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"If It Takes All Summer"

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IF IT TAKES ALL SUMMER: THE PERSONAL MEMOIRS OF ULYSSES S. GRANT

He was the most famous man in America - - and he was broke.

It happened in a matter of days. On Sunday, May 4, 1884, his partner, Ferdinand Ward, came to his home on East 66th Street in New York City and told him that the City Chamberlain had made a sudden withdrawal from the Marine Bank of Brooklyn, one of the city's depositories, but also the holder of their private investment firm's cash reserves. The bank needed $150,000 to meet the firm's obligations.

He went to an old friend and political supporter, the railroad magnate, William Henry Vanderbilt, to ask for help. Vanderbilt said, "I care nothing for the bank and very little about your firm. I will draw my check for the amount you ask. I consider it a personal loan to you and not to any other party." (Perry, p. xx)

He delivered the check to Ward, and the crisis seemed to pass. But the next day Ward informed the man's son, also a partner, that $150,000 was not enough; the firm needed another $500,000 to meet its creditors' demands. Financial tycoon Jay Gould examined the firm's securities and told the son that they were virtually worthless.

When the father arrived at his office three days later, he was met by an angry crowd of investors demanding their money. His son broke the news to him: "The Marine Bank closed this morning. Ward has fled. We cannot find our securities." Ulysses S. Grant, the great Civil War General, the 18th President of the United States, was ruined, swindled, and hopelessly in debt. (Perry, p. xxii)

Grant vowed he would repay every penny of debt he owed and pledged to find a way to provide for his wife and children - - who had lost their own investments and were besieged by creditors.

He did have a means of making money. Five months earlier he had been approached by the editors of the Century Magazine to contribute to a series of articles they were planning to publish on the great battles of the Civil War, written by its participants. These articles would turn out to be one of the most successful publishing ventures in United States history, eventually compiled as the three-thousand page "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War" and earning one million dollars for the magazine. Grant had declined for a number of reasons.

For one thing he did not think he was a writer. He was innately modest and did not want to trumpet his accomplishments. Also, he said, other writers, most notably his wartime Secretary, Adam Badeau, had written extensively on the war. And finally he hesitated because of a peculiar habit which he had developed as a boy and which stayed with him all his life: he dreaded retracing his steps.

> One of my superstitions had always been when I started to go anywhere or do anything, not to turn back, or stop until the thing intended had been accomplished. I have frequently started to go places which I have never been and to which I did not know the way…and if I got past the place without knowing it, instead of turning back, I would go

on until the road was found turning in the right direction, take that, and come in by the other side. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 23)

But now Grant needed the money, and when he received a note from the Century Magazine's associate editor, Robert Johnson, congratulating him on his election as President of the Society of the Army of the Potomac, he invited Johnson to his summer residence in Long Branch, New Jersey, to discuss the writing proposition. After hearing Grant's candid explanation of his financial problems, Johnson suggested that Grant write four articles - - one each on the Battle of Shiloh, the Vicksburg Campaign, the Battle of the Wilderness, and the surrender of Lee - - for each of which the magazine would pay him five hundred dollars, an extraordinary sum for the time.

Johnson was disappointed in Grant's first manuscript on the Battle of Shiloh, which he received a month later. There was no color or life in the article and almost none of Grant. Johnson told Grant he was writing a story, not a battle report, and coached him to add personal anecdotes. Grant went back to work and within a week produced a longer manuscript following Johnson's advice, employing his extraordinary memory and eye for detail, and recounting small incidents that gave color to his theme. (Perry, pp. 58-59)

With the help of his son Fred, a veteran of the Fourth Infantry and the author of a book about the Yellowstone Expedition, and Badeau, who was now working on a history of Grant's presidency, Grant moved on from Shiloh to the Vicksburg Campaign - - and began thinking about expanding the articles into complete memoirs. Johnson, accompanied by the President of the Century Company, Roswell Smith, visited Grant in late July and discussed having the company publish his memoirs. But Smith, confident he would get the book, was a little too cautious about its prospects for sales, did not press the matter, and left without a final agreement.

During the visit Smith and Johnson noticed that Grant had his throat wrapped in a scarf and his voice was raspy. In fact, about two months earlier, on June 2nd, sitting on his porch, Grant had bitten into a peach, felt an unbearable pain flash through his mouth, and howled in distress. But it was not until October 22nd, after the family had moved back to New York City, that Grant consulted his family doctor, Fordyce Barker, who immediately referred him to the foremost throat specialist on the east coast, Dr. John Douglas.

Douglas saw that Grant's throat was inflamed, but the real problem was at the base of his tongue, where Douglas noticed a growth that looked scaly and infected. When Grant asked him "Is it cancer?" Douglas was blunt. "The disease is serious, epithelial in nature, and sometime capable of being cured." A diagnosis was confirmed two weeks later when Douglas excised a sample of Grant's ulcerated throat and sent it to noted microbiologist, George Shrady, who, when advised that the patient was General Grant, stated, "Then General Grant is doomed." (Perry, p. 65, 69)

Apparently Grant knew his fate. When he left Dr. Douglas after that initial examination, he went straight to Roswell Smith's office and told him he wanted to write his memoirs. Smith was overjoyed, offered Grant a ten percent royalty with an expected sale of twenty-five thousand copies, and said he would prepare an agreement.

By the second week in November, Grant was well into his work, though he had not yet decided to sign Smith's contract. His cough worsened; his throat seemed always aflame; and his voice began to fail. Relief from a painkiller - - a liquid mixture of cocaine and disinfectant - - sprayed into his throat was only temporary. His throat began to constrict and his breathing became more labored. A sensation of choking overwhelmed him when he was lying down. Painful swallowing restricted his diet to soups and oatmeal. (Perry, pp. 79-80)

A frequent visitor to Grant's home was Mark Twain. The two had been close friends since 1879 when Twain had toasted Grant at the GAR Reunion in Chicago. Twain idolized Grant and was fascinated by him, describing him as "an unprepossessing man who had, in the crunch, the powers of a giant...He saw him as Tom Sawyer grown up." (Goldhurst, p. 126)

Thus it was no surprise when Twain burst into Grant's home on the morning of November 19th, according to his recollection, at the moment Grant was about to affix his signature to the Century Magazine's contract. The night before Twain had overheard two men discussing Grant's Memoirs, one of whom turned out to be Richard Gilder, the senior editor of the Century Company. Twain asked Grant to show him the contract. He was outraged at the terms - - a meager ten percent of the royalties less expenses on a book sold through book stores. He made an immediate offer of either a twenty percent royalty on sales or seventy percent of the book's profits for the publishing company he owned with his nephew, the Charles L. Webster House, to publish Grant's memoirs - - by subscription, that is, door to door, by a pre-sold contract, which, he said, would guarantee sales of not less than $100,000. When Grant demurred, mindful of his commitment to the Century Company, Twain reminded him that three years earlier he had suggested to Grant that he write his memoirs.

