LINCOLN’S LETTER TO GRANT

After the fall of Vicksburg any doubts that Lincoln had regarding the generalship of Grant disappeared. The following from Albert D. Richardson’s *A Personal History of Ulysses S. Grant* shows Lincoln’s relief and appreciation.

Grant’s brilliant campaign – made easier by Pemberton’s glaring weakness – had opened the Great River from the Falls of St. Anthony to the southern sea! When the result became known, the Northwest was wild with delight. Yet the tidings traveled slowly. In Washington, before they arrived, there was grave anxiety. But one evening Joseph A. Ware, editor of Forney’s *Chronicle*, went to the White House, and was ushered in.

Journalist.– “Mr. President, have you any news to give me tonight?”

President.– “Yes, great news; but you must hurry up, for I have company down stairs, and can’t wait long. Grant has taken Vicksburg! Here are two dispatches, one from Rawlins, the other from Hurlbut. Don’t stop to read them, but I’ll copy the short one while you copy the long one, as you can write faster than I.”

Journalist (after the copying.) – “Mr. Lincoln, this must be most gratifying to you, after standing by Grant so steadfastly.”

President – “Yes, it is. No man will ever know how much trouble I have had to carry my point about him. The opposition from several of our best republicans has been so bitter that I could hardly resist it.”

Journalist – “The newspapers assailed him outrageously.”

President – “True, but that wasn’t half the trouble. Why, after Shiloh, a republican senator from Iowa denounced him to me as bloodthirsty, reckless of human life, and utterly unfit to lead troops; and because I wouldn’t sit down and dismiss him at once, went out in a rage, slammed the door after him. Even within the last two days, senators have demanded his immediate removal.”

The chief magistrate, who never did things by halves, promptly sent this remarkable autograph letter: –

Executive Mansion Washington D.C. July 16, 1863

To Major General Grant:

“My Dear General:– I do not remember that you and I ever met personally. I write this now as a grateful acknowledgment for the almost inestimable service you have done the country. I wish to say a word further. When you first reached the vicinity of Vicksburg, I thought you should do what you finally did—march the troops across the neck, run the batteries with the transports, and thus go below; and I never had any faith, except a general hope that you knew better than I, that the Yazoo Pass expedition and the like could succeed. When you got below and took Port Gibson, Grand Gulf, and vicinity, I thought you should go down the river and join General Banks; and when you turned northward east of the Big Black, I feared it was a mistake. I now wish to make the personal acknowledgment that you were right and I was wrong.

“Yours very truly.

A. Lincoln”
Executive Mansion,
Washington, July 13, 1863.

Maj. Gen. Grant,

Very dear General,

I do not remember that you and I ever met personally, I write this now as a grateful acknowledgment for the almost incredible power you have shown the country, I wish to pay a cordial respect. When you first reached the vicinity of Richland, I thought you should see what you finally saw, March the troops across the ruck, ran the battery near the rampart, and go below, and I never had any faith, except a general hope, that you knew better than I. The Negroes run from the city, color pursuing. When you got below you thought your forces, with the Gulf, were in victory; I thought you should go even the point to send your gun, Banks, and when you knew the West part of the Big Black. I feared it was a mistake. I was not sure to make the personnel accordant, that you were right, and I was wrong.

Yours very truly,

A. Lincoln.
BELLE EDMONDSON

Belle Edmondson, a young woman from Shelby County, Tennessee, volunteered as a secret agent for the Confederacy during the Civil War. When Memphis was occupied by Federal troops in June 1862, she smuggled contraband between the lines. In the diary that she kept during the war she made the following entry on Thursday April 14, 1864: "Father heard a rumor this evening that our Virginia General Robert Lee had ruined the left wing of Grant's Army. God grant it may be so. Grant is a fool to think he can whip Gen. Lee." The rumor turned out to be a false report.

