

For seven days and nights Robert E. Lee led his ragged army westward. Following him was the army, several times as large, of Union General Ulysses S. Grant. Ahead of him was sweeping another Union army, cutting railroad lines and capturing precious supplies.

By Saturday, April 8, Lee had only two small divisions still able to fight. Finally, at Appomattox, he found his last road blocked. At dawn on Palm Sunday his army vainly tried to break through. Lee watched the fighting through his field glasses. Then he said to his staff, "There is nothing left for me to do but go and see General Grant—and I would rather die a thousand deaths."

Lee could have ordered his men to scatter in the woods, but they would have had no rations and no leadership. They would have had to rob and plunder, and no doubt many would have been killed. He told his staff: "It is our duty to live. What will become of the women and children of the South if we are not here to protect them?"

Lee's decision came barely in time. Just as the powerful Northern army was preparing to smash the small Southern force, an officer carrying a white flag rode out of the Confederate lines. To a Union officer he handed a letter addressed to Grant.

Grant was far behind his lines, so Lee's offer did not reach him until about 11 A.M. Grant read the letter, then had it read aloud. There was a moment of silence. One of the men sprang upon a log, waved his hat, and proposed three cheers. There was a feeble hurrah or two, but no real joy.

Grant quickly dictated an answer stating his willingness to meet Lee.

For the meeting place, Lee had chosen a two-story brick farmhouse. Grant rode up with a dozen members of his staff. Lee rose to greet them, and Union officers soon filled the room. It was now 1:30 P.M.

Grant was ill at ease. "What General Lee's feelings were I do not know," he later wrote. "My own feelings . . . were sad and depressed."

The conversation began awkwardly. Lee finally said, "I suppose, General Grant, that the object of our meeting is fully understood. I asked to see you to ascertain on what terms you would receive the surrender of my army."

Grant replied that Lee's men must surrender all their arms, ammunition, and supplies.

Lee asked for one exception: that the Southerners be allowed to keep their horses and mules. When they returned home, they would need these animals to work their farms. When Grant said that this was impossible, Lee's disappointment was plain to see. Finally Grant agreed that although the exception would not be included in the written terms, he would see that it was carried out. The surrender terms were then written and signed by both sides.

There was a little more polite conversation. Then Lee rose, shook hands with Grant, and left the room. It was 4 P.M.

Lee spent the rest of the day in an orchard in the shade of a tree. A number of Union officers came to see him and exchange a few words. Near sunset, he mounted his horse and rode to his headquarters.

All down the line men streamed from their tents for a last salute, tears mingling with cheers. Lee rode with his hat off, tears

coursing down his own cheeks. At his tent he turned to the men and said, "Boys, I have done the best I could for you. Go home now and if you make as good citizens as you have soldiers, you will do well. Goodbye and God bless you all."

That evening Union soldiers poured into the Confederate camp. Generously they shared their rations with the half-starved Southerners. From generals to privates there was everywhere hope that the terrible wounds of war might be swiftly healed.

CHECK YOUR READING

1. **Grant's army was**
 - A miles ahead of Lee's
 - B better supplied than Lee's
 - C smaller than Lee's

2. **The surrender took place on**
 - A Christmas Day
 - B Independence Day
 - C Palm Sunday

3. **Lee believed that his men had a duty to**
 - A return to their homes alive
 - B rob and plunder where possible
 - C die to save their pride

4. **If Lee had not surrendered just when he did, his men would probably have**
 - A won the war
 - B deserted from the army
 - C lost their lives

5. **The reaction of Grant's men to Lee's letter was**
 - A joyful
 - B angry
 - C solemn

6. **Grant later said that during the meeting he felt**
 - A afraid
 - B sad
 - C shocked

7. **Lee asked Grant to let the Southerners keep their**
 - A horses
 - B guns
 - C uniforms

8. **Grant finally decided that this favor would be**
 - A too big a chance to take
 - B part of the written terms
 - C an unwritten understanding

9. **In his farewell speech Lee urged his men to**
 - A be good citizens
 - B forget about the war
 - C stay in the army

10. **The Union soldiers showed kindness to the Confederates by**
 - A joining them in songs
 - B lending them new clothes
 - C sharing rations with them