Grant put off making a decision on his publisher through the winter of 1884-1885, while his condition worsened. By Christmas he was depressed, moody, unable to work. Staring at the wall, he came to realize he was now under heavy marching orders and, like all soldiers, he must brave death. "He went back to work, back to fighting. Finishing the memoirs was a race with time and an hourly struggle with pain." (Goldhurst, p. 152)

Mark Twain returned to New York from a three-month speaking tour and went to see Grant on February 21st, anxious to get a commitment. He was relieved when Grant told him he would get the book - - and that he would accept seventy percent of the profits rather than twenty percent of the sales, because, if the book was not profitable, Grant did not want to make money on the sales at Twain's expense. Mark Twain was disturbed by Grant's appearance; he looked exhausted and spoke with difficulty, barely above a whisper. On leaving he was told by Grant's son, Fred, that Grant was seriously ill and not expected to recover.

The contract was signed six days later.

For Grant, the memoirs were becoming more than a means to provide for his family after his now certain death.

> They would become his reason for living, the means by which he tapped into the enormous reserves of strength that, at the most important moments of his life, he had

always believed were there. He was aware of how his writing was strengthening him, giving him new resolve. He spoke of this bluntly to his daughter Nellie. "It would be very hard for me to be confined to the house if it was not that I had become interested in the work which I have undertaken." (Perry, p.142)

The street outside Grant's home was besieged with reporters, well-wishers, and curious thrill seekers, when three major New York newspapers headlined his terminal condition on March 1st. A steady stream of old friends, commanders, and simple soldiers whom Grant had known came in pairs or singly to pay their respects. They remarked on his desk piled high with notes, orders, maps, memos and books -- as well as the list Grant made late each afternoon of which parts of the book should be completed the next morning.

Twain, who visited almost daily, was amazed at Grant's clarity of expression and his prodigious abilities. "He said there was not one literary man in one-hundred who furnished as clear a copy as Grant." He observed Grant producing ten thousand words a day towards the end of March and commented, "It kills me these days to write half of that." (Perry, p. 162)

On March 25th, Grant was seized by a serious coughing fit, which reoccurred each night thereafter for five nights. His doctors relieved these spasms as best they could with cocaine and morphine. The press thought he would die on March 31st. But he did not. His labored breathing settled and on the morning of April 3rd he rose from his bed and started to work again. The next day, the anniversary of Grant's occupation at Richmond, Dr. Douglas turned to him with a smile and said, "General we propose to keep this line if it takes all summer," echoing Grant's famous dispatch to Washington after the Battle of Spotsylvania in 1864. (Perry, p. 172)

After the crisis, Grant resumed dictating for three or four hours each afternoon, sometimes producing enough material to fill twenty-five printed pages. He was now past his great victory at Vicksburg and well into volume two. After finishing the account of Sherman's march to the sea, he was in a state of near collapse.

Restlessness at night drove him to his work. From May 6th into June he wrote for several hours into the night before trying to sleep in his chair near dawn. On June 8th, he told Twain he had finished a rough draft of volume two - - too long he said by one-hundred pages. "Not a bad fault," wrote Twain in his journal. "A short time ago we were afraid he would lack four-hundred of being enough." (Goldhurst, p. 203) Yet Grant would not surrender the manuscript. He wanted to work on its completion himself, to mold the draft into a chronological narrative and fill it out when needed.

On June 16th, with Grant supervising the transporting of his beloved manuscript, the family moved to a cottage at Mount McGregor, near Saratoga, owned by wealthy philanthropist Jospeh W. Drexel, where it was felt that the cooler climate would lessen his suffering.

On June 21st, he worked on his book for an hour and on the 22nd for several more. "He was adding as many as twenty pages each day with his additions and corrections to the manuscript to volume two and the page proofs of volume one. He was undertaking extended commentaries and revisions on what he had already written." (Goldhurst, p. 211) A few days later, with a new

measure of strength in his voice, he rewrote by dictation his chapter on Lee's surrender at Appomattox.

On June 27th, at Grant's request, Mark Twain visited him at Mount McGregor, hoping to leave with the completed manuscript. Grant made it clear that he would continue to add to the book; Twain later admitted that these final efforts made a huge difference. During that visit Grant wrote a five-hundred word preface, one of the strongest sections of the book. (Perry, p. 222)

Grant spent July 4th reviewing the work he had done and rewriting the very end of the book. He told his son he was concerned about the chapters he had written on the battles around Petersburg. He worked diligently through the next week. Dr. Douglas commented, "I fear the worst the day the General completes his book." (Perry, p. 225)

On July 19th Grant put down his pencil. He smiled a bit, looked down at his paper, and handed it to his transcriber. "The book is finished," he said. He had done as much as he could. His secretary wrote, "To take dictation from him was painful and his voice got lower and lower as he went on. At last it was a mere whisper and then it stopped altogether. I shall never forget his joy at the completion of his book. He was so afraid in the last week that he couldn't finish or revise it." (Perry, p. 225)

On July 22nd, Dr. Douglas told the family that Grant was dying. His temperature had risen, his pulse was faster, erratically beating between one-hundred and one-twenty with no stability. He remained conscious throughout the day and into the evening. When asked if he wanted anything, he said, "Water." He rose late in the evening and said he wanted to lie down. It was the first time in many months that he had not slept in his chair. He died peacefully the next morning, July 23, 1885, at eight a.m., four days after completing his Memoirs.

The 295,000 words that Grant wrote in the last year of his life filled 1,200 pages and two volumes. Charles Webster and Company sold 312,000 sets at nine dollars, 624,000 books, exceeding the "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" by 100,000. Julia Grant's first check was for $200,000; it is still on display at the Players Club in New York, where Mark Twain proudly and ceremoniously hung it. Eventually, in all editions, the work earned Grant's estate nearly half a million dollars.

Reviewers of the memoirs were generous in praise. Twain, not an unbiased reader, called it "a unique and unapproachable literary masterpiece." The New York Tribune devoted a full page to its publication, finding the book "a model of simplicity and directness." William Dean Howells wrote to Twain: "I am reading Grant's book with delight I fail to find in novels. I think he is one of the most natural, that is best, writer I ever read. The book merits its enormous success, simply as literature." (Goldhurst, p. 258)

Contemporary critics have been equally laudatory. John Keegan, British military historian and analyst, called the Personal Memoirs "perhaps the most revelatory autobiography of high command in any language...If there is any single contemporary document which explains why the North won the Civil War, that abiding conundrum of American historical inquiry, it is the Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant." (Keegan, p. 202)

A most eloquent testimony of the literary value of Grant's Memoirs came from Edmund Wilson in his seminal study of Civil War literature: "Patriotic Gore." "This record of Grant's campaigns," he wrote, "may well rank, as Mark Twain believed, as the most remarkable work of its kind since the Commentaries of Julius Caesar. It is also, in its way - - like Herndon's Lincoln or like Walden or Leaves of Grass - - a unique expression of the national character." Wilson praised Grant's writing in these words:

> Its literary qualities, so unobtrusive, are evidence of a natural fitness of character, mind, and taste; and the Memoirs convey also Grant's dynamic force and a definiteness of his personality. Perhaps never has a book so objective in form seemed so personal in every line, and though the tempo is never increased, the narrative, once we get into the war, seems to move with the increasing momentum that the soldiers must have felt in the field. What distinguishes Grant's story from the records of campaigns that are usually produced by Generals is that somehow, despite its sobriety, it communicates a spirit of the battles themselves and makes it possible to understand how Grant won them...The reader finds himself involved - - he is actually on edge to know how the Civil War is turning out. (Wilson, pp. 143-144)

For the remainder of this paper, I would like to offer some comments in support of these claims, loosely organized around three topics: literary elements; thematic material; and narrative structure focusing on critical moments in Grant's war story.

