GENERAL GRANT'S LAST DAYS

say: "When a youngster, you were never bolstered up in that fashion, and every bed was the same. Now, curl up your legs, lie over on your side, and bend your neck while I tuck the cover around your shoulders."

Apparently the idea struck him pleasantly, as was shown by his docile and acquiescent manner. Lastly I placed his hand under the pillow, and asked him if he did not feel easy and comfortable. As he apparently desired then to be left alone, I could not resist the temptation to pat him coaxingly and enjoin him: "to go to sleep like a boy."

Mrs. Grant was present, and watched the proceeding with a pleased concern. After the covering had been otherwise properly arranged and the light in the sick chamber had been turned low, she and I sat beside the bed and awaited developments. In a few minutes we saw, to our great gratification, that the tired and heretofore restless patient was peacefully and soundly asleep. He rested as he must have done when a boy. After watching the patient for some time, I turned to Mrs. Grant, saying: "I'm afraid that the General will not like that kind of treatment. He may think it inconsistent with his dignity to be treated like a child, and may not understand the real motive."

"Not the slightest danger of that," replied Mrs. Grant. "He is the most simple-mannered and reasonable person in the world, and he likes to have persons whom he knows treat him without ceremony."

When, at his request, I tried the same method the following evening, he yielded to it as readily as before, and as the result of his "boy-fashion of sleeping," seldom afterward was there any need for anodynes until the last days of his sickness. He told me subsequently that he had not slept with his arm under a bolster and his knees curled up under his chin in that way since he first went to West Point, forty years before.

After this incident it happened that I was brought into closer relations with General Grant than I had been before. He seemed pleased to encourage a familiarity of intercourse. He was then no longer the naturally reserved man, but the frank and open-hearted friend. Thus he would often invite me to talk with him, and never manifested any hesitation in giving his views, in a reminiscent way, on different topics under discussion.

I was pardonably curious to learn his opinion on many matters with which his great career as a soldier had brought him in direct contact. In the "reticent man" there was thus opened for me a new line of psychological study. It was the difference between being within
actual touch of the light-house lamps and in formerly wondering at
their glare and flash when miles away. The same voice then spoke to
me that had made armies move and cannon roar. It was always an
edification to hear this central figure of it all so simply and modestly
refer to his apparently casual share of the work.

Ulysses S. Grant, grandson of
General U. S. Grant
This photograph was made about the time the letter was
written which is shown in facsimile on page 32.

When there was much discussion in the newspapers regarding
Grant's personal treatment of Lee on the occasion of the famous meet-
ing at Appomattox, I was interested to hear his own version of the
event. In all his conversations on the subject, he always spoke of Lee
as a great general and a magnanimous gentleman. It was only the
different reasons for fighting each other that, in a military sense, made
the two men forced enemies. Two practised players took opposite sides
on the checker-board. When the game was over, the issue was closed.
There was thus no necessity for any embarrassing explanations when the two opposing generals saluted each other. The real purpose of the meeting was at first masked by the ordinary civilities of the occasion. The difference in the appearance of the two was very marked. Lee was attired in an entirely new uniform; Grant wore a blouse, and was, as usual, without his sword.

Grant, in relating the circumstance, confessed himself at great disadvantage in his ordinary field clothes and "muddy boots," and felt bound to apologize accordingly. The apparent discourtesy was purely accidental, as Grant had no appropriate uniform at hand. He was notorious for his neglect of such formalities. He was a mere working-man on the field, with soft felt hat, private's overcoat, no sword, and with gauntlets trimmed to mere gloves. His only care was for his horse, always well caparisoned and well kept. This time, however, his pet animal limped to the rendezvous with a sprained foot, carrying an equally sorry rider just recovering from a severe attack of headache. Lee wore a magnificent sword, presented to him by the ladies of Richmond. Grant, noticing this, instantly made up his mind to waive the formality of accepting the weapon, as he did not wish in any way to wound the pride of so valiant an antagonist.

In remarking upon the circumstances connected with the surrender, he substantiated all the details mentioned in Badeau's military history.

