

LT. G. W. CUSTIS LEE.

Your letter of the 5th ulto. to your mother, my dearest son, has arrived and given us the pleasing intelligence of your good health, and well-being. I am so glad that your rheumatic attack has left you. Be very careful not to bring it back and do every needful thing to endure and strengthen your constitution and system. As your mother was absent, I took the liberty to open your letter, and in case no other member of the family may write to you by the steamer of the 5th, I will send these few lines to insure your receiving some intelligence of us. Your mother, Fitzhugh, and Charlotte went down to Cedar Grove last Tuesday to spend ten days or a fortnight, so they will not be back before the last of the next, or the first of the following week. Your poor mother has been suffering very much this spring and I am in hopes that a change of air and scene may benefit her. She has not made up her mind where to go this summer, or what to do to try and relieve herself from the rheumatism that still so perseveringly adheres to her. At one time she seemed to desire to go to St. Catharine's Well in Canada, whose waters are said to have worked some wonderful cures. But I have procured some of the water



in Washington, brought from the spring in barrels, which she has been drinking, so far without any apparent effect. The water is not very palatable either, being remarkably saline, and I think the Madame does not take to it kindly. I do not know what to advise, but have told her I would take her anywhere she might wish to go, trusting to her feelings, instinct, or knowledge to direct her aright. I really begin to despond of her recovery and fear she will never be entirely relieved. I have with me your four sisters, Miss Jane Lloyd, and May Childe, so I am by no means alone. I have heard that your poor Aunt Anne is suffering very much, has an attack of her eyes, that may terminate, surgeons think, in blindness. May God in His infinite mercy avert from her this dire calamity, is my earnest prayer. I shall therefore leave them this evening and go in and spend tomorrow, Sunday, and probably Monday, the 4th, with her. Mary C. will take advantage of my escort to return to her papa, who is in B., and writes that he is very lonely. All the girls are well and unite in much love and many kind messages to you. Mary C. and her papa propose going about the middle of the month to Sharon, thence to Saratoga and Newport. He has some business in Boston, and will either take it in his route, or go there from Newport. They expect to be absent the whole summer, and will give up their present house in B. A letter has just come from dear little Rob, reporting himself well, and enjoying some parties, fairs, etc., that are taking the rounds in the neighborhood, and to which "Clifton School" is invited. He expects to be here about the 21st inst., and I am very anxious to have him with me again. It was this desire, the unsettled business of your grandpa's estate, your mama's condition, and the hope I at one time entertained of seeing you, my dear son, that induced me to forego my purpose of returning to Texas this summer, and to remain till the fall. God knows whether I have done right, or whether my stay will be an advantage. I am very doubtful on the subject and feel that I ought to be with my regiment, and this feeling deprives me of half the pleasure I should derive from being here under other circumstances. I now see little prospect of one of my hopes being fulfilled, that of seeing you. On my last visit to Colonel De Russy it was not decided, but seemed to me extremely doubtful that you would be ordered to West Point. The Secretary has returned, but is busy in making certain changes under the *four-year* rule, and though some thirteen officers under that rule will leave West Point, they purpose to supply them with other *four-year* men, and you have not been that time in California. These changes and



others at other points will draw heavily on the light appropriation for defraying transportation, and they are properly and naturally loath to encroach upon it. Still, in time something may be done, and in the mean time we must all be contented. You must not have your mind exalted by Rooney's account of the improvements at this place. They are very meagre, and only serve to ameliorate matters that formerly were very rough and ugly. I have not the means to do what I should like, and what I do do, has to be limited by considerations of economy and practicability. I have been able to do nothing to the grounds around the house, except to clean up on the hill, and have been obliged to limit myself to what is most essential, and promises something for man and beast to eat, and to furnish shelter and protection. You will find things, therefore, I fear rough and unsightly, as much as I desire to polish up your mother's habitation, and to prepare for you an acceptable home. We are in the midst of our little harvest. The rye is secured and we are getting in the hay. The oats and corn look favorable, and as far as I can judge, unless something unforeseen occurs, we shall make fair crops of everything. We shall not make as good a crop of wheat at the White House as I had hoped. But I think an average one. It is harvested by this time. The corn looks well, and I hope between the two we shall do tolerably. I do not know that you have been told that George Wesly and Mary Norris, absconded some months ago, were captured in Maryland, making their way to Pennsylvania, brought back, and are now hired out in lower Virginia. I had to send down before them, Obediah, Edward, Henry, and Austin Bingham. The price here is very small, and I have to hire nearly all the labor. We have nothing but the old men and boys. The *N. Y. Tribune* has attacked me for my treatment of your grandfather's slaves, but I shall not reply. He has left me an unpleasant legacy. Jerome B. has been promoted and is with his regiment in Utah. Mr. B. has gone to France, and Mrs. B. and Charlie to the White Sulphur. Good-by, my dear son,

Your devoted father,

R. E. LEE.

ARLINGTON, August 19, 1859.