III

GENERAL GRANT'S voice was soft, deep, and distinct, and his speech deliberate, quiet, and even-toned. In conversation he was inclined to use short sentences, with few if any qualifications. It was an effort to get at the point in the surest and most direct way. He was always ready to hear the views of others. His apparently indifferent manner and abstracted air were apt to impress the speaker as lack of attention. But this seemed to be his method of absorbing things. Then would come a string of pertinent questions, which proved conclusively that he had not lost a point. He was by no means inclined to long argument, and much less to disputation. Having once made up his mind on a subject, he was silent, stubborn, and determined.

His temper was under such complete control that no one could believe he had any. Never openly demonstrative in any direction, he appeared the same under all conditions. When he was depressed, he was simply silent; when he was cheerful, he merely smiled. Even in his best moods I never heard him laugh outright. Thus he was in no sense emotionally demonstrative, and in his natural composure he exemplified the highest type of cultivated gentility. His little mannerisms were in no way eccentric or peculiar. These were only interesting as giving casual expression to his individuality.

Not long before he was taken ill, he was lamed by a fall on his hip, and was obliged to walk with a cane. Although many ornamental walking-sticks had been presented to him by fairs, military societies,
ladies, and his many personal friends, he preferred to use a plain hickory one with ordinary curved handle. This was in constant use wherever he went, even in going from one room to another.

When he dozed in a sitting position, his hands would be crossed in his lap, his head would be bowed, and his feet would rest on the chair opposite him. When lying in bed or on a lounge, he still retained the soldier fashion of merely covering the lower portion of his body, and seemed to prefer resting squarely on his back.

In his various movements there was no approach to awkwardness. His hands were always easily composed, were seldom used in gesture, and were supple and firm in their grasp. His tread was also firm, and his step had an easy stride, notwithstanding his temporary limp.

A slow and careful reader, he appeared to weigh every word, and would often keep the place in the line by his pointed finger, and look away as if to fix more firmly in his mind the idea conveyed.

His sleep was often disturbed by dreams, but they were the reflex of his physical conditions. At one time an extra pain in his throat gave him the impression of having been hit in the neck with a cannon-ball. On another occasion he dreamed of being choked by a footpad on a lonely road.

His eyesight was remarkably clear for distant objects, as was often demonstrated in the broad outlooks from Mount McGregor. This was evidently due, in part at least, to his military training in that respect. In using a field-glass, one hand was sufficient, the focal adjustment being made by his forefinger and thumb. This, too, was plainly the unconscious outcome of long practice. Glasses were always necessary for reading or writing, his preference being for ordinary horn-rimmed spectacles with large, round eyepieces.

When rumors were current of the impending death of the General, no efforts were spared by the press of the country to obtain accurate information of his actual condition. For a time it was reported that he was merely suffering from a chronic throat affection that promised soon to be relieved. But it was not until the formal consultation was held in his case, months after his first symptoms appeared, that the public was officially informed of the grave and fatal character of his malady. From that time every symptom as given in the bulletin was freely discussed. After a period of private life as an ordinary citizen, he was again an object of absorbing interest. So long accustomed to be in the public eye, he viewed the situation as a matter of course, and
GENERAL GRANT'S LAST DAYS

resignedly submitted to the elaborate, fulsome, and often exaggerated accounts of his behavior in the sick-room. To meet this urgent demand for details, he was forced to consent to the issue of bulletins to the general public. It was only by such means that the truth could be told and curiosity satisfied.

The proper preparation of the press-notices was a matter of great moment with the medical staff. Bearing in mind the many mistakes made in the case of President Garfield, in which contradictory and misleading bulletins were published, it was deemed imperative to state exact facts, with the full sanction of the medical men in attendance and also that of the family. The arrangements for the distribution of these despatches were elaborate and systematic. Three bulletin-boys were in constant attendance in the main hall, representing respectively the Western Union telegraph and cable service, the Associated Press, and the United Press. Each message, appropriately directed, was passed to the proper messenger, who would run with it to the nearest office of his company.

