

## THE CHARACTER OF GENERAL GRANT— AN ENIGMA.

The character and destiny of Grant must always remain among the enigmas of history.

No man ever did so much of whom so little could have been predicted.

At the outbreak of the Civil War he had come nearly to middle life, having failed in every undertaking, and was sunk in hopeless poverty and obscurity.

He was destitute of those personal traits and qualities that attract and charm and make their possessor popular and beloved.

Taciturn, diffident, and out of countenance with the world, he had few acquaintances, fewer friends, and no influential associates among the civil and military leaders of his time.

There was not a county in the State of Illinois that did not contain, in 1861, some inhabitant who might have been more reasonably expected to have been commander in chief of the armies of the United States and twice its President, than this humble, indigent employee in the village store at Galena, Ulysses Simpson Grant.

But in four years that dejected subordinate, upon whom Fortune seemed to have exhausted its resentment, had commanded greater armies than Caesar, had fought more battles than Napoleon, and inscribed his name among the foremost warriors of the world.

In personal intercourse he was sometimes so commonplace and prosaic that it was quite impossible to conceive of him a celebrity. He apparently placed no such estimation on himself. He betrayed no exultation over his victories. He was not stirred by any passion for glory. He seemed devoid of imagination. He was incapable of apostrophizing the "Sun of Austerlitz," like Napoleon, or personifying the forty centuries that looked down from the summit of the Pyramids. He was rather the imperturbable incarnation of plain, vigorous common sense, that would plan campaigns and fight battles as if they were the ordinary occupations of daily life.

He is popularly supposed to have been vacant and dull in conversation, but while at times irresponsive, again he was alert, vivacious, and almost inspired.

Toward the end of his second term as President there was a dinner at the White House. The Electoral Commission was sitting to decide the disputed succession between Tilden and Hayes. It was a dark and ominous time. The most threatening since Appomattox. Revolution was imminent. Henry Watterson had just issued his proclamation calling for one hundred thousand unarmed Kentuckians to assemble at Washington, January 8, to watch the count. The subsiding passions of the war, the frenzies of reconstruction, were inflamed to exasperation. The air was heavy with portents.

After dinner the guests strolled into the library for coffee and cigars. Conversation turned to the situation and its perils. Its tone was depressed. The President said nothing, exhibited no interest, but smoked with deliberate stolidity. In a pause, Burnside turned to him and said: "Well, General, what do you think—is there going to be any trouble?"

After a perceptible interval, Grant appeared to emerge

from a reverie. His features were transformed, and with a voice and manner as if he were at the head of a million men, and in a suppressed tone of indescribable intensity, he said: "No, there will be no trouble. But it has been one rule of my life to be always ready."

As uttered, it was the most immense, impressive, and pregnant sentence to which I ever listened.

The talk instantly turned to other themes, and the President became chatty, voluble, and reminiscient. He referred to the agonizing sick headache from which he suffered the night before the surrender, and how it left him on the receipt of Lee's note as suddenly as the "shutting of a jack-knife." He said he never saw General Lee but once after the close of the war. He called at the Executive Mansion as he was passing through on his way to New York on some railroad transaction for the State of Virginia. In the course of the conversation, Lee said he could hardly understand why he was sent on the mission, because he knew absolutely nothing about railroads. Grant stated that he replied jocularly that they together had considerable to do with railroads in Virginia for a number of years, but Lee never smiled; which, the President thought, evinced a lack of "the saving sense of humor."

Toward midnight some one started a discussion as to the most desirable period of life: infancy, with its helpless unconsciousness; childhood, with its innocent enjoyment; youth, with its passions; manhood, with its achievements; age, with its repose. Some preferred one and some another. Grant had relapsed into silence again. Logan appealed to him for his opinion. He pondered a moment and replied: "Well, so far as I am concerned, I should like to be born again." This seemed a very clever way of saying that he had enjoyed life all

the way through. Logan retorted that he knew of no man who stood in greater need of being born again, and then we all went home.