GRANT PROTECTS LEE

[The following excerpt, from Ulysses S. Grant: His Life and Character by Hamlin Garland, describes Grant’s steadfast determination to honor the terms of surrender that he and Lee agreed upon.]

Abraham Lincoln’s untimely death brought into the Presidential chair Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, a man who had been actively loyal at a time when loyal men in Tennessee were much to be desired. He had been put on the ticket with Lincoln for good political reasons, and up to this moment was very well regarded. He, too, was self-made. He had climbed from the tailor’s bench to the governorship of Tennessee in 1853, and was afterward senator, and in 1862 appointed military governor of Tennessee, and had discharged his duties faithfully and well. He was called by a London paper “a very determined, a very original, and it may be a very dangerous, but unquestionably a very powerful man.”

He was a man of the ranks, and he hated the aristocratic tendencies of the South. His sudden accession to power set his head whirling, and his first resolution was “to make treason odious” – to punish the Southern leader, to let them feel the weight of his hand. He disapproved of the magnanimous terms which Grant had written out for Lee. Davis had been apprehended, and was in prison; but General Lee, still relying upon General Grant’s parole, was living quietly at home. Johnson and his cabinet threatened to arrest and try them for treason.

General Lee, hearing of this, appealed to General Grant, through a friend, in order to be assured of his safety from imprisonment or death. He wrote:

Upon reading the President’s proclamation on the 29th, I came to Richmond to ascertain what was proper or required of me to do, when I learned that with others, I was to be indicted for treason by the grand jury at Norfolk. I had supposed that the officers and men of the Army of Northern Virginia were by the terms of the surrender protected by the United States government from molestation so long as they conformed to its conditions. I am ready to meet any charges that may be preferred against me; I do not wish to waive trial; but if I am correct as to the protection granted by my parole, and I am not to be prosecuted, I desire to comply with the provisions of the President’s proclamation, and therefore enclose the required application, which I request, in that event, may be acted upon.

To this Grant replied:

Your communication has been received and forwarded to the Secretary of War, with the following opinion endorsed thereon by me: “In my opinion, the officers and men paroled at Appomattox Court-house, and since upon the same terms given to Lee, cannot be tried for treason so long as they observe the terms of their parole. This is my understanding. Good faith as well as true policy dictates that we should observe the conditions of that convention. Bad faith on the part of the government, or a construction of that convention subjecting the officers to trial for treason, would produce a feeling of insecurity in the minds of all the paroled officers and men. If so disposed, they might even regard such an infraction of terms by the government as an entire release from all obligations on their part. I will state further that the terms granted by me met the hearty approval of the President at the time and of the country generally. The action of
Judge Underwood in Norfolk has already had an injurious effect, and I would ask that he be ordered to quash all indictments found against paroled prisoners or war, and to desist from the further prosecution of them."

I have forwarded your application for amnesty and pardon to the President, with the following indorsement:

"Respectfully forwarded, through Secretary of War, to the President, with the earnest recommendation that this application of General R. E. Lee for amnesty and pardon be granted him!"

Certainly nothing could be franker, manlier, or more generous than this, but General Grant’s protest did not end there. He followed the matter to the cabinet-room, and there took a firm stand. "The people of the North do not wish to inflict torture upon the people of the South," he said.

The President was still determined that these men should be punished. "I will make treason odious," he said. "When can these men be tried?"

"Never," replied Grant, with the most inflexible decision, "never, unless they violate their parole."

Johnson persisted in the contention. "I would like to know," he said sneeringly, "by what right a military commander interferes to protect an arch-traitor from the laws."

This made Grant extremely angry, and he spoke with great earnestness and with the utmost plainness. He said:

"As general it is none of my business what you or Congress do with General Lee or other commanders. You may do as you please about civil rights, confiscation of property; that does not come into my province. But a general commanding troops has certain responsibilities and duties and powers which are supreme. He must deal with the enemy in front of him, so as to destroy him; he may either kill him, capture him, or parole him; His engagements are secret so far as they lead to the destruction of the foe. I have made certain terms with Lee—the best and only terms. If I had told him and his army that their liberty would be invaded, that they would be open to arrest, trial and execution for treason, Lee would have never surrendered, and we should have lost many lives in destroying him. Now, my terms of surrender were according to military law, and so long as General Lee observes his parole I will never consent to his arrest. I will resign the command of the army rather than execute any order directing me to arrest Lee or any of his commanders so long as they obey the laws."

