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Ulysses S. Grant

ULYSSES S. GRANT.

A PAPER

Read before the Missouri Commandery

—OF THE—

MILITARY ORDER

—OF THE—

Loyal Legion of the United States,

MAY 1ST, 1886,

— BY —

COMPANION WILLIAM H. POWELL,

Brig.-General, U. S. Vols. and Brevet Major-General.

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ULYSSES S. GRANT.

COMPANIONS :

General U. S. Grant was born April 27th, 1822, in a little one-story house on the banks of the Ohio River, in the village of Point Pleasant, in Clermont County, in the State of Ohio. His eventful life covered a period of sixty-three years and three months lacking four days.

Our Grand and Great ~~Old~~ Commander, in whom we all had the most implicit confidence in the days of the terrible conflict through which we passed in 1861 and 1865, is dead. Nay, but a sleep—simply at parade rest. He will never die in the hearts of the American people. But his influence, like the orb of day, will rise and set day by day to shine the brighter and the clearer, through the cycles of time, until the land that gave him birth shall be destroyed in the final conflagration of the earth, when time shall be no more.

His lifeless form has received the last office-work and tribute of respect from his comrades, his nation, and the mourning millions of the whole earth who recognized his greatness, honored his achievements, experienced his humanity and now mourn his loss.

The unparalleled world-wide admiration manifested toward the great American Soldier in life, but now, in death, the subject of our national grief, made his mourning universal, not only throughout the length and breadth of our own land, north, south, east and west, but reached out in its universality wherever the sun sheds its rays, covering all oceans, seas, lakes and rivers; every land, nation and tongue upon the habitable globe.

Yes, comrades, methinks I see the vast army, who, in the field of fierce conflict and sufferings, who died for their country while executing the orders of him whose tongue is now silent in death, who passed over onto the other side from under the shadow of the flag, standing side by side with the great marshal of our valiant hosts, the martyred Lincoln, looking down over the battlements of heaven upon the scenes and ceremonies of August 8th, 1885, mourning with us that a great and mighty man had fallen.

Great and mighty man, did I say? Yes, verily, a great man, whose greatness will continue to unfold and develop as the years pass by, and the time comes when freed from passion and prejudices, his acts and conduct can and will be judged and rewarded by impartial jurists.

What an example for the young men of this generation, that the son of a poor tanner, without influence and friends until his own God-given, inherent genius developed into well formulated action, that yielded such wonderful results, had won them without wealth to purchase place or position of power, should advance step by step through all the vicissitudes of constant service and mingled blunders and successes, in spite of all the jealousies and combinations of political and military factions, till at the end of a four years war, equaling in magnitude the greatest conflicts of the past ages, he stood at the head of the greatest and grandest armies of the world, crowned by popular acclaim by the nations of the world *Our Greatest Soldier*. Such disinterested vindication is surely a satisfactory answer to all criticism, and sufficient evidence of his unquestioned greatness.

As critics we may reason on his career; we may prove from our individual stand-points that at but few stages in his history did he show personal evidence of marked ability; we may demonstrate what we may have supposed to have been his mistakes, as did General Halleck at Fort Donelson and Shiloh through prejudice and jealousies, or we may, on the other hand, swell the praises of his perhaps over-zealous subordinates and

admirers and hero worshippers. Be that as it may, after all, his career was wonderful, his success without a parallel. I feel that I am not claiming more for him than his conduct warrants nor more than your judgment readily approves, when I venture to say that no man loved his country more or served it better.

Praise others as we may, honor them as is their just due, still the deeds and fame of our departed Chieftain whom we mourn to-day, whose memory we so tenderly cherish places his name upon the world's roll of honor as the greatest soldier of his day. *In trials* patient and silent; *in battle* watchful and determined; *in reverses* active, cheerful, hopeful; in victory merciful, modest and magnanimous to the vanquished. His genius won for him the command of our armies.

His success as commander-in-chief of the armies in the field placed him at the head of the American Nation, where, in the simplicity of his greatness and natural self-poise, he exhibited new talents, maintaining himself with marked ability for eight years in the Administration of the Government in its then existing peculiar and unparalleled complexity.

Criticism is often selfish and vicious, based upon prejudice and passion, whilst right action that secures good results, though at the sacrifice of life in the field of battle, or party and personal friendship in the former is commendatory and justifiable, and but clearly demonstrates the greatness of the mind that conceived, and the power of the will that executes.