The general clearing-house for news was in the basement of a small house on the east side of Madison Avenue south of Sixty-sixth Street, and there were assembled the representatives of the Associated Press and the different leading dailies of the city. All the newspapers also had special wires to their central downtown offices. Reporters "covering the case" were so constantly on guard in the street that it seemed impossible for anything of importance to occur in the house without their knowledge. At the end of every consultation there was a group of anxious interviewers, who plied the medical men with questions. As there was never any other disposition than to tell the plain truth of the situation, all necessary satisfaction regarding the true import of the bulletins was easily obtained. Each journalist was constantly on the alert for new facts, his aim being to use them exclusively, and thus, in press parlance, to "beat" his confrères. To that end all sorts of devices were used. The doctors were specially besieged even in their homes; more than once inside facts were obtained by sending "dummy" patients, who, pretending to fear a similar disease to that of Grant, would ask many pertinent questions as to the nature of such a malady and its usual ending. Then, to the astonishment and dismay of the doctor, the conversation would appear as a formal newspaper interview.

There was scarcely a limit to the endeavors of such enterprising
news-gatherers. One of them, in order to gain a vantage-ground over his fellows, ventured affectionate advances to a chambermaid in one of the houses opposite, so that while calling upon his new acquaintance, he might have a better opportunity of watching from a commanding window. Another bribed one of the servants of the Grant domicile in order to gain access to the back yard and signal to a mounted confederate who was watching on Fifth Avenue across the then vacant lot on the corner.

As at that time, although for no obvious reason, the death of the General was momentarily expected, it was considered a matter of the greatest importance to get the earliest possible news of the sad event. For this purpose relays were constantly posted to keep watch. In stormy weather these men would take shelter in the areaways under the stoops, and would dodge out when a carriage approached the house or a visitor mounted the doorsteps. The lighting of any room but the sick chamber would call together a group of sentinels on the opposite side of the street, who would pace up and down the sidewalk often during the entire night, awaiting some new development.

For obvious reasons no unfavorable change in symptoms was discussed in the presence of the General, and it was only after the official bulletins were published that he had knowledge of the fact. As he insisted on reading his favorite papers, there was no way of keeping him in desirable ignorance of his actual condition. He would study the accounts with great care, and put his own interpretation on their significance. This disposition was in keeping with that of his habit of noting his pulse-beat by his watch while a consultation was in progress.

He was often much amused by the stories told of him, of his habits, plans, and moods, but was always willing to forgive the newsmongers for what they did not know. At other times he appeared to be much saddened by the gloomy prognostications that were ventured in the various papers. After reading one of the bulletins he was constrained to remark: "Doctor, you did not give a very favorable account of me yesterday." This was in spite of the fact that every care was taken to prevent alarm on his account as to his actual condition.

With a slowly progressing disease it was natural to expect that the bulletins would have a certain sameness of description and a monotony of weary hopefulness. Many of the newspapers were constantly straining a point to infuse a sensational element into their reports. The plain truth did not offer enough for varied and spicy reading.
Then came the reaction of the disappointment, with a suspicion that
the doctors had given false reports and that there had been a grave
mistake in the diagnosis of the original disease. This was made prob-
able by the fact that many of the distressing symptoms had disap-
peared for a time, and also by the anxious but ill-founded expectation
that the General would ultimately recover, in spite of previous predic-
tions. Although it was a matter for congratulation that such a tem-
porary relief from suffering had been gained, there was never any
change of opinion with the staff regarding the malady. Once the dif-
had so far disappeared tured to indulge in delights with such an
lunching on a mutton room, he felicitated to surprise the report-
perform what he con-
feat. But, alas! this
and was a mere chance struggle with over-
The General was too belief of the real na-
ture of his malady to be influenced by the critical tone of the press
regarding the alleged incompetence of his physicians. These attacks
were not only abusive in the extreme, but oftentimes they were posi-
tively libelous. One morning after one of these articles had appeared
in an editorial in one of the New York dailies, the General, who was
an attentive student of the discussion, asked me how I felt after such
a virulent attack on my professional character. When I answered to
the effect that the staff was right despite the criticism, he so far ac-
quiesced as to say that he was perfectly satisfied with the medical
treatment of his case, and that he was the person who naturally was
most interested in the course taken.