The first literary element, Grant's style of writing, has already been identified as singularly effective. Its simplicity and clarity and its reliance on verbs of action are reflective of the author's own force of character.

Edmund Wilson says this about Grant's style:

> In general, the writing of the Memoirs is perfect in concision and clearness, in its propriety and purity of language. Every word that Grant wrote has its purpose yet seems understated. (Wilson, p. 142)

In the Memoirs, in describing General Zachary Taylor, Grant is actually describing himself: "He knew how to express what he wanted to say in the fewest well-chosen words, but would not sacrifice meaning to the construction of high-sounding sentences." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 72)

Horace Porter, who served on Grant's staff from the Wilderness through Appomattox and whose own version of the events, "Campaigning with Grant", is next in value to Grant's as a revealing portrait of the General in Chief, said of Grant:

> He wrote nearly all his documents with his own hand and seldom dictated to anyone, even the most unimportant dispatch. His work was performed swiftly and uninterruptedly, but without any marked display of nervous energy. His thoughts flowed freely from his mind as his ink from his pen; he was never at a loss for an expression and seldom interlined a word or made a material correction. (quoted in Keegan, pp. 199-200)

Which explains how Grant could write the 275,000 words of his Personal Memoirs in less than a year during a period of intense suffering. He knew what was in his mind. Once unlocked by an act of will, the mind poured out the words smoothly. (Grant's Memoirs, p. xviii)

Later Porter wrote:

> His style was vigorous and terse with little ornament; its most conspicuous characteristic was perspicuity. General Meade's Chief of Staff once said: "There is one striking thing about Grant's orders: no matter how hurriedly he may write them on the field, no one has the slightest doubt as to their meaning or ever has to read over them a second time to understand them." (Wilson, p. 143)

Major General J. F. C. Fuller makes a telling comparison between Grant's orders and Lee's. "Grant's are simple, direct and unmistakable. Lee's more often than not are vague and frequently verbal. In the official records, it is conspicuous that no sooner is battle engaged than Lee's written orders cease." (Fuller, p. 244)

Verbs are what give Grant's writing its terse, muscular quality, and, as agents that translate thought into action, they offer a clue to the secret of his military success, which also consisted of translating thought into action. (Grant's Memoirs, p. xviii) Grant used few adjectives and fewer adverbs and then only those necessary to enforce his meaning. His famous reply to General Simon Bolivar Buckner's request to negotiate terms for the surrender of Fort Donelson is instructive.

> Yours of this date, proposing armistice and appointment of commissioners to settle terms of capitulation is just received. No terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted. I propose to move immediately upon your works. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 167)

There is not an excess word here; the three adjectives and single adverb produce action - - they become action. The same stylistic qualities of action verbs and active voice characterize most of the Personal Memoirs. (Grant's Memoirs, p. xix)

A second literary element germaine to the Personal Memoirs is Grant's use of an ironic sometimes self-deprecatory folk humor, in which the memoirs become a continuous droll tale "illustrating the perverse obstinacy of human character and personal fate." (Russell, p. 196)

This ironic humor is introduced by a story Grant tells on himself about a horse which he badly wanted. His father offered to pay twenty dollars for it, but the owner wanted twenty-five. When young Grant begged to be allowed to buy the horse at a higher price, his father agreed, but told him to offer twenty dollars, then twenty-two fifty, in hopes of striking a good bargain. When Grant got to the man's house, he blurted out, "Poppa says I may offer you twenty dollars for the colt, but if you won't take that I am to offer twenty-two and a half, and if you won't take that, to give you twenty-five." (Russell, p. 194)

Yes, the story is a funny one, but it makes two other points. Grant writes, "I certainly showed very plainly that I came for the horse and meant to have him." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 13) And in getting him, Grant presents himself as above petty sharp dealing - - "a man whose actions are formed by a moral sense of the actual or the absolute value of things. Slyness and the cunning pursuit of self-interest have no part in such a vision," a vision that starkly contrasts with the corruption that plagued Grant's presidency. (Russell, p. 195)

Grant's innate modesty and disdain for self-promotion - - in himself and others - - is illustrated in this humorous incident he relates during the Battle of Resaca Del Palma in the Mexican War. In charge of a company he leads an attack.

> There was no resistance, and we captured a Mexican colonel who had been wounded, and a few men. Just as I was sending them to the rear...a private came from...in advance of where I was. The ground had been charged over before. My exploit was equal to that of the soldier who boasted that he had cut off the leg of one of the enemy. When asked why he did not cut off his head, he replied, "Someone had done this before." This left no doubt in my mind that the Battle of Resaca Del Palma would have been won just as if I had not been there. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 50)

Grant's use of folk humor binds the affection and interest of the reader. Having established a point of human contact, Grant can now speak in the first person about quite personal subjects. (Russell, p. 197)

Among those subjects are the persons who were central to his life and the war, the third literary element he employs. Almost all of these individuals, with the exception of Abraham Lincoln, are the soldiers and commanders that Grant served with and against in the Mexican and Civil War. In assessing their motives and personalities, Grant takes a balanced, almost non-committal approach, for two reasons. He had suffered too much in his own life from character defamations to second-guess too publicly the causes of his subordinates' or enemies' failures; and he prefers to keep the reader's attention firmly focused on himself as the center of both the narrative and the war. (Russell, p. 199)

Grant's description of Zachary Taylor, whom he served under in the Mexican War, is a mirror image of Grant himself.

> General Taylor was not an officer to trouble the administration much with his demands, but he was inclined to do the best he could with the means given him...he never made any great show or parade either of uniform or retinue...In dress he was possibly too plain, rarely wearing anything in the field to indicate his rank, or even that he was an officer; but he was known to every soldier in the Army, and was respected by all. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 51)

Grant's ability to capture in a few words the personalities of the men he met and knew is reflective of his ability to see into the mentality of his opponents - - an aptitude honed by his years at West Point and his experiences in the Mexican War.

> The acquaintance thus formed was of immense service to me in the war of rebellion - - I mean what I learned of the characters of those to whom I was afterwards opposed. I do not propose to say that all movements, or even many of them, were made with special reference to the characteristics of the commanders against whom they were directed. But my appreciation of my enemies was certainly affected by this knowledge. (Grant's Memories, p. 101)

He concludes with this telling comment:

> The natural disposition of most people is to clothe the commander of a large army whom they do not know with ~~almost~~ super-human abilities. A large part of the northern army and most of the press of the country clothed General Lee with such qualities, but I had known him personally, and knew that he was mortal; and it was just as well that I felt this. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 101)

Two officers of whom Grant does speak with contempt are John Floyd and Gideon Pillow, both of whom scuttled away from the investiture at Fort Donelson. Writes Grant:

> General Floyd, the commanding officer, who was a man of talent enough for any civil position, was no soldier and possibly did not possess the elements of one…General Pillow, next in command, was conceited, and prided himself much on his service in the Mexican War…I had known General Pillow in Mexico, and judged that with any force, no matter how small, I could march up to within gunshot of any entrenchments he was given to hold. (Grant's Memoirs, pp. 165, 157)

Command of Fort Donaldson devolved upon an old friend of Grant's, Simon Bolivar Buckner, who was compelled to yield to unconditional terms of surrender. Grant has a much more respectful opinion of Buckner.

