

**RECOLLECTIONS OF GENERAL GRANT:
WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE
PRESENTATION OF THE
PORTRAITS OF GENERALS GRANT,
SHERMAN, AND SHERIDAN AT THE U.S.
MILITARY ACADEMY, WEST POINT**

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Recollections of General Grant: With an Account of the Presentation of the Portraits of Generals Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point by George W. Childs

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GEORGE W. CHILDS

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BY
GEORGE W. CHILDS.

PHILADELPHIA:
COLLINS PRINTING HOUSE.

1890.

TO
MRS. JULIA DENT GRANT,
WHOSE DEVOTION AS A WIFE
WAS ONLY EQUALLED BY THE
AFFECTION OF HER ILLUSTRIOUS HUSBAND,

This Little Sketch

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED
BY AN ARDENT AND ADMIRING FRIEND
OF
THEM BOTH,

GEORGE W. CHILDS.

PHILADELPHIA, February, 1830.

RECOLLECTIONS OF GENERAL GRANT.

GENERAL GRANT was one of the truest and most congenial friends I ever had. We first met in 1863, after the victory of Vicksburg. The General and Mrs. Grant had come to Philadelphia to make arrangements to put their children at school in Burlington, New Jersey. From that time until his death our intimacy grew. In his life three qualities were conspicuously revealed—justice, kindness, and firmness.

Seeing General Grant frequently for more than twenty years, I had abundant opportunity to notice these qualities. We lived at Long Branch on adjoining properties, on the same land, without any division, and I may say there never was a day when we were together there on which either I was not in his house or he in mine. He would often come over and breakfast or dine with me. I never saw him in the field, though I corresponded with him during the war, and whenever an opportunity presented itself he would come to Philadelphia for the purpose of seeing his family at Burlington, and would

often stay with me, and in that way he made a great many friends. That was as early as 1868. He always seemed to enjoy his visits here, as they gave him rest during the time he was in the army. These visits to Philadelphia were continued after he became President, and he always found recreation and pleasure in them.

Much has been published about General Grant, but there are many things I have not seen stated, and one is that he had considerable artistic taste and talent. He painted very well. One of his paintings, twelve by eighteen inches, he gave to his friend the late Hon. A. E. Borie, of Philadelphia, who was the Secretary of the Navy in his first Cabinet. That picture is, I believe, one of the two that he is known to have painted. On the death of Mr. Borie it was presented by his family to Mrs. Grant, and the engraving of it was made from the original sent to me for the purpose by Col. Fred. D. Grant. Of the other painting there is no trace. General Grant stood very high with his professor of drawing at West Point, and if he had persevered in that line might, it has always seemed to me, have made a good artist. He was throughout his cadetship apt in mathematics and drawing. The picture alluded to is that of an Indian chief, at a trading-post in the Northwest, exchanging skins and furs with a group of traders and trappers. The Indian

stands in the foreground and is the central object—a noble figure, well painted, and in full and characteristic costume. I have often seen the painting, which has been very much admired. The General took a good deal of pride in it himself.

General Grant was not an ardent student. Early in life he was somewhat of a novel-reader, but latterly he read history, biography, and travels. He was a careful reader, and remembered everything he read. He was a great reader of newspapers. I recall an incident which happened while we were at Long Branch, just after General Sherman's Memoirs had been published. Referring to the work, I asked him if he had read it. He said he had not had time to do so. One of the persons present observed, "Why, General, you won't find much in it about yourself. Sherman doesn't seem to think you were in the war." The General said, "I don't know; I have seen some adverse criticisms, but I am going to read it and judge the book for myself."

After he had perused the work carefully and attentively, I asked him what he thought of it. "Well," he said, "it has done me full justice. It has given me more credit than I deserve. Any criticism I might make would be that I think Sherman has not done justice to Logan, Blair, and other volunteer generals, whom he calls political generals.

These men did their duty faithfully, and I never believe in imputing motives to people."

General Sherman had sent to me the proof-sheets of that portion of the Memoirs relating to General Grant before the book was published, and asked if I had any suggestions to make, and if I thought he had been just to the General. I informed General Grant that I had read these proof-sheets, and that I thought, as he did, that General Sherman had done him full justice. General Grant had the highest opinion of General Sherman as a military man, and always entertained a great personal regard for him. He was always magnanimous, particularly to his army associates. He was a man who rarely used the pronoun *I* in conversation when speaking of his battles.

There is an amusing little incident I recall, *à propos* of a large painting of General Sherman on his "March to the Sea," which hangs in the hall of my Long Branch house, and which was painted by Kauffmann. Sherman sits in front of the tent, in a white shirt, without coat or vest. The picture shows a camp-fire in front, and the moonlight in the rear of the tents. The criticism of General Grant when he first saw it was, "That is all very fine; it looks like Sherman; but he never wore a boiled shirt there, I am sure."

While living at Long Branch few Confede-

rate officers who visited the place failed to call upon General Grant. He was always glad to see them, and he invariably talked over with them the incidents and results of the war. The General held in high estimation General Joseph E. Johnston, and always spoke of him as one of the very best of the Southern generals. At one of my dinners I had the pleasure of getting Johnston, Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan together.

With regard to election matters General Grant was a close observer, and had a wonderful judgment respecting results. One particular case may be cited. During the canvass of his second term (towards the latter part of it) there began to be doubts throughout the country of his election. Senator Wilson, who was then running on the ticket for Vice-President, and who was a man of the people and had had a good deal of experience in election matters for forty years, made an extensive tour through the country, and came to my house, just afterwards, very despondent. He went over the ground and said that the result was in a great deal of doubt; I hastened to see General Grant, and told him of this feeling, particularly as it impressed Senator Wilson. The General said nothing, but sent for a map of the United States. He laid the map on the table, went over it with a pencil, and said, "We will carry this State, that State, and that State,"