.

[42] Cullum, Biographical Register of West Point, II, 672.

[43] At the time of his death in 1905, he was serving as president of the Jamestown Exposition, an undertaking designed to accelerate regional economic expansion as well as to instill pride in the Virginia heritage. His participation in the Jamestown enterprise will be discussed in Chapter VIII.

buried but he strongly disassociated himself from those Southerners who completely recanted their beliefs of 1861-1865. He never wavered in his dogma that the "lost cause" had been just and correct in theory, nor did he retreat from his insistence that the South should honor and treasure the valor of the leaders and followers of the Confederacy. His dislike for "those who can see nothing good except in their respective sections" was strong, but it was exceeded by his contempt for those Southerners who renounced their heritage for temporary gains from the victor.[44] Thus the "Gettysburg controversy" (a historical controversy which raged intermittently during the last quarter of the nineteenth century) involved not only his name but his creed.[45] To him, it was a purely Southern squabble and consequently outside the realm of his reconciliatory activities; yet the affair ultimately enhanced his position as a promoter of harmony.

The heart of the issue in the verbal war over Gettysburg was the caliber of generalship of Robert Edward Lee versus that of his ranking subordinate, James Longstreet. Longstreet felt that Gettysburg could not have been a Confederate victory

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[44]Lee to Theodore Gerrish and John S. Hutchinson, September 24, 1883, printed in the introduction of Gerrish and Hutchinson, The Blue and Gray: A Graphic History (Bangor, Me., 1884), 25-26; for Lee's critical attitude towards the national government in the 1870's, see Lee to an unknown general, December 3, 1873, Fitzhugh Lee Miscellaneous Papers, University of Virginia Library.

[45]For a brief general account of the controversy, see Claude M. Morgan, "The Gettsburg Controversy," The United Daughters of the Confederacy Magazine. XXX (December 1967), 11, 30-35.

under the circumstances and therefore it was folly on the part of his commander to have fought there, while the Lee partisans maintained that Longstreet was more responsible for the defeat than anyone else. Ironically for Fitzhugh Lee, his section's rancor resulting from postwar political developments inflamed passions in this quarrel among former Confederates. Longstreet, who joined the Republicans in 1867, had become estranged from most of his wartime comrades.[46] His political conduct only two years after Appomattox made him an apostate, but criticism of his war service was not voiced until the 1870's. General Jubal A. Early of Virginia, in a public address in January 1872, laid the foundation for the controversy when he alleged that Longstreet had attempted to shirk any responsibility for the Gettysburg castastrophe ever since the battle. A year later, an intemperate speech by General William N. Pendleton further angered Longstreet and prompted him to commence preparation of a defense for his actions.[47] While he had talked with Northern writers after the War about his views on Gettysburg, Longstreet believed, with some justification, that his political activity

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[46] R. E. Lee to Longstreet, October 29, 1867, letterbook copy in Lee Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society; James Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox: Memories of the Civil War in America (Philadelphia, 1896), 401.

[47] Helen D. Longstreet, Lee and Longstreet at High Tide: Gettysburg in Light of the Official Records (Gainsville, Ga., 1905), 56-58; "The Gettysburg Campaign: Report of Major General J. A. Early," Southern Magazine, XI (October 1872). 385-393.

was the reason for the attacks.[48] Unfortunately, his rebuttal of a supposed mare's nest stirred up a hornet's nest.

After collecting as much evidence as possible, Longstreet fired the opening salvo in his counterattack in January 1876. His refutation of Pendleton's charge of disobedience was partially successful but he did not leave well enough alone. Stung to the quick, he attempted to besmirch the genius of his former commander. In an article partly written by him and published in the New Orleans Republican on January 25, 1876, Longstreet gave his account of Lee's actions at Gettysburg and noted: "Lee saw and acknowledged his error . . . in attempting to carry out his rash policy." He also quoted one sentence from a letter supposedly written by Lee to him in January 1864 as follows: "Had I taken your advice at Gettysburg instead of pursuing the course I did how different all might have been."[49] The article roused the fury of several Confederate officers including Fitz, who thought Longstreet was simply taking advantage of his late uncle's well-known policy of shouldering complete responsibility for reverses. In reply to a polite request of Fitz for publication of the complete letter, Longstreet sent the Republican a provocative communication which was printed on February 27. In it, he denied the request with caustic references to his

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[48] T. H. Goree to Longstreet, May 17, 1875, partially quoted in Donald B. Sanger and Thomas R. Hay, James Longstreet: Soldier, Politician, Officeholder, and Writer (Baton Rouge, La., 1952), 414-415.

[49] New Orleans Republican, January 25, 1876; New York Times, January 29, 1876.

critics, impugning their motives.[50] This intemperance--along with a vociferous attack by Early--precluded confinement of the argument to an analysis of the military facts. Indeed, since even his recent biographer concludes that the 1864 letter was a figment of his imagination, Longstreet was probably compelled to relieve his discomfiture by the use of vilification.[51]

With the refusal of Longstreet to publish his letter from General Lee, the acrimonious disagreement expanded to a minute examination of the tactical aspects of the original battle.[52] Fitzhugh Lee and the other critics centered their attack on the events of July 2, 1863, the second day of the engagement. They maintained that Longstreet's protests and slowness in moving his troops had caused the Confederate attack to be delayed until four o'clock in the afternoon, much later than General Lee had expected, and when the chances for success had been immeasurably reduced. Consequently, Longstreet was the chief architect of the Southern disaster.[53]

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[50] New York Times, February 13, 1876; New Orleans Republican, February 27, 1876.

[51] Sanger and Hay, James Longstreet, 418, 426.

[52] Ibid., 420-426. Longstreet's initial account appeared in the Philadelphia Times, November 3, 1877; several Southern accounts of the battle appeared in 1877 and 1878 in the Southern Historical Society Papers, see especially John W. Jones, "Our Gettysburg Series," Southern Historical Society Papers, V (1878), 87-89.

[53] For example, see Jubal A. Early, "Leading Confederates on the Battle of Gettysburg: A Review by General Early," IV (1877), 241-281, and "General Early's Second Reply to Longstreet," V (1878), 270-288, in Southern Historical Society Papers.

In his first public statement on the tactical aspects, Fitz noted Longstreet's slowness and maintained "that an attack made . . . anytime before twelve o'clock . . . would have embraced many elements of success; and from all I have heard and believe, such an attack was ordered [by General Lee to Longstreet]." Considering his strong feeling on the matter, Fitz--unlike some of the other Longstreet antagonists--exercised admirable restraint in this and later articles and frankly admitted that his own opinions were "based upon conversations with other officers, including the Commanding-General himself, and the perusal of official reports and histories of both sides." Moreover, he promised to seek the testimony of a host of participants, including Longstreet, and outlined his plans: "Were I writing history, I should like to have the opinions of these officers upon this subject, from which, with the official reports in my possession, I would of course draw and write my own conclusions."[54]

The controversy lingered for over twenty more years without definite conclusions being reached before it finally lapsed into oblivion. The anti-Longstreet articles discredited the attempt to degrade the great Confederate commander, but the countercharge that Longstreet caused General Lee to lose the battle was never proved satisfactorily. In general, the Gettysburg controversy was beneficial to the public image of

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[54]Lee to J. W. Jones, March 5, 1877, published in ibid., IV, 69-77. Lee's principal article was, "A Review of the First Two Days' Operations at Gettysburg and a Reply to General Longstreet," ibid., V, 162-194.

Fitzhugh Lee. Longstreet, in at least three different accounts of his actions at Gettysburg, fired several stinging verbal barbs at Fitz and others but Lee did not reply in kind. Instead, his quest for the truth led Lee to renew his acquaintance with a large number of Southern, and even Northern, officers.[55] The material he collected from them and other sources, when added to his personal experiences, enabled him to speak and write in an authoritative and scholarly manner on the Civil War. His speech, "The Battle of Chancellorsville," first delivered to a reunion of the Army of Northern Virginia on October 29, 1879, became a classic. Using this speech and others, he appeared before countless audiences both in the North and the South.[56] His tours on behalf of the Southern Historical Society in 1882 and 1883 were sufficiently remunerative to provide that organization with a firm financial foundation.[57] His correspondence regarding the Longstreet attack also contributed to his well-received biography of General Lee which was published in 1894.[58] These developments contributed to his stature in the eyes of many Southerners.

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[55]Lee to Jones, March 21, 1876, Brock Papers, Huntington Library; Lee to H. B. McClellan, July 31, 1878, H. B. McClellan Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

[56]Jones, Army of Northern Virginia Memorial Volume, 293-333; New York Times, December 26, 1882, and February 8, 1883.

[57]"General Fitzhugh Lee's Tour," X (1882), 569-574, and "General Fitzhugh Lee's Second Tour in Behalf of the Southern Historical Society," XI (1883), 228-238, in Southern Historical Society Papers.

[58]Lee to Charles Venable, June 23, 1891, Charles Scott Venable Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

His stance as a defender of his uncle (who was equated with the very essence of Southern glory and honor by many) against Longstreet also gave a boost to his reconciliatory efforts. The mantle of Robert Edward Lee enveloped Fitz during the late 1870's. The renowned nephew, as a true champion of the Confederacy and its leading hero, could speak frankly without suffering odious recriminations from "unreconstructed" Southerners. His standing in the South also elicited greater attention from Northerners when he spoke about Southern desires to end sectional ill will. His increased appearances in the North after 1875 were well received and sometimes presented dramatic gestures of national reunion. For example, Lee (among others) represented the South at the funeral of General U. S. Grant in 1885.[59] In that same year, he was appointed to the West Point Board of Visitors with the personal endorsement of Philip H. Sheridan, then commanding general of the United States Army.[60] His continuing efforts to alleviate sectional bitterness in subsequent years led to the following comment in the New York Times upon his death in 1905: "There is no man in the South, and no man in the United States, who contributed more than Fitzhugh Lee to form, after the division of the Civil War, 'a more perfect union.'"[61]

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[59] Harper's Weekly, August 15, 1885; Nation, August 13, 1885.

[60] P. H. Sheridan's Endorsement of F. Lee to Board of Visitors of the U. S. Military Academy, April 8, 1885, copy in Opie Papers. For his formal appointment, see William C. Endicott to Lee, May 9, 1885, ibid.

[61] New York Times, April 29, 1905.

CHAPTER IV

THE "NON-POLITICIAN" IN POLITICS

The re-emergence of Fitzhugh Lee into the mainstream of Virginia, Southern, and national life described in the previous chapter was the principal basis for his political career during the late 1870's and early 1880's. Several of his personal characteristics contributed to his participation in public affairs--his gregariousness, his enjoyment of being in the public eye, his sense of duty--but of greater importance were the circumstances which confronted him during the two postwar decades. The feeling of an obligation to serve his nation that had been nurtured in his earlier years was met by his military career. Appomattox, of course, wrenched this method from him while leaving him with a sense of duty to render public service. Eventually he became involved in the political activities of his day. However, his entrance into the political arena and his desire for public office were not manifestations of a yearning for a political career, but rather an alternate method he felt compelled to resort to in order to attain personal satisfaction, prestige, and the gratification of his sense of duty. Lee was never a "politician" in the common usage of the term. Even though he won the highest office in the Commonwealth, he remained

politically naive. He disliked the intrigue of party and intra party struggles and ignored the minutiae of politics. While he practiced--on occasion, at least--some excellent political techniques for Virginia during this era, he never seriously compromised his basic allegation that he was a "non-politician" who merely found himself moving in the political sphere. In all his campaigns for public office, neither he nor his contemporaries considered him a professional politician.[1] Most of his successes and his failures in politics may be explained by that image.

Lee was slow in escaping the limbo to which Appomattox had supposedly assigned him, especially its political aspect. During Reconstruction, he was proscribed from political activities owing both to his name and to his military record. He disliked the course of Radical Reconstruction at the national level but made his criticisms known only to intimates.[2] He took no part in the "restoration" of Virginia to the Union under conservative control in 1869-70, although he agreed with the aims of the Conservative party which was distined to rule Virginia in the post-Reconstruction

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[1] This chapter encompasses only Lee's political activities until 1886. His tenure as governor is discussed in Chapter V and his campaign for the U.S. Senate is examined in Chapter VI.

[2] For example see Lee to M. M. Kimmel, October 1, 1867 and to Nannie Enders, February 18, 1869, Opie Papers.

decade.[3] He sympathized with those persons desiring to restore the glory and power of the Old Virginia of pre-war years, yet his contempt for politicians kept him from any wholehearted commitment to political struggles. Instead he had the vague hope that Virginia and the South would be "restored" by a reconciliation between Northern and Southern veterans which would override the politics of sectional animosity. Lee never entirely abandoned this grandiose concept but he was too practical and conventional to remain completely enraptured by it. As his ex-Army comrades became involved in political affairs, it was natural for the conventional Lee to follow them albeit with that occasional dash of flair and audacity which had characterized his military career. In the 1870's he remained attached to the Conservative party at the state level and with the Democratic party at the national level--as did most of the veterans with whom he associated or met at reunions.[4]

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[3]The political development of the Reconstruction and Redemption periods may be found in Richard G. Lowe, "Republicans, Rebellion, and Reconstruction: The Republican Party in Virginia, 1856-1870" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1968), esp. 311-362, and Jack P. Maddex, Jr., The Virginia Conservatives, 1869-1879: A Study in Reconstruction Politics (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1970), 46-120. For an analysis of the interaction of political, social and economic factors, consult James D. Smith, "Virginia during Reconstruction, 1865-1870: A Political, Economic and Social Study" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1960).

[4]For a broader discussion of the Conservative veterans in politics, see Maddex, The Virginia Conservatives, 101, 248-249, 287-292.

Although Lee was slower than many other Confederate generals to become actively involved in Conservative political affairs, his tardiness was not due to reactionary intransigence or a myopic attempt to ignore the realities of postwar Virginia public life; rather, his late appearance partially resulted from the peculiar combination of circumstances (which were discussed in the previous chapter) confronting him and his family after Appomattox. In the late 1870's, however, various developments caused his interest in the political life of the Old Dominion to quicken. Moreover, his bequest from his godmother in 1874 enabled Lee to take advantage of the new circumstances. When his old friend, General James Lawson Kemper, became governor in 1874, many Virginians felt that "redemption" was complete. Although Lee preferred to discuss other matters, Kemper urged him to become more aware of the political problems confronting Virginians.[5] While Lee pleaded before veterans for reconciliation and sought to rebuild Virginia economically during these years, he also found himself being drawn into politics by Kemper and other wartime associates. In 1877 when a new governor was to be elected, the Conservative party

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[5]Kemper to Lee, November 27, 1873, and November 4, 1875, Opie Papers. Kemper had less respect for some other Confederate veterans, such as the outspoken General Jubal Early. The political activities of the Conservatives and Kemper during his gubernatorial term are amply discussed in Robert R. Jones, "Conservative Virginian: The Post-War Career of Governor James Lawson Kemper," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1964).

was probably at the peak of its strength. A host of candidates for the nomination were offered by various factions and groups, and General Fitzhugh Lee was one of the names put before the convention.

A brief examination of his candidacy for the Conservative nomination in 1877 reveals several typical characteristics of Lee's participation in politics. He had little interest in the nomination and did not expect to win it, although he agreed to be a candidate and sought some support from a few old friends.[6] He did delight in the nature of his support--Confederate veterans throughout the state (who often possessed a political naivete comparable to his!). At the Conservative state convention in Richmond in August, Fitz Lee was nominated by General William H. Payne, a lawyer from Faquier. The tone and spirit of his nominating speech exemplified the fundamental appeal that was the basis of Lee's political career. The wartime service of Fitz and the other Lees (including, of course, Uncle Robert's) was stressed; in addition, emphasis was given to past achievements of his Lee and Mason ancestors in behalf of the state and and nation. Fitz was then lauded for his ability to withstand defeat and adversity--he "has in fact, and not as a figure of speech, beat his sword into a plowshare and yoking his old war horse to the plough with his own hands has opened the furrow." Payne concluded by telling the

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[6]Lee to Caskie Cabell, June 5, 1877, Opie Papers.

delegates that they should nominate General Lee, the farmer-planter, although "I well know your intriguing politicians and smoother courtiers please you best."[7]

Virginia was at the beginning of a fierce and momentous political struggle, however, and the Lee candidacy in 1877 was hopeless since the other leading candidates were not only ex-Confederate officers but skilled politicians as well. William Mahone, the dynamic railroad executive from Petersburg, polled 421 votes on the first ballot while John Warwick Daniel and Frederick W. M. Holliday trailed with 351 and 262, respectively. Fitz received only 126 votes and was dropped by the third ballot. When a deadlock between Mahone and Daniel developed, Lee was again brought forth as a compromise candidate but the convention finally selected Holliday.[8]

The key to the Conservative nomination in 1877 and especially to the tumultuous political developments of the next several years was the problem of Virginia's public debt. The debt question, which eventually split the Conservative party and incidentally propelled Lee deeper into political

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[7]Richmond State, Aug. 17, 1877; see also Elizabeth Watkins Lyons, "Scrapbook, 1871-1897," Virginia Historical Society, 94-95.

[8]Robert C. Glass and Carter Glass, Jr., Virginia Democracy: A History of the Achievements of the Party and Its Leaders (Springfield, Ill., 1937), I, 226-228; Nelson M. Blake, William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent (Richmond, 1935), 151-153.

affairs, had a long and complicated background.[9] In brief, the state assembly had passed a funding bill in 1871, which provided for full payment of two-thirds of the prewar debt (one-third was arbitrarily allocated to West Virginia). During its passage, many Virginians felt that the measure was unfair since bondholders were excused from the consequences of the war's destruction while other Virginians were compelled to bear the full burden of abnormal times. Those persons favoring the bill, commonly labeled "Funders," secured its passage on grounds that it would not only preserve Virginia honor but also restore sorely needed public credit.[10]

Unfortunately, in the next few years state revenues proved insufficient to meet both the debt obligation and

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[9]The history of the debt controversy can only be briefly summarized in this biographical study. The standard account is found in Charles C. Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia (New Haven, 1917). For a recent study which partially supersedes Pearson on the political movement triggered by the debt problem, consult James T. Moore, "To Carry Africa into the War: The Readjuster Movement and the Negro," (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1968). For a proper understanding of the Virginia political environment of Lee after 1870, two excellent works are available: Allen W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 (Charlottesville, 1968), and Raymond H. Pulley, Old Virginia Restored: An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930 (Charlottesville, 1968).

[10]Virginia's first post-Reconstruction or "Redeemer" legislature simultaneously passed a law providing for the sale of state-owned railroads--the state's participation in railroad construction had been the principal reason for Virginia's huge prewar debt. The railroads, temporarily short of capital, were an added strain on the state's financial resources of the moment but nonetheless a potential source of revenue. The activities of the General Assembly of 1869-1871 are thoroughly examined in Robert M. Ours, "Virginia's First Redeemer Legislature, 1869-1871," (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1966).

the demands for essential governmental services, including public schools. Many Virginians called for some type of readjustment of the debt settlement which would give more consideration to postwar circumstances and their effect on Virginia's ability to pay prewar debts. These demands increased after severe economic dislocation followed the Panic of 1873 and contributed to the emergence of General Mahone as the central figure in state politics. That Confederate hero had long been a major behind-the-scenes figure in the Conservative party since he needed political influence to execute his scheme of consolidating state railroads under his control. However, the Panic not only ended any chance of success for his railroad venture but also ruined his own line (the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Ohio) as the economic climate made it impossible for him to meet his obligations to the road's bondholders. Viewing the public debt burden as an important factor in the state's declining economy, he decided to play a more direct role in politics in an effort to salvage his railroad interests.[11] Accordingly, since he was dissatisfied with the state economic environment and fiscal policies for both public and private reasons, he naturally sought to become governor by appealing to others who also believed that a revised debt settlement would alleviate the economic sufferings of Virginians. Mahone

[11] Blake, Mahone, 132-133, 147; John F. Stover, The Railroads of the South, 1865-1900: A Study in Finance and Control (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1955), 138-139.

was supported by the "readjusters" at the 1877 convention, while the "debt-payers" had split their votes among Daniel, Holliday, Lee, and other candidates. Since only one of the debt-payer candidates (General William Terry) had publicly called for payment to the last dollar, the debt question was not openly debated at the convention. Mahone and his followers, however, finally threw their support to Holliday on the basis that he seemed to be more inclined to readjustment than others.[12]

After 1877 the haunting debt question became a nightmare for Conservative politicians. Holliday was elected easily with no formal opposition since the almost defunct Republican party, temporarily torn by dissensions and past defeats, refused to nominate a state ticket. However, Virginia was not yet destined to witness a one-party system; rather, the state political scene exploded as two powerful, antagonistic groups appeared. The overt reasons for the solidification of the loose coalitions, irreconciably opposed to one another, emerged during 1878 and 1879 when the Assembly considered first the Barbour and then the McCulloch bills--both dealt with the by now controversial debt issue. The Barbour bill, designed to guarantee the operation of the general government and the schools no matter what happened to the debt repayment

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[12]Blake, Mahone, 150-155, 163-170; Glass, Virginia Democracy, 227-228; Richmond Dispatch, July 10 and 31, 1877. For a detailed account of Holliday's nomination and service as governor, consult Julian Porter, "Frederick William Mackey Holliday, Governor of Virginia, 1878-1881," (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1969).

schedule, was the original readjustment measure. It provided that revenues from the fifty-cent general property tax should be allocated in the ratio of fifty per cent, twenty per cent, and thirty per cent, to the general government, public schools, and debt interest, respectively. An added controversial provision stipulated that funds designated for general government and schools be paid in lawful money only; consequently, tax-receivable coupons from the bondholders could not be used for these two funds. Holliday vetoed the measure in February 1878, and the next year the Assembly passed the McCulloch bill with its key provision reducing the rate of interest on Virginia bonds from six to four per cent. The McCulloch Act was accepted by the governor and by many bondholders, especially foreigners frightened by possible repudiation. Despite the fiscal advantage of this measure, it was insufficient to bring relief to state finances since the bonds were left with tax-receivable coupons. Mahone and other Conservatives favoring readjustment met in Richmond in February 1879, in the midst of the debate on the McCulloch measure, and formed the Readjuster party. When the bill finally became law in March, almost half the schools were closing and the Readjusters determined that their case should be presented to voters in the Assembly elections of 1879. The Readjusters believed that the people favored the Barbour bill or even a more forcible debt measure while the Funders

or debt-payers (who retained control of the Conservative party) rallied to a defense of the McCulloch Act.[13]

Fitz Lee maintained his allegiance to the Conservative party. He had remained aloof from the agitated debates on the Barbour and McCulloch measures, but in March 1879, found himself thrust into the bitter campaign after he urged the people of Stafford county at a public meeting to endorse the McCulloch settlement.[14] Lee was not an extreme "Funder" but feared that Readjuster proposals might eventually lead to radical measures repudiating Virginia's honor as well as her debts. As a traditionalist, he was concerned with the glorious heritage of his native state and enraptured with what Raymond Pulley labeled the "Old Virginia Mystique."[15]

General Payne, his friend who had nominated him for governor in 1877, begged Lee to be the Conservative candidate for the House of Delegates from the Stafford-King George district. Fitz at first declined but finally agreed, primarily in order to keep his friends in control of the local party. Since he abhorred the breakup of the Conservative

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[13]Howson W. Cole, III, "Harrison Holt Riddleberger, Readjuster," (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1952), 50-51; Moger Virginia, 33-37; Pearson, Readjuster Movement, 78-102. For discussions of the various measures to solve the debt problem, see Reginald C. McGrane, Foreign Bondholders and American State Debts (New York, 1935), 364-381, and Benjamin U. Ratchford, American State Debts (Durham, N.C., 1941), 197-229.

[14]"General Fitzhugh Lee, Bourbon-Funder Candidate for Governor," Broadside, 1885.

[15]Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, 1-23.

party, the bitterness and intolerance between former allies exhibited in the ensuing campaign made his endeavor a sorrowful affair for him. Lee lauded the great traditions of the Old Dominion in his speeches and the public appearances of this renowned Virginian--a visible incarnation of the Old Order--were well received, but these matters were not germane to the issues of the campaign. The Readjusters chose Duff Green, a small farmer in Stafford county who had been crippled during his service as a Confederate private, as their candidate. He wisely refused to debate with Lee during the canvass despite the offer of very favorable terms for joint appearances. Instead, Green dismissed Lee as just the candidate of local factions connected with the Fredericksburg Conservative political "ring" and aimed his attacks at all "Funder-Conservatives." The Readjuster nominee, appealing to his fellow small landowners, concentrated on the possible effects a state Conservative victory would have on the public schools and the debt question. Lee eventually declared his staunch support of the public schools and his belief that the McCulloch Act would be their salvation. Aside from the issues, Lee's canvass was too decorous and indifferent (in late October, at the height of the campaign, he left the district to deliver his famous Chancellorsville speech to a group of Confederate veterans for the first time) for a local contest. The Readjuster candidate defeated him 744 to 572, approximately the same ratio by which Readjusters beat the Conservatives throughout

the state (81,000 to 62,000).[16] Friends of Duff Green bragged to William Mahone that Fitz had received "his death blow. No one expects the General to recover."[17]

Indeed the defeat in 1879 seemed to squelch his political career for Lee had no further direct political role during the years of Readjuster triumph from 1879 to 1883. However, the course of Readjusterism was to be instrumental in his eventual election as governor by 1885. The new Readjuster Assembly first elected Mahone to the United States Senate (to take office in 1881) and then passed the Riddleberger bill to readjust the debt, a measure promptly vetoed by Governor Holliday. The Readjusters soon captured complete control of the state government by not only retaining control of the Assembly but also witnessing their gubernatorial candidate, William E. Cameron, defeat Conservative John W. Daniel. When Mahone entered the Senate, he voted with the Republicans and the patronage of the national Republican administration contributed to Readjuster strength in the

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[16] An excellent account of the Lee-Green campaign was published in a Supplement to the Fredericksburg (Va.) Star, Oct. 18, 1879, (A copy is found in the Governor Fitzhugh Lee Executive Papers, Virginia State Library); see also Pearson, Readjuster Movement, 77, 118-131, and Chataigne, Virginia Gazetteer, 1880-81, 485. Duff Green subsequently served in three sessions of the Assembly (1879-1884). Earl G. Swem and John W. Williams, A Register of the General Assembly of Virginia, 1776-1918, and of the Constitutional Conventions (Richmond, 1918), 201-205.

[17] J. Critcher to Mahone, Dec. 1, 1879, William A. Mahone Papers, Duke University Library.

elections of 1881.[18] In 1882 the Riddleberger bill, embodying the spirit that public debtors should bear a portion of the burdens from the War and Reconstruction, became law and scaled the debt down from about $35 million to $21 million. Interest on the bonds was set at three per cent, and the attached coupons were declared invalid for payment of taxes.[19] After disposing of the debt question, the Readjuster-Republicans embarked on a general reform program: the schools received increased funds; the poll tax was abolished; general property taxes were reduced while assessed values of corporations were raised; archaic laws dealing with such matters as the whipping post and dueling were also abolished.[20]

By 1883, however, the coalition directed by Mahone began to disintegrate in part because of its achievements. Some Readjusters disliked the alliance with the national Republican party which had presided over Virginia's defeat in the War while others resented Mahone's dominance. Moreover, many whites were disturbed by the Mahone tactic of seeking and gaining Negro support for his coalition. In the 1883 elections of the General Assembly, the Conservatives rallied

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[18] Blake, Mahone 196-219; Pearson, Readjuster Movement, 132-159.

[19] The various provisions of the Riddleberger Debt Act and their effect on governmental operations are discussed in greater detail in Chapter V. Their debt settlement caused the Readjusters to be labeled "repudiators" by some; see John W. Johnston, "Repudiation in Virginia," North American Review, CXXXIV (Feb., 1882), 149-160.

[20] A brief summary of Readjuster reforms is found in Moore, "The Readjuster Movement and the Negro," 21-38, and Moger, Virginia, 47-49.

and sought to profit from this dissatisfaction under their shrewd chairman, John Strode Barbour, a longtime enemy of Mahone in both railroad and political affairs. Barbour devised a superior organization which eventually guaranteed the success of the Conservatives, who renamed themselves the Democratic party. The Democrats accepted the Riddleberger debt settlement, welcomed certain Readjusters into their party, denounced "Mahone bossism," and stressed the perils of Negro political participation. The outcome of the campaign between the well-organized Conservative Democrats and the incumbent Readjuster-Republicans was finally determined by the white reaction to the race riot in Danville on the eve of the election. The new Democratic party captured two-thirds of the General Assembly on the issues of race and Mahoneism.[21]

Although Fitzhugh Lee did not participate in the formation and initial triumph of the new party, he was soon associated with it. At the request of John Warwick Daniel and other Democratic politicians, he appeared before voters on behalf of Grover Cleveland in the 1884 presidential

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[21]Moger, Virginia, 51-52; Moore, "The Readjuster Movement and the Negro," 39 ff.; Charles E. Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902 (Charlottesville, 1961), 29-34; see also, William Mahone, "Address of the Readjuster State Executive Committee," Broadside, 1883. For analysis of the Danville riot and its effect on Virginia political affairs, consult John T. S. Melzer, "The Danville Riot, November 3, 1883" (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1963), and William C. Tate, Jr., "The Danville Riot of 1883: Its Effect on Politics in Virginia" (M.A. thesis, University of Richmond, 1968).

campaign.[22] At Cleveland's inauguration in 1885, the Democrats assigned Lee a prominent public role in festivities celebrating the triumph of the first Democratic president in a quarter-century. Leading a body of Virginia troops in the inaugural parade, Fitz received a tremendous ovation--even surpassing the one for Cleveland some observers declared--from the crowds lining the streets. Returning to Virginia, he found that many Democrats were clamoring for his nomination as the party's candidate for governor. Lee thus became engaged in his most important political campaign and the only one in which he would be successful.

Unlike his previous political efforts, Fitzhugh Lee was aided by opportune circumstances in his candidacy for the Democratic nomination in 1885. John S. Barbour, the architect of the 1883 victory, had long called for the entrance of new men into politics. Lee was still considered a political newcomer by most active party workers and, more important, the masses viewed him as a hero--not a politician--who was offering his services to the state. Moreover, since his name was not associated with the leadership of the old Funder-Conservative group, younger men in the party became

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[22] John W. Daniel to Lee, Nov. 10 and Nov. 12, 1884, Opie Papers. His Northern friends, along with Lee, hoped that "sectionalism may be wiped out" by Cleveland; see Thomas F. Bayard to Lee, Jan. 25, 1885, ibid.

his most active supporters.[23] Barbour, on the other hand, had no desire to see Lee nominated. The party chairman's friends pointed out that Barbour should be promoted from Congressman to Senator since his work had contributed so greatly to the victories in 1882 and 1884. His candidacy would certainly suffer if Lee were nominated since both men were from Northern Virginia and too many Democrats felt that the higher offices should be apportioned equally among the various sections of the state. John W. Daniel, the defeated Conservative gubernatorial candidate of 1881, also challenged Barbour's aspirations. Seeing a convenient way to thwart Barbour's candidacy and seize the Senate seat for himself, Daniel hailed Lee as symbolic of the type of man for which Barbour had pleaded. He asserted that Lee could be considered a "new face" since the General had not been involved in recent state politics and was certainly not a professional politician. Fitz became Daniel's candidate for the gubernatorial nomination while Lee gave tacit support

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[23] New York Times, July 29, 30, and 31, 1885. Lee was supported by numerous younger delegates who were not fulltime politicians or who had become involved only recently in politics. For example, Holmes Conrad of Winchester and James Dunlop of Richmond (the young men who made the nominating and seconding speeches, respectively, for Lee) had each served one term in the legislature. In contrast, General Lee also drew major support from the older Confederate veterans such as Generals William H. Payne and B. B. Munford. Although both the latter had served in the General Assembly, neither were career politicians. Consult Swem and Williams, A Register of the General Assembly, 200-207. Nonetheless, the Republicans attempted to cast Lee as the candidate of, and a principal leader in, the old Funder group; see "Lee, Bourbon-Funder Candidate," 1-3.

to Daniel in his quest to secure Mahone's Senate seat.[24] Since the Senate seat would not be filled until after the state general election, the first problem facing the informal alliance was securing Lee's nomination. Fitz found himself involved with numerous politicians besides Daniel in the months preceding the Democratic convention.[25]

While Lee and other Democrats were engaged in these pre-convention political maneuvers, the Readjuster-Republican coalition hammered together by Mahone, having formally adopted the Republican label for their group in April, assembled at Richmond on July 15 to nominate its state ticket.[26] The group at the convention was neither united nor representative of all Virginia Republicans and former Readjusters. Several old line or "Straightout" Republicans--many of whom had been in the party since the War--even refused to attend the convention. A greater handicap was the dissatisfaction of several Readjusters. A majority of them followed Mahone into the Republican camp, but many who attended the convention

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[24]Richmond Dispatch, July 1, 1885; Hamilton J. Eckenrode, "History of Virginia since 1865; 1865-1945: A Political History," unpublished manuscript in University of Virginia Library, 196; Richard B. Doss, "John Warwick Daniel: A Study in the Virginia Democracy," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1955), 87-88. Thomas Staples Martin, Lee's nemesis in the 1893 Senatorial election, actively supported Daniel's scheme and thus, ironically, contributed to Lee's only political victory.