> In the course of our conversation, which was very friendly, he said to me that if he had been in command, I would not have got up to Donelson as easily as I did. I told him that if he had been in command, I should not have tried in the way that I did…I had relied very much upon their commanders to allow me to come safely to the outside of their works. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 168)

Grant is able to express the contradictions of Union General George H. Thomas with elegant simplicity: "He was a man of commanding appearance, slow and deliberate in speech and action; sensible, honest, and brave…He could not be driven from a point he was given to hold. He was not as good, however, in pursuit as he was in action." (quoted in Russell, p. 198)

Another frustrating Union General was G. K. Warren, who commanded the Second Corps during the period 1864-1865:

> He was a man of fine intelligence, great earnestness, quick perception…but I had before discovered a defect which was beyond his control…He could see every danger at a glance before he encountered it. He would not only make preparations to meet the

danger, but he would inform his commanding officer what others should do while he was executing his moves. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 575)

Among the few individuals who Grant quotes directly is his alter-ego, his subsidiary hero, General William T. Sherman. Their unique relationship is introduced during the siege of Fort Donelson when Sherman, senior in rank to Grant, is at the mouth of the Cumberland River to forward supplies and reinforcements.

> At this time...there was no authority of how to assign a junior to command a senior of the same grade. But every boat...brought a note of encouragement from Sherman, asking me to call upon him for any assistance he could render and saying that if he could be of service at the front I might send for him and he would waive rank. (quoted in Goldhurst, p. 266)

Sherman helped Grant politically as well, when, after the Battle of Shiloh, Henry Halleck assumed field command of the Army of the Tennessee and, jealous of Grant, effectively shelved him. Grant resolved to ask Halleck that he be relieved. He writes: "But General Sherman happened to call on me as I was about starting to write and urged me so strongly not to think of going that I concluded to remain." (quoted in Goldhurst, p. 266)

Sherman strenuously opposed Grant's Vicksburg strategy - - to cross the Mississippi River below the town and cut loose from his supply base. But after the campaign's successful completion, Grant trumpets Sherman's cooperation.

> I heard Sherman repeating, in the most animated manner, what he said to me when we first looked down upon the land below..."Grant is entitled to every bit of credit for the campaign: I opposed it. I wrote him a letter about it." But for this speech it is not likely that Sherman's opposition would ever have been heard of. His untiring energy and great efficiency during the campaign entitled him to a full share of the credit due its success. He could not have done more if the plan had been his own. (Quoted in Goldhurst, p. 266)

According to author Richard Goldhurst, the dialogue in the Memoirs between Grant and Sherman serves a literary purpose, which is not to define the Civil War, but "to define what it is to soldier, because soldiering is what made the Union victorious," to reinforce Grant's core message, which is that "the successful conclusion of the Union cause was brought about by force of arms expertly applied to the enemy's weakness." (Goldhurst, p. 268)

The other person whom Grant frequently quotes is Abraham Lincoln, and several well-known anecdotes about him made their first appearance in the Memoirs. In his first interview with Lincoln, Grant puts words in the President's mouth which accurately describe himself.

> He stated...that he had never preferred to be a military man or to know how campaigns should be conducted, and never wanted to interfere with them...all he wanted or had ever wanted was someone who would take the responsibility and act, and call on him for all the assistance needed, pledging himself to use all the power of the government in rendering this assistance. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 382)

Lincoln humorously summarizes Grant's 1864 strategy of moving south on four fronts. Grant writes:

> I explained to him that it was necessary to have a great number of troops to guard and hold the territory we had captured, and to prevent incursions into the northern states. These troops could perform this service just as well by advancing as by remaining still, and by advancing they would compel the enemy to keep detachments to hold them back or else lay his own territory open to invasion. His answer was, "Oh yes! I see that. As we say out west, if a man can't skin, he must hold the leg while somebody else does." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 393)

The foregoing analysis of Grant's style, use of ironic humor, and succinct characterizations should serve as an illuminating introduction to several broader themes that permeate his work. Throughout the Memoirs, Grant conveys to his reader that he knew - - or came to know - - the nature of this war, which was ideological, fought on both sides for a cause; the nature of his army, which was a people's army, composed of volunteers; and the nature of soldiering, which was a combination of physical courage and moral courage.

Initially Grant was not an abolitionist, but he came to believe, that "the cause of the great war of rebellion against the United States will have to be attributed to slavery."

> Slavery was an institution that required an unusual guarantee for its security wherever it existed; and in a country like ours where the large part of it was a free territory inhabited by an intelligent and well-to-do population, the people would naturally have but little sympathy with demands upon them for its protection. Hence the people of the south were dependent upon keeping control of the general government to secure the perpetuation of its favorite institution...The people of the north...were not willing to play the role of police for the south in the protection of this particular institution. (quoted in Keegan, p. 231)

In Grant's opinion, the southern rebellion was largely the outcome of the Mexican War, in which he had cut his military teeth and of which he strongly disapproved.

> He shared the view that the Democratic administration sought, by annexation of territories south of the free soil line, to find room for creating new slave states, as Texas would become, and so to circumvent the opposition of the northern electoral majority to any extension of slavery. The consequences, he thought, were inevitable. "Nations like individuals are punished for their transgressions. We got our punishment in the most sanguinary and expensive war of modern times." (Keegan, p. 184)

Of course all that was written years after both wars. Grant's views about slavery were changed by his exposure to southern sentiment after his penetration of the slave states in 1862. He saw that the system of slavery must end for two reasons: first, the right of the conqueror to resolve the issues of peace and union; and secondly, with the system challenged and property rights disrupted, the impossibility of restoring the status quo. (Russell, p. 201)

If the war were ideological - - fought by both sides from conviction, from a belief in a cause - - so too were its armies, "the first truly ideological armies in history." (Keegan, p. 191) As such, it was a war fought by volunteers - - and much of Grant's success lay in his recognition of, acceptance of, and adaptation to that circumstance. In his Memoirs, he implicity compares himself to General Don Carlos Buell, when discussing the latter's failure in the Shiloh Campaign.

> He was a strict disciplinarian, and perhaps did not distinguish sufficiently between a volunteer who "enlisted for the war" and the soldier who serves in time of peace. One system embraced men who risked life for a principle, and often men of social standing, competence, or wealth and independence of character. The other includes, as a rule, only men who could not do as well in any other occupation. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 193)

No man was better suited to lead such an army than Ulysses S. Grant, "the son of an Ohio tanner, a man indistinguishable in a crowd, even in a uniform, who personified the egalitarian values of a modernizing democratic society." (Smith, p. 342)

> A British journalist, covering the war from Washington, noted that, unlike his predecessors, Grant was unmoved by flattery. "I never met a man with so much simplicity, shyness, and decision...He is a soldier to the core, a genuine commoner, commander of a democratic army from a democratic people." (Smith, p. 291)

His appearance, "modest, rumpled, sometimes a bit seedy," and his behavior certainly confirmed this opinion

> A doctor on General McPherson's staff wrote that Grant was "plain as an old shoe," and said it was hard to make new soldiers believe that the man in a common soldier's blouse with a battered felt hat with cavalry pants stuffed in muddy boots was actually the commanding general...The men liked Grant's unassuming ways..."The soldiers seemed to look upon him as a friendly partner of theirs, not an arbitrary commander...The soldiers when meeting him are never embarrassed by the thought that they are talking to a great general." (Catton, Grant Moves South, p. 391)

Grant demonstrated his populist touch, his innate understanding of how to command a volunteer army immediately upon assuming command of the 21st Regiment in June 1861. Its members were independent young men from prosperous families, "unused to any kind of restraint, every man inclined to think for himself," who had already deposed one colonel. He writes:

> I found it very hard work for a few days to bring all the men with anything like subordination; but the great majority favored discipline, and by the application of a little regular army punishment, all were reduced to as good a discipline as one could ask. (quoted in Keegan, p. 191)

Grant inculcated discipline in two ways. In his first order to the 21st Illinois he wrote, "In accepting this command, your commander will require the cooperation of all the commissioned and non-commissioned officers...and hopes to receive the hardy support of every enlisted man."

