These recollections by Frederick Dent Grant, the oldest son of Ulysses and Julia, are transcribed from *Youth’s Companion*, Vol. 73, no. 3, January 19, 1899, p. 28-29.

My first recollection of my father dates back to 1854, when we, his family, were staying at the old homestead of my mother’s father, “Whitehaven,” a large country place near St. Louis, Missouri. My father had been a captain in the Fourth United States Infantry, which position he resigned August 1, 1854, having already been distinguished and brevetted in the Mexican War for “brave and meritorious conduct.” After four years’ service on the great northern lakes and the Pacific coast, he decided that he would no longer endure the separation from his family.

Arriving at St. Louis, he hired a buggy, drawn by a white horse, and drove out to Whitehaven, giving us a happy surprise. I remember distinctly that my nurse, Phyllis, exclaimed, “La, there’s Mr. Grant!” when he reached the gate, and I recall vividly the joy of our welcome. He jumped from the buggy, ran up the front steps, greeted my mother fondly, and clasped me and my brother Ulysses up in his arms.
This was the first time that I remember seeing my father. From that time on, being his eldest son, I was kept or stayed with him as much as circumstances would permit for nearly thirty-one years or until his death at Mount McGregor, on July 23, 1885.

My father was always most tender and kind, devoted to his wife and family, and most considerate of the feelings of those about him. He took the greatest personal interest in his children, their welfare and education, and as I was the oldest one, he seemed to have an especial desire and anxiety for me to appear most manly and brave. Little fellow as I was in 1854, he began immediately to teach me, not only from books, but how to ride, swim, shoot, and do many other things that only older boys usually learned.

We remained at the old homestead of my Grandfather Dent some little time, through the fall and winter, after my father’s resignation from the army. Later we moved to a beautiful cottage, known as “Wish-ton-Wish,” and began to cultivate a farm, owned by my mother, which was at the opposite end of my grandfather’s estate. My father now began to gather materials for building a house on the land which he was cultivating, and we moved into our new home the following year.

There we remained very happily for more than a year [Julia, in her memoirs, states the family lived in Hardscrabble, as they named the house, for only three months], my father enjoying and entering into his life as a farmer with his usual earnestness and determination, until my grandmother’s death, when, as my grandfather was getting old, it was deemed advisable and necessary that my mother should be with him, and look after his comfort somewhat. So we moved to Whitehaven, and remained with my Grandfather Dent for more than a year, when my father decided to move to St. Louis and go into the real estate business with Mr. Harry Boggs.

During my father’s life on the farm I was almost constantly with him, and although it was the period of his greatest hardship and disappointments, he was never too despondent to take the tenderest care of me. He always made me and his other children feel that we were of the greatest importance. If I was cold when driving with him, he would wrap me in his own coat, and on smooth roads he always allowed me that greatest pleasure of small boys--to drive. If we went into the city, he was solicitous that I should have my food at regular hours, and was always as thoughtful and gentle as a woman in his care for me. He never seemed fretted nor impatient, although cares must have often weighed heavy on his mind, but [he was] always quiet, strong and firm.

My father took my brother Ulysses and me, in 1857, to the first circus I ever saw, starting with us early one morning for the city, ten miles away. I have never forgotten that circus! It seems to me even now that the bareback riders were more daring, the tight-rope walkers more graceful, the clown funnier, the ringmaster more distinguished, and that it was altogether a finer, grander affair than anything I have seen since.

My father seemed to enjoy our pleasure and amusement at all the great sights of that show, but for some weeks after it Ulysses and I kept him in constant anxiety and difficulty to prevent us breaking our necks or backs in attempts to perform the feats of the circus actors.
In 1858, when my father moved from the old Dent homestead to St. Louis, we occupied for a time what was called the “Lynch house,” and later we moved to a pretty cottage nearby which he had purchased.

During our stay in St. Louis my father was a partner in the real estate firm of Boggs & Grant for some time, and later he entered the office of the United States custom-house. He was always as devoted to his business affairs as he had been to his duties as an army officer. He was always at home after office hours, and so regular in his coming that it was the custom of us children, then numbering four, to meet him as he left the street-car some little distance from our home, and walk back with him, sure of an affectionate, glad greeting from him. His homecoming was the part of the day to which we children looked forward with most joy, because he entered into our little pleasures with intense interest and sympathy.