[25]Lee to Archer Anderson, July 2, 1885, and Anderson to Lee, July 4, 1885, Archer Anderson Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

[26]Richmond Dispatch, July 15, 1885.

were displeased with Mahone's leadership including Governor Cameron and Harrison H. Riddleberger, the junior United States Senator. Riddleberger delivered a lively speech denouncing Mahoneism and defiantly ridiculed "the machine methods of the Boss." In a brilliant and soothing reply, Mahone declared his intention of allowing an "open and free" convention, publicly embraced Riddleberger on the speaker's platform, and brought a semblance of surface unity to the party.[27]

The convention then adopted a platform which called for a free ballot (abolition of the poll tax), free public schools, economical government, an eight-hour day for public employees, and "enforcement of the Readjuster settlement of the State debt." Most of the platform was devoted to attacks on the Democrats. The Democrats were accused of reviving the race issue and trying to limit the suffrage through methods utilized by "Mississippi Bourbonism." It was also asserted that the Funders in the Democratic party accepted the debt settlement only in order to win the 1883 elections.[28] Turning to the problem of choosing a gubernatorial candidate, the Republicans rallied for John S. Wise, a young and popular politician who was supported by the Cameron-Riddleberger faction as well as by Mahone. Moreover, since several

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[27] Ibid., July 3, 14, 15, 16, 1885; Washington National Republican, July 17, 1885; Cole, "Riddleberger," 102-104, 110-112.

[28] "Platform and Address of the Republican Party of Virginia, adopted July 15, 1885," Broadside, 1885.

Republicans felt that General Lee would win the Democratic endorsement, Wise, an ex-Confederate captain and also the scion of an old Virginia family, was hailed as an effective counterploy to the Democratic Lee. With the Democratic convention two weeks away, the Republicans adjourned with claims that Wise was the "better man" owing to his political and legal experience.[29]

Though the Republicans maintained that the Democrats would nominate Fitzhugh Lee, many Democrats were not so certain of that outcome. The Richmond Dispatch, the organ of John S. Barbour and his Democratic State Executive Committee, hopefully asserted that there was no leading contender for the nomination.[30] The Democratic delegates began to assemble at Richmond two days before the scheduled opening date of their convention, July 29. Many delegates were uncommitted and a host of aspirants vied for votes, especially Phillip McKinney and Charles T. O'Ferrall, the two future governors who would follow Lee, and John E. Massey, the future lieutenant governor. Lee was the only candidate whose

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[29]Washington National Republican, July 15, 17, 20, 28, 1885. The Republicans chose H. Clinton Wood, a former president pro tempore of the state, for lieutenant governor and incumbent Frank Blair was renominated for attorney-general. Wise, the son of pre-Civil War Governor Henry A. Wise, had been active in politics since "redemption" and was worried about the shaky Mahone coalition. See John J. H. Wise to John S. Wise, April 16, 1885, John S. Wise Papers, at the home of his grandson John S. Wise, Farmington, Va. For a brief biographical sketch of Wise see Curtis C. Davis, "Very Well-Rounded Republican: The Several Lives of John S. Wise," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXXI, No. 4 (October, 1963), 461-487.

[30]July 29, 1885.

followers came "from all sections of the State." Most of the others were strong in only a particular section or were the favorite of an interest group. Though Lee did not control a majority of the committed delegates, he was the frontrunner.[31] His position as the most popular candidate was enhanced by the publicity he had recently received after General Grant's death on July 23. Fitzhugh Lee, as a well-known Southern general and nephew of Robert, was asked to represent the South at Grant's funeral. Lee gained front-page coverage when he declared that Grant had actually been a Democrat at heart.[32]

Despite Lee's popularity, Chairman Barbour seemed determined to thwart the Lee candidacy although, in early July, he assured Lee "that there would not be any clash between our personal interests." In spite of this pledge, Lee found only reluctant support from Barbour's lieutenants.[33] Ever the professional, Barbour feared that Lee's lack of

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[31] Ibid., July 28, 29, 1885; see also New York Times July 30, 1885. If the avowed candidates had not won by the second ballot, it was speculated that Barbour would be the compromise nominee.

[32] Richmond Dispatch, July 24, 1885. His appearance in the pageant especially encouraged Lee supporters with a martial background. Lee appealed not only to veterans but also current members of the Virginia militia and their friends and relatives, see Lee to "The Soldiers of the First Brigade, Virginia Volunteers," March 13, 1885, Brock Papers, Huntington Library.

[33] Lee to Archer Anderson, July 3 and 4, 1885, and Anderson to Lee, July 4, 1885, Archer Anderson Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

political experience might be a liability for the party in the general election in addition to squelching his senatorial ambition. When the convention opened, the galleries were packed with McKinney supporters in an effort to rally the Lee opponents behind McKinney. Daniel and the Lee adherents had not been inactive, however. In his nominating speech, the youthful Holmes Conrad (the future solicitor general of the United States under Presidents Cleveland and McKinley) emphasized Lee's wartime services while, in his seconding speech, James Dunlop (a member of the prominent Richmond tobacco family) appealed to the younger delegates by reiterating Barbour's plea for new faces.[34] Since their preliminary count of the delegates showed that Lee had a majority, they clamored for an immediate official ballot. Their booming, bandwagon techniques were too much for the anti-Lee men. Barbour was forced to cease stalling but sarcastically noted that "there's no use trying to stop a machine like that when it gets to going."[35] Lee received a majority on the first ballot, and the nomination was promptly made unanimous. The convention then attempted to lure as many Readjusters as

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[34]"Speech on the Nomination of Fitzhugh Lee as Governor of Virginia," James H. Dunlop Papers in the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill. Biographical information concerning Conrad and Dunlop is found in Philip A. Bruce, et. al., History of Virginia (Chicago and New York, 1924), IV, 379, and V, 95-97. For McKinney's role in the 1885 convention and his subsequent career, consult Bernice Zuckerman, "Phillip Watkins McKinney, Governor of Virginia, 1890-1894," (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1967).

[35]New York Times, July 30, 1885.

possible by nominating John Massey, as Albemarle county Baptist minister and formerly an active Readjuster speaker, for lieutenant-governor. After a brief fight, the politically doubtful Southwest was placated with the nomination of Rufus Ayers, a popular lawyer and successful businessman from that section, for attorney-general.[36]

The Democratic convention then adopted a platform which was strikingly similar to the Republican one. The Democrats again proclaimed their acceptance of the Riddleberger debt settlement, although they did assert that decisions of Federal Republican judges would probably require the state to pass more legislation on the subject.[37] The similarities between the two platforms reveal the dearth of overt issues between the two principal political groups in Virginia and show that the essential feature of the campaign was the battle for control of the political future of the Old Dominion. The Democrats were fighting to increase their majority in the legislature, to win the state-wide offices, and eventually to oust Mahone and Riddleberger from the Senate. The Republicans were defending their position and hoping to regain control of the legislature. Connected with this

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[36] Richmond Dispatch, July 31, 1885.

[37] The complete party platform was published in the Dispatch on July 31. Throughout the campaign the Democrats usually attempted to ignore the debt controversy. However, Frank G. Ruffin defended the party's past stand on that issue in his 64-page partisan pamphlet entitled "Facts, Thoughts and Conclusions in Regard to the Public Debt of Virginia," (Richmond, 1885).

power struggle was the race issue. The Republicans, dependent on Negro votes to keep from being overwhelmed by the Democrats, had to block any restriction of Negro suffrage. The Democrats considered several possibilities whereby the Republican party might be destroyed--they could limit the Negro vote; they could brand the Republican party as the "black party," or they could win enough Negroes over to the Democratic banner to cause Republican defeat. In the elections of 1885, the Democrats attempted all three schemes.[38]

The prediction was made that the Virginia gubernatorial campaign of 1885 would be dignified. After all, the two leading candidates were scions of prominent Virginia families, ex-Confederates, and personal friends. The Republicans hoped that there could be joint debates between the heads of the two tickets. Further, they argued that "a joint canvass by Lee and Wise would add both excitement and dignity to the campaign."[39] The Republican hopes, both for a joint canvass and a dignified campaign, were to be devastatingly shattered. Both Lee and Wise were skilled orators, but the Republican nominee was also an adept debater famed for his slashing attacks and ravaging repartees. When Chairman Barbour assumed control of the Democratic campaign, he refused to allow Lee to debate Wise. This was

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[38] John S. Wise, The Lion's Skin (New York, 1905), 358-361; see also Richard L. Morton, The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1865-1902 (Charlottesville, 1919), 118-126, and Wynes, Race Relations, 39-50.

[39] Washington National Republican, July 29, 1885; Davis, "Very Well-Rounded Republican," 476.

only the initial step in a shrewd strategy mapped out by Barbour and the state executive committee. Other Democratic stump speakers could be assigned to dog Wise's footsteps, but Fitzhugh Lee was to be saved for personal appearances throughout the state.[40] Barbour realized that Lee, as a symbol of the "Lost Cause," would appeal to the many Virginians who were becoming more susceptible to a "cult of the Confederacy" as the horrors of the War receded into the dim past.[41] This style of campaigning was of course acceptable to Fitz since it reflected the philosophy of his involvement in politics. Instead of featuring the two nominees in dignified joint appearances, the campaign was distinguished by its ballyhoo and bamboozlement.

Within a week of the adjournment of the convention, Lee was heavily engaged with Democratic leaders in making plans for his speaking engagements. Despite requests from various groups for immediate visits by General Lee, he did not launch his active canvass until the end of August.[42]

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[40] Eckenrode, "History of Virginia," p. 201; see also Richmond Dispatch, August 5 and 6. The Democrats justified their decision on the grounds that most Republicans were Negroes and that it would be unfair to permit Republican candidates to address white Democrats. See Wise, The Lion's Skin, 363-364.

[41] The Confederate "cult"--a glorification of all things associated with the Confederacy--received its greatest impetus when John W. Daniel spoke at the unveiling of the recumbent statue of Robert E. Lee at Lexington in 1883; see Doss, "John Warwick Daniel," 67-68. It was often synonymous with the Old Virginia "mystique."

[42] Lee to J. M. Dalzell, Aug. 8, 1885, Atcheson L. Hench Collection of Papers, University of Virginia Library.

Making his maiden speech in Accomack county on the Eastern Shore, General Lee declared the Democrats had accepted the debt settlement and that the question could not be made a campaign issue. Lee also proclaimed that he was now thoroughly national in sympathy, a supporter of President Grover Cleveland, and an ardent proponent of the industrialization of the South. He further acknowledged that while he loved his state no more than his country, he would not forget his companions in the previous sectional conflict. Finally, to broaden his appeal to the electorate even more, Lee mentioned that he was no politician or professional stumper, but "only a plain farmer, who had given the best years of his life to tilling the soil."[43] While Lee spoke at Accomack, Attorney-General Blair, the Republican seeking re-election, harangued a smaller crowd forty yards away from the Democratic dais. However, following the dictates of Barbour and the state committee, Lee refused to debate Blair.[44]

John S. Wise had begun his more strenuous canvass earlier than Lee. By September 5, Wise, in a tour of the Southwest region of Virginia, had completed thirty-one speeches and traveled 450 miles on horseback alone. The

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[43]Richmond Dispatch, September 1 and 2, 1885. Perhaps Lee was guilty of an overstatement when he used the term "plain farmer" but his friend, John Esten Cooke, noted that Fitz had great appeal for farmers; undated article in James E. Cooke Manuscript Collection, Library of Congress.

[44]The Democrats went to great lengths to keep Republican speakers from debating with Lee. For example, the Democrats moved their speaker's platform twice because Blair tried to get within speaking distance of Lee.

Democrats by that date were only beginning their campaign and, to counterbalance Wise and the Republicans, they concentrated their initial major effort in the Southwest. Lee reached the Valley of Virginia and spoke at Lexington. Barbour also sent some of his best stumpers, including Massey, Ayers, Daniel, and O'Ferrall, into the area to nullify some of the damage wrought by the Wise whirlwind. While Lee was remaining aloof from debates with Republican candidates, other Democrats were sent to debate with Wise. The State Committee decided to send its best speakers against Wise in the practically all-white counties. Accordingly, Charles T. O'Ferrall met Wise at Grayson County Courthouse on September 7 for a "joint discussion."[45] In his memoirs, O'Ferrall vividly described his discussion with "the brilliant and dashing Republican gubernatorial candidate . . . as the hardest fight of my political life." Though Wise had been campaigning daily for weeks, he successfully parried O'Ferrall for four hours in boiling heat until both men were forced to retire to the hotel "as wet as wharf rats."[46] While O'Ferrall was confronting Wise, John W. Daniel had joined Lee and was proudly introducing him to audiences as "the gallant soldier and farmer."[47]

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[45] Richmond Dispatch, September 5 and 8, 1885.

[46] Charles T. O'Ferrall, Forty Years of Active Service (New York and Washington, 1904), pp. 225-226.

[47] Richmond Dispatch, September 9, 1885. Daniel and Lee were the two most popular members of the Virginia Democracy during this period, and their joint appearances always drew large crowds.

The Lee candidacy was given a tremendous boost when a novel tactic was seized upon in early September. At the first few public appearances of General Lee, some of his war comrades and other ex-Confederates who ardently supported him heralded his approach with the blast of a cavalry bugle. On September 10, at the famous Natural Bridge, his champions grasped a new method of campaigning. A large body of mounted men passed in review before the former cavalry leader. Then the column, with Lee on a prancing horse at its head, rode to Lexington. The mounted procession, promptly designated the "Fitz Lee Cavalry," aroused tremendous excitement on the part of both participants and on-lookers. Lee, though bulky and middle-aged, still sat well on a horse and "looked every inch a soldier."[48] The mounted cavalcade was a God-send to Lee--it allowed him to exhibit his horsemanship while giving zest, sparkle, and interest to his candidacy. It no longer mattered what he said on the Platform--the people wanted to see a hero, a nephew of Marse Robert, and, most of all, a colorful parade. Such colorful columns had not been seen in Virginia for twenty years and provided Lee with the perfect setting to pose as the living symbol of the vanquished Confederacy.

While Lee was attaining his proper campaign stride, his opponent was seeking a method to counterbalance Lee's popular appeal. After the Conventions, Wise and other

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[48] Ibid., September 10 and 11, 1885.

Republicans had flatly asserted that everything good in the Democratic platform was "an ingenious copy of the Republican platform." They especially ridiculed the Democratic worry that Federal court decisions on the debt settlement might trample on "state rights" and made intemperate charges that the Democrats would destroy the debt settlement.[49] These Republican actions left Lee unruffled, and Wise--unlike Duff Green in 1877--began making accusations against Lee personally. In one of his most significant Southwestern speeches on September 7, Wise maintained Lee was the Democratic candidate only because he was "the nephew of his uncle" and cleverly compared Robert E. Lee with Napoleon and Fitz with Louis Napoleon.[50] The Washington National Republican, which had begun to blanket Virginia with extra editions for the duration of the campaign, adopted the course set by Wise. Typical of its attacks on Lee is the following poem signed with only the initials "F. L.":

Look at me!
Don't you see
I'm a Lee
I'm the nephew of my uncle, Robert E.,
And my uncle, Robert E., left to me
And I claim
His great name
And his fame.

A glorious thing it is to be
Nephew of such a man as he,
I would not swap my pedigree
For any man's ancestral tree.

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[49]Washington National Republican, July 31, August 1, 1885; William A. Mahone, "Virginia and Her Debt." Broadside, 1885.

[50]Richmond Dispatch, September 8, 1885.

As through the rural towns I ride,
My spirit swells with noble pride,
I sometimes fear 'twill burst my hide,
And scatter round the countryside.

Oh! 'tis a glorious thing to be
A nephew of great Robert Lee.[51]

Demonstrating both his audacity and his courage, Wise himself continued to taunt General Lee throughout the campaign, making good copy for all newspapers covering the campaign. By the first of October, the Republican standard bearer--whether because he was worn out from the strenuous campaign, had simply despaired of victory, or just exercised bad judgement--began to lose some of his sarcastic skill and satirical wit. His speeches took on an increasingly embittered tone, and his exaggerated denunciations of Lee exhibited a poor taste which grated on the senses of many Virginians.[52]

In contrast, Fitz Lee serenely continued his canvass of the state. The Lee cavalry and brass bands heralded his approach to the various barbecues, receptions, and parades. His speeches became increasingly unrelated to the current issues being debated by other Democratic and Republican speakers. Crowds loved his reminiscences about the War while Lee also reminded them that he had shared a common experience of many post-bellum Virginians when he farmed during Reconstruction: "I had been accustomed all my

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[51] The poem appeared in its September 23 edition and was followed by similar ones in subsequent editions.

[52] The problems and worries Wise had were later revealed in his book, The Lion's Skin, 358-367; see also the letters of his cousin, John James Wise, to him on April 16, August 3, and December 21, 1885, John S. Wise Papers, Farmington.

life to draw corn from the quartermaster, and found it rather hard now to draw it from an obstinate soil, but I did it!"[53] It was unnecessary for him to engage in vociferous attacks on the Republicans; rather, posing as the candidate who would end sectional strife and bring good-will between Negro and white, he took an almost non-partisan stance and declared, "I never wrote a political speech in my life."[54] Confederate veterans who deserted the Republicans for Lee were given great praise and wise publicity by the Democratic press, and speculations appeared that Lee would receive even a large vote from the normally Republican Negroes.[55] Thus, with the prospects of victory seeming very bright, the cavalcades, parades, and barbecues continued.

On October 1 an incident revealed the disintegration of the campaign into a bitter polemical encounter. Before an audience in Alexandria, where Lee had been living since 1883, Wise made several disparaging and derogatory remarks about his opponent to the crowd filled with Lee's friends. He gleefully noted that in the West Point class of 1856, Lee had stood number 45 out of 48. Further, he had 169 demerits--more than any other general in his class. Lee's

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[53]John William Jones, Virginia's Next Governor, General Fitzhugh Lee (New York, 1885), p. 19.

[54]Richmond Dispatch, September 16, 1885; Lee's speeches seldom varied no matter where he spoke; see his "Speech, Gubernatorial Campaign," manuscript, Lee Executive Papers, Virginia State Library.

[55]For example, see Roanoke Leader, September 12 and 26, 1885.

style of campaigning was ridiculed, and Wise claimed that the cavalcades were made up of boys and colored Republicans. Wise also emphasized that the Democrats, when asked why they supported the Democracy, had only one standard answer--"By God, I'm a white man." Finally, Wise asserted that the Democrats who nominated Lee "boldly proclaimed that they did not care whether he was popular or not; they had the machinery in their hands, and would count him in." At this point, "pandemonium reigned supreme" as the friends of Lee gave vent to their rage. "Yells, shouts, hootings, cat-calls, and every sound or act that could contribute to swell the disorder was indulged in." Wise was compelled to cease speaking. After his speech was disrupted, Wise left town immediately to campaign in Culpeper.[56] After the so-called "Alexandria Affair," many Democratic speakers increasingly matched the intemperance of Republican orators. They especially reiterated that the Republicans were the "black party"--the winning strategy they had used in 1883. In turn, the Republicans attempted to hedge on the racial issue while stressing Readjuster-Republican achievements since 1879.[57] In addition, both parties redoubled their

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[56]Washington National Republican, October 2, 1885. Lee had long been well-known to Alexandria, although he did not buy a home and farm there until the 1880's. Roanoke Leader, October 3, 1885.

[57]In his speeches in the heavily white counties, Wise compromised himself with some Negro voters. He denied their political maturity and emphatically noted his belief in segregation; see Richmond Dispatch, September 8 and October 11, 1885. The Republicans made a sincere effort to defend the record of officials elected by their party, but it was insufficient to win many votes; see "Republican Domination. What It Has Done For Virginia. A Brilliant Record!" Broadside, 1885.

attacks on the personal character of their opponents' gubernatorial candidates.

General Lee was subjected to intensified invective in the next few weeks. Republicans taunted Democrats for sheltering him from debates while noting that the "Fitzhugh Lee Democracy" had no qualms about heckling Republican speakers. He was also widely ridiculed for riding at the head of cavalcades in which a saddle, purporting to have belonged to Robert E. Lee, was prominently displayed.[58] Maintaining that Lee's claim for the governorship was based solely on his lineage, the National Republican began to delete Lee's name and insert the term "Uncle Robert's saddle" in campaign stories. In one typical facetious article, his movements were reported as follows:

> At precisely 2 o'clock this morning "Uncle Robert's saddle," in a good state of preservation, reached the Southwest border of the Old Dominion .... "Uncle Robert's saddle" is billed for a flank movement into the mountains where it will come to a halt and the rider will make a speech. But why speak when mute eloquence of that saddle is irresistibly moving the masses?[59]

While there was continued mention of atrocities committed by the Democrats, such as the kidnapping of a Republican speaker, the Republicans increased their ridicule of Lee and his uncle's saddle. "If Fitz Lee and Uncle Robert's

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[58]Washington National Republican, September 23, 1885. Fitz later explained that since he used different horses and saddles at each cavalcade, "I never knew it" if any saddle was his uncle's. Lee to E. A. Zuck, December 2, 1885, R. E. Lee Papers, Washington and Lee University Library, quoted in Moger, Virginia, 60.

[59]Washington National Republican, October 13, 1885.

saddle were to take different routes and hold separate meetings, it is honestly believed that the latter would draw larger audiences than the former." The Republicans suggested that many persons would vote for Fitz Lee thinking that they were voting for Robert E. Lee. One article noted that while the people of Rome had elected a horse as consul, Virginians might elect a saddle as governor.[60]

Despite the extensive criticism of his campaign tactics, Fitz Lee probably benefited from the Republican attacks. In late October, he slyly noted, "This ridicule of me does not belittle me, I have never yet seen the day when I was ashamed of being the nephew of Robert E. Lee."[61] However, Lee no longer discouraged other Democrats from jeering and heckling Wise. His official campaign biography, which was published in the middle of the campaign, even contained a poem taunting Wise:

> Our opponent is sad, boys,
> And heaveth heavy sighs;
> He has a doubt, as well he may,
> As who shall get the prize.
> One thing he may be sure of,
> Let him wipe his weeping eyes,
> Our chief will be a wise one,
> But will not be one WISE.[62]

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[60] Ibid., October 20 and 29, 1885.

[61] Richmond Dispatch, October 25, 1885.

[62] Jones, Virginia's Next Governor, 31. This brief biographical sketch lauded Fitz but mentioned his opponent only briefly. In contrast, the Republican tract, "Lee, Bourbon-Funder Candidate," was harshly critical of Lee and attempted to portray him as the most vehement Funder in the state.

In the closing days of the campaign, Lee finally attacked Wise personally. He asserted that Wise's father would be ashamed of the son's actions in the campaign. Perhaps the most discourteous attack made by Lee was his insinuation that Wise had been a horse-thief in the closing days of the War.[63] Nonetheless, Lee generally exhibited restraint in deriding Wise.

In the two weeks prior to the election, Southern chauvinism became more pronounced--which, of course, enhanced the Lee candidacy. Throughout the campaign, Northern Republican leaders had been interested in the Virginia elections. The seats of the two Republican Senators would be lost eventually if the Democrats won control of the state government. Further, it was widely believed that if Virginia went Democratic, the question "Shall the solid south be kept in its Democratic solidity?" would be answered in the affirmative. Accordingly, several famous Northern Republicans came to Virginia to speak for the state ticket. Unfortunately for the Virginia Republicans, these speakers only added to the bitterness of the campaign. The most active speaker, Senator John Sherman of Ohio, was cordially hated by many Virginians.[64] General John A. Logan and Judge J. B. Foraker,

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[63] Richmond Dispatch, September 16 and November 3, 1885.

[64] Washington National Republican, October 29, 1885; John Sherman, Recollections of Forty Years in the House, Senate and Cabinet: An Autobiography (Chicago, 1895), II, 933-935. The Senator was disliked not only for his criticisms of post-Reconstruction Southern politics but also because of the wartime activities of his brother, General William T. Sherman.

governor-elect of Ohio, also came fresh from a hard fought Ohio campaign, in which they waved the "bloody shirt" to a considerable degree. Their Ohio action was defended by Foraker in a speech in New York, which was duly reported in Virginia. Perhaps equally damaging, General Logan rashly referred to Robert Lee's saddle as "treason stained"--enabling Fitz to promptly reply: "Robert E. Lee, if he were alive, would vote the Democratic ticket."[65] Wise, Mahone, and other Republicans failed to disassociate themselves from Logan's statement, and the Democrats adopted the rallying cry, "Remember the days of the carpetbaggers and vote for LEE."[66]

The last days of the contest were characterized by some of the most vehement utterances of the entire campaign. John S. Wise, who had traveled over 10,000 miles during the canvass, was "thoroughly worn out" but accompanied Senator Sherman and tried to answer hecklers blow for blow. Eventually, even his most active newspaper supporter was forced to apologize that Wise was often "betrayed into expressions regarding his political opponents that he probably would not have indulged in, but for the strain under which he was speaking."[67] Sherman, although he spoke

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[65] Richmond Dispatch, October 25, and see also October 18 and 22, 1885.

[66] Ibid., October 27, 1885. Lee, shortly after the election and perhaps still caught in the heat of the contest, compared the Mahone Republicans with the "old carpet-bag organizations"; Roanoke Leader, November 14, 1885.

[67] Washington National Republican, November 2, 1885.

with some degree of truth, did nothing to allay the damage when he pointed out that "General Lee . . . has conducted his canvass almost entirely upon the basis of an appeal to the Confederate soldiers, to the pride of Virginia. . . . and with military trappings, flags, and cavalcades he tries to turn the attention of your people from the questions of the present time."[68] Such attacks helped, rather than hurt, the Democrats. First, they gave Lee a chance to note that he had returned to Virginia in 1861 as soon as "I heard the voice of my mother Commonwealth to come to her defense." Moreover, he could reiterate his position that he and other Virginia Democrats were now loyal to the Union without fear of losing any votes--for example, he maintained that U.S. flags, not rebel ones, were carried in his cavalcades. At the same time, he criticized Northern Republicans for waving the bloody shirt while reviewing his own work for restoration of harmony between all sections of the nation.[69]

During the week prior to the election, the now confident Lee spent much of his time in the more pleasant traditional political activities, such as "gallantly" kissing "fifteen beautiful little maidens" and attending sumptuous barbecues where "roasts of beef, lamb, pig, turkey, chickens, and oysters, ad libitum, refreshed the great crowd during the speaking." Chairman Barbour, however, exhibited enough concern to undertake as many precautions as possible. In

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[68] Ibid., October 25, 1885.

[69] Richmond Dispatch, October 25 and November 3, 1885.

an open letter, he warned Virginia Democrats to continue their work until the day of the election. He feared that Sherman's appeals might bring many Negro voters to the polls. Further, he warned that "we cannot now afford to have our hard-won supremacy snatched from our hands by illegal and improper methods." This latter statement resulted from the discovery of "fake" electoral tickets with the names of Lee, Massey, and Ayers at the top but with those of Republican legislative candidates at the bottom.[70]

Since the election machinery was generally in Democratic hands, the Republicans were even more concerned with possible electoral corruption. Throughout the campaign Mahone issued warnings that precautionary measures must be taken to insure a proper count on election day. In public letters and in a detailed pamphlet, he described the methods whereby the Democrats might cheat. The Republicans were especially concerned about losing the Negro vote. Mahone argued that the Anderson-McCormick election law of 1884, passed by the Democratic Assembly, was designed to rob the Republicans of the colored vote since it provided that local election boards were to be selected by a majority vote of the legislature. Accordingly, local Republican officials were ordered to send two white Republicans to each polling-place in the counties with many Negro voters. It was hoped that

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[70] Ibid., October 27, 30, 31, 1885. Wise was accused of ordering the fake tickets, but Senator Mahone was the person who would gain from the tactic since the new Assembly would elect a Senator.

these white Republicans could thwart the expected attempts of the Democrats to defraud the Negro voters.[71]

The election on November 3 was a great victory for the Democrats. The gubernatorial contest was fairly close although Lee beat Wise by 16,000 votes out of a total of 290,000 cast. Massey and Ayres, though they received fewer votes than Lee, were also elected. However, the Republicans experienced overwhelming defeat in the legislative contests, since the Democrats won seventeen of the twenty-one contested Senate seats as well as a two-thirds majority in the House of Delegates.[72] The Republicans cried fraud and pointed out that Lee had run better in some heavily black counties than he had in white sections. They asserted that the Democrats obviously stole the colored vote from them. Although this accusation probably has some validity, it should not be overlooked that some Negro voters willingly deserted the Republican party. Not only was the national government in Democratic hands, but Virginia Democrats also made a decided effort to win some Negro voters by both cajolery and threats.[73]

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[71] New York Times, July 30, 1885; Richmond Dispatch, October 2, 1885; William Mahone, "The Election Laws, and Instructions as to Voting and Election Returns," Broadside, 1885; for a discussion of the Anderson-McCormick law see Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 39-42.

[72] Journal of the House of Delegates of the State of Virginia for the Session of 1885-1886 (Richmond, 1885), 21; Richmond Dispatch, November 5 and 6, 1885.

[73] Wise felt he had been robbed of victory; see his The Lion's Skin, 366-367, and also Jennings C. Wise to N. M. Blake, July 17, 1930, quoted in Blake, Mahone, 232. However, Charles Wynes points out that by 1885 a growing number of Negroes, either in despair or out of a desire for accommodation, were voting with the Democrats; see his Race Relations, 42.

In any case Lee's victory was hailed by his fellow Democrats as a justly won victory and most Republicans accepted the result without serious protest as to the election's legality. His most enthusiastic supporters went further and claimed that the Lee triumph was a second "redemption" which would inaugurate a new era in Virginia. Lee, successful at last in politics, was ready to begin the new adventure of being head of the Commonwealth.

CHAPTER V

THE CHIEF OF STATE

At noon, January 1, 1886, Fitzhugh Lee was inaugurated as Governor before a packed crowd in the Hall of the House of Delegates. At the close of the ceremony, Governor Lee, other dignitaries, and the spectators quietly departed from the Capitol. Ironically, there was no parade of marching troops, cavalry, and bands--which had characterized the recent campaign--to applaud the triumph of the ex-cavalryman and "cavalcade" political contender. Fearing that it might detract from the dignity of the civil ceremony, the martial hero declined a parade but consented to an inaugural ball and reception in the evening. The Inaugural Ball of 1886 was one of the most notable galas in the history of Virginia. Governor Lee and the gracious Ellen began the Grand Promenade at 9:00 p.m. in the First Regiment Armory before the hundreds of invited guests. From 11:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m., the Lees received best wishes from the thousands of people attending the reception in adjoining Sanger Hall. The occasion was more than a celebration to honor the man who personified the victory of the Virginia Democracy, for ex-Governor Cameron and John S. Wise were among the special guests. It was one of those times when Virginians of myriad backgrounds and conflicting opinions came together in wonder and pride to

commemorate all that was glorious and good in the life of the Old Dominion.[1] To Lee the traditionalist, the activities were a visible manifestation of Virginia tradition as it was later defined by one historian:

> There is the Virginia that was, the Virginia that ought to have been, the Virginia that is, and the Virginia that might have been. What people say and believe about all four is the Virginia tradition.[2]

The rites augured well for the new administration and would be fondly remembered for years to come. Inauguration Day was probably the most enjoyable and satisfying day Governor Fitzhugh Lee would witness in his four-year term.