The distinction between requiring the cooperation of officers and hoping for the support of the enlisted men became a hallmark of Grant's leadership. He recognized that volunteer soldiers were not regulars and never tried to impose the spartan discipline of the old army. Instead, Grant saw the recruits of the 21st Illinois as men who thought for themselves and who could be reasoned with. They could be led but not driven. (Smith, p. 101)

Secondly, "hoped-for" support was to be encouraged by drill - - military routine learned by experience, rather than by oratory or precept from a field manual. When Grant received orders to take his regiment from Springfield, Illinois to Quincy he chose to march rather than travel by the railroad line that was available. "This is an infantry regiment," he told the Governor. "The men are going to do a lot of marching before the war is over and I prefer to train them in friendly country, not the enemy's." By that time, one month after he had taken command, his low-key but firm leadership had won him the hearts and minds of his regiment. At the end of June, after his men's original enlistments expired, when they were called upon to volunteer for three more years of service, they signed up almost to a man.

Illustrative of Grant's readiness to command by consent rather than diktat was his decision at Vicksburg to indulge his troops' desire to assault rather than besiege the enemy's fortifications. He knew they were misguided. "But the first consideration of all was - - the troops believed they could carry the works in their front." The attack was repulsed with a great loss of life. "But his hard-headed understanding of the character of the citizen army told him that his soldiers 'would not afterwards have worked so patiently in the trenches if they had not been allowed to try.'" (Keegan, p. 194)

To his soldiers, Grant exemplified physical courage and he led them with moral courage.

Horace Porter reports that during the Battle of Spotsylvania in May 1864, Grant was sitting on a fallen tree writing a dispatch when a shell exploded directly in front of him. "He looked up from his paper and then, without the slightest change of countenance, went on writing the message. Some of the 5th Wisconsin wounded were being carried past him at the time...and one of the men made the remark: 'Ulysses don't scare worth a damn.'" (quoted in Fuller, p. 60)

Grant describes his baptism of fire in the Mexican War as follows: "A ball struck close by me killing one man instantly; it knocked Captain Page's under-jar entirely off and broke in the roof of his mouth...the splinters from the musket of a killed soldier and his brains and bones knocked down two or three others." (Quoted in Keegan, p. 183)

Grant often risked enemy fire, especially in the early years of the war. He describes being struck by a bullet during the Battle of Shiloh

> The shells and balls whistled about our ears very fast for about a minute...Major Hawkins lost his hat...McPherson's horse was panting as if ready to drop; on examination it was found a ball had struck him forward of the flank just back of the saddle and gone entirely through. A few minutes the poor beast dropped dead; he had given no sign of an injury until we came to a stop. A ball had struck the metal scabbard

> of my sword just below the hilt and broken it clean off; before the battle was over it had broken off entirely. (Memoirs, p. 190)

But a courage deeper than physical courage lay within him, a courage that could not be seen or measured but which was central to overcoming the enemy. Early in the war, as Colonel of the 21st Illinois, he set out to engage a Confederate regiment operating in the vicinity. Expecting to find it waiting to engage him, his "heart getting higher and higher until it felt to me as though it were in my throat," he pressed on only because he lacked "the moral courage to halt." When he found that the enemy had decamped ahead of him, "my heart resumed its place. It occurred to me at once that he had been as much afraid of me as I had been of him. This was a view of the question I had never taken before; but it was one I never forgot afterwards. From that event to the close of the war, I never experienced trepidation upon confronting the enemy." (quoted in Keegan, p. 213)

> The remarkable point in this confession is not that Grant overcame his fears and kept right on, but that he analyzed his fears. For a brief moment fear had mastered him, then he mastered fear, and having done so at once examined why it had mastered him. Having discovered the reason, he learned one of the most important lessons in generalship, namely, that he who fears the least holds the initiative and that he who can make his adversary fear more than he does himself has already defeated him morally. (Fuller, p. 86)

One subject which Grant understandably does not address in his Memoirs is his drinking. In a clinical sense, Grant may have been an alcoholic. Drinking problems probably underlay his resignation from the Army in 1854 - - when he was separated from his wife. He was a binge drinker who could go for months without a drink, but once he started it was difficult to stop him. Assistant Secretary of War, Charles Dana, said, "General Grant's seasons of intoxication were not only infrequent, but he also chose a time when the gratification of his appetite for drink would not interfere with any important movement that had to be directed or attended by him." For the most part Grant remained sober, protected from alcohol by his adjutant, John Rawlins, and by his wife Julia. "If she is with him," said Rawlins, "all will be well and I can be spared." A journalist who covered Grant's campaigns wrote: "It can safely be asserted that no officer ever saw open drinking at Grant's headquarters from Cairo to Appomattox." (Smith, pp. 231-232)

Of course, when a delegation of Congressmen came to the White House to urge Lincoln to relieve Grant because he drank too much, his famous response was, "I urged them to ascertain and let me know (what brand of whiskey he drank) for if it made fighting generals like Grant, I should like to get some of it for distribution." (Smith, p. 231)

Grant's intuitive understanding of the nature of the war he was fighting, the nature of the army he was leading, and the nature of soldiering, were the rock-hard foundations upon which his generalship was built. But that edifice could only be complete with the application of several technical aspects of command - - knowledge gained during Grant's journey of experience, his maturity, through the course of the war and his meteoric rise in four years from colonel of a regiment to Brigadier General to General-in-Chief. In the last part of this paper, in a somewhat

artificial construct, I propose to examine these lessons - - four critical moments in Grant's military life - - Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg and the Wilderness - - in the context of his narrative, and frame them with an introduction, Mexico, and a conclusion, Lee's surrender.

To add some insight to this analysis, let me deviate briefly from the Memoirs to make a few comments about Grant's character.

