

manner of the acceptance, will form an interesting chapter in the LEE MEMORIAL VOLUME, shortly to be published by Washington College. Suffice it to say here, that it was a deliberate sense of duty to his fellow-countrymen, and a desire to pay back, as far as he could, through their sons, the sufferings and sorrows of his own generation in the South, that determined his decision. He had already fully resolved not to leave Virginia under any circumstances; and this position, humble as it seemed to be, gave him the wished-for opportunity of laboring for her people, and for the South. Therefore he accepted it.

The profound sense of duty which marked General Lee's acceptance of this office, characterized also his whole administration of it. He entertained the profoundest convictions on the importance of educational influences, both to individuals and to the country, and the deepest sense of personal responsibility in his own office. He felt that an institution like Washington College owed duty, not only to its own students, but to the whole country, and that its moral obligations were not only supreme within its own sphere, but were attached to the wider interests of public virtue and of true religion among all the people. Everybody around him felt unconsciously that he was actuated by these principles, and all were impressed by his high conceptions of duty, and the singleness of his devotion to it. Nothing else, indeed, could have sustained him so serenely through so many and so constant details of labor and of trial. Nothing else, in such a man, could have held his thoughts so high, or kept his heart so strong, in the midst of daily tasks, always so severe, often so trivial and discouraging. But he never flagged; and although he fully comprehended the difficulties of his office, and was often wearied with its incessant labors, no word of despondency fell from his lips. He felt that he was *doing his duty*. "I have," he said, as reported by the Hon. Mr. Hilliard, "a self-imposed task which I cannot forsake;" and in this spirit he met all the details of his daily labors, cheerfully to the last. Again and again, during his life at Lexington, were tempting offers made to him—offers of large income, with comparative ease and more active and congenial employment; but though he fully appreciated these considerations, and was not indifferent to the attractions presented by such offers, he turned from them all with the same reply. He had chosen his post of duty, and he clung to it. Year by year the conception of this duty seemed to grow stronger with him; and year by year the College, as its instrument and representative, grew dearer to him. And as, gradually, the fruits of his labors began to be manifest, and the moral and intellectual results of his influence approved themselves to even his own modest self-estimate, his heart grew only warmer, and his zeal more zealous, in his work. His sense of personal duty was also expanded into a warm solicitude for all who were associated with him. To the Faculty he was an elder brother, beloved and revered, and full of all tender sympathy. To the student, he was as a father, in carefulness, in encouragement, in reproof. Their welfare, and their conduct and character as gentlemen, were his chief concern; and this solicitude was not limited to their collegiate years, but followed them abroad into life. He thought it to be the office of a College not merely to educate the intellect, but to make *Christian men*. The moral and religious character of the students was more precious in his eyes even than their intellectual progress, and was made the special object of his constant personal solicitude. In his annual Reports to the Trustees, which were models of clear and dignified composition, he always dwelt with peculiar emphasis upon these interests, and nothing in the College gratified him more than its marked moral and religious improvement during his administration. To the Rev. Dr. White he said, as affectingly narrated by that venerable minister soon after his death: "I shall be disappointed, sir—I shall fail in the leading object that brought me here—unless these young men all become consistent Christians." Other expressions, bearing eloquent witness to the same truth, might be quoted; but none could be more eloquent than the steady tenor of his own life, quietly yet constantly devoted to the highest ends of duty and of religion. We trust the MEMORIAL VOLUME will give us full details of this noblest aspect of his character, as exhibited at Washington College.

Such were the principles which actuated General Lee, as President of Washington College; and their effects showed themselves in all the details of his administration. In the discipline of the College his moral influence was supreme. A disciplinarian in the ordinary sense of the term, as it is often most unworthily applied, he was not. He was no seeker out of small offences, no stickler for formal regulations. In his construction of college rules, and in his dealing with actions generally, he was most liberal; but in his estimate of motives, and in the requirement of principle and honor, he was exacting to the last degree. Youthful indiscretion found in him the most lenient of judges; but falsehood or meanness had no toleration with him. He looked rather to the principle of conduct than to mere outward acts. He was most scrupulous in exacting a proper obedience to lawful authority; but he was always the last to condemn, and the most just to hear the truth, even in behalf of the worst offender. Hence in the use of college punishments he was cautious, forbearing and lenient; but he was not the less firm in his demands, and prompt, when need was, in his measures. His reproof was stern, yet kind, and often even melting in its tenderness; and his appeals, always addressed to the noblest motives, were irresistible. The hardest offenders were alike awed by his presence, and moved, often even to tears