An analysis of this extravagantly launched administration is necessary to understand Lee the man; in turn, it is also required to place the biographical subject in his proper perspective in the broad stream of Virginia history. Governor Lee exerted an influence on the times while being swayed by them, his term in office reflected not only his personality and philosophy but also the circumstances of the day. Accordingly, the Lee years from 1886 to 1890 were shaped by their own particular combination of relevant components.

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[1] This account of the inauguration and subsequent festivities is based primarily on the following: Richmond Dispatch, January 2, 1886; Robert B. Munford, Jr., Richmond Homes and Memories (Richmond, 1936), 110-112; Elizabeth H. Hancock (ed.), Autobiography of John E. Massey (New York and Washington, 1909), 266; Virginia W. Davis, "Virginia Inaugurals: Only the Title is the Same," Virginia and the Virginia Record, LXXVI, No. 4 (January, 1954), 26-29, 104-106; Senate Journal, 1885-86, 136. (Full titles for official publications of the state during the Lee administration are given in the bibliography.)

[2] Marshall W. Fishwick, Virginia: A New Look at the Old Dominion (New York, 1959), x.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: first, to examine the specific elements which determined the character and the course of his administration and, secondly, to provide further insight into the life of Fitzhugh Lee.

Several factors contributed to the style of operation adopted by the new governor when he assumed office. He naturally turned to the administrations of his immediate predecessors for guidelines in conducting himself as the highest official of the Commonwealth. His predecessors had functioned within a similar executive framework in which Lee was to work, but their tenure did not provide an adequate model for him to follow. Several elements contributed to the differentiations in the general tone of his and the preceding administrations. For example, while Lee could draw from the service of his friend Governor James Lawson Kemper (1874-1878), the latter entered office as a seasoned politician who was thoroughly familiar with most phases of public life at the state level. Moreover, the experiences of Governors Frederick W. M. Holliday (1878-1882) and William E. Cameron (1882-1886) were not entirely relevant for him. The character of their administrations was profoundly affected by disagreements between the executive and the legislature on the debt issue. Both Holliday, the Conservative-Funder, and Cameron, the Readjuster, had suffered the humiliation of seeing the opposition party gain control of the General Assembly.[3] In comparison

[3]For the respective careers of Kemper and Holliday, consult Jones, "Conservative Virginian," and Porter, "Holliday." For Cameron's administration, see Moger, Virginia, 39-59, and Pearson, Readjuster Movement, 142-174.

with Kemper, Lee was a political novice, and, in contrast to Holliday and Cameron, he faced a new situation: the governor, other state officers, and a majority of the Assembly were members of the same party and in at least nominal agreement on major policies. The shortage of meaningful precedents and the changes in circumstances from previous administrations --plus his natural temperament--contributed to Lee's reluctance to attempt dynamic innovation during his gubernatorial term.

The conduct of Fitz in his role as governor was partially influenced by his attitude towards the office. His feeling that a weak executive was the best for the Old Dominion was shared by many of his fellow Virginians and based on attitudes going back to the colonial era. His preference for a relatively powerless chief executive did not detract from the respect he accorded that position however. To Lee, being the highest elected official of the Commonwealth was second only to being President of the United States--and not a poor second, either![4] His almost sacrosanct view of the office complemented his personal lack of interest in politics and directly influenced his official and semi-official activities. The honor and prestige of being governor were sufficient reward for any man. The occupant should remain aloof from the mundane political affairs of the moment and provide detached leadership only on the most important problems of the day.

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[4]In 1887-1888 when Southerners called for his selection as the vice-presidential nominee, Lee claimed he preferred to be Governor of Virginia. (This matter is discussed further in Chapter VI.)

The governor, in Lee's conception, should enhance the dignity of his office and not grasp for personal power. Governor Lee viewed himself as a visible symbol of the heritage possessed by all Virginians and an emblem of their unity. This concept of the governorship plus his personal taste was the basis for his emphasis on the ceremonial functions of the governor. Although Lee was often practical in handling his official duties, the hardened ex-cavalryman retained much of his romanticism throughout the four years. He was inconsistent at various times and on particular matters, but this aura never completely vanished despite the exigencies of office.[5]

The Lee concept of the governor as an exalted figurehead also conformed to realities of the state governmental structure in the 1880's. This structure generally bestowed prestige rather than authority on the office of governor. The General Assembly was the true locus of power, both legally and politically. Its members elected the major state officers of the executive department and determined their duties and authority. In contrast, Governor Lee appointed only his personal staff and the boards of the state educational and eleemosynary institutions (the number fluctuated but seldom exceeded ninety) whose appointments were subject to senatorial

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[5]Perhaps some of the respect he accorded to the office resulted from the fact that Governor Henry Lee (1791-1794) was his grandfather and Thomas Lee, President of the Council from 1749 to 1751, was another kinsman. This information was frequently mentioned in contemporary newspapers; see also Smith, Virginia: A History of the Executives, 162-164, 287-293, 399-402.

confirmation.[6] In addition the hundred members of the House of Delegates and the forty Senators had closer ties with local officials and politicians in their smaller constituencies. The Assembly elected the county and city court judges, who in turn were leading figures in the "court-house cliques" of local officials. Nominees for these judgeships were usually recommended by the Democratic county chairmen. The political and official ties of legislators and local officials were further cemented by a provision of the Anderson-McCormick election law of 1884 whereby the General Assembly chose the local electoral boards.[7] These boards were, of course, instrumental in controlling the machinery of legislative elections and perpetuating a Democratic majority in the Assembly. Officeholders and party officials were tied not to the governor at the state level but rather to the state chairman and other members of the Democratic central committee who gave advice and instructions. This system, with a Democratic governor as an ancillary figure, was only in its

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[6]The limitations of the governor's patronage and supervisory powers concerning state officials, as opposed to those of the Assembly, are revealed in the following: Acts of the Assembly, 1885-86, 456-457; House Journal, 1887-88, 107-112, 522-524; Senate Journal, 1885-86, 131-136, 485; C. E. Mason to Fitz Lee, March 27, 1888, Brock Papers, Huntington Library; "Executive Journal, Commonwealth of Virginia," 1886-1890, Virginia State Library.

[7]Acts of Assembly, (Extra Session) 1884, 146-151; the electoral board appointed officials for each precinct, thus solidifying the system from the top to the lowest level.

infancy during the Lee administration but nonetheless firmly established.[8]

Despite the limitations imposed by the conditions described in the preceding paragraphs, Governor Lee had many responsibilities and was not completely lacking in power to meet them. How he utilized his resources to meet those responsibilities depended to some extent on his own personality. Lee, hampered by his own ideology, seldom provided continuous dynamic leadership in the initiation and execution of solutions to the major problems of the Commonwealth. In military terms, he all too often viewed himself as a chief of staff, rather than the commander, of that governmental apparatus which sought to achieve his goal of promoting "the prosperity of the State." Both his personal inclination and his awareness of the existing system impelled him to attempt to focus responsibility where the power centered. Consequently, he stated to the General Assembly:

> The Legislature convenes at a propitious period in the history of Virginia, a prosperous future points to peace and progress within her limits, and wise decrees and economic laws will be expected and demanded by the people of their representatives.[9]

Yet Lee was at times forced to ignore both his romantic conception of the governor's role and the very real powers

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[8]The system survived with few modifications well into the twentieth century as Herman L. Horn revealed in his "The Growth and Development of the Democratic Party in Virginia since 1890" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1949), 360-61, 369.

[9]House Journal, 1887-88, 16.

and responsibilities of the Assembly when he confronted the problems facing the State. He was, after all, the highest official in the government and his status incurred both legal and moral responsibilities for its function. Moreover, he was continuously in office whereas the Assembly met in brief sixty-day biennial sessions.[10] He had an obligation to provide at least a vague supervision over the day-to-day governmental operations and to implement the policies formulated by his Democratic colleagues in the legislature, especially after a law of February 27, 1886, charged him with the function--previously denied his Readjuster predecessor--of both reviewing quarterly reports and demanding special ones from the heads of departments and other state agencies.[11]

During the Lee administration the chief problem--one which directly or indirectly affected all others--was the debt. Fitz confronted it in the characteristic manner with which he met most burdens imposed on him during his tenure. Although he neither fully understood the debt question nor enjoyed his attempt to resolve it, the Governor noted its true significance in his brief statement to the Assembly:

> The vexatious sore on the body politic was the public debt, and it was ulcer tender to the touch of citizens within and without the limits

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[10] Three regular sessions met during Lee's turn as follows: December 2, 1885-March 6, 1886, December 7, 1887-March 5, 1888, and December 4, 1889-March 6, 1890; In addition, Lee called one extra session, March 16-May 24, 1887. Only the 1887-88 and the extra session were totally within the Lee administration.

[11] Acts of Assembly, 1885-86, 311-312.

> of the State. Political parties were weary with its pain, and a jaded Commonwealth lamented its duration. With the belief that from a sound state of public health would freely flow multiplied blessings, my attention was at once directed to such sanitary measures as would produce results so much to be desired. It was clearly the initial point upon which executive work should begin.[12]

For four years, Lee struggled with this complex matter and the related problem of insufficient revenues to match the growing costs of governmental operation.

By 1886 several factors made the debt again the most pressing problem in Virginia public affairs, although not on the level that it had been in the late seventies. Much of the burden confronting Governor Lee resulted from the complex debt settlement proposal sponsored by Harrison Holt Riddleberger, the Readjuster leader who became the party's first United States Senator.[13] In enacting the Riddleberger law in 1882, the Readjuster-dominated legislature had adopted a dual approach to scale down the state's debt from $35 (as of January 1, 1882) to $21 million. First, one-third of the principal as of July 1, 1863, was assigned unilaterally to the new state of West Virginia while the Old Dominion assumed the remaining two-thirds as her equitible portion.[14] Secondly,

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[12]"Message of the Governor," December 7, 1887, House Journal, 1887-88, 17. Lee frankly admitted that he knew little about the Riddleberger bill and the debt problem prior to his incumbency; newspaper clippings (1887), Opie Papers.

[13]Cole, "Riddleberger," 84-85.

[14]West Virginia entered the Union on June 20, 1863. Litigation between the two states finally ended in 1918 when the United States Supreme Court ruled that West Virginia was liable for one-third of the debt. See Ratchford, American State Debts, 209-218.

the act contained various provisions which were designed to reduce the specific sum of this two-thirds share. One provision invalidated those bonds issued to meet the interest which had accrued on the total debt during the War and Reconstruction. Another section dealt with those remaining classes of bonds which paid more than three per cent. On these bonds, all prior interest payments in excess of the three per cent rate were to be subtracted from the original principal. The act also authorized the issuance of new bonds, also paying three per cent interest, to meet the state's acknowledged debt of $21 million. These bonds--to be offered in exchange for the outstanding bonds devalued by the act--and their attached coupons were not exempted from taxation nor were the coupons receivable for tax payments. Finally, in order to make the settlement effective by securing the surrender of the older issues in exchange for the new one, interest payments were forbidden on all bonds except those authorized by the Riddleberger act.[15] This settlement alleviated the state's financial burdens and, after its acceptance by the Democrats in 1883, removed the debt issue as the chief bone of contention in Virginia politics.

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[15]For the complete statute, which became law on February 14, 1882, see Acts of the Assembly, 1881-82, 99-98. Since the incentive to surrender pre-Riddleberger bonds was deprivation of interest payments, the optimistic legislators felt a more extreme provision--one which specifically declared a refusal to exchange old bonds for the new ones to be illegal--was unnecessary.

Despite Readjuster claims to the contrary, the Riddleberger act did not bring complete financial relief to the government, and by the beginning of the Lee administration, certain actions of the bondholders threatened to jeopardize state finances. The creditors' initial reaction to the settlement had been mixed. Some were pleased with the state's promise to fully honor its debt as funded by the Riddleberger act since repudiation might have been the alternative, but most hoped that a more favorable agreement might be reached eventually. Unfortunately, the law possessed a serious flaw--no effective means was provided to thwart the tax-receivable feature of coupons from bonds issued under previous debt legislation--which the creditors utilized to vent their dissatisfaction.[16] Many holders of the various classes of older bonds consistently refused to exchange them for Riddleberger bonds since coupons from the former could be used in tax payments while those of the latter issue could not. Non-Virginia bondholders increasingly discounted their coupons to individual Virginia taxpayers in an effort to receive more return than they could expect from the state for the bonds funded under the Riddleberger law. Coupons from these older bonds continued to be presented in payment of taxes despite the so-called "coupon-killer" legislation,

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[16]Both the Funding Act of 1871 and the McCulloch Act of 1878 contained the tax-receivable feature for coupons. This feature was especially liked by the bondholders since some return was readily available from their investment, even if the state lapsed on the repayment schedule.

the series of laws passed by the Readjusters to discourage the use of these coupons (in lieu of currency) for tax payments. In contesting the "coupon-killer" acts, the bondholders lost in the first series of debt cases before the Supreme Court in 1883 but won a limited victory during the second series of cases in 1885. Coupons were to be accepted from taxpayers if prescribed standards could be met.[17] The Governor and other officials feared that the whole debt settlement, which had never been accepted by the bondholders, might collapse since cash revenues would be insufficient to meet the Riddleberger obligations. At best, the expected rise in tax payments by coupons would upset the state's meager cash revenues and impair the fulfillment of basic governmental functions. Since Lee and other Democrats were suspected of being lukewarm in their support of the Riddleberger settlement, many anticipated that it would be discarded owing to these later developments.[18] In consequence, the debt controversy might be rekindled.

Governor Lee was a far different man from the "debt-payer" candidate he had been in the 1879 legislative election. He firmly believed that the Democratic party had committed itself

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[17]Ratchford, American State Debts, 209-212.

[18]George M. McFarland, "Extension of Democracy in Virginia from 1850 to 1895" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1934), 152-153. McFarland notes that Lee "turned out a real liberal" on the debt question but inaccurately states that the Governor threatened the bondholders with complete repudiation.

to an acceptance of the Riddleberger settlement; therefore, he and his party were obliged to defend it.[19] On February 18, 1886, in his first major message to the General Assembly, he reminded the legislature of the past troubles resulting from the debt and outlined possible future ones. His bold statement was a clarion call to rally both the legislature and the people to the state's defense against its creditors. His tone must have made the most rabid Readjuster happy: "There are duties resting upon the State...of a dignity higher than the obligations to her creditors, such as the absolute necessity..." to support and maintain "...our government, our free schools, our charitable institutions, and the administration of justice." While Lee made extreme statements--"The funding bill of 1871 mortgaged the life blood of the State"--he was not a repudiator. What worried him was an improbable but by no means impossible action the bondholders might take. Since the face amount of outstanding tax-receivable coupons exceeded the state's annual cash revenue, the creditors could bring governmental operations to a complete halt if they forced all the coupons upon the treasury in any one year. Lee maintained that while the people were as determined "to preserve their good name as Virginians have always been," they would not tolerate

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[19] The Democratic-controlled Assembly had also passed several anti-coupon acts in 1884 to bolster the earlier settlement; Robert C. Burton, "The History of Taxation in Virginia: 1870-1901" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1962), 170.

such a catastrophe. Accordingly, he called upon the General Assembly to appoint a commission to meet formally with the bondholders, explain the reasons for the Riddleberger settlement, and attempt to win their acceptance of it. He further believed that the commission should not be empowered to make compromises; rather, it should emphasize that, in spite of their seemingly successful litigation, the bondholders faced a long and costly effort to overcome the "perfect unanimity among our people of all political parties." Knowing that the bondholders were already tired of the legal wrangle, Lee hoped to entice them into accepting the settlement by the assurance that "Virginia will act in good faith" and pay her debt when her revenues were sufficient.[20]

Lee's proposal of a legislative commission to meet the bondholders or their representatives face to face was the initial step in a final solution of the debt problem. However, the solution was not immediately reached, and Governor Lee was forced to concern himself with the problem throughout his administration. His belief that the bondholders would accept the settlement after a reasonable explanation of it by the commission was ignored by the Assembly.[21] Instead, the legislature passed a series of acts designed to reduce the amount of coupons receivable in payment of taxes.[22] The

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[20] "Messages of the Governor," February 18, 1886, House Journal, 1885-86, 420-423.

[21] Senate Journal, 1887-88, 13.

[22] Acts of the Assembly, 1885-86, 37, 40, 312, 384.

well-organized group of foreign bondholders were intransigent, however, and flooded the state with their coupons. Lee's worst fears were not realized but the amount of coupons forced on the treasury for tax payments rose from $50,164 in 1885 to $258,938 by 1888, while the total annual revenues remained static at less than $2,500,000.[23] Since each dollar paid in coupons reduced the state's meager cash revenues by a corresponding amount, the rise in coupon payments imperiled the general governmental operation while it impaired the state's ability to meet those debt obligations assumed in the Riddleberger settlement.

Lee's initial hope that the Assembly would solve the problems relating to the debt proved futile. After its adjournment on March 6, 1886, the Governor was left to cope with the debt as best he could. Disliking paperwork and financial intricacies, he found himself embroiled in both during the next year. Fitz participated in a laborious and extensive correspondence with the foreign bondholders in an effort to break the impasse with them. In countless letters he pleaded for a reduction in the number of coupons offered in tax payments and their acceptance of the Riddleberger amount of principal and rate of interest.[24]

His vision of the governor's office being a pleasant and enjoyable position evaporated during this year, as his

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[23] Ratchford, American State Debts, 215; Burton, "Taxation in Virginia; 1870-1901," 97, 168.

[24] Frank G. Ruffin, the Second Auditor, especially helped to impress on Lee the gravity of the situation; see for example Ruffin's handwritten report labeled "Settlement of the Debt," (undated), Lee Executive Papers.

frustrating correspondence increased. In a letter to his wife, he complained, "Tonight I am tired, as usual having been in the office until a late hour."[25] There were signs, however, that the bondholders shared with Fitz the same weariness over the debt dispute. In October 1886 he received a significant communication from the Council of Foreign Bondholders, the major representative of those bondholders opposing the Riddleberger settlement. While again asserting its steadfast determination not to accept that settlement, the Council expressed "its willingness to meet the State and entertain a reasonable compromise." More importantly, the Council seemed to adhere to the general principles of the Riddleberger Act. The compromise was to be based upon a consideration of the present government revenues and an acceptance of the state's primary obligation to provide essential public services.[26] Prior to this, the Council had adamantly maintained that the first priority of the state was to honor its credit obligations in full. The elated Governor fondly hoped that this proposal was a momentous step in resolving the seemingly insoluble dispute.

The dispute with the bondholders was not readily resolved, however. In spite of their expressed desire for a compromise, the bondholders persisted in pressing tax receivable coupons upon the state and continued their successful litigation

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[25]November 20, 1886, Opie Papers.

[26]Charles O'Leary, Secretary of the Council of Foreign Bondholders, to Lee, October 8, 1886, Lee Executive Papers.

in the courts.[27] Governor Lee finally abandoned his expectations of an imminent agreement while becoming increasingly worried about the impact of the creditor's court victories on state finances. Despairing of his own efforts to solve the frustrating imbroglio, he again turned to the General Assembly for assistance and issued a proclamation on February 25, 1887, calling for a special legislative session.[28] In his message to the extra session, he summarized once more the history of the debt and the reasons for the Riddleberger settlement while reiterating his belief that Virginia revenues were insufficient to bear any agreement more favorable to the creditors. The immediate problem, Lee acknowledged, was threefold: the cost of government was increasing, total revenue remained static, and cash revenues were declining as more coupons were redeemed. His dark picture of state finances also embraced the expectation that the situation would further deteriorate as more "coupon-killer" legislation became inoperative owing to the U.S. Supreme Court decisions. A number of tax collectors and other state officials were already threatened with Federal prosecution for trying to comply with state statutes. As a remedy, Lee suggested the enactment of new laws making the redemption of coupons a more complicated, time-consuming process, and, once more, he urged the establishment of a

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[27] McGrane, Foreign Bondholders, 370.

[28] House Journal, (Extra Session) 1887, 3.

debt commission to deal directly with the bondholders.[29]

In its brief session, the legislature responded favorably to the basic principles of both gubernatorial suggestions but far exceeded them in content. The Assembly was determined to place insuperable obstacles upon coupon tax payments and force the bondholders to capitulate. Numerous laws were passed, but the most important one in achieving that objective was adopted on May 12, 1887. This act provided that if any tax payer refused to pay in cash and instead presented coupons, the state's attorney should bring suit in the pertinent state court within ten days. The burden of proving the genuineness of the coupons was placed on the defendant.[30] This legal process was expected to be repeated indefinitely. In addition to legislation, the Assembly turned to Lee's idea of a commission. Since the start of the extra session, the bondholders had pleaded for one and promised to send their representatives to meet with a Virginia group.[31] A commission was duly authorized with instructions not only to "explain" the settlement but also to open negotiations with the bondholders about the matter. Since the Joint Committee on the Debt was authorized to remain in existence and confer with bondholders

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[29]"Message from the Governor," March 16, 1887, Senate Journal, (Extra Session), 1887, 4-15.

[30]Acts of Assembly, (Extra Session), 1887, 257-260.

[31]Pleydell Bouverie, Chairman, Council of Foreign Bondholders, to Lee, March 16 and April 4, 1887; Lee to Bouverie, April 5, 1887; Edward Thornton and S. N. Braithwaite to Lee, April 24, 1887; and "Proclamation of the Governor, "April 5, 1887; Lee Executive Papers.

during recesses of the legislature, Governor Lee thought he, at least, had escaped from the onerous debt problem.[32]

Indeed, the actions of the legislature in the special session of 1887 eventually led to a compromise with the bondholders, but the final agreement was not reached until 1892 after a series of new laws, numerous court cases, and complicated negotiations.[33] During the remainder of his term, Governor Lee was continually confronted with the debt controversy and its many ramifications--unfortunately, none of his efforts to alleviate the matter was rewarded with success while he was in office.[34] Moreover, the inability of the Governor and the Assembly to solve the dispute during Lee's tenure caused the state's financial condition to remain precarious from 1886 to 1890. These adverse financial circumstances affected both the form and the results of the Lee administration by limiting his and the Assembly's course of action.

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[32] Senate Journal, (Extra Session), 1887, 73-75, 87-89, and Senate Document No. XII; Acts of the Assembly, (Extra Session), 1887, 66.

[33] The agreement, known as the "Olcott settlement," was enacted into law on February 20, 1892, Acts of Assembly, 1891-92, 533-542. Provision was made for funding the entire debt. The principal named in the Riddleberger Act was raised by $3 million, but the repayment terms were more favorable to the state than under the earler law.

[34] E. P. Bouverie to Lee, December 18, 1887; Fred R. Scott to Lee, January 5 and 9, February 9, 1888 (all with printed enclosures); John Clough to Phillip W. McKinney, December 31, 1889; Lee Executive Papers; "Message of the Governor," December 4, 1889, Senate Journal, 1889-90, 15-30.

A further brief analytical summary of his approach in confronting the chief problem of his administration reveals several facets of Lee as Governor. He was dynamic at times and suggested innovative solutions, but his disposition for caution usually tempered any proposal sufficiently to avoid the touch of radicalism. Further, his personality and concept of the governor's position precluded any sustained forceful effort to secure the adoption of his own proposals. He preferred to leave the formulation and implementation of policy to others. As a military man, he was wedded to the idea of responsibility commensurate with authority; consequently, while he proposed measures to the General Assembly, he felt that it was the body which possessed the responsibility and the power to solve the questions of the day. He attempted whenever possible to transfer or consign matters to the legislators and other politicians in his party. This tendency was augmented by his personal inclination to shun tedious paperwork or to become involved with the intricacies of the legislative and administrative processes in government. All too often, Lee was out of his natural element when facing the complexities of government--his background and experience were insufficient in preparing him for office. As one contemporary observed: "He is not a lawyer but a soldier, and it would hardly be fair for us to hope that he could extricate himself from the influence of his education and military life."[35] Both by temperament and

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[35]William E. Hatcher to B. Johnson Barbour, January 20, 1887, James Barbour Papers, University of Virginia Library.

as a type of self-defense mechanism, Governor Lee attempted to take an aloof and noncontroversial, even nonpartisan if possible, position on the issues of the day. No governor could exist in a vacuum, of course, and the General found the task of being governor far more burdensome than he had expected.

Although the debt was his chief millstone, Governor Lee was subjected to involvement with a host of other governmental affairs and concerns. The status of public education had been linked to the debt difficulties since "redemption." The crippling effect on free public schools which resulted from trying to meet the obligations of the Funder Act of 1871 had probably triggered Readjusterism more than any other single factor. Lee's concern with the debt from 1886 to 1890 was partially related to his interest in preserving and strengthening the public school system.[36] Although some Democrats did not cast off their Conservative-Funder legacy of a dislike or disinterest for free schools, Fitzhugh Lee firmly believed that a state-supported system was a key factor in promoting the progress and prosperity of the Old Dominion. He worked to commit all his fellow ex-Conservatives to his belief and, at the close of his term, he could note

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[36]"Message of the Governor," February 18, 1886, House Journal, 1885-86, 420-424.

with pride that one facet of the Readjuster controversy had been buried: "The practicability or expediency of introducing and maintaining a system of popular education is no longer a question."[37] While it is difficult to measure the degree of influence that Lee exerted on the evolution of thought towards that end, it may be noted that he consistently worked to make the state school system more palatable to all Virginians and to increase "the encouragement and moral support accorded it by the people."[38]

The Governor felt that the government was obligated to increase school appropriations whenever possible since "the efficacy and general success of a system of popular education depends upon the amount of funds provided by law for its support."[39] In his efforts to increase state expenditures for public schools, he met with mixed success. Annual school expenditures during his term increased only slightly--from $792,342 (1885-86 fiscal year) to $837,673 (fiscal year 1888-89).[40] Greater progress was made in other areas during his incumbency:

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[37]"Message of the Governor," December 4, 1889, Senate Journal, 1889-90, 15-30.

[38]"Message of the Governor," December 7, 1887, Senate Journal, 1887-88, 12-33.

[39]Ibid.; the Governor also noted the importance of how the funds were spent as well as the role of administrators and teachers in bringing success.

[40]"Reports of the Superintendents of Public Instruction," 1885-1889, printed in the respective Annual Reports.

> The estimated value of school property when I came into office and when I go out, is as follows: In 1889 it is $2,208,114; in 1885 it was $1,819,256; increase, $388,858. Number of public schools in 1889, 7,410; in 1885, 6,675; increase, 735. Total number of pupils enrolled in 1889, 336,948; in 1885, 303,343; increase, 33,605; increase of pupils in average daily attendance nearly 20,000.[41]

of course, the sole credit for the failures and the successes of the school system during this period cannot be assigned to Lee alone, but perhaps it was an achievement by him and like-minded men that school appropriations did not decline during a period when Virginia finances were precarious. Lee's public statements and messages to the Assembly helped to avoid that development. Typically, however, the Governor refrained from utilizing any other method in exerting sufficient pressure on the Assembly to win his professed goal of vast increases in school funds.

In addition to seeking increased appropriations from the state legislature, Lee also sought assistance for Virginia's schools from the national government. He strongly supported the Blair bill, a proposal before Congress to apportion part of the federal surplus among states in the ratio of the illiteracy of their population.[42] Lee and others--including

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[41] "Message of the Governor," December 4, 1889, Senate Journal, 1889-90, 22.

[42] The Blair bill, actually a series of bills with minor variations was pressed upon Congress from 1881 to 1891 by Senator Henry W. Blair of New Hampshire, the chairman of the Senate Education and Labor Committee during the period. The bills, aimed principally at the South, were designed to eradicate the region's educational deficiencies by giving large sums of federal money to the schools.

even Senator John W. Daniel, formerly a lukewarm advocate of public education--believed the Blair bill to be an opportune offer of salvation for Virginia's financially deprived schools. During the first year of his administration, Governor Lee urged the General Assembly to send to Congress resolutions endorsing the measure and the Virginia legislators promptly complied with his request.[43] Unfortunately, the actions of Lee and the Virginia legislature had little effect on national politics. The Blair proposal, and federal aid to education in general, was opposed by some Southerners on grounds that national involvement in education would infringe on states' rights. Others disliked the bill because the idea of utilizing federal funds to improve Southern schools (in particular those for Negroes) rekindled memories of Reconstruction. Endorsement of the Blair bill by various Negroes also alienated some whites, while other Southerners viewed the measure--especially with its emphasis on the pressing need to overcome the backwardness of the region's schools and to raise the percentage of literacy among the Southern population--as simply an insult to the South.[44]

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[43] Senate Journal, 1885-86, 21, 37.

[44] The Blair proposals and federal aid to Southern schools are discussed in Stanley P. Hirshson, Farewell to the Bloody Shirt: Northern Republicans and the Southern Negro, 1877-1893 (Bloomington, Ind., 1962), 86-94, 192-200, and C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge, La., 1951), 61-64, 398-400. See also Daniel W. Crofts, "The Black Response to the Blair Education Bill," The Journal of Southern History, XXXVII (February, 1971), 41-65.

Throughout the four years of his administration, Lee retained his hope that the bill would eventually be enacted, but his efforts to secure federal aid for the state's schools proved fruitless. The determined opposition thwarted the bills' passage until Senator Blair finally abandoned his proposal in 1891.[45] Consequently, the Virginia public schools remained dependent upon the state's meager resources during Lee's term.

Fitz Lee strongly espoused higher education as well, perhaps by reason of his own experience at West Point. While he recognized the educational contributions to the Commonwealth by the private colleges, he maintained that state-supported ones should be the capstone of the state public school system. The state should endeavor to provide higher educational opportunities for all Virginians with the requisite intellectual capacity.[46] In his entreaties to the legislature and to the people on this subject, Lee made probably the most skillful, persuasive arguments he ever expressed on any subject. In a self-revealing message and his last major communication to the General Assembly, he pleaded for increased aid to the higher educational institutions in an erudite solicitation combining economic, civic, and

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[45] Congressmen from the Deep South were the most active opponents of the proposal. Although Lee and Daniel helped to secure acceptance of the Blair bill by a majority of the state's Congressional delegation, that commitment was never unanimous among Virginia Congressmen. See Doss, "John W. Daniel," 122-123.

[46] "Message of the Governor," December 7, 1887, Senate Journal, 1887-88, 12-33.

intellectual advantages with an appeal to Virginia chauvinism:

> But the strength and prosperity of a State depend upon...a judicious administration of public affairs; upon liberal culture in the various professions; upon directive power in mining, manufacturing, mercantile, and other economic interests. Hence an enlightened policy demands the protection and promotion of literature, science, and art, as contributing to these important ends, and as constituting of themselves, apart from their practical utility, prominent features in an advanced civilization, and hence the value of institutions especially adapted to higher literary, scientific, and technical training.
>
> The conditions of modern life, the progressive and complex nature of modern civilization, demand a wider range of special or technical instruction and training than have existed in any previous age; hence, without institutions or means in some form to furnish the higher and general and special training, the State must needs fail in a measure to attain its normal condition of intellectual, social, and material well-being, or send her aspiring youth beyond the borders in quest of the culture not afforded at home, or commit, in a measure, the direction of her affairs and the development of her resouuces to the educated brain and skilled hand of the stranger.[47]

Unfortunately, his rhetoric did nothing to improve state finances, and the General Assembly increased appropriations only slightly during his incumbency. He did have some success, however; for example, he worked closely with Lunsford L. Lomax, his old friend since the West Point years and now president of the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College, in winning the first state appropriation for that institution since 1878.[48] Governor Lee was also more actively

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[47]"Message of the Governor," December 4, 1889, Senate Journal, 1889-90, 23.