To many observers Grant remains an enigma, an unlikely hero, a man of contradictions. The story of his life combines abject failure and world fame. He was undefeated in war and twice elected President by overwhelming majorities, yet he was incompetent in personal financial affairs and overly generous and loyal to old friends. He was a withdrawn seemingly inarticulate man whose writings sparkled with clarity. (Smith, p. 13) He hated war, yet found his place there above all his fellows. (Bonekemper, p. 246)

Yet he possessed two qualities that demand attention. One is peculiar and inexplicable, the other heroic. Major General J.F.C. Fuller characterizes Grant as the "master of predicaments." The lack of being able to do what others found easy and of accomplishing what others found difficult, and frequently impossible, he says, is the key to Grant's genius, and penetrating the enigma of his personality. (Fuller, p. 75) When everything was right and orderly, in peacetime and prosperity, "he shrank into his shell of mediocrity," and managed to lose everything he had. When all was chaos, or when the occasion demanded desperate action, he emerged from an anonymity, and "nothing would induce him to withdraw into it until normality had been established." (Fuller, p. 69)

The second quality is Grant's strength of will, his determination to do the best he could with what he had and his refusal to give up - - particularly in the circumstances described above. James Longstreet stated it well to Lee on the eve of the Battle of the Wilderness: "We must make up our minds to get into line of battle and stay there, for that man will fight us every day and every hour until the end of the war." (Foote, p. 423) And on the other side of the line, when asked by a staff physician for his definition of the art of war, Grant replied: "Find out where your enemy is, get to him as soon as you can, strike him as hard as you can and as often as you can and keep moving on." (Foote, p. 436)

Grant served his apprenticeship in the Mexican War where, as I have already described, he demonstrated personal courage under fire. He also gained valuable knowledge observing the behavior and demeanor of his commanding generals, Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott. He saw how aggressively-fought battles could be won against superior forces. General Taylor's well-drilled and disciplined army won three battles against larger Mexican forces.

> General Scott invaded a populous country, penetrating 260 miles into the interior, with a force at no time equal to one-half of that opposed to him; he was without a base; the enemy was always entrenched, always on the defensive; yet he won every battle, he captured the capital, and conquered the government. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 88)

While complimenting Scott, Grant takes him to task for not taking best advantage of the terrain and causing unnecessary loss of life.

> The route traveled by the army before reaching the city of Puebla goes over a pass and a spur of mountain coming up from the south...and over Rio Frio mountain...By moving north of the mountains, and about thirty miles north of Puebla, both of these passes would have been avoided...Arriving due north of Puebla, the troops could have been detached to take possession of that place, and then proceeding west with the rest of the army, no mountain would have been encountered before reaching the city of Mexico. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 87)

While seemingly unnecessarily detailed, this kind of writing reflects Grant's acutely developed feel for the landscape - - which originated in his youth, matured in Mexico, and served him so well in later years. Grant had always been fascinated by maps, was a map collector, and in Mexico provided Scott, Taylor and Robert E. Lee with cartographic information. Horace Porter noticed that any map "seemed to become photographed indelibly in his brain, and he could follow its features without referring to it again. Besides, he possessed an almost intuitive knowledge of topography...he was never so much at home as when finding his way by course of streams, the contours of the hills, and the general features of the country." (quoted in Keegan, p. 213)

Grant learned something else in Mexico when he was appointed regimental quartermaster and commissary to the 4th Regiment, a duty which taught him the intricacies of military logistics from the bottom up. (Smith, p. 52) During the Civil War, his food and ammunition trains were always expertly handled, and in the Memoirs he occasionally is at great pains to describe these operations.

Fort Donelson was Grant's - - and the Union's - - first great triumph. He acted with the aggressiveness that was to mark his future campaigns and demonstrated how moral courage could indeed turn the tide of battle at a critical moment.

Fort Henry on the Tennessee River and Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River were, in Grant's words, "of immense importance to the enemy and of course correspondingly important for us to possess ourselves of." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 151) When Grant went to his commanding general, Henry Halleck, on January 6, 1862, to propose moving against the forts, he "was met with so little cordiality that I perhaps stated the object of my visit with less clearness than I might have done, and I had not uttered many sentences before I was cut short as if my plan was preposterous. I returned to Cairo very much crestfallen. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 152) Grant persisted and renewed his suggestion by telegraph that "if permitted I could take and hold Fort Henry on the Tennessee." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 153) Halleck finally acquiesced, under pressure from President Lincoln, who had ordered a general advance of the land and naval forces of the United States within the month. (Smith, p. 139)

With the help of a gunboat bombardment, Grant did take Fort Henry on February 6, 1862; he prepared to move on the more formidable Fort Donelson ten miles east and informed his superiors. Other than instructing Grant to remain on the defensive, "General Halleck did not approve or disapprove of my going to Fort Donelson. He said nothing to me whatever on the subject." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 158)

Grant moved on his own authority against an enemy occupying a powerful fortified position. He was in the heart of enemy country, facing a force at least as large as his own, with nothing to fall back on in case of disaster. But he had seen time and again Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott move against a numerically superior foe and how important it was to maintain momentum. "I was very impatient to get to Fort Donaldson because I knew the importance of the place to the enemy and supposed he would reinforce it rapidly. I felt that 15,000 men on the eighth would be more effective than 50,000 a month later." (Smith, pp. 152-153)

Grant successfully invested the fort, but after its defenses severely repulsed his gunboats, a Confederate force emerged from its entrenchments and attacked and scattered the division on his right. Grant had been aboard one of the gunboats conferring with the flotilla commander, "with no idea that there would be any engagement on land unless I brought it on myself." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 103) Ferried ashore, he was advised of the attack; he mounted his horse and hastened to the front to take command, a seven-mile ride that, in the words of one biographer, changed the course of the war. (Smith, p. 159)

On the right side of the line, which had fallen back, Grant saw his men standing in knots talking, no officer giving direction. He writes:

> I heard some of the men say that the enemy had come out with knapsacks and haversacks filled with rations. They seemed to think this indicated a determination on his part to stay out and fight just as long as provisions held out. I said to Colonel Webster of my staff: "Some of our men are pretty badly demoralized, but the enemy must be more so, for he has attempted to force his way out, but has fallen back: the one who attacks first now will be victorious and the enemy will have to be in a hurry if he gets ahead of me." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 164)

If this was the moment in battle when both sides were fought out and ready to quit, and victory would go to the side which was more able to make one final effort, it was going to be Grant's army that made the final effort. (Catton, Grant Moves South, pp. 168-169) Grant gave the order to his men to fill "their cartridge boxes, quick, and get into line...This acted like a charm. The men only wanted someone to give them a command." Grant rode to the left side of the line and directed his divisional commander "to charge the enemy at his front with his whole division, saying at the same time that he would find nothing but a very thin line to contend with...The outer line of rifle pits was passed and that night...the division bivouacked within the lines of the enemy. There was now no doubt but that the Confederates must surrender or be captured the next day." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 165) They chose the former, of course, to Grant's unconditional terms.