It was strange indeed to hear Grant describe that memorable and dramatic scene with the least possible show of exultation or vainglory and with the rare and simple modesty of a man who was describing what appeared to him to be a very ordinary circumstance.

No one can say that Grant was given in any way to pomp or show. He was intolerant of all useless and extravagant exultation. It was his privilege to march at the head of his victorious army into Richmond and take formal possession of the conquered capital of the Confederacy; but instead of doing so, he immediately hurried in a quiet way to Washington to stop expenditure of men and money and to end the war in the quickest and most practical way in his power.

Mrs. Grant, in referring to some of the ovations given him during his memorable trip abroad, said that he submitted to them rather than enjoyed them. A striking instance was when he received the salute of royal elephants tendered him by the King of Siam. On that occasion the animals were drawn up in double line, and as the General walked alone along a path thus formed, each trunk by way of salute was raised
in turn as he passed. While fully appreciating the marked distinction thus shown him, his natural modesty was duly shocked by the attendant display of pomp, and he remarked at the end that he had never before "inspected such a novel guard mount." The same feeling appeared to possess him when hemmed in by a cheering crowd and compelled to acknowledge its cordial salutations. He never seemed able to understand that the greeting was intended as a distinctly personal compliment to the man.

That he was never spoiled by these outbursts of enthusiasm was shown by his frequent expressions of relief when the incentives for their display were over and he gracefully took his position as "an ordinary private citizen." In referring to the vote of thanks from Congress, he would say: "That is the Government's expression of appreciation of services"; and once he said to me, "That is the certificate given me for being a good boy in school."

He told me that one rainy evening while walking to a reception which was given in his honor he was overtaken by a pedestrian who was on his way to the same place of meeting. The stranger, who quite familiarly shared the General's umbrella, volunteered the information that he was going to see Grant. The General responded that he was likewise on his way to the hall.

"I have never seen Grant," said the stranger, "and I merely go to satisfy a personal curiosity. Between us, I have always thought that Grant was a very much overrated man."

"That's my view also," replied his chance companion.

When they afterward met on the receiving-line, the General was greatly amused when the stranger smilingly said: "If I had only known it, General, we might have shaken hands before."

Although the General had a well-earned reputation for remembering faces and individual points of character in connection with them, it was not surprising that he should sometimes be at a loss to place persons he had met before. In order to avoid embarrassment, he would frequently resort to the expedient of being informed in advance of the persons he was to meet.

At a reception given to him by General Sharpe in Kingston, New York, on a trip to the Catskill Mountains, a noted character of that region, a great admirer of Grant, was introduced to him. The General, attracted by the open-hearted and bluff manner of the man, inquired as to the chance of a pleasant day for the morrow and the
opportunity for a view from the mountain peaks. The man so much appreciated the privilege of even this brief interview that he constantly referred to it in talking with his neighbors.

Long afterward the General was a guest of Mr. Harding, the proprietor of the Kaaterskill Hotel, when the proud interviewer was seen approaching them on the road.

"Here comes a man, General, who constantly prides himself on having talked with you, and he is evidently bent on renewing the acquaintance."

"Where and when did I see him," asked the General, "and what is his name?"

Mr. Harding, being naturally acquainted with all the facts in the case, having often heard the man tell his story, gave the inquirer all the necessary information. When the countryman approached, an introduction followed.

"General, here is an old friend of yours, Mr. ———"

"What, Mr. ———! Oh, yes; I saw you at General Sharpe’s. We had fine weather the next day, although I did not think it possible when you told me. Are you always such a good weather-prophet?"
S

EEING General Grant so frequently, I had reasonable opportunities for studying his moods and becoming acquainted with his views on many subjects. The topics were for the most part introduced by himself, and there was a freedom in their discussion that was in strange contrast with his general reputation for studied reserve. His insight into character and motive was the outgrowth of long and varied experience with men and circumstances, and was always edifying to the listener. In recognizing fully the hopelessness of his physical ailment, and that the mortal issue was a mere question of time, there was a sad sincerity in his reflections that allowed no doubt of their weight and accuracy. At times he appeared to talk for posterity, that he might leave behind him some testimony that would be suggestive or useful to others.