Upon the rock of his inflexible resolution the rage of the President broke without effect. He had met a man he could neither wheedle nor intimidate. He knew something of the position to which General Grant had attained. If he did not fear him personally, he feared the people, whose love he held and whose will he represented. The indictments against Generals Lee and Johnston were dropped and never again referred to.
THE GENERAL LOSES A BET

In September 1879, after returning from their World Tour, Julia and Ulysses traveled for a while in the American West. On one of their stops they visited the Bonanza Mine in Virginia City, Nevada. They were joined by family and friends, including Mr. John W. Mackey (standing at the far left in the illustration) with whom General Grant had made a bet that Julia would not venture down the shaft of the mine. When Julia showed some reluctance to proceed, Mr. Mackay whispered to her about the bet, urging her not to give up going. In her memoirs she proudly proclaimed, “The General lost his wager when he bet against me.”
JULIA DENT GRANT COMMEMORATION

[The following summary of events was provided by National Park Ranger Charles Kahlstrom.]

On Saturday, December 14, 2002, the Grant Monument Association and the National Park Service presented ceremonies at the General Grant Memorial in New York City commemorating the 100th anniversary of the death of Julia Dent Grant, wife of General Ulysses S. Grant. Frank Scaturro, President of the Grant Monument Association, gave a welcoming speech. The Sons of Union Veterans, Oliver Tilden Camp No. 26, presented the colors and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The ceremony, which was held in the rotunda of the Memorial, was attended by about 350 people, including several troops of Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. Lesley Dean, National Chaplin of the Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, gave the convocation. National Park Ranger Christopher Keenan spoke on behalf of the Park Service. Claire Ruestow Telecki, great great granddaughter of Ulysses S. Grant, read a letter from First Lady, Laura Bush, and Lynn Rollins, Deputy Director of the New York State Division for Women read a message from Governor George Pataki. Ulysses Grant Dietz, great great grandson of Grant also presented a speech. Carole Elizabeth Adams, Ph. D., Associate Professor of History and Women's Studies at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, spoke about the life of Julia Dent Grant. (Dr. Adams is currently writing a biography of Julia Grant, which will be published in 2003.) Balladeer and folksinger Linda Russell presented a selection of 19th century songs with which Julia and Ulysses Grant would have been familiar. After a presentation of memorial wreaths Lesley Dean gave the benediction, which was followed by the retirement of the colors.

ADDENDA TO JULIA GRANT BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Julia Grant Bibliography, compiled by Marie Kelsey and published in the Fall issue of the Newsletter, also contains the following book, which was omitted:

MARK TWAIN PAYS TRIBUTE TO GRANT

[The following article, titled "Mark Twain and General Grant, first appeared in The Mentor, May 1924.]

The first meeting of these two men – so unlike and yet destined to be closely associated – was in 1868, when Mark Twain was a newspaper correspondent in Washington. He had arranged for an interview with Grant and had looked forward to it with lively expectations, but when he gazed into the imperturbable, square, smileless face of the soldier he found himself, for once in his life, with nothing particular to say. Grant nodded to him and waited in silence. At length Mark Twain’s native resources came to the rescue. “General,” he said, “I seem to be a little embarrassed. Are you?” That broke the ice, and all went well with them thereafter.

In 1879, eleven years later, they met again. In the meantime Mark Twain had become world famous, while General Grant had been President of the United States twice, and had made a splendid tour of the world, receiving an ovation in every land. On his return, a magnificent reception was given to him in Chicago by the Army of the Tennessee, and the greatest men of the country were there to pay him tribute – Mark Twain among them. Carter Harrison, mayor of Chicago, was host, and when Mark Twain came in he introduced him to Grant. The general greeted him gravely; then, looking Mark calmly in the eye, said, “Mr. Clemens, I am not embarrassed, are you?” So he recalled their first meeting years before.