[48]Ibid., 22-23, and Lomax to Lee, November 18, 1887, printed in House Journal, 1887-88, 37.

involved and concerned than his post-war predecessors with the operations of the upper-level institutions. He not only maintained extensive communications with members of the regulatory boards whom he appointed but also with officials at the institutions as well.[49] Many of his recommendations to the Assembly and other state officials were derived from this correspondence. Further, the Governor tried to emphasize the importance of these institutions by attending their commencement and other special functions whenever possible.[50] Perhaps his efforts contributed in some measure to their continued growth during his gubernatorial tenure.

The third general area of official affairs which occupied a great amount of Governor Lee's time and effort related to various aspects of maintaining civil order in the state--chiefly his activities involving the militia, his pardoning power, and the penal system. Naturally, the ex-General enjoyed his role in supervising and directing the state militia. Moreover, his qualifications in this concern were superb, consisting not only of his active military performance but also his service from 1881 to 1885 as the commander of a militia brigade. Lee, primarily because of

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[49]Lee also became embroiled in quarrels between school officials and board members; for example, see: Francis H. Smith to Lee, September 25, 1886; General T. T. Munford to Smith, August 22, 1886; Smith to Munford, September 6, 1886; Lee Executive Papers.

[50]James Hugo Johnston to Lee, May 7, 1888, Ibid.: the Richmond Dispatch, March 19, June 11, 23, and 24, July 1 and 3, 1886, contains accounts of typical Lee visits.

his personal disposition, devoted more energy than other governors to militia affairs. He examined in great detail all reports pertaining to militia activities and reviewed the troops as often as he could. Further, he encouraged the state to enhance its prestige by having its military organizations appear at numerous ceremonies both in and outside the Commonwealth. Lee did not hesitate to use the militia for a more practical purpose, however, since he promptly dispatched the state's volunteer soldiers to any locality threatened with riots or other manifestations of public disorder.[51] Lee, of course, took great personal satisfaction in the peak efficiency and accomplishments of the militia during his tenure.

His exercise of the pardoning powers was a far less enjoyable prerogative of office. The Governor was involved in hundreds of cases pertaining to the granting of pardons, reprieves, and commutations of punishment. Although the decisions in most were matter-of-course, Lee's examination of each request was a time-consuming process.[52] Controversial

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[51] John J. Williams to Lee, May 27 and June 3, 1886; Williams to Joseph A. Nulton, June 3, 1886; Lee to Nulton, undated (ca. June 1886); Joseph Lane Stern to Lee, June 16, 1887; William H. Palmer to Lee, September 12, 1887; J. Thompson Baird to Lee, September 29, 1887; James McDonald to Lee, September 23, 1887; Edward W. Gould to Lee, November 9, 1887; Lee Executive Papers. Richmond Dispatch, January 13, 1887; "Reports of the Adjutant General," 1886-1889, printed in the respective Annual Reports. One of the militia units proudly bore the name "The Fitz Lee Troop."

[52] "A Communication from the Governor of Virginia Transmitting a List of Pardons," March 1, 1888, House Doc. No. VIII, House Journal, 1887-88.

and disputed judgments involving capital offenses placed Lee in an especially unenviable position and imposed one of the heaviest burdens of office upon him. The most celebrated and controversial case in Lee's administration was that of Thomas J. Cluverius, who was convicted of murder in 1885 and finally sentenced to be hanged on December 19, 1886. Lee granted a thirty-five day respite in order to thoroughly examine all aspects of the case. During this stay the newspapers devoted extensive coverage to the matter while the public debated it.[53] Lee was subjected to intense pressure not only from speculations and suggestions by the press and the public at large but also from the heartsick appeals of the criminal and his relatives.[54] After much anguish, the Governor accepted the verdict of the court and refused to grant clemency. While there were no winners in the emotional affair, Fitz at least earned the respect of both sides for his conscientious treatment of the matter.[55]

Governor Lee was also required to devote considerable attention to the penal system. The state penitentiary, housing the black and white prisoners of both sexes, was

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[53]Richmond Dispatch, December 7, 1886, January 4, 6, 7, 8, 15, 19, and 20, 1887. Since the victim was a woman, the crime had sexual overtones (but no racial ones since the two principals were white).

[54]Thomas J. Cluverius to Lee, December 8, 1886, and W. B. Cluverius to Lee, January 12, 1887, Opie Papers.

[55]Richmond Dispatch, January 15 and 20, 1887; but see also William E. Hatcher to B. Johnson Barbour, January 27, 1887, James Barbour Papers, University of Virginia Library.

filled to nearly twice its capacity by 1886 and, as usual, suffered from a chronic shortage of funds. As a means of alleviating both problems, it was customary to hire out some convicts to local governmental units and private enterprises. This practice was vastly expanded by a new law passed at the beginning of Lee's administration.[56] Since the governor was charged with initiating contracts with employers of convict labor, Fitz engaged in numerous negotiations in an effort to fulfill that responsibility. Moreover, he suffered under an additional amount of despised paperwork since he was required to review all complaints arising from the system.[57] His problems pertaining to the penitentiary itself were compounded when a fire in January 1888 destroyed the large shoe factory there. Under the control of a private contractor, the shoe manufacturing enterprise had rendered a sorely needed profit to the state, and its loss imposed the additional task on Lee of seeing that it was restored

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[56] Acts of the Assembly, 1885-86, 539-540; "Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Virginia Penitentiary," in Annual Reports, 1886.

[57] John W. Carter to Lee, March 20, 1886; F. J. Chapman to Lee, June 10, 1886; C. G. Holland to Lee, July 15, August 30, and September 17, 1886; Abraham Fulkerson to Lee, May 15, 1886; printed petition of B. D. Triller to Lee, February 26, 1886; Lee to Triller, March 7, 1887 (a copy), Lee Executive papers. The Governor's Papers contain numerous requests for convict labor and copies of the contracts. The convicts were naturally most desired in the spring and summer months, and the competition for them was heaviest during that period.

to operation as quickly as possible.[58] The Governor recommended reforms in the penal system but without success. Although he pointed out that the state lost money on the expanded convict-hire system, the General Assembly refused his request to revise the practice. The vested interests of the counties and the railroads in obtaining a cheap labor force were too much to overcome.[59] Lee also professed a humanitarian interest in the general welfare of the prisoners and especially sought the latest information on the subject of rehabilitation. His innovative proposals--chiefly, the establishment of a reformatory school for youthful offenders under the age of eighteen years and the separation of criminals under twenty-one years from the older and more hardened ones--were ignored by the legislature.[60]

In contrast to his limited achievements in coping with the preceding and other problems of his tenure, Governor Lee

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[58]"Communication from the Governor of Virginia in Relation to the Destruction of a Portion of the Penitentiary by Fire." House Journal, 1887-88, House Doc. No. VII. The demands for convict labor increased sharply after the fire since many felt the former shoe shop workers would be available for work on internal improvement projects throughout the state; see J. M. Vernon to Lee, January 17, 1888; J. M. Bailey to Lee, March 7, 1888; George E. Penn to Lee, March 10 and August 28, 1888; J. D. Imboden, November 30, 1887, and March 10, 1888; Lee Executive Papers.

[59]"Message of the Governor," December 4, 1889, Senate Journal, 1889-90, 15-30; "Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Virginia Penitentiary," in Annual Reports, 1889.

[60]Robert T. Devlin, Secretary of the California State Penological Commission, to Lee, April 13, 1886, Brock Papers; "Message of the Governor," December 7, 1887, Senate Journal, 1887-88.

was more successful in maintaining what he considered to be the proper relationship between himself and the General Assembly. His personal view of the governorship plus his natural amiability contributed to the harmonious relationship which prevailed throughout his term. While he did not hesitate to suggest quite strongly the enactment of a host of measures, the Governor felt compelled for a combination of reasons to abstain from any further attempt to influence the legislature's actions. Members of the Assembly, after all, were more skilled in policy-making and closer to the people. In addition, since the Assembly was overwhelmingly Democratic, he declined to contest decisions of his fellow party members. Finally, Fitz remained firmly wedded to his idea that the governor possessed relatively little power to effectively direct the operations of the government in general and especially those of the legislature.[61] Although he refrained from slavishly catering to the Assembly, he did avoid gubernatorial challenges--which would only be futile in his opinion--to the legislative will. His personal distaste for political strife supplemented this view of the governor's position. Lee preferred to maintain a distant, aloof but cordial relationship with the legislators. A careful reading of the Governor's executive papers and the Richmond Dispatch (1886 to 1890) reveals no major confrontation between him and the Assembly.

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[61] Lee to B. Johnson Barbour, February 11, 1886, Barbour Family Papers, University of Virginia Library; S. E. Mason to Lee, March 27, 1888, Brock Papers.

In addition to Lee's lack of success in seeing his legislative proposals enacted into law, the domination of the executive branch by the legislature--and, consequently, by the leading Democratic politicians whether they were members of the Assembly or not--was revealed in several other areas. The Governor's exercise of his limited patronage powers disclosed no attempt to enhance his personal influence. He usually acquiesced in the suggestions for appointments made by his fellow Democrats. In addition, he scrupulously avoided any effort to influence the election by the Assembly of personnel in the various executive departments. This behavior resulted both from his personal dislike of being involved in patronage matters and his feeling that he possessed insufficient authority to interfere in them.[62] Lee's cautious use of his veto power also reflected his reluctance to oppose the Assembly. His vetoes--of only three minor bills on grounds that the measures would be inoperative or entail too much expense--were noncontroversial, and the legislators made no serious attempt to override them.[63] Assembly control over the organization and function of the various executive departments was exemplified by the fate of Lee's recommendations to abolish the Register of Land

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[62] Ibid.; also, Lee to B. Johnson Barbour, February 23, 1888, Barbour Family Papers. Lee especially disliked the numerous requests from personal acquaintances and Assembly members; see W. H. Payne to Lee, February 18, 1889 and Bernard P. Green to Lee, February 19, 1889.

[63] House Journal, 1887-88, 289-290, 505-506; Senate Journal, 1887-88, 12-55; House Journal, 1887-88, 67-69.

Office. The Governor suggested, as one response to the perennial legislative demands for economy and retrenchment, that its functions could be taken over by the Second Auditor. The Assembly had no intention of dissolving a juicy Democratic patronage plum, however, and soundly rejected the advice.[64] In a sense, Lee's "success" in maintaining harmonious relations with the legislature was at the expense of securing the adoption of gubernatorial proposals. It should be pointed out that this phenomenon was not confined to the Lee administration.

The major triumph of Governor Lee--and the principal redeeming feature of his administration--was in the broad area of public relations, particularly in the public image he projected. His achievements in this facet of the gubernatorial office amply satisfied the great hopes and expectations which had been expressed at his glittering inaugural. As previously mentioned, Lee felt his principal function as governor was to serve as the visible symbol of the Commonwealth. Consequently, it was in character that as governor he put great emphasis on his performance in the official and quasi-official public activities relating to the office. His achievement in this area was his criterion (and that of many of his contemporaries as well) whereby the success or failure of his stewardship might be judged. Moreover, Lee's view of the proper function of the governor--to

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[64] "Message of the Governor," December 7, 1887, Senate Journal, 1887-88, 12-33; House Journal, 1887-88, 67-69.

avoid strenuous efforts to exert a dynamic influence on governmental policies and practices, and instead, to concentrate on the ceremonial and public role--pleased most Virginians. In the government sphere, Lee's ego was satisfied while the politicians were content to exercise power and let the Governor have the publicity; in the public sphere, the masses enjoyed immensely the conduct of the Confederate hero who served as the formal head of their state.

Governor Lee possessed several additional advantages in fulfilling his chosen task of bringing prestige and honor to the office, and indirectly to the state, by the use of publicity. He enjoyed public appearances of all kinds and relished addressing and talking with his fellow citizens. Although he begrudged the hours spent on administrative tasks of the governor, he was willing to devote an inordinate amount of time to planning for and attending public functions.[65] The quantity of appearances did not detract from their quality since the self-assured Governor, jovial but dignified, consciously exhibited the proper poise suitable to the particular occasion.[66] In addition to his personal ability

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[65]An analysis of the "Executive Journals, Commonwealth of Virginia," 1886-1890, (Virginia State Library), and the Richmond Dispatch, 1886-1890, revealed that Lee averaged over ten appearances or meetings of this nature per month.

[66]Although Lee was portly, he remained a striking, commanding figure. Moreover, he continued to be a fine horseman, and one contemporary fondly recalled "the occasions when we would see General Fitzhugh Lee on horseback, or starting from the mansion in his high-seated trap drawn by two spirited black horses...The General himself, whether riding or driving, was a very impressive figure of the gentleman and the soldier." See Munford, Richmond Homes and Memories, 111.

as an orator who could warm the hearts of his fellow Virginians, Lee's adeptness in the publicity field was bolstered by another valuable asset. The Governor's attractive family presented an appealing portrait. Mrs. Lee, gifted with all the social graces, demonstrated her hospitality according to the finest Virginia traditions at numerous receptions in the Executive Mansion. The four Lee children were much liked, but the fifth and last child became the idol of the state--all the Commonwealth thrilled to the birth of this baby, appropriately named Virginia, at the governor's official residence in 1886.[67]

Perhaps Lee's greatest success in publicity was his personification of the Confederate "cult" in Virginia. The cult reached its peak during his tenure as countless monuments to "The Lost Cause" were erected throughout the state. With his impeccable Confederate credentials, the Governor's presence at dedications, memorial services, reunions, and similar affairs was demanded by the people. In his speeches, Lee idolized the past and expressed his hopes of a glorious future for Virginia and the South while the audiences, in response to the spell-binding orations and caught up with the emotion of the occasion, hailed him--"Our Fitz," "Our Gallant Fitz," "General Fitz"--as one of their favorite

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[67] Ibid., 111-112; Richmond Dispatch, July 23, 1886, January 1, 1887; J. W. Jones, "Biographical Sketch of Lee," April 22, 1898, Opie Papers.

heroes.[68] Fitz was intimately involved with the erection of the famous equestrian statue of General Robert Edward Lee in Richmond. This monument was to be the ultimate in Confederate memorials, and the Governor devoted considerable effort to bring the project to fruition. No other monument sparked the attention that this one received, and its protracted execution only whetted public interest. The governor of Virginia was automatically the President of the Lee Monument Association, and Fitz energetically plunged into his duties.[69] His goal was to complete the work of the Association, which had been concerned with the project since the 1870's, during his administration. He stimulated public interest--and the corresponding rise in contributions--by his heavy correspondence and numerous speeches. Finally, the first round of ceremonies, consisting of the dedication of the site and the laying of the cornerstone, was held amid much pomp and pageantry in October 1887.[70] After this initial success, the Governor renewed his exertions to bring the endeavor to a dramatic

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[68]For examples, see Lee to Confederate Veterans Camp at Alexandria, August 22, 1887, and the copy of his speech at Alexandria's Confederate Monument, May 24, 1889, Opie Papers; Richmond Dispatch, May 18, 1888, and November 14, 1889.

[69]Jubal A. Early to Lee, April 8, 9, and May 27, 1886; Sarah N. Randolph to Lee, April 1, June 7, July 27, and August 6, 1886; Archer Anderson to Lee, June 10, 1886; Snowden Andrews to Lee, July 31, 1886; and Charles Niehaus to Lee, August 2, 1886, Lee Executive Papers.

[70]Richmond Dispatch, August 7, 10, 17, September 24, and October 25-29, 1887.

conclusion before the close of his term. Unfortunately for Lee, the sculptor (Jean Antoine Mercie) could not be hurried.[71] Five months after Lee left office, the unveiling of the statue finally took place in one of the most impressive and colorful pageants ever witnessed in the Old Dominion. Fitz, of course, was a prominent participant in the unveiling and served as Grand Marshall of the ceremonies. His labors on behalf of the equestrian monument and other Confederate memorials were lauded by speakers and observors at the emotional rites of May 29, 1890.[72] In this phase of his gubernatorial tenure, General Fitzhugh Lee was truly a man who benefitted from the circumstances of the era.

During his term Governor Lee was constantly in the public eye owing to his conscious efforts to catch the public's imagination. Although Lee won the praise of many Virginians for his previously mentioned activities, he did not seek acclaim for purely selfish reasons. For example, his character precluded an attempt to use his popularity as a tool for increasing his personal influence on the operation of the state government. He naturally enjoyed the commendation and prestige accorded him, but his ultimate goals were to instill additional pride in Virginians for their state and to enhance the respect of non-Virginians for the Old Dominion.

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[71] Ibid., October 29, 1887; Paul Pujol to Lee, July 2, 1888, Lee Executive Papers.

[72] Richmond Times, May 28-30, 1890; Richmond Dispatch, May 29-30, 1890.

He tried to be nonpartisan--most of his public activities were nonpolitical in nature although the Democrats tended to monopolize the Confederate functions--in order to be governor of all the people. His successes in public relations rather than his administrative achievements were the basis of the following contemporary judgment on the administration of Fitzhugh Lee: "'Our Fitz' retires to private life with the assurance that Virginia never had a governor who was more beloved or who tried more conscientiously to do his duty."[73] Indeed, Virginians would long remember the Lee tenure and contrast its social sparkle with other lackluster gubernatorial administrations.

Despite the scarcity of notable administrative achievements during his term, Lee's record compares favorably with both the service of other Virginia governors since 1865 and the performances of his contemporaries during the 1880's in other states. Naturally, no two gubernatorial terms have been identical, since events, personalities, problems, issues, and other factors interact to give distinguishing features to each. Nonetheless, as the first of an unbroken line of twenty-one Democratic governors of Virginia (from 1886 to 1970), Lee unconsciously initiated the basic pattern of service from which his successors seldom deviated. He was typical of most governors since 1865--of course, Governor Harry Flood Byrd (1926-1930) was a glaring exception--in that he left little permanent imprint on the civil and political annals of the

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[73]Richmond Dispatch, December 31, 1889.

Old Dominion.[74] Lee's tenure also conformed to the general mold of executive performance prevalent in other states during the Gilded Age. Since the executive power was widely diffused among other officials, contemporary governors were often the chief executive only in a formal rather than in a real sense. A governor who exercised the dominant voice in a state's public affairs rarely emerged, since the limitations imposed on the office by the governmental machinery were difficult to overcome.[75] Consequently, Lee's general administrative performance met the accepted standards of the nation at the time. Moreover, his colorful activities in public relations, especially his use of publicity as a means not only to honor Virginia's heritage but also to improve the state's economic and political status, made him a noteworthy figure among contemporary governors.

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[74]Despite their efforts to achieve post-gubernatorial political careers, J. Hoge Tyler (1898-1902), A. J. Montague (1902-1906), and Westmoreland Davis (1918-1922) were relegated--in company with Lee--to political oblivion after their terms of office, partly owing to the essential features of the political system discussed in this and the subsequent chapter.

[75]A few exceptions to the general rule of ineffective governors during the period included Lee's wartime associate, Wade Hampton (governor of South Carolina, 1877-1881), as well as John Peter Altgeld (Illinois, 1892-1896) and David B. Hill (New York, 1885-1891). However, even these men suffered defeats at the hands of legislatures or the electorate. For an account of the gubernatorial office and its development, see Coleman B. Ransone, Jr., The Office of Governor in the United States (University of Alabama, 1956). An informative review of the period's state governmental framework is found in Allan R. Richards, "The Heritage of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in The 50 States and Their Local Governments, ed. by James W. Fesler (New York, 1967), 45-70.

CHAPTER VI

"BOOM AND BUST"
ECONOMICS AND POLITICS, 1886-1894

Governor Fitzhugh Lee served as chief executive of the Commonwealth in the middle of the exciting transitional period which began with the defeat of the Readjusters in 1883 and continued until the mid-1890's. In two areas, economics and politics, the developments during this period were reflective of national--or at least Southern--trends, but both have a particular Virginia flavor. Economic activities during this time paralleled the political evolution. For example, in 1893 two events and their results, the Panic of 1893 and the election of a United States senator, made the year a momentous one for Virginians. Indeed, as revealed by the course of developments in subsequent decades, that year proved to be a watershed in both the economic and political history of the Old Dominion. Fitz Lee played a notable role in several economic and political events of this period, both as governor and later as private citizen. These events in turn left a profound impression on him. Lee's actions and thoughts while governor naturally influenced the man's life at the time, but these actions also exerted a major effect on the course of his affairs during the immediate post-gubernatorial years. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the role of

Governor and former-Governor Lee in economic and political matters within the framework of this era.

Lee served as chief executive of his state during a period of great economic growth in the United States. While Virginia and the other Southern states did not participate in this expansion to the extent experienced by the remainder of the nation, the South did undergo a striking advance relative to its status during Reconstruction. This advance heralded a new era for the region, and the participants in what became known as the "New South" movement eagerly stressed the inherent advantages--social, economic, and intellectual--which this New South would possess. According to the New South creed (as Allen Moger has summarized it), Southern prosperity would be achieved "by copying the economy of the North through the diversification of crops, the construction of railroads, and the encouragement of any variety of industry which might come to the section."[1] In particular, New South advocates gained a wider and more receptive audience during the late 1880's for their program of industrial advancement. In the first year of the Lee administration, Henry W. Grady, the most celebrated New South apostle, made

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[1]Moger, Virginia, 122. For various secondary accounts of the diverse factors involved in the New South movement, see: Paul M. Gaston, The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking (New York, 1970) and also his article, "The 'New South'," in Link and Patrick, Writing Southern History, 316-336; Buck, Road to Reunion, 145-162, 170-195; and Howard B. Clay, "Daniel Augustus Tompkins: The Role of a New South Industrialist in Politics," in Dept. of History, Studies in the History of the South, 1875-1922, East Carolina College Publications in History, Vol. III (Greenville, N. C., 1966), 85-118.

his classic speech to the New England Society of New York in which he announced that the Old South had passed away and that a New South was ready for reconciliation and economic regeneration. Although much of the Grady speech consisted of expressions previously made trite by other Southerners (including Fitzhugh Lee), he captured the attention of the national press and caught the popular fancy. By the time of Grady's death in 1889, the South was gripped by the optimistic movement and the vision of panacea it promised. The publicity generated by the New South advocates permeated the region from Lee's inaugural to the Panic of 1893.[2] In Virginia, long a leading manufacturing state by Southern standards, a renewed emphasis was placed on economic progress, especially industrial growth, by the Governor and a host of his contemporaries.[3]

Lee had been interested in promoting Virginia prosperity in the years prior to his inaugural but chiefly in the general area of agricultural advancement.[4] Being a realist, he

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[2]Both Grady, as editor of the Atlanta Constitution, and others had pleaded for more industry long before his New York speech in 1886. For a definitive analysis of the New South rhetoric, including Grady's role, consult Gaston, The New South Creed, especially 17-18, 45-116.

[3]Moger's Virginia, 122-144, and also his article, "Industrial and Urban Progress in Virginia from 1880 to 1900," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXVI, No. 3 (July, 1958), 307-336, provide a detailed account of the New South movement in the state.

[4]For example, see Addison Borst to J. L. Kemper, August 16 and 18, 1875, Brock Papers, and "Synopsis of Gen. Fitzhugh Lee's Address Exhibiting His Plan to Secure Immigration to Virginia," The Southern Planter and Farmer, XXXVII (February, 1876), 118-122.

continued his interest in the promotion of agricultural interests of the Commonwealth since the overwhelming majority of its citizens depended upon the soil for their livelihood. As governor, he noted: "The whole State will at once feel any vigorous increase in its agricultural prosperity."[5] Consequently, he requested the expansion of numerous state services to aid the farmer; in particular, he urged that the Commissioner of Agriculture be delegated increased powers and responsibilities for the collection and dissemination of agricultural statistics and other information. He also expressed the hope that the legislature would pass laws designed to relieve the distress of those farmers, especially grain producers, who suffered from Western competition. He declared to the lawmakers: "Prosperous farmers make a prosperous State, and every suggestion which can promote their interests demands, and I feel will receive, your faithful attention."[6] Yet Lee shared the philosophy of limited government which dominated the Assembly and precluded any massive amount of assistance, even indirectly, to the increasingly hard-pressed farmers. The farmers' plight was less noticeable in the general prosperity which prevailed during his administration, and Lee was usually considered to be a sympathetic governor by agricultural groups. Agrarian discontent and despair came to a focus after he left

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[5]"Message of the Governor," December 7, 1887, Senate Journal, 1887-88, 12-33.

[6]"Message of the Governor," December 4, 1889, Senate Journal, 1889-90, 15-30.

office, and Governor Lee consequently escaped the disruptive threat entailed by the Populist revolt of the 1890's.[7]

While the farmers' role in state economic prosperity was not ignored, Lee and his contemporaries were far more enthusiastic about the industrialization phase of the New South movement. Publicists might mention the need for diversification of crops and call for the establishment of agricultural experiment stations as Lee did, but the major emphasis centered on encouraging the construction of railroads and the migration of industrial concerns to the state.[8] Governor Lee felt that a proliferation of manufacturing enterprises would propel Virginia into the mainstream of American economic life, and he constantly sought during his tenure to entice industry into all areas of the state. Whenever Lee journeyed northward, he spoke not only of the Southern desire for sectional reconciliation but also of its interest in the future. The South, he maintained, cherished its past but was no longer wedded to it and would be an ideal region for Northern investment. Virginia, with her natural resources and man-made facilities, stood ready to receive sincere Northerners--at least those possessing money or

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[7]Lee's vetoes of two agricultural bills were on grounds that they would prove ineffective and did not cost him farmer support; Lee to House of Delegates, March 3, 1888, printed in House Journal, 1887-88, 505-506; Richmond Times, February 8, 1888; William D. Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion: Virginia Farm Politics, 1885-1900 (Princeton, 1935), 62 and also 76-114.

[8]Acts of the Assembly, 1887-88, 581-582; Sheldon, Populism, 62.

special skills--with open arms on mutually advantageous terms.[9] When Lee was unable to attend major expositions and economic meetings outside the state, he tried to see that Virginia's industrial possibilities were properly lauded, and he appointed numerous delegations to represent the state at these gatherings.[10] At home, he gave full support to any group which attempted to boost a particular town or locality. The most notable economic exposition held in his term, The Richmond Exposition of 1888, received his warmest praise and encouragement. Exhibits were designed to reveal the Commonwealth's economic progress and demonstrate the desire of Virginians to move forward into a new phase of economic development.[11] Governor Lee, at this and similar affairs, proudly extolled his state's present achievements while claiming that future accomplishments would be even more spectacular.

Lee's extravagant boosterism was comparable to that of many of his fellow citizens although a few deplored the

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[9]New York Times, May 1, 1889; Richmond Dispatch, July 20, September 21, and October 14, 1887; undated newspaper clippings (ca. 1886-1890), Opie Papers; George Hoadly to Lee, May 29, 1886, and C. R. Boyd to Lee, June 14, 1886, Brock Papers.

[10]Certificate appointing Thomas Nelson Page "A Commissioner to represent Virginia at the Universal Exposition of Paris, 1889," March 16, 1889, Thomas Nelson Page Papers, University of Virginia Library; "Executive Journal, Commonwealth of Virginia," Virginia State Library, entry for October 1, 1889; Richmond Dispatch, September 17, 1887.

[11]Manufacturer's Record, February 23, 1889; Richmond Dispatch, September 23, October 3 and 30, November 1, 2, 15, and 22, 1888.

attempts to emulate the Northern economy in Virginia. The Reverend Robert L. Dabney, the most notable representative of the latter group, strongly lamented the effects on Virginia's social values and system of government which he expected to be wrought by industrialism.[12] Governor Lee, in spite of his fascination and awe for the heritage of Old Virginia, seems to have been unbothered by qualms that industrial progress might prove a mixed blessing for his beloved state. To Lee, industrial development was the key to Virginia's prosperous future and the only means to alleviate both the people's and the government's financial impoverishment. It was time that Virginia regained her former preeminence in the Union. Industrialization meant more and better jobs for its citizens, an expanded tax base for the state, and numerous other benefits.[13]

The personal efforts of Governor Lee to attract new industry were a contributing factor to economic advancement.

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[12]Speech of Robert L. Dabney at Hampden-Sydney College, Virginia, 1882, entitled "The New South," in Rare Virginia Pamphlets, XIX, University of Virginia.

[13]Although Lee was later in advocating industrialization than many other proponents of the New South, his inertia resulted primarily from personal circumstances rather than from any philosophical objections. He engaged in farming after 1865 and continued to be a planter until the 1880's. Consequently, he was more interested in agricultural improvements than in industrial advancement prior to his election as governor. Unlike the vehement opponents of an industrial society implied by the New South, Lee did not subscribe to the argument that advocacy of industrialism meant a rejection of the region's heritage. Indeed, he considered himself a pillar of the Old Order and supported industrial growth on grounds that it would lead to Southern revival. See Gaston, The New South Creed, 153-160, for the principal figures who joined Dabney in claiming that industrialization would warp or destroy all that was best in Southern society.

Moreover, he headed a "sage," conservative, and stable regime which provided an additional attraction to the potential investor. Business and industrial leaders became increasingly influential in his party as the Virginia Democracy's commitment to commercial interests became more pronounced during the Lee era. It is impossible to determine the exact influence Lee exerted on Virginia's economic development during the period, but one may note the progress made while he presided over the state government. An estimated $100 million in new capital investment came into the state during his incumbency.[14] In manufacturing enterprises alone, capital investment rose from $27 million in 1880 to $63 million by 1890. The number of wage earners, the total wages paid, and the value of products experienced comparable rises.[15] The railroads also showed an equally astounding but haphazard growth and total mileage increased from 1,893 in 1880 to 3,360 by 1890. The first two years of Lee's administration saw less than one hundred miles of new track laid in the state but an acceleration occurred in 1888 and 1889 with the addition of 151 and 289 miles respectively.[16]

Although these figures reveal that Virginia made a rapid industrial advance during the Lee years, the state

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[14]Moger, Virginia, 64.

[15]McFarland, "The Extension of Democracy in Virginia," 62.

[16]Allen W. Moger, "Railroad Practices and Policies in Virginia after the Civil War," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LIX, No. 4 (October, 1951), 448.

economy remained primarily agricultural at the close of his administration. For example, manufacturing gave employment to only 60,000 persons (less than 15 per cent of the total work force) and most of these were involved in the processing of agricultural products such as tobacco. Moreover, the rate of increase in Virginia lagged behind the rest of the South because Virginia was already more industrialized than most Southern states. Yet Virginia's advance was impressive and encouraged many Virginians to entertain hope for the imminent enrichment and continued development of their state.[17]

One reason that Governor Lee became enraptured by the New South gospel was the manifestations of progress he could easily observe. For example, during his administration the first telephone was installed in the Executive Mansion, an elevator was placed in the Capitol near his office, and his secretary began to use a new machine called the typewriter in handling the official correspondence.[18] Once off the Capitol grounds, the Governor could ride down the nation's first electric street car line and view the physical signs of rapid growth in bustling Richmond. These and other

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[17] As a supplement to the employment statistics found in McFarland, "The Extension of Democracy in Virginia," 62, consult the following for comparisons of Virginia and the South with the nation: Moger, "Industrial and Urban Progress in Virginia," 307-336; Gaston, The New South Creed, 275; and Woodward, Origins of the New South, 107-141.

[18] This progress was not without its problems, however. In addition to the technical difficulties of installing the elevator, Lee was criticized by the Republicans for its installation: William Mahone, "Virginia--Campaign of 1887--Address of the Republican State Committee," Broadside, 1887.

objects provided very tangible evidence of Virginia's remarkable progress, and the visions of future prosperity caught not only his imagination but also that of countless other Virginians. By 1890 cautious optimism premised on the growth of the preceding years had given way to the contagious fever of a speculative boom. Fitz was thoroughly captured by its spirit. At the close of his term, Lee refused the presidency of Virginia Military Institute in spite of his interest in higher education and love for the military.[19] Instead, he accepted the presidency of one of those numerous development companies which hoped to bring the millennium to the Old Dominion.

