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GENERAL HOWARD'S TRIBUTE TO A CONFEDERATE CLASS-MATE,

GENERAL J. E. B. STUART.

It gave me great distress, when in the early spring of 1861, I began to realize the fact that a separation was to take place between many of my West Point companions and myself. I knew in the outset that I must stand by the Union, and I could see very plainly that the most of the young officers, and the cadets whom I was instructing in classes, would separate. The young men from the States that were threatening secession would be most likely to go with their political leaders into the conflict, which was imminent. I do not know of anything that gave me more pain than the feeling that Lieutenant J. E. B. Stuart of Virginia, would leave the Union army, and join the other side. He was a class-mate much beloved, who entered the academy at the same time I did, in the fall of 1850; the cadets called him "Sept" Stuart, because he came in September. For a while I also was called "Sept" Howard for the same reason.

We had two drill masters, one was Cadet Walker and the other Cadet Boggs; they were corporals in the class just above us. I liked Boggs far the best and so did Stuart. We were delighted when Boggs had charge of our squad, because he was a manly man, full of dignity and discipline, but not too severe with these two awkward boys. I was already nineteen



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years of age, and had been a senior in college; Stuart, a little younger, also, was a graduate of a college, William and Mary, of Virginia. My figure was hardly shaped at that time according to military requirements, and Stuart's was worse. They have a habit at the Military Academy of naming a cadet according to his appearance, often using the opposite. They named Stuart "Beauty" Stuart, simply because of his queer figure and irregular face. Nothing then seemed to be handsome about him from head to foot. Walker called us hard names at every drill; he would say to me, for example, "Why do you act so much like a monkey", which, of course, not only mortified me, but often made me angry. To Stuart he would say, "Throw back your shoulders, put your little fingers on the seam of your trousers, with the palms of your hands to the front", and "Throw back your neck and draw in your chin, you awkward thing". Thus we were drilled together. We were usually in the same section of the class, but sometimes not. Little by little Stuart came to have - perhaps the best military proportions of anybody in our class. He was made a cadet corporal the next year, a sergeant the following, and a cadet captain in his first class year. I became quarter-master sergeant my second class year and cadet quarter-master the third. For reasons peculiar to cadet life, before the end of my first year I had difficulty with a cabal composed mainly of southern young men. My principal delinquency was my opposition to slavery, which



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somehow became known, though I did not make my sentiments prominent. There used to be a habit of ostracizing a cadet who became unpopular. I remember one young man who was ostracized because of something that he had done when a new cadet, not regarded as genteel; the consequences to him were that he was left alone by the most of his classmates and by a majority of the others in the Academy. He was living by himself, not far from my room; so, taking compassion on him I frequently went in and played some simple games with him, and was often seen conversing with him. That little thing also did me injury among my fellows who followed this singular cadet proverb, "If a man associates with cut-men, he must himself be cut."

When I was passing through the severest trial of my cadet life, when it seemed as though everybody that I cared for was turning against me, there were a few brave spirits that gave me their sympathy and their fellowship. Among them was Cadet J. E. B. Stuart. His manly course towards me when my heart was sore made me love him sincerely, and I was always made happy when he asked me to walk with him, or when he accepted my invitation to go and see the young ladies of West Point with me, something we often did during the recreation hours of Saturday. I think that Stuart was equally fond of my society as I was of his. When we graduated, we went away to serve at different posts, he in one direction and I in another; in fact, we never came together again



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One thing that Stuart was always remarkable for was his ability to ride and manage a fractious horse. He became perhaps the best rider of all our class-mates, so that I did not wonder that he was given the command of a cavalry regiment in Virginia, to be followed soon by a brigade, next a division, and then a cavalry corps of the army of northern Virginia.

When McClellan made the change of his base and of his line of approach to Richmond, leaving the front of Washington and taking his army to the Virginia Peninsula, Sumner's division was left behind as a rear guard, with instructions to follow McClellan as soon as it was practicable moving by water from Washington to the neighborhood of Fortress Monroe. I commanded a brigade which Sumner strengthened by some cavalry and artillery, and sent me to drive the confederate-rear guard across the Rappahannock. As I was to see to it that all the bridges over that river were destroyed. Stuart, my class-mate was in command of a confederate cavalry force left behind by General Joseph E. Johnston to cover his retreat to Richmond. It became my fortune in the second engagement that we had with the confederates, the first being Bull Run, to encounter this intimate friend and class-mate in the field; and I had it on good authority that Stuart, now General Stuart, had crossed the Rappahannock in the night with a small body of his cavalry, and had thoroughly



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reconnoitered my camp. I had so located my division, if I may call it a division, so as to face in four directions, holding an elevated wooded knoll. My forces took substantially the form of a square with the artillery at the corners all facing outward. I was told by a scout that Stuart, after his reconnaissance, remarked that Howard had taken up a strong position and so disposed his troops that it would be useless to attack him with cavalry. He therefore crossed the river, burning the bridges behind him. I had only skirmished briskly for some time with his advance guard and there had been no substantial battle. I said to General Sumner, after I had rejoined his division, "General, I drove "Beauty Stuart" across the Rappahannock and forced him to burn the bridges behind him." Sumner's division then hastened to Alexandria and was transported to the Peninsula.

I never could realize any hostility to Stuart in my heart. His career as a cavalry leader, making frequent raids and often going around our entire army and cutting off our supplies was indeed remarkable, displaying great energy, boldness and resourcefulness. It was brought to a close in front of the Army of the Potomac. This was after I had taken my corps to the West. When I heard of his death I mourned for him as I would for a brother. He was always the most devoted friend to our class-mate, G. W.\* C. Lee,\* and fairly worshiped his father, our great opponent and grand soldier, General Robert E. Lee. General Lee's first words, on hearing the news of Stuart's being wounded in the fierce battle near



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Yellow Tavern, May 1864, were: "General Stuart has been mortally wounded; a most valuable and able officer; he never brought me a piece of false information." A little later, in announcing the sad event, he said: "In military capacity of a high order and to the noble virtues of a soldier, he added the brightest graces of a pure Christian faith and hope." To

In these statements I find evidence of the fruitage of his early promises when he and I walked together as cadets and talked of the highest and best things which then inspired us.

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NOTE: George Washington Custer Lee,  
G. W. C. Lee, son; Robt. E.  
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