NEW BOOK BY McFEELEY

Ulysses S. Grant: An Album by William S. McFeely is a collection of illustrations and essays revealing the people, places and events that shaped Grant's life. The material in the book spans Grant's entire life, from his birth in Point Pleasant, Ohio in 1822 to his final days at Mt. McGregor, New York in 1885. The book offers 100 illustrations, mostly in the form of engravings that appeared in newspapers of the day, including many illustrations of Grant's tour around the world. In a series of several essays McFeely discusses both Grant's private and public life. He writes about Grant's view on slavery, his marriage, how photographers portrayed him, his understanding of war, the places he lived, his trip around the world, and the writing of his memoirs. The book is 160 pages, hardbound.

BACK ISSUES

Back issues of the Grant Network Newsletter are available for purchase. Issues available are Volume 1, number 1 through Volume 9, number 4. The cost per issue is $5.00. Send a check or money order to Ulysses S. Grant Network, W 3547 Playbird Road, Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085.
BREAD IN THE ARMY

Issuing Bread to Soldiers During the Mexican War

In his Memoirs Grant describes how he was able to raise money when the regimental fund ran low during the Mexican War.

... I was kept somewhat busy during the winter of 1847-8. My regiment was stationed in Tacubaya. I was regimental quartermaster and commissary. ... In garrison there are various ways of keeping up a regimental fund sufficient to give extra pay to musicians, establish libraries and ten-pin alleys, subscribe to magazines, and furnish many extra comforts to the men. The best device for supplying the fund is to issue bread to the soldiers instead of flour. The ration used to be eighteen ounces per day of either flour or bread; and one hundred pounds of flour will make one hundred and forty pounds of bread. This saving was purchased by the commissary for the benefit of the fund. In the emergency the 4th infantry was laboring under. I rented a bakery in the city, hired bakers – Mexicans – bought fuel and whatever was necessary, and I also got a contract from the chief commissary of the army for baking a large amount of hard bread. In two months I made more money for the fund than my pay amounted to during the entire war. While stationed at Monterey I had relieved the post fund in the same way.

Supplying Bread at Vicksburg

In May of 1863, just before the siege of Vicksburg, Grant wrote the following in his Memoirs:

The 20th and 21st were spent in strengthening our position and in making roads in rear of the army, from Yazoo River or Chickasaw Bayou. Most of the army had now been for three weeks with only five days’ rations issued by the commissary. They had an abundance of food, however, but began to feel the want of bread. I remember that in passing around to the left of the line on the 21st, a soldier, recognizing me, said in rather a low voice, but yet so that I heard him, “Hard tack.” In a moment the cry was taken up all along the line, “Hard tack! Hard tack!” I told the men nearest to me that we had been engaged ever since the arrival of the troops in building a road over which to supply them with everything they needed. The cry was instantly changed to cheers. By the night of the 21st all the troops had full rations issued to them. The bread and coffee were highly appreciated.
On March 24, 1864, General Sherman wrote the following letter to his brother, John, from his headquarters, then at Nashville, Tennessee:

I went to Cincinnati with Grant to see Ellen. I stayed but two days, and am now here. I go to Decatur, Huntsville and Chattanooga, to be gone a week, and then return here. I shall have plenty to do. I am bored for photographs, etc. I send you the only one I have, which you can have duplicated, and let the operator sell to the curious. Give Grant all the support you can. If he can escape the toils of the schemers, he may do some good. He will fight, and the Army of the Potomac will have all the fighting they want. He will expect your friendship - we are close friends. His simplicity and modesty are natural and not affected. Whatever part is assigned me I will attempt, cost what it may in life and treasure .... Grant encourages his juniors and takes pleasure in supporting them.

On March 26, 1864 John Sherman wrote to his brother from Washington, D.C.:

My Dear Brother: Your movements have been so rapid of late that I scarcely knew where to address you. I have recently met with several officers who have been with you, among others General Grant and General Butterfield. General Grant is all the rage; he is subjected to the disgusting but dangerous process of being lionized. He is followed by crowds and is cheered everywhere. While he must despise the fickle fools who run after him, he, like most others, may be spoiled by this excess of flattery. He may be so elated as to forget the uncertain tenure upon which he holds and stakes his really well-earned laurels. I conversed with him but little, as I did not wish either to occupy his time or to be considered his flatterer. The opinion I form of him from his appearance is this - his will and common sense are the strongest features of his character. He is plain and modest, and so far bears himself well. All here give him hearty cooperation, but an officer who does not like Halleck tells me that Halleck will ruin Grant with the President in sixty days, or on failure to do so will resign...