On that night, when Logan, Hurlbut, Vilas, Woodford, Pope, Robert G. Ingersoll, and other brilliant men spoke, Mark Twain, although he was not called on until 2:30 in the morning, at the end of a long list of speakers, was the bright particular star. Mark Twain had responded at many public dinners most happily to the toast “The Ladies,” but for this occasion he chose, by characteristic whimsical fancy, the subject “The Babies.” His words were:

“We have not all had the good fortune to be ladies. We have not all been generals, or poets, or statesmen; but when the toast works down to the babies, we stand on common ground. It is a shame that for a thousand years the world’s banquets have utterly ignored the baby, as if he didn’t amount to anything. If you will stop and think a minute – if you will go back fifty or one hundred years to your early married life and recontemplate your first baby – you will remember that he amounted to a good deal, and even something over. You soldiers all know that when that little fellow arrived at family headquarters you had to hand in your resignation. He took entire command. You became his lackey, his mere body-servant, and you had to stand around too. He was not a commander who made allowances for time, distance, weather, or anything else. You had to execute his order whether it was possible or not. And there was only one form of marching in his manual of tactics, and that was the double-quick. He treated you with every sort of insolence and disrespect, and the bravest of you didn’t dare to say a word. You could face the death-storm at Donelson and Vicksburg, and give back blow for blow; but when he clawed your whiskers, and pulled your hair, and twisted your nose, you had to take it. When the thunders of war were sounding in your ears you set your faces toward the batteries, and advanced with steady tread; but when he turned on the terrors of his war-whoop, you advanced in the other direction, and mighty glad of the chance, too. When he called for soothing syrup, did you venture to throw out any side-remarks about certain services being unbecoming an officer and a
gentleman? No. You got up and got it. When he ordered his pap bottle and it was not warm, did you talk back? Not you. You went to work and warmed it. You ever descended so far in your menial office as to take a suck at that warm, insipid stuff yourself, to see if it was right—three parts water to one of milk, a touch of sugar to modify the colic, and a drop of peppermint to kill those immortal hiccoughs. I can taste that stuff yet. And how many things you learned as you went along! Sentimental young folks still take stock in that beautiful saying that when a baby smiles in his sleep, it is because the angels are whispering to him. Very pretty, but too thin—simply wind on the stomach, my friends. If the baby proposed to take a walk at his usual hour, two o'clock in the morning, didn’t you rise up promptly and remark, with a mental addition which would not improve a Sunday-school book much, that that was the very thing you were about to propose yourself? Oh! you were under good discipline, and as you went fluttering up and down the room in your undress uniform, you not only prattled undignified baby talk, but even tuned up your martial voices and tried to sing!—Rock-a-by Baby in the Tree-top, for instance. What a spectacle for an Army of the Tennessee! And what an affliction for the neighbors, too; for it is not everybody within a mile around that likes military music at three in the morning. And when you had been keeping this sort of thing up two or three hours, and your little velvet-head intimated that nothing suited him like exercise and noise, what did you do? You simply went on until you dropped in the last ditch. The idea that a baby doesn’t amount to anything! Why, one baby is just a house and a front yard by itself. One baby can furnish more business than you and your whole Interior Department can attend to. He is enterprising, irrepressible, brimful of lawless activities. Do what you please, you can’t make him stay on the reservation. Sufficient unto the day is one baby. As long as you are in your right mind, don’t you ever pray for twins. Twins amount to a permanent riot. And there ain’t any real difference between triplets and an insurrection.

Yes, it was high time for a toast-master to recognize the importance of the babies. Think what is in store for the present crop! Fifty years from now we shall all be dead, I trust, and then this flag, if it still survive (and let us hope it may), will be floating over a Republic numbering 200,000,000 souls, according to the settled laws of our increase. Our present schooner of State will have grown into a political leviathan—a Great Eastern. The cradled babies of today will be on deck. Let them be well trained, for we are going to leave a big contract on their hands. Among the three or four million cradles now rocking in the land are some which this nation would preserve for ages as sacred things, if we could know which ones they are. In one of those cradles the unconscious Farragut of the future is at this moment teething—think of it!—and putting in a world of dead earnest, unarticulated, but perfectly justifiable profanity over it, too. In another the future renowned astronomer is blinking at the shining Milky Way with but a languid interest—poor little chap!—and wondering what has become of that other one they call the wet-nurse. In another the future great historian is lying—and doubtless will continue to lie—until his earthly mission is ended. In another the future President is busying himself with no profounder problem of state than what the mischief has become of his hair so early; and in a mighty array of other cradles there are now some 60,000 future office-seekers, getting ready to furnish him with occasion to grapple with that same old problem a second time. And in still one more cradle, somewhere under the flag, the future illustrious commander-in-chief of the American armies is so little burdened with his approaching grandeurs and responsibilities as to be giving his whole strategic mind at this moment to trying to find out some way to get his own big toe into his mouth—an achievement which, meaning no disrespect, the illustrious guest of this evening also
turned his entire attention to some fifty-six years ago; and if the child is but a prophecy of the man, there are mighty few who will doubt they he succeeded.”