This comment led to a question as to how he had treated the many
newspaper criticisms to which he had been subjected in his long public
career. He remarked simply that he never read the papers containing
them, and was always too busy with more important matters to notice
the vaporings of scribblers who were willing to give free and valueless
lessons on matters of which they knew little or nothing. "If a man
assumes the responsibility of doing a thing," continued he, "he naturally does it his own way, and the result is the only proof, after all, that he may be right or wrong. One does the work, and the other does the guessing."

When the tables were turned against the doctors, ridiculing bulletins were printed, to give new point to the situation. In violation of all principles of good taste, the relations of medical attendant and patient were reversed, and Grant was represented as resenting the officiousness of the doctors by a promise to aid in restoring their weak mental and physical conditions. From the first the staff was accused of magnifying the situation, and much felicitation was manifested by many newspaper writers that the trick had at last been discovered. Outside friends of the family covertly advised a change of medical consultants, and numerous applications to such an end came from influential politicians throughout the country. So annoying were these importunities, that the General became personally interested in declaring his confidence in the men whom he himself had selected. He appeared to be particularly indignant at the charge that there had been an error in diagnosis, and asked that the true state of facts be explained to the public in a long bulletin, which was published after receiving his approval.

The publication of this document had the desired effect of silencing further criticism on the subject. It seemed then impossible to start a quarrel among the physicians in attendance, and the usual medical scandal in a case of such national interest was thus most happily averted. This result was also in great part due to the care to state only the exact truth in all the bulletins, and to obtain a unanimity of opinion from the entire staff before publication was permitted. Whatever misconception by the public might have existed of the true condition of affairs in the sick-room was due to the statements of visitors to the house who would give their personal views concerning the condition of the patient to the crowd of interviewers who awaited them on the sidewalk. The absurd story that the General was at one time suffering merely from an ordinary inflammation of the throat gained currency in this way, and gave the first impression that the physicians had unduly alarmed the public. The General himself always took a resigned and philosophical view of the situation. His simple wishes were to be free from constant pain, to be able to swallow his food without strangling, and to make the most of the time that was left him
to finish his work. He was virtually in the position of one who was settling his affairs before starting on a forced journey. His habit of mind made such resignation possible. Long accustomed to take his life in his hands and to face death in the emergencies of battle, he was not one to manifest fear when the end seemed inevitable. He would often speak of it with a calmness that could not be shaken. He was simply living each day by itself in the hope that there would be no distressful struggle at the last. His apprehensions in this regard were reasonably well founded, as in his inquiring way he reasoned that the progress of the ailment would either arrest his breathing or prevent his taking proper nourishment.

It was fortunate under the circumstances that his thought was centered on his "Memoirs," inasmuch as when he forced himself to write or dictate he was thus able to distract his attention from his condition. Hence every encouragement was given him to do as he pleased in such regard. He often remarked that his book was destined to be his own salvation as well as that of his family. Thus he would sit and write when most men would have been abed and under the influence of an anodyne.

The General's concern for help, when his time should come for needing it, was often manifested in what might otherwise have appeared to be casual conversations. In an impressive talk with me on one occasion, he obtained a promise that I would be with him without fail at the last. So anxious was he that nothing should interfere with such an understanding, that he questioned me concerning my whereabouts and future plans in my necessary absences from Mount McGregor. On learning that my summer home was at my farm on the Hudson, near Kingston, he was particular to learn how long it would take me to reach him in response to an urgent message. After crossing the river, the railroad starting-point would be Barrytown. He wished to know the distance from that point to Poughkeepsie, where a special locomotive could be obtained. Then, in order to master every detail of the trip, he indicated the route on a piece of wrapping-paper, and smilingly styled it "a working plan of battle." Alas! he had planned many such before, but none in which he could have been more personally interested. I was quite surprised at his knowledge of the topography of the country and his appreciation of relative distances. A line was made across the river to Barrytown, a spur to Poughkeepsie, a straight course northward through Hudson, Albany, and
Saratoga, and a slight detour to McGregor. The probable time between these places was duly indicated at proper points, and the total added at the bottom of the sheet. What became of this paper, which was evidently Grant's last "plan of battle," I did not ascertain. He simply folded it, and placed it in a side-pocket, and there was no subsequent occasion for referring to the subject in my presence.