One day, late in the autumn or early winter of 1858-59, it was very cold, and when we met my father at our usual trysting-place, he was carrying two bundles in his arms, one of which he handed to me and the other to Ulysses. They were skates--treasures not so common then as now to boys. Those gorgeous skates had wooden footrests painted red; the front went up high and curled, and ended in a brass acorn; such beautiful, wonderful skates I shall never see again.

On reaching home, father taught us how to strap the skates on our feet; then he took us into the yard, where there was a large space of smooth, frozen snow, and spent some time in patiently teaching us to skate, and comforting us when we fell.

As I grew older, it seemed quite a pride of father’s that I was a very strong, although not a graceful, skater.

He took similar interest in teaching me to swim while on the farm, going with me into the Gravois Creek on our place; and later, when we lived in Galena, he continued these lessons, until I became quite an expert, so he declared. General Grant was singularly modest in small and great affairs, but always happy to praise those in whom he was interested.

We lived in St. Louis until April, 1859, (this is incorrect, it was 1860) when we moved to Galena, Illinois, where my father entered into business with his father and brothers, the firm being quite large and important one for those days in the West. He remained thus engaged continually until he re-entered the army, in 1861. While engaged in business he never seemed to become impatient or tired of his duties, and he had time always for his family life.

Once in a while he was obliged to make business trips through Illinois, and he took me with him several times that I might have the great pleasure of traveling. We were provided with a shotgun and ammunition, and driving through the country, we frequently saw game to shoot along the roads. My father always allowed me to do the shooting, and all the lessons I ever had in the art were given to me by him. He was a most accomplished teacher.

When the war broke out in 1861, my father was appointed colonel of the Twenty-first Illinois Infantry, and went to Springfield, where he very kindly allowed me to accompany him. I remember well his solicitude in the organization and disciplining of his regiment, which included many turbulent spirits. Notwithstanding his great anxiety and constant care in these days, he never forgot or neglected me, his young son, while I was with him.
Later, when he moved his regiment from Springfield into Missouri, he was obliged to send me home until November, when we all joined him at Cairo, Illinois, where he was commanding the district of Southeast Missouri. At Cairo he was kept extremely busy in his office, seeing his family only at meals and late in the evening. On his tours of inspection he invariably took me, and never seemed worried to have me with him. He sent for his family whenever he could arrange to have us with him during the war.

When I alone of the family was with him before Vicksburg, he took pains to send letters to my mother on every occasion when it was possible to communicate with the North, inquiring anxiously about her and his absent children and telling her how I was. This tender interest and care for his family, shown in constant letters and messages, was continued to the end of the war, notwithstanding his enormous anxieties and responsibilities.

After the war, when I was at West Point, I had become too mature to need his care and solicitude, but I ever received his affectionate advice and guidance.

As grandchildren began to gather about him, he expressed for them the same tender interest that he had shown for his own children. For instance, once in Washington my father had noticed my little daughter Julia, then less than a year old, playing with a painted rubber doll. He was then President of the United States, and almost overwhelmed with public affairs, but when reading a paper he suddenly rose from his chair, came to me, and pointed to a paragraph which contained an account of a child who had been poisoned by the paint on some plaything. I was amazed that he could even then find time to observe anxiously, and even meditate on the little ones about him, and enter into all that pertained to their welfare and safety.

Strange that to the world, General Grant could have ever seemed a “man of iron,” and by some have been pronounced a man without a feeling heart! We, his family, knew him to be gentle, unselfish, charitable to others, tenderhearted and always just. He often considered others and their feelings to the sacrifice of himself and his own interests. He was loyal and true to his family and friends, and most forgiving to his enemies.

I was with my father in several great battles, and watched him during those scenes of turbulence and fearful carnage. When others became overexcited, he remained quiet, self-controlled, having on his face that set expression which enemies may have called hard and unflinching, his lips being closed firmly, with his grim determination to endure all and go through all for the final right and good. The scenes of bloodshed and agony caused him intense suffering, of which only those near him were aware.