Retiring as governor, Fitz promptly moved to Lexington and assumed his duties as head of the Rockbridge Company, an enterprise organized in 1887 by local citizens to reap profits from the expected industrial growth of Rockbridge and adjacent counties.[20] The boom craze was especially pronounced in the Valley and the Southwest. Those regions had long been a center of iron production, and the dreams for great expansion in the manufacture of iron and steel formed the basis of the

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[19]Richmond Dispatch, July 4, 6, 9, 14, and 18, 1889.

[20]Richmond Times, February 25, 1890; William A. Anderson to Lee, November 23, 1890, Opie Papers; Contract between the Rockbridge Company and F. G. Fuller, February 7, 1890, John W. Daniel to John D. Long, May 6, 1889, and Hugh R. Garden to Lee, November 27, 1889, William A. Anderson Papers, University of Virginia. (Anderson, Vice-President of the Company, retained its records and his Papers contain hundreds of letters, contracts, and memorandums pertaining to its affairs.)

boom which captivated the area from the later 1880's to 1893. Several companies were formed to exploit the natural resources and build a huge industrial complex, but the Rockbridge Company was one of the most ambitious and consequently attracted Fitz Lee.[21] It was authorized to engage in the mining of any product it desired, to acquire land and lay out a town, to construct railways and waterways, and to hold stocks in any other corporation. When Fitz assumed its leadership, the company was already engaged in various schemes to exercise to the fullest those liberal powers granted in its charter.[22]

William A. Anderson, the Lexington attorney who was the moving spirit in the enterprise, chose the flamboyant but highly respected general and ex-governor as president in order to enhance the public image of the company. Lee, however, proved to be more than a figurehead, and he and Anderson were soon deeply enmeshed in attempts to achieve the fabulous

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[21] For an account by a contemporary observer, see Hugh A. White, "Personal Recollections of the Rockbridge Land Boom," Lexington, Va., Rockbridge County News, April 21 and 18, 1938; see also Moger, The Rebuilding of the Old Dominion, 31-42.

[22] Acts of the Assembly, (Extra Session), 1887, 192-195; The Rockbridge Company, "Memorandum in Relation to the Rockbridge Company" Broadside, 1890. Typical acquisitions of property and contracts with other companies are revealed in the following: Jed Hotchkiss to W. A. Anderson, July 17, 1890; Lee to Anderson, October 1, 1890; and agreements with the George L. Squier Mfg. Co., October 18, 1889, and F. H. Foster, October 4, 1890, Anderson Papers.

goals of the corporation.[23] In theory, the company's aims seemed plausible and sound but in practice they were too pretentious for the available financial resources. Nevertheless, the company enjoyed an initial success in the first several months of Lee's presidency. The key plan, to acquire extensive tracts of land rich in mineral resources and establish a new manufacturing center to exploit them, was instituted. In the eighteen months after Lee joined the company, it acquired an option to buy, or purchased outright, several thousand acres and founded the town of Glasgow on the James River. Lee, Anderson, and the other directors of the Rockbridge Company expected to attract various manufacturing firms to Glasgow by offering favorable terms for locating there, and in time, they hoped to reap profits from rising real estate prices as new immigrants moved to the expanding industrial complex. Additional profits would accrue as the mineral holdings were mined and sold to the industrial concerns of the vicinity.[24] Further, the continued growth of Glasgow

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[23]Anderson to Lee, November 23, 1889, Opie Papers; Anderson to Lee, August 27, 1890 and Lee to Anderson, September 11, 1890; Rockbridge Company contracts with H. O. Lochner and Company, and with the Glasgow Construction and Improvement Company, September 29, 1890, and March 22, 1890, respectively; all in Anderson Papers.

[24]The Rockbridge Company, "Prospectus" Broadside, 1889. The Anderson Papers contain documents and letters revealing the plan and its implementation: see the Company documents labeled "Schedule of Properties to be included in Mortgage to secure Loan of $500,000" (1890) and "Memorandum on Income" (1890); also R. H. Catlett to W. A. Adnerson, September 12, 1890, E. K. Talcott to Lee, October 8, 1890, D. R. Eggleston to Rockbridge Company, November 18, 1890, Trezevant Williams to Anderson, March 14, 1891 and the Company's agreement with A. D. Exall and J. A. Ede, December 1, 1891.

would be guaranteed when it became a major railway terminal after the construction of the Pittsburgh and Virginia railroad--the town was located at a point where the Chesapeake and Ohio parallels the Norfolk and Western--to provide a direct connection to Pittsburgh and Atlanta.[25]

From 1890 to mid-1892 the Rockbridge Company generated an aura of fabulous success and Fitzhugh Lee was lauded as the head of "The Grandest Enterprise in the New South." By July 1891 Glasgow boasted a population of 1200 residents with several manufacturing establishments (including a rolling mill and an iron foundry) in operation, under construction, or under contract to move there.[26] Unfortunately, in spite of its accomplishments, the company lacked sufficient funds to translate the multifold plans into reality. Many of its properties had been acquired on short-term credit and, although they represented a potential source of vast revenues, the company needed constant infusions of new capital to meet its immediate obligations.[27]

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[25]Richmond Times, February 25, 1890; Moger, "Railroad Practices and Policies," 451; Lee to J. K. Edmondson, September 4, 1890 (with enclosed expense account against Pittsburgh and Virginia Railroad) and December 4, 1891, Holmes Conrad to Lee, December 5, 1890, and R. P. Chew to Anderson, December, 1890, Anderson Papers.

[26]Glasgow Herald, May 21, 1891; "Glasgow (Virginia) Town Lands, Limited" (printed circular dated October 24, 1890), Anderson Papers.

[27]The Company's original cash assets of $200,000 were woefully inadequate since an estimated minimum of $5 million was needed to successfully accomplish its objectives. See "Statement of Assets and Liabilities" (printed Company document dated July 1, 1891) and Resolutions of the Board of Directors, Numbers 2-4, (1890) in the Anderson Papers.

Accordingly, Lee devoted considerable attention to publicity in order to attract investors willing to buy its stock or that of the manufacturing firms in the area and to purchase lots in booming Glasgow. Fitz conducted a widespread and successful advertising campaign by making personal appearances and maintaining an extensive correspondence and favorable relations with the press. Virginia newspapers were joined by the Manufacturer's Record, the Baltimore publication which was the leading New South organ, in praising the Rockbridge endeavor.[28] Investors ranged from Wall Street speculators to English businessmen and prominent members of the nobility, but all too often they were unwilling to wait for future profits and instead hoped for immediate fantastic returns.[29] Lee's flair for public relations contributed immeasurably to attracting the necessary capital to keep the company in operation while Anderson concentrated on finding well-endowed investors who were willing to forgo quick returns and gamble on long-term larger profits in the

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[28]For example, see Manufacturer's Record, March 29, 1890. (Page 10 contains editorial praise of the Glasgow endeavor while a full-page Rockbridge Company advertisement is found on page 63). R. H. Edmonds, the editor (and a former Virginian), was willing to accept town lots in Glasgow in lieu of cash payments for advertising, contract dated March 7, 1890, Anderson Papers. For other advertising matters, see F. Hamilton to Rockbridge Company, December 19, 1890, and the dated bills or contracts with the following: The Rockbridge County News, February 21, 1890; the Richmond State, October 13, 1890; the Roanoke Herald, September 26, 1890; and the Virginia Official Railway Guide, September 30, 1890, all found in the Anderson Papers.

[29]As a typical case, one Wall Street attorney told Lee: "I am thinking of pulling up stakes here, temporarily at least, and going down to Glasgow to make a fortune," Francis T. Jenkins to Lee, April 29, 1890, Opie Papers.

future.[30] To entice this type of capitalist, however, proved to be the most difficult and futile task of the Rockbridge group and similar organizations which promised an impending bonanza. Lack of adequate capital not only precluded any chance of fulfilling the more grandiose aims such as the building of the Pittsburgh and Virginia Railroad--no track was ever laid--but also threatened the achievements at Glasgow.

By the latter part of 1892, the Rockbridge Company was sorely pressed by a shortage of cash reserves, and Fitz and his associates found it imperative to limit their splended aspirations in order to keep the company solvent. Several of the manufacturing enterprises in Glasgow were financially deficient and solely dependent on Lee's company in order to stay in business. In addition, certain Northern firms which received Rockbridge money defaulted on their loans or refused to honor their commitments to establish plants in Glasgow. Fitz engaged in frustrating and costly efforts to force these firms to meet their obligations but seldom won more

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[30] Lee and Anderson sought to tap the larger English investment concerns but met with limited success despite Anderson's sojourn of several months in London; Lee to Anderson, September 1 and 11, 1890; R. H. Catlett to Anderson, September 12, 1890; Morris Word to Anderson, September 25, 1890 and February 21, 1891, Anderson Papers. Lee was also unable to secure commitments from major American financiers; see August Belmont to Lee, August 25, 1890, ibid.

than Pyrrhic victories.[31] To compound its fiscal problems, the company's creditors became increasingly reluctant to extend the loans on the properties acquired before and during the first months of Lee's presidency.[32] Consequently, the company was forced to reduce its grand scale of operation, whereupon the continuous flow of speculative investors attracted by Lee's advertising campaign dwindled to a trickle. When the Panic of 1893 dealt the boom its death blow, the bubble burst for the Rockbridge and a host of other companies.

General Lee, although disillusioned with the enterprise and involved in a contest for a U. S. Senate seat as well as other activities, stayed on as president until 1894 and helped Anderson and other associates to salvage a portion of the exploded bubble. Most of the properties bought on credit and only partially paid for were surrendered to creditors or the original owners to avoid bankruptcy. Other assets had to be sold at a fraction of their purchase price, and the company's stock declined to a negligible value. Lee lost over $20,000

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[31] The most troublesome case involved W. S. Witman, an Ohio stove manufacturer who failed to repay his loans from the Company or to establish a foundry at Glasgow; see Lee to Judge William McLaughlin, September 26, 1890, to W. S. Witman, September 3, 1891, and to the First National Bank, Ironton, Ohio, October 2, 1891; David K. Watson to James E. Campbell, November 14, 1891; W. S. Witman to Lee, September 2, 1891, and to Rockbridge Company, July 14, 1891, ibid.

[32] J. D. H. Ross to W. A. Anderson, December 28, 1891; W. A. Glasgow, et al., to the President and Board of Directors, April 27, 1892; Anderson to Lee, April 2, 1892; W. A. Anderson et al., to the President and Board of Directors, February 19, 1892, ibid.

of his own capital which he had invested in the Rockbridge and its associated and subsidiary companies.[33] For Fitz and many others, the hopes and expectations generated by the New South movement were to remain a will-of-the-wisp.

The political activities of Fitzhugh Lee which paralleled the preceding economic developments showed a marked if ironic similarity in final results. In politics as in economics, his notable achievements in earlier years ended with a surprising catastrophe for the man in 1893. In both areas, Lee participated in affairs for which he lacked the training and aptitude requisite for continuous success. In economics, his avid interest in industrial progress partially compensated for his lack of experience in business and commercial affairs. His sense of duty, his personality, and his former achievements and status were ample assets which guaranteed temporary triumphs in politics, but his aversion to the mechanics of political life precluded his becoming a perennially invincible politician. Consequently, although Fitz possessed sufficient talent and ability to attain initial success, his being out of his metier was a contributing factor to the ultimate disasters he suffered in economic and political affairs.

Lee's conduct in Virginia politics from 1886 to 1892 was

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[33]Lee also accepted his salary in company shares and persuaded several relatives to invest in the enterprise. See Robert C. Lee to Lee, May 3, 1890; W. J. Madden to Lee, February 27, 1892; Lee to J. Preston Carson, March 22, 1892, Opie Papers. For Anderson's management of the Company's surviving assets after 1894, see Charles W. Mayer to Anderson, March 2, 1897, and an agreement signed by Frank T. Glasgow, September 30, 1898, Anderson Papers.

exemplified by his behavior as governor-elect during the Daniel-Barbour senatorial contest. When the Assembly convened three weeks prior to Lee's inauguration, its first important order of business was to elect a United States senator. Fitz had been intimately involved in certain initial background maneuvers pertaining to that election. Both leading Democratic candidates for the senate seat, John Warwick Daniel and John S. Barbour, realized that Lee's nomination would affect the subsequent contest since the Virginia Democracy tried to avoid a geographic concentration in selecting important officials. With Barbour and Lee living in the vicinity of Alexandria, Daniel and his allies gave Lee the crucial support he needed to win the gubernatorial nomination. The Lee-Daniel alliance--despite their personal friendship--was a political "marriage of convenience" and Fitz treated it as one. During the gubernatorial campaign, he appeared with Daniel on the stump but cooperated with and followed the advice of Barbour, the party chairman. After his election, he continued his amiable relationship with both men and scrupulously avoided any public indication of a preference for the senatorial nomination. It was in character for Lee to remain aloof from the intraparty struggle. Moreover, by remaining neutral, Lee avoided an awkward predicament. He neither alienated his friends who worked for Barbour, especially his long-time political mentor General William H. Payne, nor opened himself to the charge of treachery from the Daniel partisans. Without any assistance from Lee, Daniel, the most popular politician in the state, won nomination by the party

caucus in December. Subsequently, he was easily chosen to succeed William Mahone, the Republican incumbent, by the Democratic-controlled Assembly.[34]

Lee maintained affable relations with both Daniel and Barbour as governor and continued to avoid irrevocable alliances with any particular politician or group. Conversely, few Democratic politicians felt a special commitment to furthering Lee's political fortunes. As was stressed in the previous chapter, Governor Lee attempted to remain above party politics and usually left patronage and policy matters to the politicians. Yet Lee was, after all, the party's highest officeholder in the state from 1886 to 1890, and he was expected to enhance its status whenever possible. Lee preferred to fulfill this obligation to his party by meeting his obligation to the state--that is, by providing good government (at least his conception of it)--but of course he was compelled at times to act as a party leader rather than a state official. In particular, the popular governor was requested to appear before audiences in election campaigns or at party functions.[35]

Lee presided over the Old Dominion during a period when momentous political developments occurred. During his

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[34]Doss, "John W. Daniel," 85-98; see also J. W. Daniel to Richard M. Conway, August 18, November 16 and 23, 1885; Thomas S. Martin to Daniel, December 8 and 15, 1885; and the Letterbook on Election to U.S. Senate, December 15, 1885, John W. Daniel Papers, University of Virginia Library. Besides his popularity, Daniel was supported by some Democrats who resented Barbour's diligent but chafing efforts to maintain a tight party organization. See Robert Yancy to Daniel, December 10, 1885, ibid., and also Quinn, "Barbour," 66-67.

[35]J. W. Daniel to Lee, August 14, 1887, and April 3, 1889, Opie Papers. Each November saw a statewide election with state and local contests in the odd-numbered years and the Federal elections in the even-numbered ones.

administration, the Democracy was engaged in the final phase of its struggle to vanquish the Republican coalition led by William Mahone. Lee did not play the most prominent role in the attainment of the Democracy's ultimate triumph, but he dutifully spoke on behalf of his party's candidates and policies in the annual electoral contests which culminated in Mahone's defeat in the gubernatorial race of 1889. Lee's popularity, his status as governor, and the apparent success of his administration were among the Democratic assets during these years. Moreover, Lee was a sincere advocate of Democratic policies and goals who ardently defended his party and himself when subjected to partisan attacks from the Republicans.[36]

It was inevitable that Lee, in his position as a public figure, became involved in the chief issue used by the Democrats to undermine the Republicans as a viable force in politics--the role and status of Negroes in Virginia political life. Lee possessed the conventional attitudes of his class and generation on racial matters, but his paternalistic feelings toward the Negroes precluded intemperate attacks on them comparable to those of some Democratic politicians.

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[36]For a brief account of Republican activities during Lee's administration, see Blake, William Mahone, 235-251; for typical attacks on Fitz and his replies, see Mahone, "Campaign of 1887," and Richmond Dispatch, August 25 and September 1, 1887. Lee and his administration were defended by the Democratic State Central Committee in its 1889 broadsides entitled "A Reply to Sundry Charges Brought by General William Mahone against the Democratic Party of Virginia," and "Characteristic Facts in the Business and Political Career of General William Mahone."

As governor, Lee worked for Negro public schools and state-supported colleges, retained the Negro militia units, and tried to maintain a rapport with the Negro community by frequently responding to invitations to attend various functions.[37] He had promised the Negroes that their rights would be protected when he took office and later maintained that he fulfilled his commitment. However, Lee did share the common view of most white Democratic Virginians that the Northern press and the Republican party (both national and state) were only using the Negro as a political tool:

> The more I see of the North, the more I am convinced that the southern people are the best friends the negroes have. . . . Now the [Northern] papers that distort my utterances on the race question make it appear that I am hostile to the negro race; whereas, I am particularly friendly, and the negroes themselves admit that I have done more for them in my official capacity than any other governor ever did.[38]

Consequently, Lee was a proponent of the Southern argument that racial matters should be left to the paternalistic whites

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[37]For examples of his personal rapport with various Negro individuals and groups, see the Richmond Dispatch, July 16 and October 1, 1887, and October 5 and 6, 1889. In addition to his personal rapport with individuals, Lee received some gratitude from Negroes for his advocacy of economic and educational advancement for the race. For example, he was completely unreceptive to the arguments of Frank G. Ruffin. The latter voiced the dislike of some Democrats for Negro public schools in his "Cost and Outcome of Negro Education in Virginia, Respectfully Addressed to the White People of the State," Rare Virginia Pamphlets, University of Virginia Library.

[38]Richmond Dispatch, March 1, 1889; see also Lee to Magnus L. Robinson, December 12, 1885, printed in the Roanoke Leader, January 2, 1886. For Lee's reaction to an editorial in the New York Herald, March 3, 1889, about his statements on the Negro, see his letter to the editor of the Herald, March 3, printed in the Dispatch, March 5.

in the various states and, in order to bring racial peace, the Negro would have to be removed eventually from politics. Lee bluntly stated the paramount issue in Virginia and Southern politics: "It is the question of Anglo-Saxon supremacy with us and always will be as long as the Negroes seek, through the aid of a few whites, to control affairs."[39] Thus Governor Lee, viewing the Republicans as a threat to white hegemony, joined his fellow Democrats in their battles to win permanent political control of the state.

In Virginia, Governor Lee became a respected political celebrity but one who seldom exerted a decisive or permanent influence on political affairs. In national political life, he occupied a similar niche for various reasons. He continued his pre-gubernatorial activities on behalf of sectional reconciliation after he became governor. In addition, as a famous Southern governor, his comments on political matters received considerable attention from Northerners. He also became acquainted with several prominent Northern Democratic politicians (especially President Cleveland) who viewed Fitz as an important member of the party's Southern wing.[40] By 1887, in consequence, numerous Southerners were suggesting that

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[39] Richmond Dispatch, March 24, 1888 (for quotation) and also April 19, 1889. Lee's administration was the last in which Negroes served in the General Assembly, but the majority of laws providing for rigid segregation were not passed until the 1890's.

[40] Lee's acquaintance with New York Governor David B. Hill, for example, is revealed in his letter to Hill, February 23, 1887, Fitzhugh Lee Papers, University of Virginia Library.

Lee would be the logical choice for the vice-presidential nomination in 1888. Lee, however, had little interest in that office and stated his preference to remain as governor of Virginia for a full term. Moreover, Fitz doubted that he or any other Southern man had much chance of capturing the nomination in spite of the flattering press comments on the subject. The vice-presidential boom quickly faded after Lee discouraged it, but his stature with some elements of the national party remained high.[41] For example, Lee continued his affable relationship with Cleveland--the President consulted Lee on routine and confidential political matters and even asked the ex-cavalryman for personal advice about horses--and from 1886 to 1896 Lee was generally acknowledged as one of the leading Cleveland supporters and confidants in Virginia.[42] This relationship with Cleveland enhanced Lee's political stature at the moment and eventually proved to be a determining factor in the course of Lee's public career after 1894.

In the first two years after his gubernatorial term, Fitz devoted little time to politics since he was busily

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[41] New York Times, March 6, 1887; John T. Pleasants to Lee, November 21, 1887, and numerous unidentified newspaper clippings, 1887-1888, Opie Papers; Brock, Virginia and Virginians, II, 549. Lee continued to be considered a possible vice-presidential candidate into the 1890's; see Richmond Times, April 7, 1895.

[42] Cleveland to Lee, October 23 and November 18, 1886, Opie Papers: Cleveland to Lee, April 15, 1888, and Lee to Cleveland, October 29 and November 29, 1886, April 18, June 5 and 21, August 23, and November 11, 1888, Grover Cleveland Papers, Library of Congress.

engaged in the affairs of the Rockbridge Company. Nonetheless, he stumped for his party at election time and maintained his contacts with Cleveland.[43] However, the death in 1892 of United States Senator John S. Barbour (who had been selected in 1887 to replace Senator Riddleberger, the Readjuster-Republican incumbent, for the 1889-1895 term) started a train of events which once again thrust Lee into the heart of Virginia politics. The contest for Barbour's successor, in which Fitzhugh Lee was a central figure, proved to be a controversial cause célèbre and later came to be considered one of the most significant events in Virginia's political annals. The gubernatorial election of 1885 was the most important electoral contest for Lee personally, and it did not lack in significance for the state--Lee's inauguration in 1886 began uninterrupted Democratic control of the statehouse which lasted until 1970--but the 1893 senatorial contest for Barbour's successor proved to be of far greater importance for the Old Dominion. Indeed, this senatorial election and its results determined the tone, style, and method of operation of the Virginia political system for the next seven decades.

The preliminaries of the pivotal senatorial election of 1893 began in the week following Barbour's death on May 14, 1892. At that time, Governor Philip McKinney, who refused on

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[43] Cleveland to Lee, September 12, 1892, Opie Papers; Lee to Cleveland, September 7 and 16, 1892, Grover Cleveland Papers.

grounds of governmental economy to call a special legislative session, had to choose an interim appointee to serve as Barbour's replacement until the next regular session of the Assembly in December 1893. McKinney's problem was complicated by his desire to avoid an appointment which would give special advantage to a potential candidate for the full senatorial term beginning in 1895. He finally settled on seventy-year-old Eppa Hunton, a respected retired Congressman and ex-Confederate brigadier. Hunton's appointment was widely viewed as a wise compromise, and he was eventually selected by the Assembly, when it met in December 1893, to complete Barbour's unexpired term (the so-called "short term"). Although Lee was mentioned for the interim appointment and as a possibility for the short term, his major role in Virginia politics from May 1892 until December 1893 centered on the election of the senator who would begin a full term in 1895. This latter Senate contest aroused the interest of most Virginians during these months, and General Fitzhugh Lee and Thomas Staples Martin (an attorney from Albemarle county) promptly emerged as the two major contenders for the Democratic senatorial nomination for the full term.[44]

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[44] Richmond Dispatch, May 17 and 19, 1892; New York Times, May 16, 17, 19, and 29, 1892; John H. Wright to William A. Jones, August 18, 1911, William A Jones Papers, University of Virginia Library; Eppa Hunton, Autobiography of Eppa Hnton (Richmond, 1933), 214-218; Eppa Hunton, Jr., to Francis Lassiter, June 24 and 29, 1893, Francis R. Lassiter Papers, Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina. The United States Senator had to be chosen during the session of the Assembly elected in 1893 (which ran from December 6, 1893, to March 4, 1894) since Barbour's term expired on March 3, 1895, and the next session would not begin until December 4, 1895.

Martin, in comparison with Lee, enjoyed little popularity among the masses except with his neighbors. The forty-five-year-old bachelor shunned publicity and had never held public office. However, the shy and unassuming lawyer exhibited an avid, consuming interest in politics. His circle of friends was almost totally confined to the many politicians with whom he was intimately acquainted throughout the state.[45] His employment as a district counsel for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad enabled him to devote considerable time to his passion and, moreover, involved him in the dispensation of essential railroad campaign contributions to Democratic candidates.[46] Martin, an effective but behind-the-scenes worker, experienced a remarkable rise to the upper echelon of the party hierarchy after 1883. His services as a Barbour lieutenant won him an appointment to the State Central Committee in early 1885. Temporarily breaking with Barbour since he felt Daniel's nomination would be more appealing to party members, Martin emerged as a masterful politician when he helped to engineer Lee's nomination as governor and

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[45]Martin to Walter A. Watson, October 3 and December 3, 1894, Walter A. Watson Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

[46]During this period, the railroads formed the largest single commercial group in Virginia. Their involvement in Democratic politics resulted from a desire to avoid stringent state regulation and to keep their low tax assessments. Although their tax payments averaged less than five per cent of the total tax revenues (since the latter included individual property taxes), they paid over ninety percent of the state corporation taxes. See Burton, "Taxation in Virginia, 1870-1901," 97, 103.

the subsequent election of Senator Daniel.[47] After 1885, as a member of the prestigious executive group of the Central Committee, Martin continued to earn the respect of Democratic officeholders and candidates--especially for his talents as a fund raiser with the railroads--and had acquired a considerable credit of political obligations by 1892.[48]

In the eighteen months between the interim appointment of Hunton and the Democratic caucus of the new legislature elected in November 1893, Lee's conduct demonstrated several fatal errors which precluded his selection by the party caucus. During the period he possessed most of the same basic political assets and liabilities which had characterized his career as gubernatorial nominee and governor. His noteworthy assets made him a formidable candidate for the senate, but his liabilities left him in a vulnerable position in the contest with Martin. The General professed an unrealistic opinion of his chances for the senate seat. The cheering and applause he received at party functions and public meetings deluded him as to his true status among

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[47]Martin to Daniel, December 8 and 15, 1885, and D. S. Peirce to Daniel, December 8, 1885, Daniel Papers; Richmond Times, December 12, 1885. Martin's ironic support for Lee in 1885 resulted only from the exigencies of the Lee-Daniel alliance (which was discussed in Chapter IV) rather than from any particular commitment to Lee.

[48]For Martin's political role prior to 1892, see the following: Bear, "Thomas Staples Martin," 51-113; Paschal Reeves, "Thomas S. Martin: Committee Statesman," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXVIII, No. 3, (July, 1960), 344-351; and Biographical Sketch of T. S. Martin, S. Bassett-French Collection, Virginia State Library.

the politicians.[49] He all too often ignored the fact that the politicians, not the people, were the electorate in the senate election. The absence of a formal campaign in which Lee could directly appeal to the people for their votes also seriously handicapped his candidacy.

Bound by his own conventions and those of his party as well, Lee did not openly seek the senate seat. Instead, he depended on his appearances in behalf of the party to reveal his "availablility." His success on the party circuit and the acclaim he received for his efforts were sometimes deceiving. For example, he campaigned for Cleveland and the state Congressional candidates in 1892 and was gratified with the Democratic success. As a strong supporter of Cleveland, Lee felt his fortunes were enhanced by the former President's return to office; however, the President's sympathy for Lee's candidacy was of doubtful value. Since the choice of Senator was a purely state matter, no effort was made to distribute Federal patronage on behalf of Fitz.[50]

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[49]For example, at the state Democratic convention in August 1893, while Lee and Senator Daniel received rousing ovations from the mass of delegates, the professional politicians of the "organization" busily engaged in the more important task of selecting the gubernatorial nominee. See New York Times, August 18 and 19, 1893, and Charles E. Wynes, "Charles T. O'Ferrall and the Virginia Gubernatorial Election of 1893," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXIV, No. 4 (October, 1956), 437-453.

[50]Cleveland to Lee, September 12, 1892, and September 6, 1893, and Henry T. Thurber, April 10, 1893, Opie Papers; Lee to Cleveland, September 7 and November 9, 1892, April 7, September 13, October 19, and November 9, 1893, and Lee to Thurber, April 17 and June 5, 1893, Cleveland Papers; Lee to William A. Jones, January 9, 1894, Jones Papers; Lee to L. L. Lomax, May 5, 1893, Lomax Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

Moreover, Cleveland's popularity suffered a decline, especially after the Panic of 1893, among the Virginia Democrats as they became more sympathetic to "free silver," and Cleveland's pro-gold policy was a burden for the Virginia Democracy in the state elections of 1893.[51] Lee's reliance on his status as a leading Cleveland ally lulled him into a false sense of security and proved to be a serious error in political judgment.

Lee also failed to make an accurate assessment of his adversary owing to his own inflated self-confidence in his ultimate success. For example, he could not fathom the possibility that a former cadet from Virginia Military Institute, especially one who had missed the famed Battle of New Market in 1864 (Martin had a cold and was left behind when the Cadet Corps marched off to war), might be the victor over an ex-Confederate general and the former Governor of Virginia.[52] Moreover, he was affected by his knowledge that he had been successful in his prior public career without becoming too deeply involved in the mundane facets and intriguing maneuvers of politics. He relished his aloofness from those matters and his reputation as a political amateur and uncompromised public servant. The reception of the press to his candidacy also augmented his belief in victory. The reports of his activities were well publicized and contained

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[51] Wynes, "O'Ferrall and the Election of 1893," 437-453.

[52] Bear, "Thomas S. Martin," 20-21, and Reeves, "Thomas S. Martin," 346. Martin did see action in the last year of the war as a member of the Cadet Corps, however, and thus had some claim to have been a fighting Confederate veteran.

the usual laudatory comments about General Lee's past achievements and services. Newspapers generally conceded that Fitz was the leading candidate and predicted that he would be elected to the senate. Unfortunately, too few newspapers felt further comment was necessary and saw little need to shower him with ringing endorsements or to actively promote his candidacy. Furthermore, Lee and most of his contemporaries failed to perceive the significance of recurring suggestions made by the Richmond Dispatch, the leading Democratic organ, that Martin too was a viable candidate.[53]

Lee also exhibited an almost cavalier unconcern for the senate race a great deal of the time. His reasons for wanting to be a senator were comparable to those which encouraged him to be a gubernatorial aspirant, but his desire did not reach the stage of being a sole, all-encompassing one. As usual he exhibited interest in a wide range of activities and, in particular, he was deeply involved in Rockbridge Company affairs during the period. Perhaps the incident which illuminated his preeminent interest in life--military affairs--was his renewed participation in the Gettysburg controversy.

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[53]Richmond Dispatch, May 17, 19, and 22, 1892; New York Times, September 12, 1893; Richmond Times, October 11 and 13; November 1, 1893; Harrisonburg, Va., Rockingham Register, November 20 and 24, December 1 and 8, 1893; William A. Anderson to Joseph Bryan, April 27, 1893, William A. Anderson Papers; Lee to Joseph Bryan, July 26, 1893, John Stewart Bryan Papers, Virginia Historical Society. An argument that Martin received respectable support from the press is presented in William G. Ray, "Public Opinion and Thomas S. Martin: The Role of the Virginia Press in the Senatorial Campaign of 1892-1893" (unpublished session paper for History 207-208, University of Virginia, 1965).

During the most crucial time of the Senate campaign, for instance, he devoted much of his attention to refuting Longstreet and preparing a biography of his beloved Uncle Robert.[54]

The preceding liabilities were compounded by the ex-Governor's failure to establish an effective organization to promote his candidacy. Lee received endorsements from a few members of the State Central Committee but none worked actively for him.[55] His scarcity of dependable skilled political allies at the local level was even more damaging since he had gained few commitments from politicians during his gubernatorial tenure. Consequently, both by choice and necessity, he relied on his friends across the state to promote his candidacy. William A. Anderson, his business partner, offered advice as did General Payne, but Lee paid too little attention to the encouragement and effective direction of his friends' efforts.[56] Most of his supporters

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[54]For a typical letter exemplifying Lee's continued interest in the Gettysburg dispute, see John P. Bachelder to Lee, December (no day given) 1892, in reply to Lee's letter of December 15, Opie Papers.

[55]Members of the important Executive Committee who endorsed but remained inactive on behalf of the Lee candidacy--and who were shocked by the caucus result--included Rufus Ayers (Lee's attorney-general), Joseph Bryan (publisher of Richmond Times), and Congressman William A. Jones. Lee supporters retained a majority on the Executive Committee in 1894; see Henry C. Ferrall, "Claude A. Swanson of Virginia" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1964), 66.