It will be easily taken for granted that he had a great burden to bear in the contemplation of the ultimate doom that awaited him. Although he defiantly and bravely awaited the final termination of his sufferings, there were many occasions when he became mentally depressed. At such times he was ominously silent, and would sit gazing abstractedly into space, and be in essence and substance the silent and introspective man. When attempts were made to arouse him from such depressing reveries he would merely reply in monosyllables, as if desiring in a courteous way to be left to himself. Often, in apparent desperation, he would take to a game of solitaire, and for hours would be quietly fighting a battle with himself.
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During these periods of depression he was incapable of fixing his mind on his “Memoirs,” and often after an ineffectual effort would give up in despair. He was then aware of having lost his grip on himself, and would wait patiently and uncomplainingly for an opportunity to recover it. What seemed to annoy him most was the teasing pain in his throat and his difficulty in swallowing. When these symptoms were prominent, the mental depression was proportionately pronounced. His only concern was lest he might choke in his sleep. This possibility was so constantly in his thoughts that it was frequently necessary to comfort him with positive assurances to the contrary. His “choking spells” so often mentioned in the bulletins were nevertheless very distressing, and, although temporarily demoralizing to his pluck, were never attended with immediate danger of absolute suffocation.

Still these conditions worried him, and it was often a matter of surprise to those about him that he could at any time do any work whatever. His quietly determined struggle to do his best was a wholesome object lesson for all. For hours, while stubbornly working at his desk, he would deny himself a drink of water rather than trust to the chance of special pain in swallowing it.

Although he expressed firm belief in Christianity, he was in some sense a fatalist. Often, in speaking of his malady, he would say: “It was to have been.” His was a Christianity that taught him to submit to whatever might come. Religion supported him on one side, and philosophy on the other. Thus conditioned, he was naturally tolerant of the views of others. Sects to him were differences in methods rather than in principles. In speaking of this subject he remarked that latitude in religious thought and freedom of its expression were the foundations of true liberty in any government. The worship of God according to conscience was also the fundamental principle of all religions. The real point to be considered was whether a man was doing the most with the light that was given him. The Methodist form of worship appealed to him for its simplicity. The argument in favor of faith in the supernatural was the peace, comfort, and safety of its acceptance.

Although strictly reverential, he was not what might be called an enthusiastically devout Christian. When the Rev. Dr. Newman, his pastor and friend, called to pray with him, he was always pleased to see him, would be the first to kneel to the devotional exercise, and
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afterward would always in a quiet and humble way converse with his spiritual adviser on spiritual affairs. There could be no doubt of a great bond of sympathy between these two men, who, from long association, understood each other perfectly.

Grant's respect for religion was quite consistent with his high moral attributes. It has been most truly said of him that he was never profane or vulgar. His friends and intimates can bear ample testimony to this commendable part of his private character. He had promised his mother never to utter an oath, and had faithfully kept his word. He could be emphatic enough in his conversation, his orders,
and his writing, to make oaths of any kind entirely unnecessary. No one who knew the man would venture a questionable story in his presence. On one occasion, after a dinner, a guest, in venturing an anecdote, asked in a furtive way if any ladies were within hearing. The General, then President of the United States, simply replied: "No; but there are some gentlemen present," and showed his readiness to leave the room.

The other side of Grant's character and his belief in "What was to be, would be," presented a much more positive aspect. His explanations of the reasons why such should be the case were, however, more of a material than of a spiritual character. It was his interpretation of every-day events and of their direct relation to causes. Certainly his own life-experiences helped to ground him in such a faith. Events and conditions shaped themselves consistently in support of such a view. The waiting man and his real work came together at last, and when they did, as usually happens, there was the short circuit to fame. The man, the gun, the aim, and the game were all in line at the proper time. How many have tried, and how many more will try to fulfil such conditions, and have only failure for their efforts! He would modestly explain it from his own point of view by remarking: "It was to have been."