General Sherman replied on April 5:

Grant is as good a leader as we can find. He has honesty, simplicity of character, singleness of purpose, and no hope or claim to usurp civil power. His character, more than his genius, will reconcile armies and attach the people. Let him alone .... If bothered, hampered, or embarrassed, he would drop you all in disgust, and let you slide into anarchy.

In one of Grant’s daily strolls about the camps and defenses, he approached a commissary warehouse guarded by negroes. He was suddenly stopped by one of the guardians:

SENTRY: — “You must throw away that cigar, sir.”

GRANT: — “Why?”

SENTRY: — “My instructions are not to let any man pass my beat who is smoking. If you want to go by you must throw away that cigar.”

The amused General obeyed and continued his walk.

Upon another afternoon a long, gaunt civilian wearing garments of rusty black, and a stovepipe hat, walking up in the rear of headquarters, was accosted by a hostler.

HOSTLER (gruffly): — “Keep out of here.”

VISITOR: — “Isn’t this General Grant’s tent?”

HOSTLER: — “Yes.”

VISITOR (striding forward): — “Well, I reckon he will let me inside.”

HOSTLER: — “You will soon find out!”

The agents of the Sanitary and Christian commissions, though of incalculable service in relieving the sufferings of soldiers, were unpopular at all headquarters, perhaps because they found fault with every real or fancied abuse. As the stranger neared the tent, a guard mistook him for one of these grumblers:

GUARD: — “No Sanitary folks allowed inside!”

VISITOR: — “I guess General Grant will see me.”

GUARD: — “I can’t let you pass, but I’ll send him your name. What is it?”

VISITOR: — “Abraham Lincoln.”

The veteran almost dropping his musket in surprise, gave the military salute, and with wide-staring eyes motioned the Commander-in-Chief to pass on. The President, visiting the army with his son, Tad, and a party of friends, was warmly received within, where he related with keen enjoyment his unexpected adventure.

From A Personal History of Ulysses S. Grant by Albert Richardson, 1868.
Grant's Offer of Service

In 1861, at the beginning of the Civil War, Grant was made a mustering officer of the State of Illinois. In May, 1861, Charles Lamphier, editor of the "Springfield Register," found him looking "tagged out, lonesome, poor and dejected." "What are you doing here in Springfield, Captain?" asked Lamphier. "Nothing—waiting," Grant replied.

Shortly after, he obtained a leave of absence, and went to his home town, Galena. It was while there that he wrote the following letter of application to Washington:

Col. L. Thomas,                      Galena, Ill., May 24, 1861.
Sir:

Having served for fifteen years in the regular army, including four years at West Point, and feeling it the duty of every one who has been educated at the Government expense to offer their services for the support of that Government, I have the honor, very respectfully, to tender my services until the close of the war, in such capacity as may be offered. I would say that in view of my present age, and length of service, I feel myself competent to command a regiment, if the President, in his judgment, should see fit to entrust one to me.

Since the first call of the President I have been serving on the staff of the Governor of this State, rendering such aid as I could in the organization of our State Militia, and am still engaged in that capacity. A letter addressed to me at Springfield, Ill., will reach me.