The crowd responded with a roar of appreciation. Even Grant’s iron serenity broke, and he shook with laughter.

During the years that followed, the soldier-President and the philosopher-humorist became great friends. Then came the great episode that crowned Mark Twain’s career as a publisher and closed the career of the general. In 1884 when Grant’s fortunes came to disaster in the financial crash of Grant and Ward, the thought of capitalizing his reminiscences made a strong appeal to him. It was then that Mark Twain came to him and said: “General, if you have actually determined to write your memoirs, they belong to me.” Mark Twain had established a publishing business under the name of Charles L. Webster and Company, which had made a brave and successful start with his own books. “General,” he said, if you will place your book with my firm, I will pay you twenty per cent of the list price, or, if you prefer, I will give you seventy per cent of the net returns, and I will pay all office expenses out of my thirty per cent.” Grant finally consented, accepting the plan that provided for seventy per cent of the net profit.

In the end more than three hundred thousand sets of the two volumes were sold, and between four hundred and twenty and four hundred and fifty thousand dollars was paid to Mrs. Grant. This was the high-water mark of Mark Twain’s publishing life.
EUROLY OF ULYSSES S. GRANT

[This speech by Horace Porter was delivered at the banquet of the Army of the Tennessee at the dedication of the Grant Equestrian Statue in Chicago, October 8, 1891.]

Almost all the conspicuous characters in history have risen to prominence by gradual steps, but Ulysses S. Grant seemed to come before the people with a sudden bound. The first sight they caught of him was in the flashes of his guns, and the blaze of his camp fires, those wintry days and nights in front of Donelson. From that hour until the closing triumph at Appomattox he was the leader whose name was the harbinger of victory. From the final sheathing of his sword until the tragedy on Mount McGregor he was the chief citizen of the Republic and the great central figure of the world.

The story of his life savors more of romance than reality. It is more like a fabled tale of ancient days than the history of an American citizen of the nineteenth century. As light and shade produce the most attractive effects in a picture, so the singular contrasts, the strange vicissitudes in his marvelous career, surround him with an interest which attaches to few characters in history. His rise from an obscure lieutenancy to the command of the veteran armies of the Republic; his transition from a one-company post of the untrodden west to the executive mansion of the nation; at one time sitting in his little store in Galena, not even known to the Congressman of his district; at another time striding through the palaces of the Old World, with the descendants of a line of kings rising and standing uncovered in his presence—these are some of the features of his extraordinary career which appeal to the imagination, excite men's wonder, and fascinate all who read the story of his life.

General Grant possessed in a striking degree all the characteristics of the successful soldier. His methods were all stamped with tenacity of purpose, with originality and ingenuity. He depended for his success more upon the powers of invention than of adaptation, and the fact that he has been compared at different times to nearly every great commander in history is perhaps the best proof that he was like none of them. He was possessed of a moral and physical courage which was equal to every emergency in which he was placed; calm amidst excitement, patient under trials, never unduly elated by victory or depressed by defeat. While he possessed a sensitive nature and a singularly tender heart, he never allowed his sentiments to interfere with the stern duties of the soldier. He knew better than to attempt to hew rocks with a razor. He realized that paper bullets could not be fired in warfare. He felt that the hardest blows brought the quickest results; that more men died from disease in sickly camps than from shot and shell in battle.

His magnanimity to foes, his generosity to friends, will be talked of as long as many qualities are honored. You know after Vicksburg had succumbed to him he said in his order: "The garrison will march out tomorrow. Instruct your commands to be quiet and orderly as the prisoners pass by, and make no offensive remarks." After Lee's
surrender at Appomattox, when our batteries began to fire triumphal salutes, he at once suppressed them, saying in his order: "The war is over; the rebels are again our countrymen; the best way to celebrate the victory will be to abstain from all demonstrations in the field."

After the war General Lee and his officers were indicted in the civil courts of Virginia by direction of a President who was endeavoring to make treason odious, but succeeded in making nothing so odious as himself. General Lee appealed to his old antagonist for protection. He did not appeal to that heart in vain. General Grant at once took up the cudgels in his defense, threatened to resign his office if such officers were indicted while they continued to obey their paroles, and such was the logic of his argument and the force of his character that those indictments were soon after quashed. So that he penned no idle platitude, he fashioned no stilted epigram, he spoke the earnest convictions of an honest heart when he said, "Let us have peace."