Certainly destiny appeared to control his career against many apparent odds. The strangest fact of all is, that Grant himself, after entering the army, never expected to be anything more than an ordinary soldier, doing his duty in humble positions, until such time as he might secure an instructorship at West Point, and enjoy a quiet, rural home on the Hudson. He often said that, next to being a physician, such a life had been his highest ambition. What he did was done because he could not help doing it. His life was an evolutionary process with a sure ending in the proper choice. Fate laid hold of the right man at last. No one could have guessed the choice amidst the parade, bluster, defeat, and failure of those who were equally prominent in the earlier years of the rebellion.

No man had had a poorer chance to distinguish himself than he after his early resignation from the army, in which he had reached the grade of captain. It was virtually the end of his ambition for military honors of any kind, and his only resource was to begin life again on a farm, with hard labor and a struggle with poverty, obscurity, and discouragement. No discipline could be more severe to one with even
moderate aspirations; but he bowed to it with the becoming resignation of a victim to uncontrollable circumstances. Impressed with the conviction that he had tried and failed, there was apparently nothing ahead for him but a repetition of past experiences. Still, behind it all was a determination to retrieve what he had lost. In such a determination there was the evidence of that staying power which afterward made him the great man. The will was there, in spite of the disheartening circumstances of his environment. His energies were loaded for action, but the opportunity was not yet in sight.

In that period before the Civil War he was known as the quiet, retired captain who had luck against him, and was becomingly pitied by such as believed that there might yet be some good in him. It so happened, however, that when military affairs were discussed in his home town of Galena at the outbreak of the war, no one there was better qualified to give advice in the raising and equipment of volunteer troops. At a public meeting he was asked to give his views. Embarrassed beyond measure, he modestly expressed them, and was surprised to find them accepted. In promising to take part in the movement, he was merely offering to do his bounden duty as an humble citizen. His only ambition was to be useful in a small way. The aim was to do diligently whatever came to hand, to work for the work's sake. Such a disposition characterized all his subsequent efforts. His highest hope at first was to be the colonel of a volunteer regiment, and this was made barely possible to him by the number of incompetent persons who through purely political influence had been appointed to that position. Even when he was promoted to be a brigadier-general, he was inclined to doubt his fitness for the responsibilities of the rank. His father, in fact, warned him at the time not to allow any foolish ambitions to get the better of his cooler judgment. He became so impressed by the admonition that he never thought of aiming higher. Thereafter it was to him the glory of his work rather than a reputation for its doing. He was too busy with material results to count the smaller vanities of their achievement.

Contact with great events gave him broad views of men and things, and calm judgment of motives and justice, in the estimation of qualifications for action in others. His early personal experiences gave him also a charitable feeling for failure in others. There was always a kind word for the man who had missed his mark. The unfortunate one was always viewed as the unlucky person who had been unable to
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overcome difficulties. There was never any arrogance or pretension in explaining his own successes. They were to him the merest accidents of circumstances.

New York
April 8, 1885

To the President of the United States

May I ask you to favor the appointment of Edward 1st, son of Frederick Grant, as a cadet at West Point upon his application.

New York City, Feb. 1, 1887

The names submitted that any action should be necessary in the above, have not been made with any malice on the part of Mr. Grant, but with the best interest of your son in mind.

New York, March 20, 1887

Facsimile of General Grant's letter, asking the appointment of his grandson to West Point, with the endorsement of General Sherman and President McKinnley.

It was plain to see that in his estimate of the different generals with whom he had been associated, Sherman and Sheridan took first place. He seemed never tired of speaking of their qualities in terms of deep affection: The first as the well-poised, stubborn, self-reliant, and unconquerable warrior, the other as the dashing, impetuous, and irresistible charger, but each incomparable in his respective line. In speaking of McClellan he maintained that the course taken by him early in the war was necessary to the end attained. McClellan was a judiciously cautious general, was justly loved by his army, was a good disciplinarian, and a splendid organizer. It was excellent strategy to protect and drill raw recruits until they were fit to take the offensive.

Contrary to what might be expected, he was very lenient in his criticism of Butler in connection with the Dutch Gap Canal fiasco. It may be recollected that Grant referred officially to the fact that the
enemy had corked up Butler's army as in a bottle. On asking the General why he had used such an expression, he avowed that he had no intention of making a severe or offensive criticism, but had merely repeated a phrase which had been used in a personal report made by General Barnard, his chief engineer.