I am very Respectfully,

Your Obt. Svt.,

U. S. GRANT.

Receiving no reply, and, seeing no hope of appointment in Illinois, he made a visit to St. Louis, and applied for service under the State of Missouri, but got nothing. He then went to Cincinnati, Ohio, where George B. McClellan was in command. He sought a position on General McClellan's staff, but, after calling twice, failed even to see McClellan. While in Cincinnati, he received a telegram from Governor Yates offering him the command of the Twenty-first Illinois Volunteers. This was a disorderly and troublesome command, but Grant brought the regiment quickly under discipline, and, in the face of demoralizing conditions, showed himself the cool, calm master-commander.
ADAM BADEAU’S REFLECTIONS ON SHILOH

Results of the Battle

A part of the Army of the Tennessee undoubtedly misbehaved at Shiloh; this however, occurred only in Sherman and Prentiss’s divisions, where the troops were entirely raw. These commands were the most advanced, and received the first shock of the assault. It probably would have been better had the older troops been put in the advance. Still, Sherman’s presence at the key-point of the fight, almost compensated for the conduct of his men. No other division commander in Grant’s army was a professional soldier, and upon no other did Grant so rely as upon Sherman. ... I have heard Sherman say that he never saw such terrible fighting afterwards, and Grant compared Shiloh only with the Wilderness. The ground remained in the hands of Grant, and with the reinforcements that Buell brought, the national army was doubtless in vastly better condition than the rebels after the battle. But Halleck arrived on the 9th, and at once took command of all the national forces, and he restrained any advance except behind breastworks; so that, whatever immediate results might have been reaped from the repulse of Beauregard, were lost. The moral effect of the fight was also impaired by this course. In the battle, each party was forced to respect the fighting qualities of the other; the Northerners recognized the impetuous vigor and splendid enthusiasm of the rebels, and the latter found all the tenacity and determination of the North in those who opposed them. This mutual respect remained, but the bad effect of Halleck’s policy was that it caused in the army a depression which should have been known only to the defeated, while it gave to the country an idea that the army had suffered an overthrow. But, whatever injury the spirit of the troops sustained, was the result of the distrust manifested by Halleck, and not the victory of Shiloh.

Incorrect Reports of the Battle

The results of the battle of Shiloh were not all military. Incorrect accounts were circulated throughout the North; those who had seen only what occurred at the rear, misrepresented the actions at the front; others, who were in a single part of the field, attempted to give accurate descriptions of the whole, which they had no opportunities of knowing. General Buell and some of his officers, arriving late and seeing only the fugitives at the Landing, thought and said that the entire Army of the Tennessee was overwhelmed and disgraced; and for a long while the country was ignorant whether or not a great disaster had occurred. Rumors were industriously spread that Sherman had been surprised, that Prentiss was captured early in the morning, and in his shirt; that Grant was drunk, and that Buell was purposely dilatory. The country believed many of these rumors, and in the West especially, the outcry was fierce. The newspapers took up the theme; congressmen and politicians, some of them doubtless with pure intentions, and believing that they were seeking the best interests of the country, beset the President to relieve Grant entirely from command, and the fame that arose from Donelson was obscured by the unmerited odium of Shiloh.

GRANT'S OBSERVATIONS AFTER SHILOH

The battle of Shiloh, or Pittsburg, Landing, has been perhaps less understood, or, to state the case more accurately, more persistently misunderstood, than any other engagement between National and Confederate troops during the entire rebellion. Correct reports of the battle have been published, notably by Sherman, Badeau and, in a speech before a meeting of veterans, by General Prentiss; but all of these appeared long subsequent to the close of the rebellion and after public opinion had been most erroneously formed.

I myself made no report to General Halleck, further than was contained in a letter, written immediately after the battle informing him that an engagement had been fought and announcing the result. A few days afterwards General Halleck moved his headquarters to Pittsburg Landing and assumed command of the troops in the field. Although next to him in rank, and nominally in command of my old district and army, I was ignored as much as if I had been at the most distant point of territory within my jurisdiction; and although I was in command of all the troops engaged at Shiloh I was not permitted to see one of the reports of General Buell or his subordinates in that battle, until they were published by the War Department long after the event. For this reason I never made a full official report of this engagement.


---

NEWS FROM GRANT COTTAGE

From Spring through Fall 2003 the porch of the Cottage at Mt. McGregor, New York was decorated with planters, much in the same style that it was while General Grant sat there in his favorite chair in the summer of 1885 during his final days.

Also, this past year a new paved road was completed from the guard gate up to the loop in front of the cottage, including a new paved parking area near the cottage.