With the first formal consultation of the surgical staff, the advisability of an operation was thoroughly discussed, and arguments were made against any such efforts to relieve him. Thus the treatment of the case was narrowed to such efforts as might be necessary to guard against possible complications and to make him as comfortable as possible by assuaging his pain and keeping his throat clear of an accidental accumulation of secretions. The wisdom of such a decision was manifested in sparing him unnecessary mutilation and allowing him to pass the remainder of his days in comparative comfort. Rela-
tively, however, it meant suffering for him until the end. His great apprehension was that he might be suddenly choked during his sleep. After a severe spell of threatened suffocation during the night of March 20th, this became a fixed conviction. Although quickly relieved at the time, he became so much demoralized concerning a possible recurrence of such troubles, that he passed his days and nights thereafter in a sitting position, with his feet resting on a chair.

The hurried call for Dr. Douglas and myself at the time of his first choking spell so alarmed the reporters on watch in the street that they gave currency to the probability that the General was in a very critical condition and that his death might be expected at any hour. Later, a similar announcement was made, based upon the occurrence of an accidental hemorrhage from the throat due to the separation of an inflammatory exudation that for days had clogged his breathing. The bleeding was quickly arrested by simple means, and he then felt so much relieved in his breathing and his increased ability to swallow that many of his friends believed that he might actually conquer the original disease. The press was also eager to adopt this optimistic view.

The room in which General Grant died

This room was the "parlor" of the Drexel cottage, Mount McGregor. The bed in the corner was placed there only a short time before General Grant's death, as he had been sleeping in a sitting posture in the chairs shown on the previous page.
and it required no little persuasion on the part of the staff to assure the public that, in spite of the temporary change for the better, all the symptoms were progressing slowly to the inevitable end.

Only on one occasion had there been any danger of sudden collapse, and this was on the night of April 5th, when the General, believing he was dying, summoned his family to his chair and asked that Dr. Newman, his faithful minister and friend, should baptize him. The sinking spell occurred about three o'clock in the morning. There was warning of this possible condition during the previous day, and it was deemed best that I should remain at the house in case any threatened change for the worse should show itself. While Dr. Douglas was watching the patient, I was hastily summoned from an adjoining bedroom by the startling announcement that the General was dying. The sufferer was evidently in an extremely weak condition. He was sitting in his chair as usual, with head bowed on chest, and was breathing in a labored way, feebly bidding farewell to his family, and striving to leave final directions regarding the completion of the second volume of his "Memoirs." His voice was scarcely audible, and his sentences were interrupted by painful gaspings for breath. The Rev. Dr. Newman was standing behind the chair with a small silver bowl in hand, repeating in solemn tones: "Ulysses Simpson Grant, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." The General feebly responded, "I thank you," and was evidently becomingly impressed with the solemnity of the proceeding. During this affecting scene hypodermics of brandy were repeatedly administered, and to the bystanders it appeared as if the sufferer had been almost miraculously snatched from death. In fact, it was so reported to the press, and much was made of a very ordinary method of treatment in such cases. Dr. Newman was especially astonished at the sudden change for the better, and emphatically remarked that it was due to the prayer that had just been offered. With a similar gratification in the physical responsiveness of the patient, I was inclined to attribute the result to the brandy. This circumstance afforded the press a fine opportunity for discussing the relative merits of prayer and brandy, and for a long time many opposite views on the question were freely ventilated.

Virtually confined to his room during his stay in Sixty-sixth Street, General Grant would sometimes realize the irksomeness of his condition, and strive to amuse himself by walking from one apartment to the other, playing solitaire by his open fire, viewing the watching