For the Confederate generals he had great respect. Lee was a resourceful commander, a born strategist, and a valiant fighter. Joe Johnston showed wonderful ability, and his possible maneuvers were always a matter of deep concern to any one about to attack him.

Stonewall Jackson had been one year at West Point when Grant was graduated. Though viewed as a veritable crank, there seemed even then to be something in him that would tell in the long run. When Jackson obtained a command, his chance came. He was of the Cromwellian type, believing with all his heart that God was on his side. It was the conviction of a special mission. He imagined himself directly chosen to maintain the right, to stand against anything and everything wrong like the stone wall that he was.

For Buckner, who was Grant's old-time friend, there was always a good word, and when that officer visited Mount McGregor to tender his sympathies, the meeting was such as might have been expected.

For Napoleon General Grant expressed no liking. He said that Napoleon's treatment of Josephine was abominable, and admitted of no possible excuse, and would be a blot on his character for all time. Conceding that as a military genius Napoleon took first rank, he found his motives grasping, arbitrary, and selfish. It was the man working for himself rather than for his country—the use of tremendous power for most insignificant ends. Personal ambition so overwhelmed patriotism that he became a veritable "military monster."

Cromwell he regarded as an able general and still better statesman, and although a fanatic, he was admirably suited to the conditions of his time.

It was evident he thought that Wellington had the fortunes of war on his side at Waterloo, but it was by sheer force of good generalship that he took advantage of them. Napoleon, though more than a match for Wellington in resources, made a fatal miscalculation. But it was high time for Napoleon's career, based on a mere desire for personal aggrandizement and dictatorial power, to come to an end.

The character of Lincoln was often a subject of comment, and the General seemed always ready in his communicable moods to refer to
some peculiarity of the martyr president which showed simplicity of
demeanor and directness of purpose. His esteem for him was un-
bounded. "The first time I saw President Lincoln," he said, "I was
profoundly impressed by his modesty, sincerity, and earnestness. He
was justice, humanity, and charity all in one."

General Grant always showed amusement in referring to Lincoln's
humor under trying circumstances, and his great tact in easing the dis-
appointment of a candidate for office. The habit of illustrating a point
by a little story or a timely parable was one of Lincoln's traits. He
was always ready to argue a point on such a basis, and his meaning
was seldom misunderstood. On one occasion the General himself was
the subject of one of those touches of humor. Governor Smith of
Virginia, having removed the State capitol from Richmond to Dan-
ville, after Lee's surrender, sent a letter to General Grant, asking if
he would be permitted to exercise the functions of his office, and if not,
to leave the country unmolested by the Federal authorities. The Fed-
eral headquarters were then at Burkesville, and in the absence of Grant
in Washington, the note was received by General Meade, who imme-
diately telegraphed its contents to his commanding officer. General
Grant on meeting the President, showed him the despatch by way of
asking for instructions, but Lincoln, referring to the request to be
permitted to leave the country, gave none except as implied in the story
he told of an Irishman who was popular in Springfield, and who had
been persuaded to sign the pledge. Tiring of soda water, which he
was using as a substitute stimulant, one day, in spite of previous good
resolutions, he was strongly tempted to indulge in his old beverage,
and holding an empty tumbler behind him asked a friend if some
brandy could n't be poured in the water "unbeknownst" to him. In
reciting this anecdote, General Grant would pose himself as Lincoln
had, by standing by a chair, placing one foot on a rung and with glass
behind him and an averted face appear to be expecting the favor.

While General Grant was in no strict sense a story-teller on his
own account, he was at times given to repeating in an effective way
the anecdotes of his friends, and quietly showed great appreciation of
the humor of the various situations. He was never tired of referring
to Lincoln's odd and innocent mannerisms on the occasions when they
met. This, however, was always done in that loving spirit which was
the natural and instinctive outgrowth of an unquestioned admiration
for "the greatest man he had ever known."
General Grant writing his "Memoirs" at Mount McGregor