Follow our Old Commander in his military career, beginning at Belmont, Fort Henry, Fort Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg, Chattanooga, the battle of the Wilderness, March 5th, 6th and 7th, 1864; Spottsylvania C. H., May 9th to 12th, 1864; Five Forks, Petersburg, Richmond and Lee's surrender at Appomattox, April 6th, 1865, when his magnanimity and true character and greatness was magnified and crystallized in the terms of surrender submitted by him to General Lee. In that hour of conflict, prejudices and bitter animosities engendered by the war, I ask you, was there not something grand, bordering on the divine influencing the conduct of Grant toward

Lee, as they sat together at Appomattox, indicating a sublimity of character and superhuman power that freed him from the common sentiment of the masses, as with pen in hand, he formulated the terms of surrender of the Commander-in-chief of the confederate armies—that has since proven an important factor in allaying the bitter prejudices of the South, and won for its author the highest encomiums of praise.

How beautifully the following lines express the sentiments of the soldiers in their lamentation over the slowly ebbing tide of life of their dying hero:

It seemed to me that yesternight
 I heard the branches sighing
 Beneath my window, soft and low :
 "The great war chief is dying."
 His marches o'er, his battles won,
 His bright sword sheathed forever.
 The grand old soldier stands beside
 The dark and silent river.

While fame for him a chaplet weaves
 Within her fairest bowers,
 Of Shiloh's never-fading leaves,
 And Donelson's bright flowers ;
 Grim Vicksburg gives a crimson rose
 Embalmed in deathless story,
 And Appomattox adds a star
 To crown the wreath of glory.

He's dying now: the Angel Death,
 Insatiate and impartial,
 With icy fingers, stoops to touch
 The Union's old field marshal
 Who, like a soldier brave, awaits
 The summons so appalling,
 While o'er the land from sea to sea,
 The silent tear is falling.

Still in his veterans' hearts to-day
 His battle drums are beating ;
 His bugles always blew advance—
 With him was no retreating ;

And tenderly, with moistened eye,
 Columbia bends above him,
 And everywhere the sorrowing heart
 Tells how the people love him.

From golden-fruited orange groves
 To where the pines are sighing,
 The winds waft messages of love
 To Grant, the hero dying.
 The old world sends across the way
 A token of its sorrow;
 The greatest chief alive to-day
 May fall asleep to-morrow.

O, touch the hero gently, Death,
 The land is filled with weeping,
 And he is passing like a child—
 The counterfeit of sleeping,
 A million Boys in Blue now stand
 Around their dying brother;
 The mighty world knows but one Grant,
 'Twill never know another.

So let him die with honors crowned
 To live fore'er in story;
 The fields he won, the land he saved,
 Will be his lasting glory.
 O, mighty Ajax of the North,
 Old field marshal immortal,
 My saddened heart's with thee to-day
 Before the darkened portal.

I listened to the winds last night—
 How mournful was their sighing,
 It seems to me a nation sobs
 O'er Grant, the soldier dying.
 O, touch him, touch him softly, Death—
 Insatiate and impartial;
 He is the Union's mightiest chief—
 My cherished old field marshal."

On July morn the twenty-third
 The news reached every nation:
 Grant died this morn, as he had lived,
 In silent resignation.

The million Boys in Blue now stand
 Around their departed brother ;
 This mighty world knew but one Grant—
 We will never know another.

Of the long line of illustrious men who have left their impress upon our own country's history, there have been three who will stand above all the rest, and side by side with each other. Washington, who was the father of his country; Lincoln, who guided the Ship of State through the late storm of civil strife; and Grant, the Great General, who saved the nation from overthrow in the sanguinary struggle for national life. What a glorious trio of patriots, each and all of them worthy examples. While the American people cherish the names and imitate the virtues of these great patriots and benefactors of their race, the nation which the one founded and the other saved will live and prosper. Bacon said that "death openeth the good fame and extinguisheth envy." So these three—Washington, Lincoln and Grant, while they lived lives of truth and were each raised up in the providence of God for a great work, which they performed as though specially provided and guided by divine wisdom, yet they did not escape the shafts of envy and malice; their great lives were often clouded with sadness because the world could not read the secrets of their hearts as they struggled for the right.

But death in each case openeth the good fame and extinguisheth envy.

Washington is called the Father of his Country, first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen. Lincoln, by universal consent of mankind, is recognized as the emancipator of the slave race of America, and the friend of oppressed humanity everywhere. While GRANT, with firm step, steady hand, and heart full of devotion to duty, with faith in God and man, moved on and on in the work assigned him in the field, and still on as a statesman in the councils of the nation, amid the fierce shafts of opposition until his work was finished. And now that he has passed beyond the reach of

envy and hate and out of everybody's way, the world assigns him his place as an honest man and a patriot without a blot upon his record.

Grant's genius was always ready. It was always brightest in an emergency. All his faculties were sharpened in battle; and the man, who, to some, may have seemed dull, or even slow, was then the most prompt and decided.