One lesson Grant did not learn at Fort Donelson, in spite of the Confederates' surprise breakout, was that the enemy could be as aggressive as he. He had moved his 40,000 man army 100 miles south, up the Tennessee River, and had camped on the west bank of the Tennessee River at a place called Pittsburgh Landing, near Shiloh Church, when, on the morning of Sunday, April 6, 1862, the Confederates launched a massive surprise attack. Grant writes:

> The fact is, I regarded the campaign we were engaged in as an offensive one and had no idea that the enemy would leave strong entrenchments to take the initiative when he knew he would be attacked where he was if he remained. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 168)...The criticism has often been made that the Union troops should have been entrenched at Shiloh. Up to that time the pick and ax had been little resorted to in the west...Besides this, the troops with me, officers and men, needed discipline and drill more than they did the big shovel and ax. (Grant's Memoirs, pp. 192-193)

Grant was at breakfast, aboard his headquarters steamboat, when "heavy firing was heard in the direction of Pittsburgh Landing and I hastened there," he writes. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 180) He seized control of the Union battlefield the moment he arrived. He galloped along the front and visited each of his five divisional commanders in turn, providing general direction but relying on them to fight the troops under their control. (Smith, p. 196)

By mid-day his line was under pressure at every point. He spent the afternoon riding from place to place encouraging his commanders, sending forward any uncommitted regiments he could find, and turning back others which were dropping out of the fight. He writes: "There was no hour during the day when there was not heavy firing and generally hard fighting at some point on the line, but seldom on all points at the same time. It was a case of southern dash against northern pluck and endurance." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 186)

One division, under General Prentiss, its flanks exposed by Union retreats, was isolated in a bramble field deemed forever after the Hornet's Nest and repulsed twelve Confederate attacks before surrendering its remaining 2,200 officers and men. Grant writes that the ground was "so covered with dead that it would have been possible to walk across in any direction, stepping on dead bodies, without a foot touching the ground." (Quoted in Smith, p. 197)

As night fell, Grant assembled a battery of fifty guns on his left flank to stabilize his line. Anyone other than Grant, staring at his battered troops, would have retreated. (Smith, p. 204)

I deviate from the Memoirs to record what Grant said to General McPherson when he rode by that night and reported that one-third of the army was out of action and downcast and disheartened. McPherson asked, "What do you propose to do, Sir. Shall I make preparations for retreat." "Retreat," said Grant, "No, I propose to attack at daylight and with them." Similarly he responded to General Sherman's comment that, "Well, Grant, we've had the devils own day, haven't we" with, "Yes, lick 'em tomorrow though." (Smith, pp. 200-201)

Grant writes in his Memoirs:

> So confident was I that the next day would bring victory if we could only take the initiative that I directed them to throw out heavy lines of skirmishes in the morning as soon as they could see, and push them forward until they found the enemy, following with their entire divisions and to engage the enemy as soon as found...To Sherman I told the story of the assault at Fort Donelson and said that the same tactics would win at Shiloh. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 187)

Grant's counter-attack the next morning was successful. The Union assault caught the southerners off guard and drove them back over the previous day's battlefield, until by three P.M. a full but orderly retreat was in progress. "I wanted to pursue, but had not the heart to order the men who had fought desperately for two days, lying in the mud and rain when they were not fighting, and I did not feel disposed positively to order Buell, or any part of his command, to pursue," writes Grant. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 191)

Shiloh changed Grant's opinion about the war. Until then, he thought the Confederate government would collapse quickly if the Union could win a decisive victory. But the boldness of the rebels in assuming the offensive and the bravery with which they fought convinced him to give up "all idea ~~of saving~~ the Union except by total conquest." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 198)

> Up to that time it had been the policy of our army, certainly of that portion commanded by me, to protect the property of the citizens whose territory was invaded, without regard to their sentiments, whether Union or secessionists. After this, however, I regarded it as humane to both sides to protect the persons of those found at their homes, but to consume anything that could be used to support or supply armies...I continued this policy to the close of the war. (Grant's Memoirs, pp. 198-199)

Unlike Shiloh, Grant's next great triumph was the product not of brute force but of perseverance, ingenuity, agility, maneuver, and the willingness to risk all. This time the objective was the citadel at Vicksburg, perched high upon the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River, its gun batteries preventing free passage of the river from Ohio to New Orleans. It was occupied by troops commanded by General John Pemberton, which were safely ensconsed on the opposite side of the river from Grant where he could not get to them.

Seven times Grant tried to storm or turn the defenses at Vicksburg and seven times he failed. He tried an overland movement on the east side of the river along the Mississippi railroad but had to turn back when his supply base was captured. He tried attacking up the bluffs north of the town, but was severely repulsed. He tried digging a canal across the base of a tongue of land in front of Vicksburg to allow Union vessels to move south of the city without coming under fire, but it flooded. He tried creating a ship channel through a series of swamps, bayous and rivers, which would emerge on the Mississippi 150 miles below the city, but the project was too ambitious. He tried blowing a levy 200 miles north of Vicksburg and riding gunboats and transports down the flood tide, but was blocked by a sunken steamer and driven off by Confederates manning a small fort on an island in the river. He tried bringing troop-carrying gunboats through a flooded delta closer to the city but was driven off by rebel riflemen. He tried building a second canal further north on the west side of the river through which his transports could pass and come out south of Vicksburg, but this failed when the river waters receded.

After three months of futility, Grant made a courageous decision that determined the future course of the war. It was one of the greatest strategic gambits in modern warfare - - to float transports past Vicksburg's defenses in the middle of the night, move his troops south of the Confederate capital, cross the Mississippi River, cut himself off from his supply base in Memphis, march east into Mississippi, turn 180 degrees, and strike Vicksburg from the side on which it was vulnerable - - against the advice of his leading generals. Sherman told him he was

putting himself in "a position which an enemy would be glad to maneuver a year to get me in"...And warned that "it was an axiom of war that when any great body of troops moved against an enemy, they should do so from a base of supplies." Grant told Sherman he had no intention of changing his plan. (Smith, pp. 234, 236) He writes in his Memoirs

> It was my judgment that to make a backward movement as long as that from Vicksburg to Memphis would be interpreted by many of those who had full of hope for the preservation of the Union as a defeat...There was nothing left to be done but go forward to a decisive victory. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 240)

And although much fighting lay ahead, surely the war turned once Grant was across the Mississippi. Simply and eloquently he writes:

> I was now in the enemy's country, with a vast river and a stronghold of Vicksburg between me and my base of supplies. But I was on dry ground on the same side of the river with the enemy. All the campaigns, labors, hardships and exposures from the month of December previous to this time that had been made and endured, were for the accomplishment of this one object. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 262)

Three months earlier, when a Confederate force had destroyed a supply base at Holly Springs, Mississippi, Grant had realized how it was possible to provision his army. Deprived of supplies, the army lived off the countryside

> I was amazed at the quantity of supplies the country afforded. It showed that we could have subsisted off the country for two months instead of two weeks...Our loss of supplies was great at Holly Springs, but it was more than compensated for by those taken from the country and by lessons taught. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 236)

Making the enemy give him what he wanted also denied the Confederates what they needed for themselves. Grant was making the decision that, in a war of principle, which this was, it was necessary to take the battle to the civilian population, to break their will, to destroy their economy at home as well as defeat their armies in the field. In April 1863 he wrote to one of his divisional commanders:

> Rebellion has assumed that shape now that it can only terminate by the complete subjugation of the south or the overthrow of the government. It is our duty therefore to use every means to weaken the enemy by destroying their means of cultivating their fields. (quoted in Keegan, p. 220)

Once across the Mississippi, Grant moved quickly and expeditiously. During the next three weeks, his three corps fought and won five separate battles, defeated two enemy armies, occupied the capital of Mississippi, and drove the remaining Confederates back into Vicksburg, which they surrendered to him after a one-month siege.