[56]William A. Anderson to Joseph Bryan, April 27, 1893, Anderson Papers; Bear, "Thomas Staples Martin," 147, and Glass, Virginia Democracy, I, 263, list various Lee supporters who worked sometime during the contest.

shared Fitz's opinion of an easy victory. The lack of even the semblance of a campaign organization contributed to Lee's shortage of iron-clad commitments among the hold-over state senators and the newly elected legislators after the November 1893 election. As early as June 1892, Lee began to solicit support for his candidacy among incumbent and potential members of the Assembly, but his attempts to recruit these key individuals were too limited and sporadic.[57] He and his friends were content that a majority of legislators seemed to be in sympathy with the Lee cause.[58]

Thomas Staples Martin, the epitome of a shrewd and calculating politician, exhibited a singleness of purpose during the months prior to the legislative caucus. Since his ambition to be senator was overpowering, he used all his considerable political talents to secure that goal. Martin, the intimate of many Assembly members, received initial commitments from a majority of the 1891-92 legislature and resolved to repeat that feat with the 1893-94 session. Lee never seriously challenged the Martin

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[57]William A. Watson to Francis R. Lassiter, June 4 and 9, 1892, Lassiter Papers; Thomas S. Martin to William E. Bibb, June 20, 1892, William E. Bibb Papers, University of Virginia Library; Lee to John L. Hurt, July 7, 1893 (and also April 21 and May 3, 1895), John L. Hurt Papers, ibid.

[58]Unfortunately, most of his friends who worked actively for him were not candidates for the 1893-1894 General Assembly. William Payne (of Warrenton) and B. O. James (Goochland county) had served an earlier term in the House of Delegates, but Henry C. Stuart (Russell county), C. V. Meredith (Richmond), and Rufus Ayers (Lee's attorney general from Wise county) never served in the Assembly. However, the latter three were elected to the 1901-1902 Constitutional Convention and were generally familiar with Virginia politics.

sympathies of many local politicians.[59] Leaving nothing to chance, Martin constantly sought to endear himself to possible legislative candidates and professed a flattering interest in their political affairs. Moreover, he perfected a superb campaign apparatus which was headed by Henry D. Flood, a rising young politician and Assembly Delegate from Appomattox. Flood, heavily utilized as a liaison man with a host of party workers, joined Martin in encouraging other allies to devote attention to the most minute details in every legislative district.[60] Martin also attended numerous local party meetings and functions but, in contrast to General Lee, avoided expressions of opinion on the money question and other controversial subjects.[61] Instead, he and his lieutenants carefully cultivated pro-Martin men and tried to attract neutral legislative candidates by personal appeals and small campaign contributions.[62] In his concentration on appeals to the Assembly membership, Martin's quest for victory pragmatically conformed to the realities of the Virginia political system.

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[59]Bear, "Thomas Staples Martin," 106-113, 117; Martin to W. E. Bibb, June 20, 1892, Bibb Papers; Martin to William A. Glasgow, Jr., June 24, November 22, 27, and 28, 1893. Jones Papers; W. A. Watson to F. R. Lassiter, May 25, 1892, Martin to Lassiter, September 26 and 30, 1893, and J.S.B. Thompson to Lassiter, September 27, 1893, Lassiter Papers.

[60]Martin to Flood, June 2, 1892, July 2, 4, and 28, August 23, November 2 and 11, 1893, Henry D. Flood Papers, Library of Congress.

[61]Bear, "Thomas Staples Martin," 121-122.

[62]J. R. Wingfield to W. A. Jones, February 2, 1893, Jones Papers; Martin to Flood, September 4, 9, and 11, 1893, John D. Horsley to Flood, February 24, 1893, William M. Murrell to Flood, R. E. Byrd to Flood, October 26, 1893, Flood Papers.

Lee's ultimate disadvantage in his contest with Martin involved campaign funds from the railroads. This money was especially important to candidates in a depression year, and Martin profited from his reputation as a man who had secured the financial backing of the railroads for the party in previous campaigns. In addition, two major Martin supporters, John S. Barbour Thompson (a nephew of the late Senator Barbour) and William A. Glasgow, Jr. (former general manager of the Richmond and Danville and attorney for the Norfolk and Western, respectively), were also known as distributors of railroad money.[63] Lee tried to counterbalance the Martin connections with the railroads by soliciting a pledge that all railroad funds would flow through the Central Committee and not be used in the interest of a particular Senatorial candidate. In the summer of 1893, Lee and Party Chairman James Taylor Ellyson secured this pledge along with several thousand dollars for the party coffers from various railroad officials.[64] However, Glasgow and Thompson distributed other railroad funds to various legislative candidates who pledged their votes to Martin. Perhaps of equal importance was Lee's inability to destroy the prevalent impression of most politicians that Martin controlled the flow of railroad funds. Many candidates, sorely pressed for money in 1893 and thinking of

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[63] Reeves, "Thomas Staples Martin," 350-351.

[64] Bear, "Thomas Staples Martin," 126-128; Lee to Bradley Johnson, December 22, 1893, Fitzhugh Lee Papers, University of Virginia Library; Lee to Edmund Berkeley, January 20, 1894, Berkeley Papers, ibid.

future campaigns as well, contemplated the wisdom of allying themselves with so powerful a person by voting for him.[65]

The Democratic legislative caucus called for the primary purpose of selecting the U. S. Senator convened on the evening of December 7 in Richmond. As Martin had predicted, he led on the first ballot and the totals boded ill for Lee's success: Martin, 55; Lee, 46; others, 20. Martin finally emerged as the winner in one of the great upsets of Virginia politics when the sixth ballot was tabulated: Martin, 66; Lee, 55; others (for Governor McKinney), 1.[66] The caucus adjourned with jubilant shouts of the Martin supporters providing a marked contrast to the stunned silence of the dazed Lee partisans. Lee and his followers were joined in their amazement at Martin's victory by a great many other Virginians. However, the Lee defeat was not as great a surprise to Virginia politicians and other keen observers who possessed

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[65]Martin to F. R. Lassiter, October 24, 1892, Lassiter Papers; J.S.B. Thompson to Flood, November 1, 1893, Flood Papers; Martin to Glasgow, June 24, 1893, Jones Papers. The full extent of the widespread use of railroad funds in both the 1891 and 1893 campaigns by Martin, Glasgow, and Thompson, did not become public until 1911 when Congressman Jones challenged Senator Martin. Jones received numerous letters written by the trio from Malcolm Griffin. Griffin's letter to Jones (August 29, 1911) and the other letters are in the Jones Papers but several were also reprinted in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, July 11 and 19, August 8 and 30, 1911.

[66]Norfolk Virginian, December 9, 1893; Richmond Dispatch, December 8, 9, and 12, 1893.

a knowledge of the internal operation of the Democratic party as it was to the general public.[67]

The methods used by Thomas Staples Martin in defeating the General were a matter of major concern and controversy to contemporaries, and Martin's victory has continued to fascinate subsequent political commentators and historians who write about the period. The greatest emphasis has been placed on the use of railroad contributions by Martin to assist candidates in the legislative elections of 1893 and thereby win their commitment to his own candidacy.[68] Speculations on the reasons for Lee's defeat by Martin border on the infinite, however, but include the following: the defeat of older Democrats by the younger men in the party; the defeat of a Cleveland or "gold" man by the "silver" Democrats (Lee was widely viewed as a firm supporter of Cleveland's policies, but Martin successfully hedged on the currency issue); the loss of the people's candidate to the

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[67] Joseph Bryan's Richmond Times attacked the decision in several editorials and emphasized that most Virginians were surprised with the outcome of the Lee-Martin contest; see its editions of December 13, 19-21, and 23, 1893. John S. Wise, in an interview reprinted in the Richmond State, January 30, 1894, maintained that Lee's defeat was the natural result of the increasing power of railroads and the wholesale electoral frauds practiced by the Democrats in Virginia since the 1880's; see Scrapbook, James Alston Cabell Papers, University of Virginia Library.

[68] The importance of railroad funds in securing Martin's election is stressed in the excellent biographical study by James A. Bear, Jr., "Thomas Staples Martin: A Study in Virginia Politics, 1883-1896" (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1952). Bear devotes considerable space to the election since it was the crucial event in Martin's life; see especially pages 90-169. See also Moger, Virginia, 111-121, 209-211, 225-226, and Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, 50-54.

one supported by vested interests; the rejection of a famous political amateur in favor of the party's unknown professional (or the "independents" unsuccessful challenge of the "machine"); the decline of the old ruling elite and the rise of the common man (that is, the symbolic scion of all First Families of Virginia being upstaged by a Horatior Alger); a shift from Old South romanticism to New South realism (despite Lee's promotional efforts in behalf of economic progress, Martin was alleged to be more attuned to the needs of the railroads and other commercial enterprises); and, finally the overthrow of straightforwardness and honesty by intrigue and corruption. While the preceding analyses contain variable degrees of truth, the principal shortcoming of all accounts of the Lee-Martin conflict is the tendency to ignore Lee's own contributions to his defeat and to stress Martin's role in his victory.[69]

Lee was disappointed with his defeat and shocked by the vote of some of the legislators.[70] Since he felt he had been

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[69]In this biographical study, the role of Lee in the election is emphasized especially since it is often ignored by students of the period. The author is trying to correct this imbalance but makes no claim of presenting the definitive study of the Lee-Martin confrontation and its significance for Virginia political history. A thorough history of the matter would entail the production of a thick but invaluable volume since the contest deserves a lengthy synthesis of the political, social, and economic developments in post-Reconstruction Virginia as well as a detailed analysis of the major and secondary political personalities of the era. In addition to the accounts of the election contained in the scholarly works of James Bear, Allen Moger, and Ray Pulley (all previously cited), a popular survey is found in Marshall Fishwick, Gentlemen of Virginia (New York, 1961), 194-209.

[70]For example, John L. Hurt, president pro tempore of the state senate from 1884 to 1894, later explained his vote on grounds that "the combine" (or Martin group) had proved unexpectedly to be too powerful for him to support Lee. See Lee to Hurt, May 3, 1895, Hurt Papers.

robbed of victory by his opponent's use of scheming intrigue and clever manipulations of railroad funds, Fitz was amenable to the efforts of some pro-Lee legislators for a thorough investigation of the whole affair.[71] The resolution to establish an investigating committee received the unanimous consent of the Assembly on December 15. The committee was empowered to examine both the legislative elections in November and the caucus in order to determine if "any improper methods or means were used in . . . the interest of any candidate or candidates for the United States Senate."[72] The committee (composed of three Lee men, three Martin partisans, and the lone McKinney supporter) reviewed the testimony of Lee, Martin, and their respective adherents over a three-day period. Martin denied any wrongdoing while Glasgow and Thompson refuted the charges that they had used campaign funds from the railroads solely on Martin's behalf. The Lee supporters had no concrete evidence of their charges against the Martin men, especially their major claim that legislative candidates were offered funds only in return for a pledge to vote for Martin. Moreover, many Lee proponents were reluctant to participate in a public exposure of the railroad-Democratic relationship.[73] Martin, duly elected Senator on December 19,

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[71] Lee to Johnson, December 22, 1893, Lee Papers (University of Virginia) and Lee to Berkeley, January 20, 1894, Berkeley Papers.

[72] House Journal, 1893-94, 106.

[73] Ham Shepperd (a Lee caucus leader) to Eppa Hunton, Jr., December 15, 1893, (a verbatim copy certified by John A. Faulkner), Opie Papers. The complete report of the investigation appeared in the Richmond Times, December 17-20, 1893.

was exonerated by the committee on the following day in its conclusion: "That certain practices and acts were proven connected with the election on November 7, 1893, which they do not commend, but such practices and acts were without the assent or approbation of any candidate for the United States Senate, and not different from those resorted to in former campaigns."[74] Thus emerged the man who would dominate Virginia politics for the next quarter of a century.

To Lee personally, his defeat was not a lethal blow--it was rather an added burden to bear alongside the failure of the Rockbridge Company--and certainly of secondary importance to him in comparison with his feelings about the defeat of the Confederacy and the end of his military career. However, Lee never lost his bitterness regarding Martin's behavior in the senate race. He was conscious of the fact that railroad funds had been used against him and had contributed to his defeat, but Lee was also aware of the tremendous importance of continued railroad contributions to the Democracy's perpetual dominance of Virginia political life. Consequently, during and after the sessions of the investigating committee, he refrained from a direct public attack of Martin and the use of railroad funds in the contest.[75] Moreover, he remained a loyal Democrat and, always a congenial and forgiving man, held few long grudges.

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[74] House Journal, 1893-94, 131 and 129.

[75] Richmond Times, December 17-20, 1893; Moger, Virginia, 118-121.

In the next several months, he did speak in favor of the direct election of Senators but declined to join those Democrats who continued to bemoan the alleged corruption in their party. Instead, Lee responded to the pleas of Daniel, Claude Swanson (a future Governor and Senator then running for Congress), and other Martin supporters to campaign for Democratic candidates in the Congressional elections of 1894. The recent defeat did not detract from his popularity nor reduce his enthusiastic receptions by the crowds.[76] His natural resilience and perpetual optimism contributed to his remarkably quick and painless recovery from any despair over his setback in politics (and in business affairs). By mid-1894 Fitz was not only responding to the cheers at all kinds of meetings but also eagerly awaiting whatever adventures fate held in store for him. At the close of his sixth decade, the old cavalryman had by no means lost his zest for living.

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[76] Ferrall, "Claude Swanson," 66; Richmond Times, April 25, May 31, September 8, October 10, 17, 20, 24, 28, and 31, November 1 and 2, 1894. Lee was disappointed that the popular Senator Daniel had not supported him but their friendship soon revived.

CHAPTER VII

CONSUL-GENERAL IN HAVANA

With the close of the disappointing year 1893, the personal fortunes of Fitzhugh Lee took a decided turn for the better. In the midst of the Senate race, Fitz was trying to extricate himself from the collapsing Rockbridge Company. Finally, resigning as president of the concern in 1894, he concentrated on clearing up his other business affairs and recouping some of his financial losses.[1] Lee also made some effort to recover his public prestige after his surprising defeat in the Democratic caucus. As previously mentioned, in 1894 he made several appearances and speeches on the party's behalf and voiced his criticism of Martin and the railroads only in private. However, Lee was viewed by some insurgent Democrats as a potential leader in challenging the so-called Martin "ring," and reports of various maneuvers by Martin or his supporters continued to flow to Lee after 1893. But Fitz declined to take an active part in intraparty struggles and, although he supported and campaigned for its candidates, Lee never again sought a party nomination or made any attempt to

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[1] Receipt from South Boston Improvement Company issued to Lee, February 21, 1894, H. J. Watkins to Lee, March 1, 1894, and W. T. Shields to Lee, October 25, 1895, Opie Papers.

exert a determining influence in the internal affairs of the Virginia Democracy. Lee had had enough of Virginia politicians.[2]

Fitz devoted more time to participation in activities which had a greater appeal to him during the less hectic months after the Senate election. In particular, he addressed himself to a labor of love and, in July 1894, finally completed his biography of General Robert E. Lee.[3] His study of the great general, based primarily on manuscripts in his possession, enjoyed considerable acclaim from critics and a brisk sale to the public. After its publication, the author found himself increasingly in demand as a lecturer and a contributor to journals on events of the War.[4] The success of the biography greatly pleased Fitz, although his partisan defense of his uncle accelerated the slowly reviving Gettysburg controversy. The old ex-cavalryman relished his immersion in military affairs

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[2]Anne S. Green to Lee, May 10, 1895, ibid.; but see also Henry Loving, Jr., to J. Hoge Tyler, April 23, 1897, and R. T. Irvine to Tyler, December 15, 1898, James Hoge Tyler Papers, University of Virginia Library.

[3]The biography, entitled General Lee, was published by D. Appleton and Company of New York as a volume in its The Great Commanders Series edited by General James Grant Wilson. It was reprinted in 1904 by the University Society, Inc., (New York), and published as a paperback in 1961 by Fawcett Publications, Inc., with an introduction by Philip Van Doren Stern. See also Lee to James G. Wilson, July 18, 1895, Fitzhugh Lee Papers.

[4]Book reviews (newspaper clippings, 1894), Charles Venable to Lee, August 6, 1894, E. P. Alexander to Lee, August 27 and September 24, 1894, Opie Papers; Philadelphia Times, October 28, 1894; Lee to Gordon McCabe, September 28, 1894, Lee Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society; preface by Lee for Ben La Bree (ed.), The Confederate Soldier in the Civil War, 1861-1865 (Louisville, Kentucky, 1895), 7-8.

again--fighting the battles of a bygone era, even if only on paper--and spent much time in discussions with other Confederate veterans. The revived Gettysburg dispute did not reach its proportions of the 1870's, but Fitz was now viewed by most veterans as the chief defender who had finally and completely dispelled Longstreet's criticisms of their late Commanding General. Longstreet made his last major reply to Fitz and others in 1896 with the publication of his memoirs. Although his memoirs contained harsh criticisms of the great general and his nephew, Longstreet was unsuccessful in winning many new allies in the long struggle. By 1896, Fitz (then engaged in the pressing problems of his position in Cuba) had little time to devote to the dispute but did receive the satisfaction of knowing that his uncle's military reputation would remain undiminished.[5]

Lee enjoyed the luxury of pursuing his personal interests after his withdrawal from the Rockbridge Company, but he also remained receptive to further public service. Although he was a defeated senatorial aspirant, he retained much of his public prestige. Moreover, his warm relationship with Cleveland continued to be strengthened after 1893, especially

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[5] E. P. Alexander to Lee, July 26 and 31, 1894, Thomas Carter to Lee, August 3 and 18, 1894, Lee to Carter, August 5, 1894, J. William Jones to Lee, January 24 and March 10, 1896, B. H. Robertson to Lee, January 27, 1896, Cullen A. Battle to Lee, March 15, 1896, Frank Huger to Lee, April 24 and 28, 1896, and C. C. Penick to Lee, April 24 and 28, 1896, Opie Papers. Prior to the publication of his From Manassas to Appomattox, Longstreet added fuel to the controversy by his public statements; see Richmond Times, March 1, 1896, and Atlanta Constitution, March 29, 1896.

as Virginia politicians tried to accomodate "free-silver" advocates.[6] Lee, a leading Cleveland ally and proponent of gold or "sound-money," was considered a potential leader around whom the President's Virginia supporters could rally. Within a week of the Martin victory, speculation had begun that Fitz would be appointed to some Federal office. He rejected the first offer, to be ambassador to Sweden, since he did not wish to leave Virginia until he finished writing General Lee.[7] Nor did he wish to become enmeshed in another intraparty fight; however, he took an increasingly stronger position in defending the Presidential monetary policies.

In April 1895, Fitz finally accepted a patronage appointment from Cleveland as the Collector of Internal Revenue for the Western District of Virginia. By that date, Lee was recognized as being a key individual in efforts to maintain the President's personal stature in Virginia and the person who could gain adherents for Cleveland's monetary policy. Most of the press comments stressed the appointment as a clever stroke on the part of the President. By making his surprising selection (Fitz had not sought the position nor had he been suggested by the Virginia Congressional delegation), Cleveland had not only rewarded a faithful and capable lieutenant but had also laid the foundation for

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[6]Lee to W. A. Jones, January 9, 1894, Jones Papers; Cleveland to Lee, September 17, 1894, Opie Papers.

[7]Richmond Times, December 10, 1893; New York Times, February 22, 1894.

a revival of sound-money supporters in the Virginia Democracy.[8] Lee did make several speeches in defense of the gold standard in the next several months, but he made no other attempt to increase the friction among Virginia Democrats or to become the leader of a faction. Instead, Lee devoted his attention to his new duties and thereby repudiated the gossip that he would challenge Senator Daniel and other free-silver Democrats.[9] Lee fortunately escaped from what could have developed into another bitter political confrontation for him when Cleveland decided that Fitz's services were needed in confronting a far more perplexing problem.[10]

Fitzhugh Lee formally began his last great public service to his country on April 13, 1896, when President Cleveland appointed him consul-general in Havana, the highest official American representative in Cuba. Characteristically, Cleveland kept his intention of appointing Lee to this key post a secret until the last moment.[11] Several factors made the position of consul-general in Havana one of the most difficult but significant positions in the Administration, and one that Lee felt obliged to accept when the President

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[8]Newspaper clippings, April-May, 1895, Opie Papers; Richmond Times, April 20, 1895; New York Tribune, April 23, 1895.

[9]New York Times, April 23, 1895

[10]Lee to Joseph S. Miller, April 10, 11, 28, and May 6, 1896, Lee Executive Papers.

[11]Ibid.; Cleveland to the U.S. Senate, April 13, 1896, printed in its Executive Journal, 54th Cong., 1st Sess., 1896, 223-233; Certificate, Appointment of Lee as Consul-General, April 23, 1896, Opie Papers.

requested him to serve there. In February 1895, a revolution erupted in Cuba against its Spanish rulers, and the struggle became an increasingly vexing but pressing problem for the Cleveland administration in subsequent months. The United States was a very interested observer in the insurrection owing to the island's strategic location and to the large American economic interests in Cuba (primarily the sugar plantations) which seemed to be threatened by the fighting.[12]

Cleveland's problems in dealing with the Cuban situation grew increasingly troublesome and complicated as American newspapers, particularly Joseph Pulitzer's World and William Randolph Hearst's Journal in New York, allotted more and more pages to Cuban activities. The papers reported numerous alleged atrocities of the Spanish and thereby contributed to the growing American sympathy for the rebels.[13] Public opinion,

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[12]Several books relate to U.S. interest in Cuban affairs prior to the Spanish-American War. The author found the following particularly helpful: Walter LaFeber, The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898 (Ithaca, N. Y., 1963), Ernest R. May, Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power (New York, 1961), French E. Chadwick, The Relations of the United States and Spain: Diplomacy (New York, 1909), Allan Nevins, Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage (New York, 1933), Hugh Thomas, Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom (New York, 1971), and H. Wayne Morgan, America's Road to Empire: The War with Spain and Overseas Expansion (New York, 1965).

[13]The standard work on the major jingo newspapers is Joseph E. Wison, The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press, 1896-1898 (New York, 1934), but also consult Charles H. Brown, The Correspondents' War: Journalists in the Spanish-American War. (New York), 1967). An interesting case stuay of local newspapers and their influence on the formulation of public opinion about the Cuban rebellion is David C. Boles, "Editorial Opinion in Oklahoma and Indian Territories on the Cuban Insurrection, 1895-1898," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, XLVII, No. 3 (Autumn, 1969), 258-267.

already agitated by the gyrations of the press, was further inflamed by those politicians whose imperialistic tendencies caused them to leap at the chance of American acquisition of Cuba--or at least the expulsion of the Spanish. These pressures and the limitations they imposed on the Administration's Cuban policy were to plague Cleveland until the end of his term in March 1897--nor did they, in fact, lessen for his successor in the White House until the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in April 1898.[14]

Cleveland and his Secretary of State, Richard Olney, were restrained by another factor in dealing with the Cuban

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[14]This biographical study of Lee concentrates on his tenure in Cuba. However, this general period in American history has been subjected to intense investigation by numerous historians primarily interested in the rise of the American imperialist movement. Their thorough studies have led to various explanations and interpretations concerning the origins of the Spanish-American War and the acquisition of America's overseas empire. Some of these historians provide invaluable insight into the general national and international setting in which Lee served as consul-general in Cuba. For example, Julius W. Pratt emphasized public opinion as a cause of the war and denied that American businessmen had been responsible for it. See his Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands (Baltimore, 1936). Richard Hofstadter contended that the origins of the war and the later acquisition of the Philippines cannot be properly understood except by considering the frustrated responses of various groups to the Panic of 1893, i.e., "the psychic crisis of the 1890's." See his "Manifest Destiny and the Philippines," Americain Crisis, ed. by Daniel Aaron (New York, 1952), 173-200. In The New Empire, Walter Lafeber argued that the war grew out of a gradual expansionist process--with primarily economic roots--which began in the 1860's. Ernest R. May noted the influence of European liberal thought on the imperialist movement. By the time of the war, elite opinion was ambivalent on imperial ventures, but mass opinion was more favorable to an aggressive foreign policy. See his American Imperialism: A Speculative Essay (New York, 1968).

insurrection. Neither wanted to initiate policies leading to overt American intervention, which might result in eventual annexation of Cuba by the United States and, more probably, a war with Spain. The Administration settled on a policy of neutrality but hoped that the Spanish would offer Cuba a degree of autonomy similar to that enjoyed by Canada within the British Empire. In April 1896, the revolution was over a year old with no end in sight, and Olney moved closer to intervention by suggesting that Spain propose reforms which the United States would attempt to persuade the rebels to accept.[15] At this juncture, Cleveland decided that Fitzhugh Lee would be an invaluable man to have on the scene. He and Olney had long realized the need for a trustworthy agent with a military background who could investigate and report on the true conditions in Cuba. The Spanish had maintained that the revolt was doomed to a quick collapse, but obviously the rebels were growing stronger rather than weaker. The reports from American journalists were often highly colored in favor of the rebels and the Administration needed an accurate source of information on the military and political situation on the island. Since Spain opposed the visit of an American to conduct a special investigation, Cleveland selected Lee, his confidant and a man with wide military experience, to serve as the ranking American official in Cuba.[16]

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[15] LaFeber, The New Empire, 292-293.

[16] Olney to Cleveland, September 25 and October 8, 1895, and Cleveland to Olney, September 29 and October 6, 1895, Richard Olney Papers, Library of Congress; May, Imperial Democracy, 88-89.

Lee spent several weeks in private consultation with Cleveland and Olney prior to his departure to Havana. The confidential nature of his mission was stressed by the two men, especially since the Cuban cause was becoming an American political issue as Congress passed resolutions calling for recognition of the rebels as belligerents. Lee would be depended upon to furnish essential information on Cuban military, economic, and political conditions whereby the administration could formulate policies to restore peace and indirectly to promote Cuban autonomy. He was also expected to protect vigorously the American interests and citizens on the island and thereby lessen the harsh criticisms hurled at Cleveland by the jingo press. The burdens of the position were further increased by the necessity for Lee to fulfill the normal responsibilities of a consul-general in addition to these special tasks.[17]

On June 3, 1896, the sixty-year-old ex-soldier reached Havana and began his long and trying service as the ranking American official on the troubled island. The hazardous nature of his position, as well as his fears about the climate, caused Lee to leave his wife and younger children in Richmond but Fitzhugh, Jr., his twenty-two-year-old eldest son, accompanied him as a confidential secretary.[18]

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[17] Chadwick, United States and Spain, 433-439; Fitzhugh Lee, "Cuba and Her Struggle for Freedom, From Personal Observations and Experiences," The Fortnightly Review, LXIII (June 1, 1898), 855-866.

[18] Lee to Mrs. Lee, June 3 and 17, 1896; Special Passport for Fitzhugh Lee, May 1, 1896, Opie Papers.

Promptly upon arriving, Lee attempted to see as much of the island and meet as many of its inhabitants as possible in order to send the Washington authorities thorough and meaningful reports. He had had little sympathy for American intervention in the earlier unsuccessful Cuban revolution (the Ten Years' War of 1868-1878), but his presence on the isle in the next several months influenced his feelings about Cuba.[19] Lee was impressed by Cuba's natural beauty, its "splendid harbors," and "its fertile soil, producing so many varieties of food, fruit, tobacco, coffee, and sugar."[20] The economic potential would never be properly developed until the insurrection ended, he believed. Also, after observing at first hand the personal sufferings caused by the fighting, Lee became an ardent proponent of ending the revolution for both economic and humanitarian reasons.[21] In this initial period of his residence in Cuba, he formed opinions and made predictions on how peace

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[19]Lee to an unknown general, December 3, 1873, Fitzhugh Lee Papers. Believing that the United States had enough problems to cope with in 1873, he maintained that Americans ought to avoid participation in filibustering expeditions or other direct involvement in the island's political affairs.

[20]Lee to Olney, June 24, 1896, Olney Papers.

[21]Lee's economic and humanitarian reasons for ending the rebellion reflected the concern of other Americans. Julius Pratt notes that American businessmen engaged directly and indirectly in the production and marketing of Cuban sugar--unlike the general business community--favored U. S. intervention. See his Expansionists of 1898, 232-278. The humanitarian impulses of Americans in going to war with Spain are stressed in Norman Graebner, Ideas and Diplomacy: Readings in the Intellectual Tradition of American Foreign Policy (New York, 1964), 334-346.

could be restored. He consistently adhered to his convictions and, in retrospect, his predictions proved to be prophetic.

Lee sent his first honest appraisal of the Cuban imbroglio to the Secretary of State on June 24, 1896. The consul-general observed that the opposing forces were nearly equal and that a protracted struggle loomed ahead, one which would probably end in a stalemate--the rebels lacked the strength to gain independence while the Spanish were too weak to subdue them and restore order. Lee suggested that the United States could avert Cuba's being "laid waste and destroyed" only by some positive action, possibly by buying the island.[22] In subsequent letters, he spelled out his beliefs that the harsh measures of General Weyler (such as enforced concentration of civilians in camps under Spanish control) and other Spanish authorities precluded the fulfillment of the Administration's hope that peace would be restored if Spain granted autonomy to the Cubans. The past intransigence of the Spaniards and their failure to implement former promises of reform caused most Cubans to believe that Spain would never inaugurate meaningful reforms, and the rebels would probably no longer accept anything other than complete Spanish withdrawal. If Spain preferred to continue her efforts to vanquish the rebels, the outlook was qually bleak since Weyler and his 240,000 troops

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[22]Lee to Olney, June 24, 1896, Olney Papers. During his service as consul-general, Lee favored intervention but not annexation by the United States. After the Spanish-American War, however, he became convinced that eventual annexation was the best means to promote Cuban economic progress. His postwar ideas are discussed in Chapter VIII.

had been unable to achieve much success during the last several months in subduing the revolutionary forces under Maximo Gomez. Consequently, Lee maintained that if the administration hoped to bring peace some new approach was necessary, and he also reiterated his earlier suggestion: "I do not know that it is proper for me to do anything except to report facts, but I cannot forbear from saying again that the purchase of the Island should first be attempted."[23]

In Washington, Cleveland and Olney were still comfortably sustained by their belief that a Spanish grant of autonomy would end the revolution and restore tranquillity to the devastated island. Olney was not much impressed with the proposal to buy Cuba and refused to accept the suggestion that the deadlock between Spain and the rebels could only be ended by American mediation.[24] Cleveland also demonstrated his reluctance to take any action which might lead to acquisition of Cuba and expressed concern with the eventual results to which Lee's suggestions might lead:

> I am a little surprised at Consul-General Lee's dispatch. He seems to have fallen into the style of rolling intervention like a sweet morsel under his tongue. I do not think the purchase plan would suit at all, though it is perhaps worth thinking of. Many of the fairest talkers in favor of intervening (Sherman, for instance) are opposed to incorporating the country into the United States

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[23] Lee to Olney, July 8, 1896, Opie Papers; see also Olney to Lee, June 27, 1896, Olney Papers; and Lee to Olney, July 1 and 4, 1896, Dispatches from U.S. Consuls in Havana, Record Group 59, National Archives (hereafter Dispatches from Havana, RG 59, NA).

[24] Olney to Cleveland, July 14, 1896, Olney Papers.

> system and I am afraid it would be entering upon dangerous ground. It would seem absurd for us to buy the island and present it to the people now inhabiting it, and put its government and management in their hands.[25]

Unfortunately, the two men proposed no new policy and instead clung to the hope that the United States might somehow escape from being drawn into the morass. Nonetheless, the problem of Cuba continued to grow despite the administration's futile efforts to remain aloof as much as possible or, at most, to gently prod the Spanish into granting autonomy.

One reason Lee urged a serious attempt for American purchase of the island was what he considered to be the only logical (even if in the distant future) alternative remaining for the United States--war with Spain! He noted that the loss of American life and property would probably continue as a side effect of the fighting. These losses plus the sympathies for Cubans aroused by the jingo press required the United States to become increasingly involved in Cuban affairs which, in turn, might result in a Spanish-American armed confrontation.[26] Lee also believed the Spanish were already giving serious consideration to the possibility of war. Spanish soldiers in Cuba who were willing to face honestly the fact of a stalemate now felt only two courses of action remained open to them; first, they could continue

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[25]Cleveland to Olney, July 16, 1896, ibid.