In the last years of the war, after Grant became Commander-in-chief, there was need for a combination of his best traits. Developed as he then was by experience, taught by circumstances, learning from all he saw, and even more from what he had done—as few men have ever been developed or taught or have learned by patient submission to duty to his country more than self—taught him directness and steadiness of purpose, clearness and certainty of judgment, self-reliance, and immutable determination which carried him through the wilderness, which refused to be recalled from Richmond when *Early* threatened Washington, which kept him in front of Petersburg when the country was impatient at his apparent lack of success, which determined for him when the moment had come to assault the works which had detained him so long.

He seemed to possess the peculiar faculty of penetrating at once to the very heart of things. He was quick to see the point to strike, or the thing to do, and seeing it he never wavered in his judgment if the circumstances upon which he based his decision remained unchanged.

This prominent trait in his character was fully demonstrated when his army at Shiloh was badly broken into fragments, and thousands taken prisoner, and thousands more had, through the utter demoralization, gone to the rear. When General Buell came upon the field in advance of his troops, still miles away, who in that seeming darkest moment of the first day's struggle rode up to Grant near the river; seeing the situation, supposing all was lost, and not a ray of hope remaining, asked Grant, "What preparations have you made for retreating, General?" To which Grant replied, "I haven't

despaired of whipping them yet. "But if you *should* be whipped," replied Buell, "how will you get your men across the river? These transports will not take 10,000 men." "If I have to cross the river," said Grant, "10,000 will be all I shall need transports for." His army then was 30,000 strong.

It was as a fighter, rather than a maneuverer, that the "silent man" was so remarkably distinguished as in contradistinction to others who had preceded him to the command of the armies.

He was ready in resources and prompt in decision at Belmont, Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg, Chattanooga, in the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Five Forks, Petersburg, Richmond and Lee's Surrender.

But, it was his invincible determination that knew no fear, that marked his career at Shiloh, that won all his victories and secured peace and quite to our land, which he so much desired and which won the admiration of the whole earth, and the hearts of his own people and nation.

Follow him now into civil life, after the close of the war, into the difficult cabinet position forced upon him by President Johnson, and in his conduct during the memorable impeachment trial of the President, familiar to many if not all here this evening, his greatness failed him not: well do each of us remember how earnestly and trustingly the eyes and hearts of the people of this nation were then fixed hopefully upon General Grant.

Said one: "I remember seeing General Grant when President Johnson was crazed with rage; when the war minister, Stanton, was hedged in with bayonets; when the country was trembling from center to circumference with excitement; when the Executive and Congress each seemed about to call out under arms their respective partisans, and once more plunge the people into civil war, that amidst all that terrific excitement the people looked only with hope and confidence to General Grant, who, unmoved by the tempest of passion raging around him and spreading over the land, conscious of

his own ability to control the storm and quiet the elements of discord, sat in his headquarters quietly and serenely smoking his cigar; now receiving anxious inquiries from the President's friends, and anon receiving a delegation of grave but excited Senators; assuring all—nay convincing all—in his own way that the Republic was safe.

I ask you, call you not such a man greater than they all? And yet, some assume to say that General Grant was merely a fortunate man, achieving his success from the failures and reverses of his predecessors in command. Fortunate results follow only clear judgment, determined purpose, and indomitable execution, and are but the legitimate sequence of cause and effect, and so regarded by General Grant, as indicated by him in some of his many notable sayings, such as:

“I do not believe in luck in war any more than luck in business.”

“A general who will never take a chance in battle will never fight one.”

“I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer.”

During the advance on Richmond, in May, 1864, it is said that after a hard-fought battle in which the loss in both Grant's and Lee's armies was very great, Grant's Corps Commanders met that night at his headquarters to propose to him a council of war to consider the situation, which was granted, which resulted in advising Grant to fall back and cover Washington. The silent man listened only, and on the retirement of the council bade them good night; near midnight Grant issued an order to his Commanders to be in readiness at four o'clock next morning to “move to the front by the left flank” and engage the enemy; upon receipt of which several Commanders collected together immediately and repaired to Grant's headquarters to ask if there was not some mistake in the orders they had received. Reporting to Grant the purpose of their second visit, and the supposed mistake in the orders they had received, he promptly asked, “What were the orders you

received?" when his order was correctly reported, to which he replied, "Such were my orders;" to which the Corps Commanders suggested, "If you attempt such a movement, Lee will go to Washington," to which Grant significantly replied: "If Lee goes to Washington, I will go to Richmond; be in readiness to execute my order." Do you call such determined purpose luck? The sentiments contained in these few brief terse sayings clearly defines Grant's true character and pre-eminent qualifications as a military genius and commander of great armies, and wise executive, and fully demonstrates the true secret of his own great success.

If it were true that Grant was not a great, but a merely fortunate man, I ask why did not some other general capture Vicksburg? and why did not some one of the many generals previously commanding the army of the Potomac drive Lee out of Richmond? And why did not some one or more of the great statesmen at the National Capital, during the impeachment trial, calm the storms of human passion and political strife, and restore quiet, confidence and stability to the country.