He never tired of giving unstinted praise to worthy subordinates for the work they did. Like the chief artists who weave the Gobelin tapestries, he was content to stand behind the cloth and let those in front appear to be the chief contributors to the beauty of the fabric.

If there be one single word in all the wealth of the English language which best describes the predominating trait of General Grant’s character, that word is “loyalty.” Loyal to every great cause and work he was engaged in, loyal to his friends, loyal to his family, loyal to his country, loyal to his God. This produced a reciprocal effect in all who came in contact with him. It was one of the chief reasons why men became so loyally attached to him. It is true that this trait so dominated his whole character that it led him to make mistakes, it induced him to continue to stand by men who were no longer worthy of his confidence; but after all, it was a trait so grand, so noble, we do not stop to count the errors which resulted. It showed him to be a man who had the courage to be just, to stand between worthy men and their unworthy slanderers, and to let kindly sentiments have a voice in an age in which the heart played so small a part in public life. Many a public man has had hosts of followers because they fattened on the patronage dispensed at his hands; many a one has had troops of adherents because they were blind zealots in a cause he represented; but perhaps no man but General Grant had so many friends who loved him for his own sake, whose attachment strengthened only with time, whose affection knew neither variability nor shadow of turning, who stuck to him as closely as the toga to Nessus, whether he was captain, general, President, or simply private citizen.

General Grant was essentially created for great emergencies; it was the very magnitude of the task which called forth the powers which mastered it. In ordinary matters he was an ordinary man. In momentous affairs he towered as a giant. When he served in a company there was nothing in his acts to distinguish him from the fellow officers, but when he wielded corps and armies the great qualities of the commander flashed forth, and his master-strokes of genius placed him at once in the front rank of the world’s great captains. When he hauled wood from his little farm
and sold it in the streets of St. Louis, there was nothing in his business or financial capacity different from that of the small farmers about him; but when, as President of the Republic, he found it his duty to puncture the fallacy of the inflationists, to throttle by a veto the attempt of unwise legislators to tamper with the American credit, he penned a State paper so logical, so masterly, that it has ever since been the pride, wonder, and admiration of every lover of an honest currency. He was made for great things, not for little. He could collect for the nation $15,000,000 from Great Britain in settlement of the Alabama claims; he could not protect his own personal savings from the miscreants who robbed him in Wall Street.

During his last illness an indescribably touching incident happened which will ever be memorable, and which never can be effaced from the memory of those who witnessed it. Even after this lapse of years I can scarcely trust my own feelings to recall it. It was on Decoration Day in the city of New York, the last one he ever saw on earth. That morning the members of the Grand Army of the Republic, the veterans in that vicinity, arose earlier than was their wont. They seemed to spend more time that morning in unfurling the old battle flags, in burnishing the medals of honor which decorated their breasts, for on that day they had determined to march by the house of their dying commander to give him a last marching salute. In the streets the columns were forming; inside the house, on that bed from which he was never to rise again, lay the stricken chief. The hand which had received the surrendered swords of countless thousands could scarcely return the pressure of a friendly grasp. The voice which had cheered on to triumphant victory the legions of America’s manhood could no longer call for the cooling draught that slaked the thirst of a fevered tongue; and prostrate on that bed of anguish lay the form which in the New World had ridden at the head of conquering columns, which in the Old World had been deemed worthy to stand with head covered and feet sandaled in the presence of princes, kings, and emperors. Now his ear caught the sound of martial music. Bands were playing the same strains which had mingled with the echoes of his guns at Vicksburg, the same quicksteps to which his men had sped in hot haste in pursuit of Lee through Virginia. And then came the heavy, measured steps of moving columns, a step which can be acquired only by years of service in the field. He recognized it all now. It was the tread of his old veterans. With his little remaining strength he arose and dragged himself to the window. As he gazed upon those battle flags dipping to him in salute, those precious standards bullet-riddled, battle-stained, but remnants of their former selves, with scarcely enough left of them on which to imprint the names of the battles they had seen, his eyes once more kindled with the flames which had lighted them at Shiloh, on the heights of Chattanooga, amid the glories of Appomattox, and as those war-scarred veterans looked with uncovered heads and upturned faces for the last time upon the pallid features of their old chief, cheeks which had been bronzed by Southern suns and begrimed with powder were bathed in tears of manly grief. Soon they saw rising the hand which had so often pointed out to them the path of victory. He raised it slowly and painfully to his head in recognition of their salutations. The last of the columns had passed, the hand fell heavily by his side. It was his last military salute.