**Grant Never Profane**

I never heard my father use an oath, and seldom an expletive of any sort, although I have seen him when he was under great strain. For instance, on the battlefield of Champion’s Hill he had pushed ahead of the army, and was attacked by the enemy. He threw his troops into line of battle as rapidly as they arrived, and soon we were under heavy fire. This happened to be an Indiana
column and the commanding general did not make his appearance, although the entire division was soon engaged in battle, under the immediate eye of my father.

When the division commander arrived, in a carriage, his tardiness of action had aroused my father, who was evidently very much annoyed. He spoke to the division commander, quietly although severely, saying that he was surprised to see him in a carriage in the rear of his division. The division commander explained that he had been quite ill all the morning, and had taken to the carriage in order to be able to keep up with his troops, but that he was quite ready to go into action with them now. This seemed to mollify my father very much, as he was ever ready to listen to reason; so he said simply that he was glad to hear that it was not a custom of his subordinate.

On the same field of battle the troops were terribly pressed, as their numbers were very small compared with those that they were resisting. A portion of General McPherson’s corps now came into line on the right of the Indiana division, and in the distance we could see the corps marching, countermarching and deploying in line toward the banks of a narrow stream. While this terrific battle was going on in front of us, my father sent staff officer after staff officer directing the corps commander to push ahead; but he seemed unable to get across this stream. Suddenly my father used the expression, which for him was violent, “Thunder and lightning! Why doesn’t he push ahead?”

With the exception of just this one time, he was apparently absolutely calm during all of this battle, which really was a great one, as it resulted in our capturing three thousand prisoners on the field, the capturing or destroying of all but one of the thirty guns which the enemy had brought out from Vicksburg, and the cutting of Lorrain’s division of troops, which would otherwise have been able to fight us behind the fortifications the next day at Black River Bridge.

My father always cautioned his sons against certain vices which many small boys possess, and guided us and warned us against falling into bad habits. He was extremely careful about everything he said, and in no way ever made misleading remarks. He seemed to abhor anything like prevarication, and could never be induced to tell us anything or promise anything to satisfy us for the moment, or which was not absolutely truthful, or which he did not carry out. We always knew that what he promised us would surely come to pass, if possible, and we also knew that when he told us we could not have this or do that the matter was settled, and disobedience would be unsafe for us. He never permitted his children to quarrel among themselves, and when he purchased any toy or playing for one, the others were made to recognize that it was the property of that one, although the possessor was taught to permit the others to enjoy it as much as possible.

During all the time that we lived in St. Louis and Galena it was the custom of my father to read to his family in the evening. He used to take some of the magazines, and a few books that he could afford at the time. Our family would gather around in the evening, after his return from his day’s business, to enjoy his reading. I remember very well hearing Dickens’s works read in this way, especially *Little Dorrit*, which was published in *Harper’s Monthly*. 
I never heard my father say an unjust, cruel word, even to those who sought to injure him. What were most impressed upon my mind during my youth, and afterward, were my father’s qualities of truthfulness, loyalty and honor, his unselfishness and his charitableness toward all.

If an unkind word had been uttered or an uncharitable thought expressed in our home circle, our greatest care and anxiety was to keep the fact from the knowledge of our father, because we realized that such expressions from one of his family would cause him deepest sorrow. From our earliest years we could not bear to have him think us unworthy. His children never feared him, as he was far from being stern or severe with us, but we respected him, loved him with deep affection, and we dreaded to disappoint him.

General Grant was considered by his countrymen a great commander, firmly pushing through overwhelming obstacles on to his goal; he was known to his children to be a tender-hearted, indulgent and most considerate parent, ever willing to sacrifice his pleasure for the happiness of those about him, even to the smallest and most unimportant member of the household.

A distressed or troubled expression in the face of one hear him was sure to be noticed, and called forth his sympathy. His was the character of a simple, unaffected, Christian gentleman, and his descendants may well try to imitate him.

In General Grant’s home we knew the gentle and just and chivalrous nature which the public recognized when he gave orders at Vicksburg and Appomattox that his own victorious soldiers should make no demonstration of triumph over the defeat of the opposing army. We, his family, knew best of all that spirit of warm good-will which caused him to say to General Lee, “Let your soldiers retain their horses and mules; they will need them to cultivate their farms.”