As in war, so in peace, his greatness, courage and magnanimity characterized his entire life and formulated the beautiful canopy of peace and good-will to all mankind that lent its soft, gentle shadows to cover, as a veil, the terrible struggle in the hour of death from the loved ones who watched by his side, as his great soul bade adieu to mortal abode, to put on the Grand Uniform *we trust* in the eternal armies of heaven. At the surrender of Lee he was as impassive as on the most ordinary occasions. No exultation over the conquest of the conquered hero; and until some of his subordinates had congratulated him he seemed not to have realized that he had accomplished one of the greatest achievements in modern history; and when the works at Petersburg were carried, the enthusiasm was unbounded, and whenever or wherever they caught a glimpse of him the cheers were vociferous; and when, after the surrender of Lee, they began without orders to salute him with cannon, note the nobility, magnanimity, courage and

greatness of the man as he directed the firing to cease, lest it should wound the feelings of the prisoners, who, he said, were once again our countrymen.

And again, when a committee of Congress, headed by Charles Sumner, waited on him to propose that a picture should be painted of the surrender of Lee, to be placed in the rotunda of the National Capitol, he told them he should never consent, so far as he was concerned, to any picture being placed in the Capitol to commemorate a victory in which our own countrymen were the losers.

It is now too early to properly estimate General Grant. We are too near him. We are still in the shadow. As, drawn by the inexorable drive-wheels of time, humanity moves away from the rocky, mountain defiles of war, in which so many were overwhelmed, down the foot-hills and out upon the wide planes of ordinary, commonplace history and experience, men and women will pause again and again at each passing station, and contemplate the sublime heights from which they are regretfully receding. Then the great character of General Grant in all its majesty and grandeur will stand out before them, sublime, eternal, and they will appreciate, as we cannot to-day, the life which has just been rounded up. They will see the rugged inequalities, the clouds and darkness, and the sunlit glories, then they will in some degree comprehend its height and depth, its length and breadth.

We walk about within the great shadows; soldiers who fought with him, citizens who honored him.

We think of the great war, of the stirring events in which he took so prominent a part. We think of the soldiers of the Grand Army of the Republic who have preceded him to the silent land. We see in our midst his comrades whom we knew in the prime of life, in the vigor of young manhood.

We see their heads whitening with "the snows that never melt." We observe their halting steps. We realize that soon, ah, too soon, they like the soldiers of the Revolution, will have all disappeared.

We think of what might have been had they not given the vigor and glory of their young lives to their great work. We think of what might have been had the war been prolonged, had not a man equal to the emergency risen out of the darkness to organize victory.

We see what is: A nation united, redeemed, enfranchised, a great people prosperous and happy, a republic of near sixty million souls, making greater advances since these heroes laid down their arms than in all its previous history.

We try to realize what is to be, the grandeur and glory to which this great republic will yet attain; we think of men and women and children gathered around millions of happy fire-sides in the days that are to be blessed with peace and plenty.

We think of them talking how their ancestors fought and he led, and repeating the story of the achievements of their fathers and grandfathers linked and blended forever with the name of General Grant.

This is no hero worship. His was not mere military glory. There is no path, however weary and sorrowful, which he has not trod. He drank to the dregs the bitter cup of poverty and want, of humiliation, of sorrow. He stood before Kings and was himself a ruler mightier than they. Without brilliant personal endowments, such as arrest the attention and dazzle the eye, by the quiet force of persistent effort directed by sound discretion and constant devotion to duty he performed where many failed.

The record of his extraordinary life is made up. His courage, his fortitude, his gentleness, his simple unaffected devotion, his patient endurance, his constancy, will be the themes of eulogium and panegyric so long as men think and act and labor and love. Farewell, great leader, illustrious citizen, noble benefactor, generous, faithful friend.

Rest forever in that peace which your own deeds achieved, and your own voice commended. Rest forever upon the bosom of humanity, close to that gentle master in whose services you never faltered.

“The whole earth is your sepulcher.”
 “All time is the millenium of thy glory.”
 Farewell. Farewell.

Companions of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of Missouri:— We are furnished an opportunity and called upon at this time to bid adieu to our old Commander and Chieftain. He has been dropped out of the ranks on earth, but his name will stand on the Muster-Roll of eternity, and when called, the Adjutant will answer “Absent,” for the soldier never dies.

May we, who remain to keep the camp-fires burning, ever hold a place in each circle and in each memory for him. And when the Archangel of Time shall beat the reveille of the resurrection morn, may we and all the valiant hosts who gave up their lives for free government be permitted to pass in Grand Riview before the God of nations, marshaled by him who said “Let us have peace,” into an eternity of peace forever.
Farewell. FAREWELL.





