

ROBERT EDWARD LEE

BY SIR ANDREW MACPHAIL

AFTER these seventy-five years, and all their wars, R. E. Lee remains the soldier hero and martyr, yet dearest to the public heart. These four volumes¹ explain that phenomenon. Lee was a great gentleman, too great a gentleman to prosecute war to its inherent and logical conclusion, lacking the ferocity of the traditional conqueror. He did not believe that war was an uncontrollable force of nature like the tides of the sea, the storm of the heavens, or stress of the earth. "Had forbearance and wisdom been practised on both sides," Lee said, "the national tragedy of 1861 might have been averted."

Forbearance and wisdom are not yet universal human qualities. Until that heavenly state of mind prevails war will be inevitable. A senseless hatred of war will not prevent it. Edward Grey in 1914 repeated three times "I hate it"; and we all know what happened. Woodrow Wilson based his League of Nations upon the forbearance and wisdom of mankind. Based upon that illusion collapse was obvious from the first.

Lee looked upon war as an instrument of peace. Utter military success was to him, and to Grant also, worse than failure. They looked to the conciliation that was bound to

¹ *R. E. Lee*. By Douglas Southall Freeman. 4 vols., pp. 2421. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, London. \$30.