by his words; and there was no student who did not dread a reproof from General Lee more than every other punishment. In all his official action, and indeed in all his intercourse with the students, he looked to the elevation of the tone of principle and opinion among themselves, as the vital source of good conduct, rather than to the simple repression of vice. His discipline was moral rather than punitive. Hence there were few cases of dismissal, or other severe punishment, during his administration; and hence, also, the need for such punishments became ever less and less. The influence of this policy, aided especially by the mighty influence of his personal character, was all-powerful. The elevation of tone, and the improvement in conduct, were steady and rapid. Immediately after war, the young men of the South were wild and unrestrained, and acts of disorder were frequent; in the latter years of his administration, hardly a single case of serious discipline occurred. We doubt, indeed, whether at any other college in the world so many young men could have been found as free from misconduct, or marked by as high a tone of feeling and opinion as were the students of Washington College during these latter years of General Lee's life. The students felt this, and were proud of it; and they were proud of themselves and of their College, as representatives of the character and influence of Lee.

Yet not the less was he rigidly exacting of duty, and scrupulously attentive to details. By a system of reports, weekly and monthly—almost military in their exactness—which he required of each professor, he made himself acquainted with the standing and progress of every student in every one of his classes. These reports he studied carefully, and was quick to detect shortcomings. He took care, also, to make himself acquainted with each student personally, to know his studies, his boarding-house, his associations, dispositions and habits; and though he never obtruded this knowledge, the students knew that he possessed it, and that his interest followed them everywhere. Nor was it a moral influence alone that he exerted in the College. He was equally careful of its intellectual interests. He watched the progress of every class, attended all the examinations, and strove constantly to stimulate both professors and students to the highest attainments. The whole College, in a word, felt his influence as an ever-present motive, and his character was quietly yet irresistibly impressed upon it, not only in the general working of all its departments, but in all the details of each.

Of this influence, General Lee, modest as he was, was perfectly aware, and, like a prudent ruler, he husbanded it with a wise economy. He preferred to confine his direct interposition to purely personal acts; and rarely, and then only on critical occasions, did he step forward to present himself before the whole body of students in the full dignity of his presidential office. On these occasions, which were always rare, and in the latter years hardly ever occurred, he would quietly post an address to the students, in which, appealing only to the highest principles of conduct, he sought to dissuade them from threatened evil. These addresses, which the boys designated as his "*General Orders*," were always of immediate efficacy. No single case ever occurred in which they failed of instant and complete effect; and no student would have been tolerated by his fellow students who would have dared to disregard such an appeal from General Lee. One of the addresses, the original of which was presented to the writer by General Lee himself, may be here quoted, as an interesting exhibition of his character, and the kind influence he sought to exert:

WASHINGTON COLLEGE, Nov. 26, 1866.

"The Faculty desire to call the attention of the students to the disturbances which occurred in the streets of Lexington on the nights of Friday and Saturday last. They believe that none can contemplate them with pleasure, or can find any reasonable grounds for their justification. These acts are said to have been committed by students of the College, with the apparent object of disturbing the peace and quiet of a town whose inhabitants have opened their doors for their reception and accommodation, and who are always ready to administer to their comfort and pleasure.

"It requires but little consideration to see the error of such conduct, which could only have proceeded from thoughtlessness and a want of reflection. The Faculty therefore appeal to the honor and self respect of the students to prevent any similar occurrence, trusting that their sense of what is due to themselves, their parents, and the institution to which they belong, will be more effectual in teaching them what is right and manly than anything they can say.

"There is one consideration connected with these disorderly proceedings which the Faculty wish to bring to your particular notice; the example of your conduct, and the advantage taken of it by others to commit outrages for which you have to bear the blame. They therefore exhort you to adopt the only course capable of shielding you from such charges; the effectual prevention of all such occurrences in future.

"R. E. LEE,
President Washington College."

General Lee was also most laborious in the duties of his office as a college president. He gave himself wholly to his work. His occupations were constant, almost incessant. He went to his