[26]Lee to Olney, July 8, 1896, Opie Papers; Lee to W. W. Rockhill (2 cables) July 3, 1896, and Lee to Olney, July 4, 1896, Dispatches from Havana, RG 59, NA.

to fight the rebels haunted by the growing fear that the deadlock might end in "ignoble surrender" to the insurgents, or, second, they could wait until the United States forcibly intervened and ended the protracted struggle. No longer possessing any delusions of ultimate victory in Cuba, the proud Spanish officers vastly preferred a fight with Americans in which they could at least "lose the island with honor" and avoid capitulation to the detested rebels.[27] Lee was no warmonger but he sincerely believed that war with Spain was inevitable unless a miraculous development occurred. His conviction that the suffering on the war-torn isle should be terminated as quickly as possible caused him to advance the argument to Cleveland and Olney that immediate action was better than trying to postpone the inevitable American intervention.[28] In a letter to his wife, Fitz was even more depressed about his fears of a war with Spain but took consolation "that I cannot help it. I have done the best I could in the interests of" avoiding the conflict.[29] For the remainder of his service under Cleveland, Lee tried to follow the President's policy of avoiding war despite his personal views that such a policy was hopeless and futile. He fearfully expressed his opinions in the confidential reports to the President on Cuban matters but felt obligated to follow

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[27]Lee to Olney, July 4, 1896, Dispatches from Havana, RG 59, NA..

[28]Lee to Olney, July 8, 1896, Opie Papers.

[29]Lee to Mrs. Lee, June 24, 1896, ibid.

presidential dictum since Cleveland ultimately had to bear the responsibility for American actions.[30]

In July 1896, the Democratic national convention denounced the Cleveland administration and nominated William Jennings Bryan on a free-silver platform. This action not only shocked Lee, Cleveland, Olney, and other conservative Democrats but also became a factor in the administration's Cuban policy. In a confidential message to Olney, Lee damned the convention as a "populistic, anarchist assembly," and declared that any conservative Democrat nominated by another convention would lose "unless we take the chance to win" by immediately initiating a dramatic change--but what he believed to be the only practical and humanitarian course--in Cuban policy. He proposed the adoption of a platform calling for the following:

> . . . a recognition of the helplessness of the struggle in Cuba, because of the inability of either side to win ultimate success, and that a war protracted for years, means the devastation of the Island, the shooting, arrest and imprisonment of American citizens, day by day, the abatement of American commerce and the destruction of American interests, and should be brought to a close by American mediation or if necessary American intervention.

Further, Lee speculated that Cleveland and the other "Sound [Money] Democrats" would receive "the credit of stopping the

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[30] The harshest criticism of Lee's consulship is found in Gerald G. Effert, "Our Man in Havana: Fitzhugh Lee," The Hispanic American Historical Review, XLVII, No. 4 (November, 1967), 463-485. Effert argues that Fitz was far more militant in dealing with the Spanish than Cleveland (and later McKinley) but concedes the Consul-General was not a warmonger who disobeyed presidential instructions.

wholesale atrocities daily practiced here" as well as "the acquisition of Cuba by purchase or by fighting a successful war, if war there be." In this letter to Olney (marked "private and personal"), Lee's political naïveté was manifest, but his suggestion for immediate action in Cuba by the United States cannot be dismissed as a simplistic plea for a foreign adventure to rescue the administration from its domestic difficulties.[31] Convinced that the Cuban situation would deteriorate, he merely argued that the Administration should cease to postpone the inevitable intervention and act while political advantages could accrue from the endeavor.[32]

President Cleveland, more politically astute than Fitz, disagreed with his consul-general. Cleveland suspected that direct intervention and the resulting war with Spain would be too late to save the conservative Democrats and that the new administration (of either Bryan or Republican nominee William McKinley) would reap any benefits from an end to

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[31] Lee to Olney, "Private and Personal," July 22, 1896, Olney Papers. A draft of the letter with numerous insertions and deletions in the Opie Papers suggests that Lee gave considerable thought to its composition. In this candid confidential communication, Lee also noted that if war came, the conflict "might do much towards directing the minds of the people from imaginary [economic] ills." This statement suggests the validity of Richard Hofstader's explanation of jingoism as a frustrated response to the economic crisis of the 1890's; see his The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays (New York, 1965), 145-187. However, Lee was not advocating war for the sake of economic relief; rather, he was simply urging his superior to take advantage of a future possibility which he considered to be inevitable.

[32] Eggert, "Our Man in Havana," 464, 469-470; Lee to Olney, July 8, 1896; Lee to his wife, July 8, 12, and 25, 1896; Translation of a report entitled "Organization of the Insurgent Army," signed by Antonio Maceo (a rebel general), August 4, 1896, Opie Papers.

the Cuban insurrection.[33] This political analysis contributed to his determination in subsequent months to continue to avoid policies which might lead either to American acquisition of Cuba or war with Spain. However, he requested Lee to return to Washington for intensive consultations with administration officials on the Cuban problem, and Fitz spent November and December in Washington or in Richmond visiting his family.[34] Moreover, in his annual message to Congress in December, the President assumed a more militant stance towards Spain although it was far short of Lee's position. Cleveland intimated that Spain was incapable of defeating the rebels by force of arms. Accordingly, "genuine autonomy" was the best solution, and it was hopeless for the Spanish to continue their policy of trying to pacify the island before granting autonomy. He warned that American interests (business as well as those of a sentimental and philanthropic character) were endangered by the chaotic conditions and urged the Spanish to act promptly. Reforms should be granted soon since the past "expectant attitude of the United States will not be indefinitely maintained." In a passage especially appealing to Lee, the President noted that the time was imminent when American

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[33] LaFeber, The New Empire, 286.

[34] Lee to L. L. Lomax, October 20, 1896, Lomas Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society; Lee to Mrs. Lee, October 5 and 20, 1896, and newspaper clippings (October-December, 1896), Opie Papers; Festus P. Summers (ed.), The Cabinet Diary of William L. Wilson, 1896-1897 (Chapel Hill, N. Car., 1957), 169-183.

wishes to rescue the island "from complete devastation, will constrain our Government to such action as will . . . promise to Cuba . . . the blessings of peace."[35]

For the remainder of his administration, Cleveland continued to ignore the possibility that autonomy might be unacceptable to the rebels (as Lee suggested in his reports), but he had at last clearly warned Spain that if she could not quickly end the insurrection, America would intervene. The jingo newspapers in New York were dissatisfied with the unveiled threat of intervention in the message since they demanded immediate action.[36] Lee was far less displeased with the President's policy, however, as the message had declared that the United States possessed the right and the duty to intervene if the Spanish failed to pacify the island.[37] In subsequent months, Fitz continued to bolster Cleveland's efforts to force Spanish initiation of a new Cuban policy and thereby avoid American intervention, but he still placed little reliance on the Spanish to end the conflict: "There has been no change here in the situation," he wrote Olney on February 18, 1897, "and no prospect, in my opinion, of peace, unless the United States stops this horrible war."[38] Lee also

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[35]James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897 (Washington, 1900), IX, 716-722.

[36]New York World, December 8, 1896; New York Journal, December 8-11, 1896; see also Wisan, The Cuban Crisis, 239-245.

[37]Chadwick, United States and Spain, 465-466; LaFeber, The New Empire, 300.

[38]Lee to Olney, February 18, 1897, Olney Papers.

stressed the Spanish inability to control the movements of high-ranking rebel leaders or to pacify a single province. With "no peace in sight," Lee reitereated his earlier prediction that neither side would accept a compromise nor win a military victory and again urged the American purchase of the island or, as the last resort, military intervention.[39] Cleveland, with his administration nearing its close, spurned the consul-general's advice to act, however, and left the problem for his successor.

By the time William McKinley assumed office on March 4, 1897, Cleveland and Lee were at marked odds with one another on certain aspects of the Cuban policy. Lee believed nothing was to be gained by Cleveland's refusal to participate in settling the Cuban matter, and he exhibited displeasure with the policy of inaction and the attempt to postpone everything for McKinley's administration.[40] To Lee in Havana, such a policy bordered on being callous and inhumane. In turn, Cleveland feared the outbreak of war before he left the White House and was disturbed by the provocative attitude of Consul-General Lee. He expected war to come soon because of the "activities of the Americans in Cuba" (with Fitz as their "ringleader") who favored direct intervention in the

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[39]Lee to W. W. Rockhill, February 18 and 19 (3 cables), 1897, Dispatches from Havana, RG 59, NA; Lee to Rockhill, February 19, 1897, Cleveland Papers.

[40]Lee to Assistant Secretary of State, March 2, 1897, Dispatches from Havana, RG 59, NA, and also consult Olney to Rockhill, March 9, 1897, Olney Papers.

Cuban mess.[41] At McKinley's inauguration, Cleveland bluntly expressed his feelings to the new President about Lee's seeming opposition to a pacific, moderate approach in dealing with the Spanish in Cuba.[42] President McKinley, who sincerely wished to avoid a war if possible, nevertheless decided to retain Fitz (a lifelong Democrat) in the sensitive position in Havana. McKinley knew Lee was honest and dependable if too outspoken in favor of intervention. Moreover, an experienced man at the Cuban capital would be invaluable if the situation continued to deteriorate. Further, Spanish hostility to Lee was well known, and his replacement might give the Spanish an impression that American demand for an end to the Cuban imbroglio was lessening.[43] When Lee offered the new Secretary of State, John Sherman, his resignation, he

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[41] Cleveland to Frederic R. Condert and to Olney, February 28, 1897, Cleveland Papers; Nevins, Grover Cleveland, 719. In calling Lee a "ringleader," Cleveland was probably referring to the intimate association of Fitz and the American press corps in Havana. For example, Lee lived at the Hotel Inglaterra, where numerous journalists (including Hearst's two famous correspondents, Richard Harding Davis and Frederic Remington) also resided. See Thomas, Cuba, 343.

[42] Cleveland to Olney, February 16, 1898, reprinted in Allan Nevins (ed.), Letters of Grover Cleveland, 1850-1908 (Boston, 1933), 494-495, and the footnote, 495.

[43] John L. Offner, "President McKinley and the Origins of the Spanish-American War," (Ph.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1957), 96-97, 149-151; H. Wayne Morgan, William McKinley and His America (Syracuse, N.Y., 1963), 337; William R. Day, a McKinley protege and his second Secretary of State, later wrote Lee; "You know the President reposes great confidence in your judgment and discretion" and requested "any suggestions which occur to you, as a military man, should it become necessary to use an armed force against Cuba." See Day to Lee, "Personal and Confidential," January 18, 1899, Opie Papers.

promised to remain in Havana if needed. McKinley disregarded Cleveland's advice and sent word of his confidence in Lee's "devotion to American interests," and urged the Consul-General to continue in his duties.[44]

Another aspect of Lee's performance at his Havana post helps to explain his retention by both presidents in spite of his continuous arguments to Washington officials on the necessity of American intervention. As consul-general, Lee was expected not only to furnish reports on conditions in Cuba but also to serve as the symbol of American power there. The colorful, flamboyant ex-Confederate general was a zealous patriot who ardently defended the rights of American citizens residing on the island as well as American-owned property.[45] By the end of the Cleveland administration, Lee had won an enviable reputation for his defense of American citizens who ran afoul of Spanish authorities and was hailed as a hero by the press.[46]

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[44]Lee to John Sherman, March 10, 1897, Dispatches from Havana, RG 59, NA; John A. Porter (McKinley's private secretary) to Sherman, March 15, 1897, William McKinley Papers, Library of Congress.

[45]The consul-general maintained close relations with the American planters. The major planters, with the notable exception of Edwin F. Atkins, agreed with Lee on the necessity of American intervention. Atkins felt that he could continue his operations without undue difficulties if he cooperated with the Spanish authorities. However, even Atkins requested assistance from Lee at times. See his Sixty Years in Cuba: Reminiscences of Edwin F. Atkins (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), 221-222, 248-250, 281.

[46]Lee even achieved the honor (?) of being satirized by the famous Mr. Dooley; see Finley Peter Dunne, Mr. Dooley: In Peace and War (Boston, 1898), 10-13. Fitz was portrayed as a hot-headed Irish-American (an alleged descendant of the Fitz-Hugh family of Ireland), who jumped out of bed at a moment's notice to confront Spanish authorities over the slightest affront to American honor.

His assiduous work on behalf of Americans in Cuban jails or those threatened with punishment annoyed the Spanish authorities, but it contributed to his retention in Havana by McKinley who praised Lee's "earnest desire to guard the rights of American citizens."[47] Fitz tried to maintain proper diplomatic protocol when dealing with the Spanish authorities--but not at the expense of threatened American citizens. As the insurrection dragged on and the situation became more chaotic, the number of sharp conflicts between Lee and the Spanish authorities greatly increased. Each challenge by Fitz earned a concomitant increase in Spanish hatred for him. These clashes with the authorities made Lee more avid for Spanish expulsion and the cessation of the rebellion, while they added eye-catching fuel to the flaming columns of jingo journalists. In turn, the press exerted heavier pressure on Washington officials for positive efforts to solve the Cuban problem quickly.[48] Both Cleveland and McKinley, however, commended Lee for his work in protecting American citizens despite the resultant increase in demands for intervention by their administrations.

At times, cases of mistreatment or imprisonment of Americans by Spanish officials became the most perplexing and potentially explosive problem facing Washington in dealing

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[47] Porter to Sherman, March 15, 1897, McKinley Papers.

[48] For press activities, consult Wisan, The Cuban Crisis, especially 174-186, 277-301, and Brown, The Correspondents' War, 103-110. McKinley's treatment of the Cuban problem is discussed thoroughly in Morgan, William McKinley, 326-378.

with the Cuban situation. Lee's involvement in these cases not only enhanced his position as the key American representative in Cuba but also won him much favorable publicity in American newspapers. These cases also influenced both American public opinion and the government's policy on Cuba. Trying to secure the release of Americans held by the Spanish was a major headache for the overworked Lee in his taxing, frustrating position as consul-general, but he never faltered in his efforts to "demand the release of all American prisoners" who were "suffering and lingering in the prisons and jails" of Cuba with "no reasonable prospect of their cases being taken up and decided upon one way or the other . . . ."[49] The unpleasant experiences of imprisoned Americans (and Cuban nationals) increased Fitz's support for intervention to end the fighting. Since American policy barred other countries from intervening, he believed that the United States had a humanitarian obligation to "take such action, in the interest of peace, prosperity, human life, commerce, and American progress."[50]

One of the most notable and inflammatory incidents involving American citizens occurred in February 1897 (during the last month of the Cleveland administration). Lee was in the midst of the pandemonium which resulted when the case came to light, and his conduct during that turbulent

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[49]Lee to W. W. Rockhill, February 20, 1897, Cleveland Papers.

[50]Lee to Rockhill, February 20, 1897, Dispatches from Havana, RG 59, NA.

uproar was typical of his actions in similar cases. On February 18, Fitz reported to Secretary of State Olney the death of Richard Ruiz, a dentist and naturalized American citizen since 1880, who had been held incommunicado in a remote Spanish prison for nearly two weeks. Lee noted that the death was rumored as being due to suicide or to beatings but promised he would investigate fully to determine if the dentist's death involved "foul work."[51] Lee reported more fully on the Ruiz case the next day and announced his firm belief that the dentist had not participated in the rebellion and had died from neglect or violence. The Consul-General admitted it was "very difficult to ascertain the facts" because most knowledge of the affair was "confined to officials" who refused to cooperate with American authorities.[52] The matter took on an added complication when he received the report of the arrest of Charles F. Scott, another American who also was being held incommunicado. Lee, fearful that the Spanish might expand their violations of American rights, pleaded for the United States to demand from the Spanish government the immediate release of all American prisoners in Cuba. If necessary, Lee hoped warships would be available

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[51] Lee to Rockhill, February 18, 1897, ibid.

[52] Lee to Rockhill, (3 cables), February 19, 1897, ibid., and a letter on the same day, Cleveland Papers. Lee contacted the Ruiz family and also the rebel leaders on the matter; see Mrs. Ruiz to Lee, February 21, 1897, and General Gomez to Lee, March 31, 1897, Opie Papers.

to enforce that demand.[53] Olney and the State Department were less interested in taking immediate action, however, and concentrated on acquiring a thorough account of the Ruiz case. In contrast, Lee, after viewing the bruised body of the dead dentist, was perturbed with the slower moving Washington bureaucrats and critical of their wish for an extensive, time-consuming investigation. Haunted by fears that the fate of Ruiz might be repeated in the case of Scott and other Americans, Fitz pleaded that he could not afford the luxury of a delay since American lives depended on him.[54]

The Ruiz affair took on an added importance to the United States as the jingo press devoted more and more space to militant and fiery comments on all aspects of the case. Hearst's Journal declared there was "strong evidence to show that this man was murdered" and that because of the crime "national respect, as well as national honor, demands that the United States declare war against Spain."[55] Pulitzer's World, not to be outdone in bellicosity, reported the refusal of Lee's request (later granted, however) to Spanish officials for exhumation of the body with a headline which

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[53]Lee to Rockhill and Lee to the Assistant Secretary of State, February 20, 1897, Cleveland Papers. Since July 1896, one ship (the Maine) had been kept at Key West in case of emergency; see Olney to Lee, July 15, 1896, Opie Papers.

[54]Lee to Olney, February 24, 1897, and Olney to Lee, February 23, 1897, Dispatches from Havana, RG 59, NA; Lee to Olney, February 26, 1897, Olney to Lee, February 21, 24, and 25, 1897, Olney to Cleveland, February 27, 1897, Cleveland Papers.

[55]New York Journal, February 20 and 22, 1897.

read: "The United States May Fight Spain Yet."[56] The newspaper correspondents in Cuba possessed much sympathy for the activities of Consul-General Lee on behalf of imprisoned or threatened Americans, and they lauded him frequently while criticizing the alleged indifference and unconcern exhibited by Washington officials. Both Cleveland and Olney were attacked for not publicly supporting the Consul-General's efforts to free American captives.[57] However, Fitz had no intention of being the leader of a movement designed to stampede the administration he served into an undesired war. Although several sharp exchanges had occurred between Olney and him, Lee assured the Secretary of State that he would do nothing in Havana to constitute deliberate provocation of the Spanish and tersely cabled Washington: "[I] deprecate war, [since I have] seen too much of it."[58]

At the peak of the crisis ignited by the Ruiz-Scott cases, Lee stressed to Olney (and Cleveland) that the remedy for relief was ultimately "in your hands and you should not hesitate to employ it." At the same time, he justified his conduct, by reminding the Washington officials that he was located at the scene of the Cuban insurrection and bluntly noting: "No one not here can appreciate the situation."[59]

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[56] New York World, February 21, 1897.

[57] Ibid., February 24, March 1 and 2, 1897; Journal, February 23, 26-27, 1897.

[58] Lee to Secretary of State, February 22, 1897, Dispatches from Havana, RG 59, NA.

[59] Ibid.

His offer to resign was declined, and the crisis passed owing to Scott's release and the failure to discover conclusive evidence as to the cause of Ruiz's death.[60] Lee's actions in the two related cases revealed his typical conduct in such matters during his service under both the Cleveland and McKinley administrations; specifically, he was more militant in defending American citizens than were Washington officials, but he was less eager for an American war to end Cuban strife than correspondents supposed. Nonetheless, reports of Lee's activities enhanced his popularity with the jingo journalists and their readers while increasing doubts among Washington officials regarding his commitment to a pacific solution to the Cuban problem.[61] Unfortunately, the cases also had a broader importance--more newspapers expanded their coverage of similar emotion-filled cases in the next several months. The new McKinley administration suffered a corresponding restriction of options in trying to impose peace in Cuba without direct American intervention.

If McKinley's decision to retain Lee had been partially based on the Consul-General's high standing with the journalists, the new President soon received other evidence to support the wisdom of his choice. Wishing to secure a new analysis to

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[60] Lee to Secretary of State, February 23, 1897, Cleveland Papers; and Lee to Olney, February 24, 1897, Dispatches from Havana, RG 59, NA.

[61] Lee's intimate friend, General Bradley Johnson, was a reporter for the World; see Lee to Mrs. Lee, June 3 and 24, 1896, Opie Papers. In addition, Fitz won praise for securing the release of another journalist, Sylvester Scovel; see Brown, The Correspondent's War, 84-87, 108-110.

determine whether Lee and other Americans were too biased by their closeness to the scene, McKinley dispatched William J. Calhoun, his political friend and a prominent Illinois attorney, on a private fact-finding tour of the island in May 1897. Calhoun's report of the Cuban situation on June 22 was a fundamental reaffirmation of Lee's views on the matter. The special agent confirmed the vast evidence of the brutal warfare by noting: "The island is one of the most unhappy and most distressed places on the earth. . . . The country was wrapped in the stillness of death and the silence of desolation." Calhoun agreed with another interpretation of Lee's--the inability of Spain to defeat the rebels--and stated that the Spanish claim that Weyler and his reconcentration policies were concluding the rebellion "is more theoretical than actual." The agent also supported the Consul-General's opinion that the Cubans were too embittered to accept autonomy and no longer had any faith in Spanish promises of reform. Therefore, the rebellion was likely to continue. Even in provinces where the insurrection was temporarily dormant, "the moment there is any relaxation of the attempt to suppress it, the flames will break out again with renewed fury." Calhoun concluded with an avowal of the correctness of Lee's interpretations and asserted that the only real hope of pacifying Cuba lay in ultimate American intervention.[62]

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[62]The Calhoun report of twenty-two typed pages, dated June 22, 1897, is filed in Special Agents Reports, Volume 48, RG 59, NA. For further information on the Calhoun mission, consult H. Wayne Morgan, America's Road to Empire, 24-26. Calhoun visited Cuba ostensibly for the purpose of investigating the death of an American citizen.

McKinley, as his predecessor had done, continued to hope that the Cubans and Spaniards would compromise during the first months of his administration. The new president at first tried to reduce popular excitement about conditions on the island by avoiding any mention of Cuba in public statements. Simultaneously, he urged the Spanish (as Cleveland had done) to establish a government there modeled after the Canadian one, but Spain was not interested and refused to consider it.[63] As the Calhoun report and the Lee dispatches made clear, the plan had no lure for the rebels who demanded complete Spanish evacuation. Lee devoted considerable time to summarizing the Cuban situation for his new superiors and concentrated on the futility of American demands for autonomy as a solution to the problem.[64] After reminding them of his belief that "no one can fully appreciate the situation without being here in person," he subsequently informed them in June that "no one who is well acquainted with existing conditions now has any hope that Spain can grant reforms approximating, even, to Canadian autonomy, such as is so often mentioned."[65] Lee and others in Cuba also continued to report the atrocities and widespread

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[63]Morgan, William McKinley, 327-340.

[64]Lee to John Sherman, March 17, 1897, Dispatches from Havana, RG 59, NA.

[65]Lee to Sherman, April 20, 1897, (first quotation); Lee to William R. Day, the assistant Secretary of State and McKinley's most trusted confidant on Cuba, June 8, 1897, (second quotation); and also Lee to Day, June 12 and July 14, 1897, ibid.

suffering of those caught up in the revolutionary environment.

During September, Lee was on leave in the United States and on his return in November, he found that a new Spanish ministry--in response to McKinley's earlier pleas--had offered various reforms which eventually would give the island self-government. General Weyler had also been replaced by the more congenial Ramon Blanco as commander of the Spanish forces. The Spanish moves made little impression on Lee, and he expected that the smouldering island would erupt if any effort were made to implement the reforms--the Spaniards on the island and the Cuban rebels shared a common hatred for autonomy, although for opposite reasons.[66] However, Lee was powerless to dictate to Washington authorities and could only mark time while the new administration promulgated policies to cope with the seemingly insoluble Cuban problem. From the summer of 1897 onward, McKinley slowly but publicly committed himself on Cuba. By December, in his annual message to Congress, his announced policy contained the firm threat of ultimate intervention unless the helpless Spaniards bowed to American demands.[67] Lee chafed during this evolutionary period since he continued to feel helpless in alleviating the troubles borne by the Cubans.

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[66] Lee to Day, November 27, December 1 and 3, 1897, ibid. Lee's opinions of the insurgent reactions to Spanish proposals were partially based on his occasional contacts with rebel leaders. See Ignacio Betancourt to Lee, September 1, 1897, and General M. Gomez to General Lachambra, November 12, 1897, Opie Papers.

[67] Richardson, Messages and Papers, X, 30-38.

The new year 1898 brought with it a series of momentous events which finally resulted in Lee's departure from Havana as Consul-General and, more importantly, the outbreak of the Spanish-American War. After the formal announcement of an autonomy plan by the Spanish government, riots occurred in Havana during mid-January as Lee had predicted. Lee notified the State Department of the outbreak of rioting and expressed his fears once more about the danger to the lives and property of American residents. Fortunately, the powder keg did not explode. Most of the rioters were junior officers from the Spanish garrison or other Spanish residents who were opposed to autonomy. After smashing the presses of three anti-Weyler newspapers, the Spaniards ceased their violent protests.[68]

However, the brief riots were to have important consequences for the future of Cuba as well as of Spain and the United States. From the beginning of his service in Havana, Fitzhugh Lee had pleaded for an American warship to be stationed as close as possible in order to protect American citizens in emergencies and to serve as an ominous symbol of American power. By December 1897, Lee reasoned that the Cuban situation was sufficiently precarious for him to have the ship at his immediate disposal, and he proposed that the officer in command be instructed to sail immediately for Havana upon receipt of a code letter from the consular officer.[69]

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[68] Lee to Assistant Secretary of State, January 13 (2 cables), Lee to Day, "Personal," January 15 and 18, 1898, Dispatches from Havana, RG 59, NA.

[69] Lee to Day, December 1, 3, and 25, 1897, ibid.

The Maine, a second-class battleship stationed at Key West, was accordingly assigned that duty. When news of the January riots reached Washington, the Navy dispatched the Maine to Havana without consulting Lee. Fitz, although he would have welcomed the ship in earlier times, frantically tried to have the order countermanded since he feared the ship's arrival might spark more violent riots (to him, the riots on January 12-13 had been surprisingly mild).[70] The President refused to cancel the order. He felt that protection for Americans might be needed, but he also hoped to present the Maine's visit as a resumption of friendly naval visits and a sign of lessening tension between the countries. The pacific hopes of McKinley seemed to be realized when the ship finally steamed into Havana harbor on January 25. Lee reported that Americans were relieved by the Maine's presence and the Spanish had cordially and politely received the vessel.[71]

Unfortunately, the Maine was destined to be the principal overt cause for the war that Consul-General Lee had long predicted. After the arrival of the ship in Havana, relations between Spain and the United States reached a new level of tension when the famous "de Lome letter" was published on February 9. The Spanish Ambassador's criticisms of President McKinley in his private letter (which had been stolen, sent to Cuban leaders in New York, and eventually passed on to the

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[70] Lee to Assistant Secretary of State, (cables), January 24 and 25, 1898, ibid.

[71] Lee to Day, January 15 and 26, February 5, 1898, ibid.

newspapers) led not only to his recall but also to increased demands for war by the press and the politicos.[72] These taut relations between Spain and America were capped by an unbearable strain when the Maine blew up on February 15. Lee reacted to the disaster in a restrained manner and urged the administration to remain calm. His initial impression was that the explosion might be accidental, and he stressed his belief that General Blanco and other high Spanish officials were not responsible for the ship's destruction and the loss of 264 crewmen. He conceded that lesser officials or outside parties might be involved but pleaded for restraint from wild speculation while awaiting the findings of a naval inquiry.[73] Fitz cooperated with the naval authorities in conducting the board of inquiry and also testified before it about the official Spanish reception to the Maine's arrival. On March 22, the naval court concluded its investigation with the report that "the Maine was destroyed by the explosion of a submarine mine" but admitted its failure "to obtain evidence fixing the responsibility for the destruction . . . . upon any person or persons."[74]

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[72]New York Journal, February 9, 1898; Morgan, William McKinley, 355-359.

[73]Lee to Day, February 15 and 16, March 1, 1898, ibid.; General Blanco to Lee, February 16, 1898, Opie Papers.

[74]U.S. Senate, The Report of the Naval Court of Inquiry Upon the Destruction of the United States Battlesnip Maine, 55th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1898, Doc. No. 297, page 261; for Lee's testimony, see pp. 246-247. For other matters relating to the Maine, consult Walter R. Herrick, Jr., The American Naval Revolution (Baton Rouge, La., 1966), 205-219.

After the explosion of the Maine, the scene of decisive events which had begun with the birth of the Cuban insurrection shifted to Washington and Madrid. Within a few days the President sent his ultimatum to Spain, and although oblivious as usual to the press screams for war, he decided early in April to intervene in Cuba with armed force.[75] Lee asked and received a delay in McKinley's war message to Congress in order to secure the safety of Americans in Cuba.[76] On April 10, Consul-General Lee left Havana with the last group of Americans and returned home to be met with a hero's welcome from his appreciative fellow citizens. Crowds gathered to cheer and praise him at every stop made by the special train which carried him from Florida to Washington. In the national capital, he received a "hearty reception" from the President and the Congress and praise for his faithful, vigilant service in Havana.[77] For Fitzhugh Lee, the long disheartening ordeal was over.

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[75]McKinley was long stereotyped as the aimless, weak President who bowed to the pressures of the jingo press, imperialistic politicians, and a bellicose public. However, some recent historians have portrayed him as a strong and forceful leader who maintained his control over the conduct of foreign policy and one who accomplished his objectives. In addition to Morgan's study, William McKinley, consult Paul S. Holbo, "Presidential Leadership in Foreign Affairs: William McKinley and the Turpie-Foraker Amendment," The American Historical Review, LXXII, No. 4 (July, 1967), 1321-1335. At least in his relations with his consul-general in Havana, McKinley seems to have withstood Lee's bombardment of suggestions concerning the hopelessness of autonomy proposals and the consequential necessity of American intervention.

[76]Lee to Day, April 6, 1898, Dispatches from Havana, RG 59, NA; May, Imperial Democracy, 154.

[77]Washington Post, April 10, 21, 1898. These issues contain detailed accounts of Lee's journey from Key West and his initial activities upon arrival in Washington.

Fitzhugh Lee experienced a troubled, and often unrewarding, two years as consul-general in two presidential administrations. While meeting his responsibilities as the senior American emissary on the war-torn island, he endured the disappointment of witnessing an indifferent and even icy reception by Washington officials of his suggestions. His initial opinion on the proper policy of the United States--and his view of the circumstances on which he formed his opinion--remained unchanged during his Cuban residence. To him, there would be no permanent peace in Cuba until America intervened. This belief was based on his conviction that neither the Spanish nor the insurgents could win a military victory but that neither side would accept anything less than a victor's peace. Consequently, he viewed the efforts of Cleveland and McKinley as being unrealistic and insufficient to end the stalemate, although he earnestly tried to execute the policy of his Washington superiors. He repeatedly urged American intervention in some form to end the Cuban disorders, but he never called for outright war with Spain at any point in his tenure. After he returned to America, however, with the country at last committed to war as the instrument to bring peace to Cuba, ex-General Lee, C.S.A., anxiously awaited the opportunity to render further service to the American nation.

CHAPTER VIII

BACK IN THE BLUE: THE TWILIGHT YEARS

When Fitzhugh Lee made his triumphal entry into Washington on April 11, 1898, he was given little time to enjoy the popular demonstrations in his honor. The capital and the nation were gripped by a frantic scramble to prepare for the coming struggle with Spain. War was not formally declared until April 25, but Lee experienced a hectic schedule during the two weeks. The opinions of Lee--hailed as "The Right Man in the Right Place at the Right Time" for his recent consular service--were eagerly sought by the President and State Department officials, members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and especially by Secretary Russell A. Alger and other War Department officials.[1] During his service in Cuba, the Consul-General had taken considerable pains to observe and study Spanish military fortifications and had provided the War Department with voluminous information.[2] His observations in Cuba were now an invaluable resource to the Army as it prepared to invade the island. Lee met with

[1] Washington Post, April 13, 1898.