The final turning point in the war - - and for Grant - - came in the Battle of the Wilderness, May 5-6, 1864. On May 3rd, Grant ordered the Army of the Potomac across the Rapidan River, "to

start upon that memorable campaign," he writes, "destined to result in the capture of the Confederate capital and the army defending it. This was not to be accomplished, however, without as desperate a fighting as the world as ever witnessed." Mindful perhaps of his critics, he offers some justification for the severe casualties incurred. "The campaign now begun was destined to result in heavier losses for both armies in a given time than any previously suffered; but the carnage was to be limited to a single year, and to accomplish all that had been anticipated or desired at the beginning in that time. We had to have hard fighting to achieve this." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 413)

Indeed they did. Both Lee and Grant were surprised to find their enemy confronting them in the Wilderness, but both committed their forces furiously. Throughout two days of savage fighting the tide ebbed and flowed as each side seemed on the verge of a smashing victory (or a disastrous defeat) only to be reversed by the arrival of reinforcements, a counter-attack, or the missteps of confused commanders. Late on the afternoon of the second day, Lee led a desperate charge that would be the final offensive threat of the Army of Northern Virginia. Grant writes: "The woods were set on fire by the bursting shells, and the conflagration raged. The wounded, who had not strength to move themselves, were either suffocated or burned to death." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 430)

Writing in his characteristic, understated tone, the next morning Grant ordered Meade to "make all preparation during the day for a night march to take position at Spotsylvania Courthouse." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 434) He describes the response of some soldiers in one corps who were watching him and another corps march by: "The greatest enthusiasm was manifested by Hancock's men as we passed by. No doubt it was inspired by the fact that the movement was south. It indicated to them that they had just passed through the beginning of the end in the battle just fought. The cheering was so lusty that the enemy must have taken it for a night attack." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 435)

Other reports are more dramatic, and reveal the heroic nature of the order he has just given. The Union soldiers thought they had been whipped and assumed, almost to a man, that the next order they received would be to withdraw, regroup, and reorganize, the all too familiar pattern of the Army of the Potomac when it faced Robert E. Lee in Virginia. (Smith, pp. 338-339) But that night Grant told a reporter heading back to Washington: "If you see the President, tell him for me that whatever happens, there will be no turning back." (Smith, p. 334) When Grant and his staff rode by a column of soldiers, wrote Horace Porter, "wild cheers echoed through the forest…Men swung their hats, tossed up their arms, and pressed forward to within touch of their chief, clapping their hands." (Smith, p. 338)

Sherman called Grant's decision to move south the supreme moment in his life: "Undismayed, with a full comprehension of the importance of the work in which he was engaged, feeling as keen a sympathy for his dead and wounded as anyone, and without stopping to count his numbers, he gave his order calmly, specifically, and absolutely - - forward to Spotsylvania." (Smith, p. 339)

By once again refusing to retrace his steps, Grant was demonstrating another lesson - - learned on this most bloody of battlefields - - if he did not already know it - - the power of applying

overwhelming military force - - a doctrine now a part of United States military tradition. Grant knew he had more resources than his opponent, and that in a war of attrition he was almost certain to win. But unlike his predecessors, when he mustered for battle, he brought every available soldier to the front. He was not afraid to take casualties in order to inflict permanent damage on his enemy.

What about these casualties, which have earned Grant in some circles the epithet of a butcher? That reputation was initiated by early apologists for the "Lost Cause" and bolstered by southern memoiralists and northern historians disgusted by the scandals of Grant's presidency and angered by his administration's efforts to protect the rights of free blacks and to resolve ongoing hostilities with native Americans. Recent scholarship has shown that Grant suffered no greater casualties - - proportionally or in real numbers - - than other generals on both sides, and, in many cases, fewer. For the entire war Grant imposed 190,000 casualties on his foes while incurring 154,000. Grant had 18.1 percent of his men killed or wounded while killing or wounding 20.7 percent of the enemy; Lee had 20.2 percent of troops killed or wounded while killing or wounding 15.4 percent of the enemy. Lee lost more soldiers than any other general in the war. "If a general could be called a butcher, Lee is probably more of one than Grant," says historian Gordon Rhea. (Bonekemper, p. 248)

Although Grant was fighting for "the complete subjugation of the south or the overthrow of the government," when victory came, he would not be vindictive. The man who fearlessly and relentlessly pursued his opponent through the endless forests and bottomless roads of Virginia, who encouraged his subordinates to destroy the breadbaskets of the Shenandoah Valley and the Georgia countryside, who never flinched at the sacrifices that the brutality of war demanded, would be gracious and conciliatory when he sat down with Robert E. Lee at Appomattox.

Grant disliked to humiliate people. He had known enough humiliation in his own life in the days after the Mexican War when his drinking had cost him a discharge from the Army, in years of trying to scratch out a living from his appropriately named farm, Hardscrabble, and in the days after Shiloh when his superiors and the press had heaped one indignity after another upon him and he had almost resigned.

Grant's magnanimity to Lee at Appomattox is legendary. He was intent on carrying out a Lincolnesque policy of no bitterness and no reprisals. His state of mind at Appomattox was hardly exultant but, as he says, "sad and depressed. I felt like anything other than rejoicing at the downfall of a foe who had fought so long and valiantly and had suffered so much for a cause." After an opening conversation which he describes as brief and pleasant, Grant then wrote out the terms of surrender in words that suggested the process of the composition by which the very words were being recorded.

> When I put pen to paper I did not know the first word that I should make use of in writing the terms. I only knew what was in my mind, and I wished to express it clearly, so that there could be no mistaking it. As I wrote on, the thought occurred to me that the officers had their own private horses and effects, which were important to them, but of no value to us; also that it would be an unnecessary humiliation to call upon them to deliver their sidearms. (Grant's Memoirs, p. 604)

On his own initiative, Grant added an important sentence to the terms of surrender. "Each officer and man will be allowed to return to their homes, not to be disturbed by United States authority so long as they observe their paroles in the laws in force where they may reside." (Grant's Memoirs, p. 604) Grant was taking a huge step towards reconciliation; not only was the military dignity of his opponents being respected, but there would be no imprisonment or captivity. There would be no trials or witch hunts. Strictly speaking, the rebels had committed treason, but Grant was effectively pardoning all who had surrendered. (Smith, p. 405)

Grant made another magnanimous concession. After a little further conversation, Lee told Grant that in the Confederate Army cavalrymen owned their horses and asked if they could retain them. Grant acceded to this request, expressing the hope that this would be about the last battle of the war, and acknowledging that these soldiers, most of whom were small farmers, would need their horses to put in a crop in a countryside that had been ravaged by the two armies. (Wilson, p. 151)

Thus ends the greatest conflict on the American continent. And thus ends, for all intents and purposes, the Memoirs, Grant's final triumph, achieved in the last year of his life. As so many times on the battlefield, he accomplished what he set out to do. He wrote his story; he climbed back out of poverty, and he left a decent estate for his family when he died. Those qualities which explain the success of his generalship - - his strength of will, his determination to do the best he could with what he had, his refusal to give up or complain about the crucible of fate - - also explain the success of his Memoirs both in the substance and the circumstances of their writing. The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant offer a satisfactory answer, at least to me, of why the North won the Civil War.

Upon his death, Grant's physician, John Douglas, wrote this about him to a reporter:

> The world knows him as a great general, as a successful politician; but I know him as a practical, self-sacrificing, gentle, quiet, uncomplaining sufferer, looking death calmly in the face, and counting almost the hours in which he had to live, and those hours were studied by him that he might contribute something of benefit to some other fellow sufferers. If he was great in life, he was even greater in death. Not a murmur, not a moan, from first to last. He died as he had lived, a true man. (quoted in Perry, p. 227)

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