

202 THE DAY OF THE CONFEDERACY

at an end. The last gunshots were still to be fired far away in Texas on the 13th of May. The surrender of the forces of the Trans-Mississippi on May 26, 1865, brought the war to a definite conclusion.

There remains one incident of these closing days, the significance of which was not perceived until long afterward, when it immediately took its rightful place among the determining events of American history. The unconquerable spirit of the Army of Northern Virginia found its last expression in a proposal which was made to Lee by his officers. If he would give the word, they would make the war a duel to the death; it should drag out in relentless guerrilla struggles; and there should be no pacification of the South until the fighting classes had been exterminated. Considering what those classes were, considering the qualities that could be handed on to their posterity, one realizes that this suicide of a whole people, of a noble fighting people, would have maimed incalculably the America of the future. But though the heroism of this proposal of his men to die on their shields had its stern charm for so brave a man as Lee, he refused to consider it. He would not admit that he and his people had a right thus to extinguish their power