

**LIFE OF GENERAL TAYLOR, THE
HERO OF OKEE CHOBEE, PALO
ALTO, RESACA DE LA PALMA,
MONTEREY, AND BUENA VISTA**

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**LIFE OF GENERAL TAYLOR, THE
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MONTEREY, AND BUENA VISTA**



GENERAL TAYLOR AS PRESIDENT.

THE YOUNG AMERICAN'S LIBRARY.

LIFE

OF

GENERAL TAYLOR,

THE HERO OF

OKEE CHOBEE, PALO ALTO, RESACA DE LA PALMA,
MONTEREY, AND BUENA VISTA.

CONTAINING

NUMEROUS ANECDOTES.

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PREFACE.



GENIUS, or great natural capacity, unaided by experience and unfortified by previous application, may often prove equal to a sudden exigence. But the upward flight which challenges admiration may in the next moment be followed by a mortifying plunge, which escapes censure only by the intervention of pity. Hence we find that mere genius has needed apologists in the ratio of its admirers; and that in the relation of the lives of brilliant men, the voice of praise must alternate with pleadings for their deficiencies. Between what they have done well, and what they have committed ill — between what they have performed and what they have neglected—a world usually indulgent to the gifted strikes the balance in their favour with an “if,” and their account is rendered, like a factor’s bill, with “errors excepted.”

We wish, in this brief narrative of the public life of General Zachary Taylor, to appear rather as his impartial historian, than as his indiscriminate eulogist. But the splendour of the military achievements in which his has been the guiding arm, has caused an enthusiasm which is contagious; and raised a grateful tempest of praise, which would cover great faults, if there were any gross faults to conceal in his military character, or in his public life. "Success," says a quaint old writer, "is a rare paint—it hides all the ugliness."

But while we confine our remarks to his public life, we beg not to be misunderstood, as intending to leave the inference that his private relations are open to censure. In truth, we know little of him, except as a soldier, and have therefore forborne to attempt any relation of his private history; nor is such matter necessary to our purpose. Common fame is now one-voiced in his praise as a man and a soldier. Circumstances may subject him to a stricter ordeal by and by; and while we now temper adulation with the consideration that he is human, and therefore frail, we must apply more than the same abatement to the censure which envy, inseparable from success, may aggravate. Should detraction succeed eulogy, we must take into account the accusers as

well as the accused. No man can occupy a responsible place, without clashing against the wishes, if not against the interest, of others.

General Taylor is unquestionably a man of genius—but he is as unquestionably a man of application. The remarks in our opening paragraph apply to him only by contrast; and it was for the sake of that contrast that they are introduced. The lesson which his life teaches is one of great practical utility. His military knowledge is the purchase of long experience, and of diligent service. To the great mass of the public he seemed to start forth into fame, as a fabled personage of mythology came into being, the instant creation of a perfect hero. But before the nation was astonished with the feats of our army on the Rio Grande, Zachary Taylor had been for nearly forty years a soldier; and of this long term the greater part was spent in service which gave little other reward than the consciousness that he was performing his duty. He obtained not fame, but knowledge.

Reviewing his life, we find the lad quick of parts, yet diligent of application. As “the child is father of the man,” the same characteristic has marked his whole course. He has not been content that his superior capacity should put him, with scarce an

effort, on a simple equality with those who are compelled to labour to perform that which he can effect without. To his aptness he has added industry — a rare combination — and thus has improved his natural powers to a better purpose than that of merely accomplishing with ease what others can only do with effort. He has doubled by application whatever advantages his eminent abilities conferred.

We cannot all be soldiers—and it is much to be hoped that the need of men whose profession is arms may every day grow less and less. But we can all act upon the motto that “whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well,” and thus in times of comparative repose be gathering strength and knowledge for such occasions as demand extraordinary exertions. Thus trained, when we conquer — for there are conquests in peace as well as in war — the praise of those who know nothing of our history may be the more clamorous; but that of those who understand us will be the more judicious—the more sincere—and the more permanent.

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