

learn much from Corot in the way of technical secrets; no one can learn from him how to idealize nature except a man who, like himself, chances to be born with a poet's heart; and we can do no more than hope that all new poets who may be born to paint shall be souls of Corot's sort. But we must indeed hope this; for what the world needs just now are not mournful temperaments, reading into nature the sorrow of the human race, but apostles of the joy and peace which those who seek can always find in her, valiant yet tender singers like Corot—happy singers of a glad new day.

VIII.

THE more we study Corot's art the more we love the man who stands behind it; and I have dwelt at some length on the record of his life because it completes the revelation of a strong and serious will, of perseverance, modesty, and self-reliance, of noble desires, unflinching courage, sincerity, and loving-kindness.

It is a little the fashion nowadays to think of artists as excusing themselves, on the strength of being artists, from the duties and virtues we demand of commoner clay. It is too much our way to think of them as eccentric, egotistic, nervously excitable or morbidly sensitive, at odds with a prosaic world and often at odds with themselves—pushed one way by the artistic impulse, pulled another by mere human loves and obligations. We think too often of them thus to pardon or condemn them accord-

ing as we value art or care little for it as a factor in the progress and aspiration of the world.

Corot's story is of priceless value as proving how far wrong are these ideas; and all the more because it is not an exceptional story. Men like Corot, in all the essentials of what even a pharisaical world would call good conduct, have never been rare among artists and are not rare to-day; nor men as courageous and persevering in disappointment, as simple, modest, and laborious in success. As was Corot, so, in a more or less marked degree, were almost all the great painters and sculptors of his great time. Not all of them could be so cheery and happy, but most of them were as single-minded in their devotion to art, as generous and sincere in their dealings with their fellows.

Let me make a good ending now with a few more words from Corot's lips: "Do we know how to render the sky, a tree, or water? No; we can only try to give its appearance, try to translate it by an artifice which we must always seek to perfect. For this reason, although I do not know my craft so very badly, I am always trying to go further. Sometimes some one says: 'You know your business and don't need to study more.' But none of that, I say; we always need to learn. . . . Try to conquer the qualities you do not possess, but above all obey your own instinct, your own way of seeing. This is what I call conscience and sincerity. Do not trouble yourself about anything else, and you will have a good chance of being happy and of doing well."

M. G. van Rensselaer.

GENERAL LEE AFTER THE WAR.

IT would not be easy, for one who had not been in the midst of it, to realize the enthusiasm that existed among the Southern people for General Lee at the conclusion of the war. Nothing could exceed the veneration and love, the trust and absolute loyalty, which people and soldiery alike had manifested towards him through the struggle. But it was after the war had closed that the affection of the people seemed more than ever a consecrated one. The name given to him universally in the army, "Ole Mars' Robert," is an evidence of the peculiar tenderness with which he was regarded. But after defeat came, all this feeling was intensified by the added one of sympathy. Nowhere could he move abroad without being greeted with such demonstrations of love and interest as always touched his generous and gracious heart.

Living near General Lee as I did, from

1865 till his death, in 1870, I was cognizant of many little instances and scenes which illustrate this feeling, and also serve to bring out some of the finer points of his character in a way no stately biography would condescend to do. It may be worth while to focalize some of these minute side-lights, in order to indicate the less known characteristics of that inner life which shrank from manifesting itself to the world at large.

A brief period only had passed after the surrender at Appomattox when offers of homes began to be pressed upon him. His family was originally English, and he had many relatives among titled people in the old country, who insisted upon his coming and sharing, for a time, the ease and luxury of their homes. But he positively declined to expatriate himself. "No," he said, "I will never forsake my people in their extremity; what they endure, I will endure, and I am ready to break my

last crust with them." And he refused to leave Virginia. Nothing ever gave him greater pleasure than to witness personal, strenuous effort to overcome the disasters of the war. To see a small farmer attempting to fence his fields with green saplings was to him a sight that made his eyes brighter.