[2] For example, see Lee to Daniel S. Lamont (Cleveland's Secretary of War), May 23, 29, and June 21, 1896, Daniel S. Lamont Papers, Library of Congress; Lee to Day, June 2 (1 cable, 1 dispatch) and June 9, 1897, Dispatches from Havana, RG 59, NA; Day to Lee, January 18, 1898, Opie Papers.

Commanding General Nelson A. Miles (the two had been opposing cavalry leaders in Virginia during 1864-1865) and other soldiers to assist in planning a strategy against the Spanish foe.

The presence of Lee at the center of the bustling activity in the War Department promptly sparked rumors and speculation of his return to active military service. Owing to his knowledge of Cuban conditions, the press and numerous private citizens urged the appointment of the former Consul-General as commander of the American expeditionary forces assigned to invade Cuba.[3] In a burst of patriotism capped by the desire for a dramatic event to symbolize national unity, Northerners and Southerners alike also called for Lee's appointment for that reason. Lee, a longtime proponent of sectional reconciliation, soon found himself portrayed as the personification of national reunion. On May 4, 1898, the ex-Confederate general (aged sixty-two) was formally confirmed a major general in the Volunteer Army of the United States by the Senate.[4] The appointment received an enthusiastic reception

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[3]"A Place for Fitzhugh Lee," (editorial) Washington Post, April 21, 1898; "Serious Words for Veterans," The Confederate Veteran, VI, No. 4 (April, 1898), 146; Robert L. Scribner, "Ex-Confederate in Blue: Fitzhugh Lee," The Virginia Cavalcade, V, No. 4 (Spring, 1956), 16-22.

[4]U.S. Senate, Journal of the Executive Proceedings, 55th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1898, pp. 745, 758-759; for a complete survey of Lee's military career, consult General Fitzhugh Lee, Document File No. 77633, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, The National Archives (hereafter Lee File, A.G.O., RG 94, NA). A typical letter found in the file which reflects the widespread demand for Lee's appointment is C. A. Woodson to President McKinley, May 3, 1898.

throughout the country, and Lee accepted his commission with great pleasure and satisfaction. After an absence of thirty-three years, the old soldier reentered his beloved profession--the gnawing frustration he had borne for a third of a century was over! For him, at least, the cycle of reunion was complete--a United States regular army lieutenant (1861), resigned; a major general, Confederate States Army (1865), paroled; and a major general, United States Volunteers (1898), nominated, confirmed, and eager to serve his country in the "Federal blue" once more. As if to augment the reconciliatory significance of his appointment, two first lieutenants were assigned to his staff. One was Fitzhugh Lee, Jr. (his son), and the other was Algernon Sartoris (a grandson of Ulysses S. Grant).[5]

Unfortunately, Lee's hopes to lead the American forces which would liberate Havana were dashed by a combination of circumstances.[6] His friends believed that McKinley and the Republicans, seeing the growth of popular enthusiasm for Lee, had no wish to crown him with military glory and thereby make him a possible candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1900.[7] However, McKinley was guided by

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[5]Scriber, "Ex-Confederate in Blue," 19; for public reaction to the appointments of Lee and another ex-Confederate major general, Joseph Wheeler, see "Major-Generals of the Volunteer Army," Harper's Weekly, XLII, (May 14, 1898), 478, and Rufus R. Wilson, "The Leaders of Our Army," Munsey's Magazine, XIX, No. 5, (August, 1898), 651-653, 663.

[6]Ella L. McCrary, "Life and Public Services of Fitzhugh Lee," Midland Monthly, X, (July, 1898), 42-47.

[7]Hunter, "Fitzhugh Lee," 139; John Leslie Hall, Half-Hours in Southern History (Richmond, 1907), 18-19.

considerations other than Lee's political future. The President, having been a soldier himself in the Civil War, was leary of marring his administration with appointments of "political generals" which might lead to disastrous results in combat. Accordingly, in the vast expansion of the Army beginning in April, out of the twenty-six major generals he appointed, nineteen were regular Army officers and these latter tended to be given the choice commands. While his West Point training and pre-1865 military service precluded his classification as a political general in the strict sense of the term, the fact remained that General Lee had not been on active duty since Appomattox. Consequently, regular Army officers were given preference over him. But McKinley, an astute and skillful politician, also realized the advantages of recalling able Southerners to the colors. The last Civil War veteran in the White House did not deliberately maneuver to give Lee and the other ex-Confederate general, "Fighting Joe" Wheeler, the poorest assignments. Wheeler, in fact, went on to win some degree of fame in fighting in Cuba and later in Puerto Rico, but Fitz unluckily (in his own view) received no opportunity during the war to participate in combat operations.[8]

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[8]Morgan, America's Road to Empire, 68-71; Margaret Leech, In the Days of McKinley (New York, 1959), 236-237; Walter Millis, The Martial Spirit: A Study of Our War with Spain (Boston, 1931), 161, 267-268, 270-276, 283, and 289.

On May 26, Lee was given command of the Seventh Corps, United States Volunteers.[9] This force of nearly thirty thousand men was by no means an insignificant assignment for General Lee nor was it indicative of any presidential intrigue to bury Fitz in limbo. The Corps, in the process of being organized at Jacksonville and Tampa, was scheduled for embarkation to Cuba as soon as transport facilities were available. However, the logistical incompetence of the War and Navy Departments--the most serious deficiency in the American military effort against the Spanish--caused a few months' delay in landing Lee's army in Cuba.[10] The Corps was sufficiently welded together to meet his standards as an effective fighting unit during the wait for transportation facilities, but Lee soon found--much to his chagrin--that the Seventh Corps would never see battle. The war in Cuba was of unexpectedly brief duration since San Juan Hill was captured on July 2, and by July 17, the fighting in Cuba

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[9] F. C. Ainsworth to P. J. McCumber, May 21, 1906, Lee File, A.G.O., RG 94, NA. This letter from the Military Secretary of the War Department to Senator McCumber, Chairman of the Committee on Pensions, contains a complete summary of Lee's military career according to official records (including his Confederate service). The career of Wheeler in the Spanish-American War is discussed in John P. Dyer, "Fightin' Joe" Wheeler (Baton Rouge, La., 1961), 339 ff.

[10] The camp near Jacksonville was called "Cuba Libre." U.S. Senate, Report of the Commission Appointed by the President to Investigate the Conduct of the War Department in the War with Spain, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., 1900, Doc. No. 221, III, 81-82; William Jennings Bryan to Lee, December 30, 1898, Opie Papers.

was over for all practical purposes. On August 12, Spain called for an armistice and hostilities ceased.[11]

Lee's service in the Spanish conflict thus proved to be the opposite of his career as a Confederate general. Instead, it was more reminiscent of his staff duties under Van Dorn in those far distant days of his membership in the U. S. Second Cavalry. General Lee not only spent his time in preparing the Seventh Corps for combat but also found himself serving as an adviser to military authorities in Washington. He was called to Washington several times for consultations--the former Consul-general was still considered an expert on Cuban conditions--even though his command remained in Florida.[12] However, unlike the period of intensive staff work prior to the Van Dorn expedition forty years earlier, the old soldier's painstaking efforts were not destined to be rewarded this time with success on the battlefield. Ironically, the laurels he won during the Spanish-American War resulted from his direction of the Seventh Corps during its organization and training stages. Lee, always conscientious about the welfare of his men, was concerned with their health and consequently took an elaborate interest in initiating

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[11] Millis, The Martial Spirit, and Frank Freidel, The Splendid Little War (New York, 1958), provide detailed accounts of the war; but also consult Morgan's America's Road to Empire and his William McKinley as well as Leech's In the Days of McKinley.

[12] Assistant Adjutant General to Lee, May 17, 1898, Lee to General H. C. Corbin, May 17, 1898, H. C. Corbin to Lee, August 13, 1898, George H. Hopkins to Lee, September 25, 1898, and Lee to Adjutant General, September 27, 1898, Lee File, A.G.O., RG 94, NA.

and maintaining proper sanitary measures for his unit. No more than two per cent of Lee's Corps were ever hospitalized or otherwise listed as unfit for duty--a phenomenally low incidence of sickness in a war in which whole regiments were sometimes incapacitated. To Secretary of War Alger and the presidential commission investigating the War Department, Lee's unit was a pleasant surprise in contrast to the usual pestilence-ridden camps. Seeking his advice on the subject of health, they soon discovered the reason for his superior performance: other generals tended to ignore sanitation problems, but Lee gave them his strictest attention and personally supervised the execution of his orders relating to the matter.[13]

While Lee was disappointed with his failure to participate directly in the defeat of his former Spanish adversaries, he received at least the consolation of being back in his chosen profession. In December 1898, he finally returned to Cuba in uniform, not as the head of one of the liberating armies, but as a member of the American occupation forces. Although McKinley was urged to appoint General Lee the military governor of Cuba, that position was given to Major General John R. Brooke, since the latter was a regular Army officer with thirty-eight years of continuous service. As a consolation,

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[13] Report, Commission to Investigate the War Department, 81-95. In his testimony on October 6, 1898, Lee also recalled his past residence in Cuba and pointedly suggested that the heavy uniforms worn by his troops and those already in Cuba bordered on criminal idiocy.

Lee received the assignment of occupying and policing Havana and its surrounding provinces until the establishment of an independent Cuban government.[14] With the end of the war in Cuba and the termination of Spanish sovereignty on January 1, 1899, the United States Army assumed formal responsibility for the island's government. The military government of Brooke and his four major subordinates--Generals Lee, William Ludlow, James H. Wilson, and Leonard Wood--was assigned the duty of commanding the American forces of occupation and supervising the civil administration. In accordance with the Teller Amendment (the proviso, adopted by Congress when war was declared against Spain, which precluded the formal annexation of Cuba by the United States), their announced goal was to pacify Cuba and then relinquish control to the Cuban people at some indefinite date.[15]

For two years, Lee was destined to serve in the military government of Cuba in various capacities. Unlike his previous two years in Cuba as consul-general, his second tenure was

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[14] F. C. Ainsworth to P. J. McCumber, May 21, 1906, and John H. Henryrut to President McKinley, September 28, 1898, Lee File, A.G.O., RG 94, NA; David F. Healy, The United States in Cuba, 1898-1902: Generals, Politicians, and the Search for Policy (Madison, Wis., 1963), 51-52.

[15] Allan R. Millett, The Politics of Intervention: The Military Occupation of Cuba, 1906-1909 (Columbus, Ohio, 1968), 29-44; see also Healy, The United States in Cuba, 53-64. Wilson was a West Point graduate who had left the Army after the Civil War, while Ludlow and Wood were regular army officers temporarily holding a higher rank in the volunteer forces. After the ratification of the treaty with Spain on February 6, 1899, Lee and his colleagues were reduced to the rank of brigadier general as a result of the reduction in the military forces.

relatively free of crises. Nonetheless, his second assignment proved to be more complex and formidable than he expected. Shortly after his return to Cuba, he even began to write a book (in collaboration with General Wheeler) about the island and the war. However, the duties of his occupation assignment soon became too onerous and troublesome for him to devote much time to such a project.[16] The major difficulties which he faced resulted from the slowness of Brooke and the Washington politicians in promulgating a clear policy concerning the island's present affairs and its future status. Consequently, Lee found himself involved once more in a Cuban imbroglio.

General Lee and other officials of the military government were concerned with, and wished to participate in, the gradual formulation of American policy towards Cuba; however, they were confronted with the more pressing task of eradicating the wretched conditions in the war-ravaged island. Consequently, Lee first devoted much of his attention and energy to providing for the well-being of the Cuban populace within his geographic area of responsibility (which consisted of Havana province, but not the city itself, and the adjacent province of Pinar del Rio). During his first year, Lee was primarily concerned with the tasks of restoring public order, fighting

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[16] Their book, entitled Cuba's Struggle Against Spain with the Causes for American Intervention and a Full Account of the Spanish-American War, including Final Peace Negotiations, was finally published by the American Historical Press (New York) in 1899. Lee wrote only the first 93 pages while Wheeler produced the remaining 500. Theodore Roosevelt wrote the final appendage entitled "The Story of Santiago."

disease and starvation, and providing other humanitarian services. He and the other members of the American occupation force engaged in a massive program of national reconstruction to alleviate the plight of the Cubans which resulted from four years of rebellion and war.[17]

Simultaneously with this reconstruction endeavor of American soldiers, a change of personnel in President McKinley's cabinet also affected Cuba. On August 1, 1899, Elihu Root formally assumed office as the new Secretary of War. Root promptly solicited the advice of the generals in the military government in determining a Cuban policy.[18] Prior to Root's request of August 18, however, General Lee had already turned his attention to the future governmental status of Cuba. On August 15, he proposed that the United States should initiate the beginning of its compliance with the Teller Amendment. He urged the calling of a constitutional convention and an election of national officers as soon as possible in order that "the pledged faith of the Government of the United States to Cuba can be kept." Lee thought the American troops should be stationed in the island until the success of the new government had been established. Thereafter, the Cuban people themselves could decide if they preferred an American

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[17]"Annual Report of Brigadier-General Fitzhugh Lee, August 15, 1899," Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1899, Report of the Major-General Commanding the Army (Washington, 1899), Part I, 213.

[18]Healy, The United States in Cuba, 108-112.

protectorate or annexation to the United States.[19] In September, in response to the inquiry of the Secretary of War, he again submitted his opinions on Cuba's future and declared that the Cubans:

> . . . are as capable of organizing a form of government today as they ever will be. If they construct a "stable government" strong enough to protect life and property and give confidence to capital, they should be entitled to control their own affairs. If not, the strong hand of the United States must be placed again on the helm and guide the future course of this beautiful and fertile island out from the shadows of a dark past into the broad sunlight of a bright future.[20]

Fitzhugh Lee believed the end of uncertainty about Cuba's status would stimulate foreign investment and, as a result, a rise in the living standards of the island's poorer classes. Since his days as consul-general, he had praised its natural resources and speculated that American investors could reap large profits while turning the land into a paradise. As a general in the occupation force, he continued to hold these ideas and urged Americans to participate in Cuba's economic development.[21]

Lee, whose viewpoints were shared by General Wilson, had no qualms about possible future annexation of Cuba by the

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[19]"Annual Report of Fitzhugh Lee, August 15, 1899."

[20]"Special Report of Brigadier-General Fitzhugh Lee, September 19, 1899," Annual Reports, War Department, 1899, Report of Major-General John R. Brooke on Civil Affairs in Cuba (Washington, 1900), 344.

[21]Lee to Daniel S. Lamont, November 29 and December 3, 1898, Lamont Papers; Lee to Thomas L. Rosser, July 28, 1899, Thomas L. Rosser Papers, University of Virginia Library.

United States. Both men professed little hope that the Cubans would be very successful in self-governing. They expected increased American investments would bind the island securely to the United States and, in any case, the island's destiny would be entwined with its continental neighbor. However, the two generals believed the United States was honor bound to comply (at least technically) with the Teller Amendment and give the Cubans the opportunity to establish their independence.[22] Such a course also had the advantage of lessening the possibility of a Cuban insurrection against American military forces comparable to the then current struggle in the Philippines.[23] In contrast, Generals Wood and Ludlow preferred the indefinite stay of the military in Cuba. Wood, in particular, desired eventual annexation but only after a long period of tutelage by which time the Cubans

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[22]Lee to Wilson, October 19, December 21 and 30, 1899; Wilson to Theodore Roosevelt, September 11, 1899; and Wilson to Joseph B. Foraker, November 20, 1899, James H. Wilson Papers, Library of Congress.

[23]Beginning with the formal transfer of government from Spain to the United States, the Cuban insurgents resented American rule and felt that their past services in fighting the Spanish were ignored. Occupation leaders were fearful that the insurgents might resort to armed attack on American soldiers. See Healy, The United States in Cuba, 53-56. The contribution of the insurgents in defeating the Spanish has been the subject of much scrutiny by revisionist historians in Cuba. In general, the revisionists argue that the rebel army brought Spain to her knees before the American invasion. See Duvon C. Corbitt, "Cuban Revisionist Interpretations of Cuba's Struggle for Independence," The Hispanic American Historical Review, XLIII, No. 3 (August, 1963), 395-404. Of course, the revisionist's view strongly conflicts with Lee's opinion that a stalemate existed between the Spanish and the insurgents from 1896 to 1898.

themselves would see the wisdom of that course. He advocated their Americanization through the agency of the military government. Consequently, he attempted to set an example of honesty and high-mindedness in public office which would impress upon the Cubans the advantages of American rule.[24] In summary, the four generals agreed that eventual annexation was desirable and probably inevitable, but they disagreed on the timing and method of annexation. Lee and Wilson believed Cuba should be granted independence as soon as possible. After its failure, the Cubans would then join the United States. Wood and Ludlow maintained that the benefits of continued American occupation would finally persuade the Cubans to accept annexation voluntarily.

Elihu Root, after receiving the generals' opinions, pondered their suggestions for several months before finally making his recommendations on Cuba's future to President McKinley. General Wood replaced Brooke (who viewed the American occupation as definitely temporary in nature) as military governor on December 20, 1899, and it was speculated that his proposals would be adopted eventually.[25] Surprisingly, many of the recommendations pertaining to Cuba's future made by Lee, rather than by Wood, were accepted by Washington

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[24]Millett, The Politics of Intervention, 33-35.

[25]The Cuban revisionist historians view Wood as a leading American imperialist who tried to thwart the birth of Cuban independence. In consequence, they have harshly criticized his administration. Until the 1930's, most Cuban historians reserved their criticisms for the Platt Amendment and subsequent American interventions. See Corbitt, "Cuban Revisionist Interpretations," 395-396.

authorities (partially owing to the continued fighting in the Philippines and the public reaction to it). The United States announced that Cuban independence would be granted as soon as a Cuban government was formed, and Lee, during his last month of service in Cuba, witnessed the convoking of a constitutional convention in November 1900. The Constitution of 1901 established the new Republic of Cuba, but others shared Lee's views on the inability of the Cubans to maintain their independence. Accordingly, the Platt Amendment (providing for American intervention in Cuban affairs) was appended to the Constitution and provided a protectorate status similar to the one he had envisioned. Of course, the permanent annexation of Cuba by the United States, which he also expected, never occurred.[26]

Lee served most of his last year in Cuba under Wood (from December 1899 to November 1900), but there was little conflict between the two despite their disagreement on the length of American occupation. For example, both cooperated in working to improve Cuban economic conditions. Their amiable relationship continued until Lee was recalled to the United States. Fitzhugh Lee left the island for the last time on November 15, 1900, and assumed command of the Department of the Missouri at Omaha, Nebraska, on December 4. His service at his new post was of brief duration, however, since the general (aged sixty-five) believed he should resign and

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[26] Millett, The Politics of Intervention, 36-44; Healy, The United States in Cuba, 107-178; Lee to James H. Wilson, December 30, 1899, and December 11, 1900, Wilson Papers.

make way for younger men. His third military career culminated with his acceptance of the rank of brigadier general, U.S. Army (regular), on March 2, 1901, followed by his retirement the next day.[27]

General and Mrs. Lee then moved to Charlottesville, Virginia, where they expected to spend the remainder of their lives. The retired general looked forward to a varied but more relaxed mode of living than he had experienced in the past several years.[28] Lee promptly became involved in civic activities, once settled in Charlottesville. His favorite project was the plan of the Jefferson Memorial Road Association to build a three-mile hard-surface road from downtown Charlottesville to the grave of Thomas Jefferson at Monticello. This project, a happy blend of economic improvement and patriotism, was to serve as "a lesson in making good roads" as well as a memorial to the great statesman. With his characteristic vigor, the old gentleman accepted the presidency of the Association. In April 1902, he chaired the Jefferson Memorial and Interstate Good Roads Convention, which was held in Charlottesville. At the three-day meeting, Lee stressed the hope that the Memorial project would serve as an encouraging example of the practicality of good highways not only to Virginia, but to all Southerners. The Jefferson

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[27]F. C. Ainsworth to P. J. McCumber, May 21, 1906, Lee File, A.G.O., RG 94, NA; Lee to James H. Wilson, January 21, February 4 and 13, 1901, Wilson Papers.

[28]Lee to Wilson, December 21 and 18, 1901, Wilson Papers.

Memorial Road was completed a year later.[29]

Unfortunately, Fitz had less time to enjoy participation in civic affairs than he had anticipated. His idyllic retirement ended abruptly on September 10, 1902, when he finally agreed to accept the presidency of the Jamestown Exposition Company. The Company had been chartered in March by the General Assembly to promote and direct the celebration of the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition of 1907. Lee, strongly motivated by his state (and national) patriotism, accepted the task of bringing the proposed project to a successful completion.[30] The grandiose nature of the plans to celebrate Jamestown's three-hundredth anniversary was reflected by the joint resolution of the Virginia Assembly in 1901. This resolution invited not simply all Americans but "all the English-speaking peoples of the earth" to share in this exhibit of "the products of peace and fruits of free institutions in all the realms of human ingenuity."[31] The ambitious goals of the celebration's promoters were not commensurate with their financial resources, however, and the aged general faced overwhelming obstacles in raising the necessary funds. Eventually, he persuaded the General

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[29] Lee to Wilson, November 13, 1903, ibid.; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Proceedings of the Jefferson Memorial and Interstate Good Roads Convention, 1902 (Washington, 1902), 9-13.

[30] Richmond Dispatch, September 21, 1902; Charles R. Keiley (ed), The Official Blue Book of the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition (Norfolk, Va., 1909), 39, 46.

[31] Journal of the House of Delegates, Extra Session, 1901, 55-56.

Assembly to appropriate $200,000 and obtained one million dollars in popular subscriptions by January 1, 1904 (the company had to secure the latter amount by that date or its charter would become void). Congress, although asked for sums varying from three to five millions, voted only $250,000. After that disappointment, Lee tried a barnstorming of state legislatures and was successful in persuading twenty-two states to participate in the Exposition.

These efforts were a severe strain on the general's health and a contributory cause of his death in 1905--he was returning home from a tour of New England when he succumbed to an attack of apoplexy in Washington, D. C. The Exposition was not a fitting memorial to Fitzhugh Lee. Although President Theodore Roosevelt and some 2,850,735 visitors passed through the gates between April 26 and November 30, 1907, it was a financial failure. Moreover, the celebration was highly commercialized. The emphasis on honoring and glorifying the rich heritage of the Old Dominion as well as the nation--the principal purpose of Lee despite his long interest in the promotion of economic progress--became a minor consideration to his successors.[32]

The reactions of Virginians and other Americans to Lee's death on April 28, 1905, were much more indicative of his status

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[32]Keily, Blue Book, 39-79; Robert T. Taylor, "The Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition of 1907," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXV, No. 2 (April, 1957), 169-208; Lee to Thomas Nelson Page, September 2, 1904, Page Papers; Lee to Edwin A. Alderman, October 17, 1904, Edwin A. Alderman Papers, University of Virginia Library.

among his contemporaries. With great pomp and ceremony--and full military honors--the body of the old soldier was transferred from Washington to Richmond. In Richmond, the crowds observing his elaborate funeral procession numbered in the thousands as his fellow citizens paid their last tribute to his memory. During this period of public mourning, perhaps the most typical of the hundreds of eulogies delivered was the following:

> Fitzhugh Lee lived a life upon the level on which history is made--and died in the harness as doubtless he would have preferred to die--just short of the three score years and ten that the Bible has allotted to man. . . . Lee was a man of unusual capacity, a man of unflinching courage, a man who stood for the finest traditions of Virginia, a soldier, a statesman, a diplomat, an example and a light to his fellow citizens. . . .
>
> And when all is said, the most that the dead can do for the living is to leave such an example as shall make for the uplifting of the race, for the inspiration of the young, and for the firm grounding of such ideals as shall leaven the body politic.
>
> This Fitzhugh Lee unquestionably did. More need not be said of him or of any man.

On May 4, 1905, General Fitzhugh Lee was appropriately buried in Hollywood Cemetery, the final resting place of numerous heroic and famous Americans.[33]

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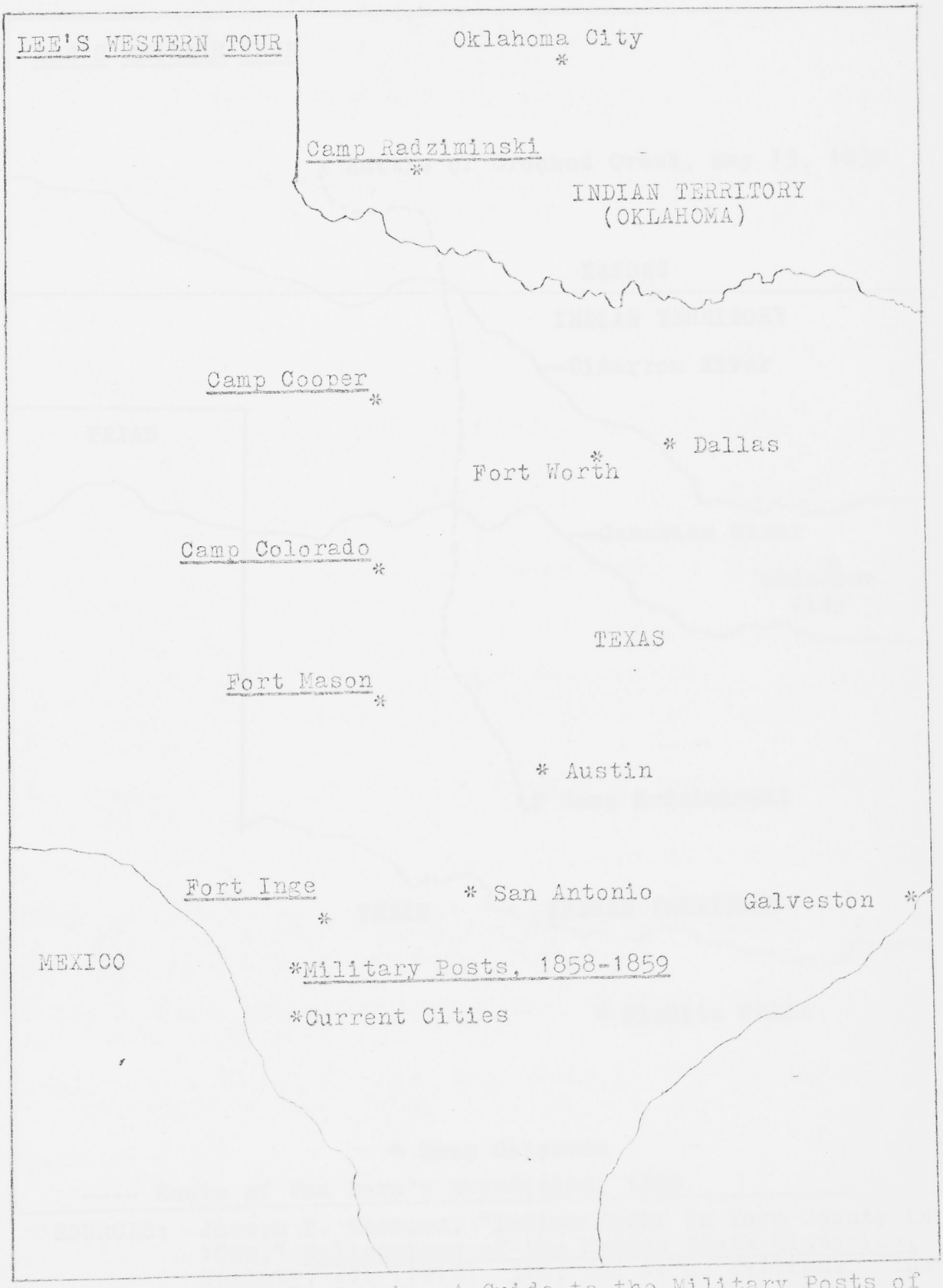
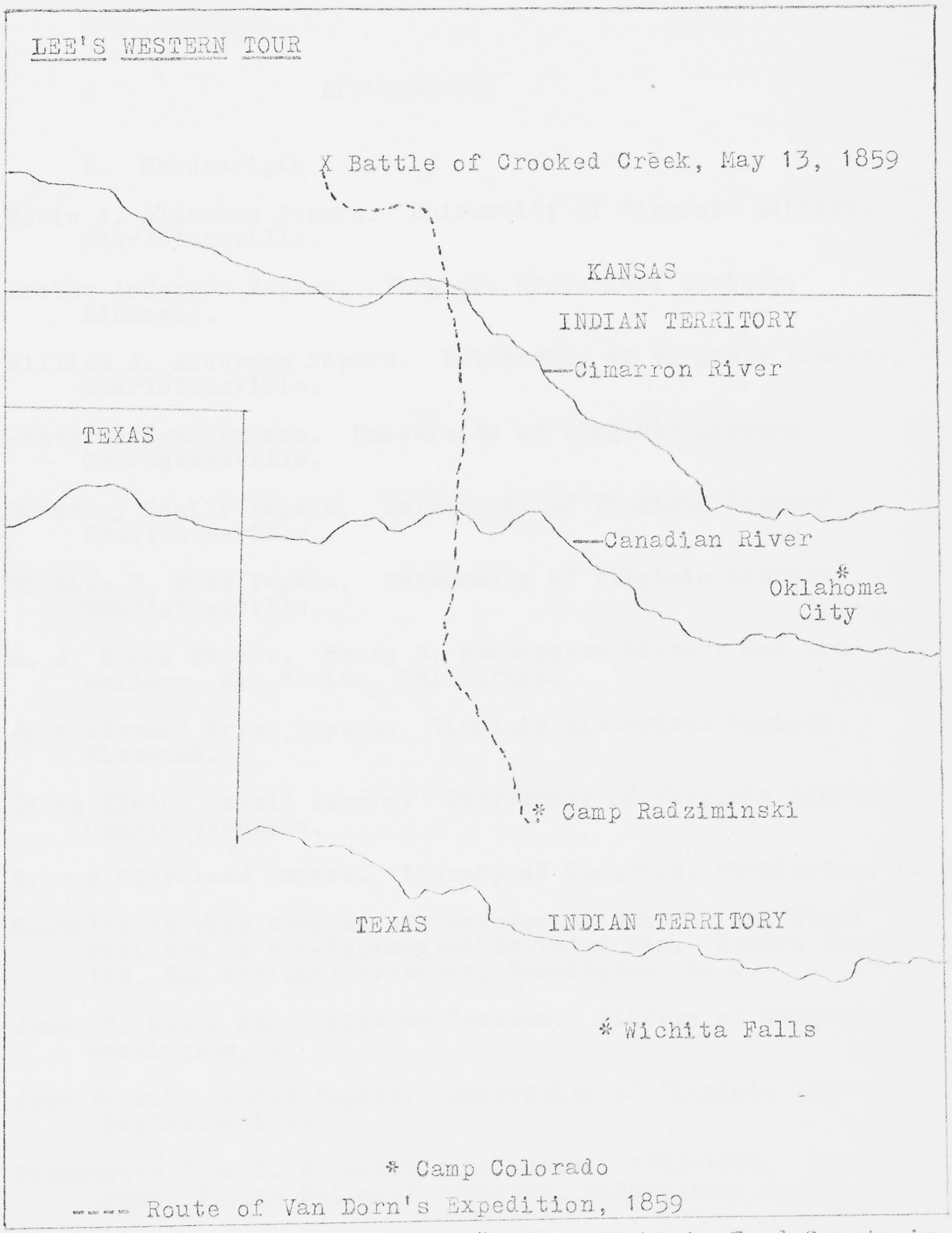
[33]The quotation is from the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, April 30, 1905, but see also its editions of April 29-May 6, and the following newspapers (all 1905): New York Times, April 29 and 30; Atlanta Constitution, April 29-May 5; Atlanta Journal, April 29.

APPENDIX



SOURCE: Francis P. Prucha, A Guide to the Military Posts of the United States (Madison, Wisc., 1964), 46-47.



SOURCES: Joseph P. Thoburn, "Indian Fight in Ford County in 1859," Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society, XII (1912), 318, and J. W. Williams, "The Van Dorn Trails," The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XLIV (January, 1941), 334, 338-339.

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Philadelphia (Pa.) Times
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