Many homes were urged upon him in his native State; but as my sister, Mrs. E. R. Cocke, of Cumberland, said when he accepted her offer of a vacant plantation adjoining her own, which was a part of her estate, "He chose among these homes one of the most unpretending." With furniture from her own house, she fitted up for him and his family a comfortable abode at "Derwent," Powhatan County; and here he gathered together, for the first time since they had left Arlington, his wife and children around him. "Never shall I forget," she said, "his unaffected gratitude, and his gracious acceptance of this simple home I and my sons had prepared for him. The plantation of Derwent was only two miles from my own, and our great country gardens readily met the wants of the new residents. As I saw the beautiful simplicity with which these trifling supplies were received, it seemed impossible for me to realize that this was the man upon whom the fate of the South had hung; that this was the man for whom thousands were ready to rush to death; that this was the man before whom the hearts of all the Southern Confederacy bowed in reverence. One day, shortly after he came to Derwent, he rode over on Traveler¹ (his famous war-horse) to a neighboring country-store, which was also the post-office. The desire of the people, black as well as white, to see the General was intense, for this was but a few weeks after the surrender. He walked quietly into the store, and was engaged with its proprietor in talk about the prospects of the crops, and such like things, when the place began to be crowded by the country people, intent upon catching a glimpse of the great commander. He seemed not to observe them at first; but turning round, and noticing the press about him, he said, in an apologetic way, 'Ah, Mr. Palmer, pardon me for keeping you talking about corn and tobacco so long; for I see I am detaining you from your many customers.' There was nothing whatever to indicate the slightest consciousness that the crowd had pressed in to see him.

"Another incident," she went on to say, "I recall of General Lee, which seems to me worth relating. My head dining-room servant, who had occupied his post for twenty-five years, and whose ancestors for more than a hundred years had been born on the plantation, had

¹ For portrait of General Lee on Traveler, see THE CENTURY MAGAZINE for July, 1886.

determined to avail himself of his sudden freedom. We were all sitting at dinner—for it was before the General and his family had taken possession of Derwent—when Shepherd, the man in question, all ready for departure, entered the dining-room, to take leave of the assembled family. I well remember the kindness with which the General rose from his seat, and, shaking the old servant cordially by the hand, gave him some good advice and asked Heaven to bless him. There was no feeling of bitterness towards him because he was leaving his mistress to much distraction and care from which he might have saved her; instead of this, a benediction and a Godspeed."

When homes were being offered to him, both abroad and from one end of the late Confederacy to the other, his eldest daughter, who was visiting in our neighborhood, said one day, in the hearing of a trustee of Washington College, "Why don't they propose to my father some place in which he can work? For he never will accept the *gratuity* of a home." The remark was caught up, and conveyed to the board of trustees. This college, situated in the very heart of Virginia, was founded before the American Revolution; and after it had received a large endowment from Washington himself its name was changed from Liberty Hall to Washington College—the first institution of any kind whatever that bore the name of the great patriot. Thenceforth this college was the educator of a large number of the prominent men of Virginia. Its buildings had been injured, its professors and students scattered, and its resources crippled by the war. An offer of its presidency was made to General Lee with scarcely a hope that he would accept it; but accept it he did, without hesitation, saying, "I may thus influence my young countrymen."

I once heard it said by Professor White, the professor of Greek in our college, who had himself been a Confederate officer: "The first appearance of the General in our streets was thoroughly characteristic. As I passed up our main street one day in the summer of 1865 I was suddenly confronted by General Lee on his fine war-horse Traveler, dressed in white linen from head to foot, wholly unattended, even by his black groom. Nobody in the town knew he was coming. This was as he wished it, for it was his desire to shun every demonstration. Here was the man who for four years had never moved abroad without being attended by a military staff composed of some of the most brilliant younger men of the South, and who never appeared anywhere without being received with enthusiastic shouts from all beholders—now with only one person to greet him, and an old Confederate to hold his

stirrup! But as every man in the town had been a soldier, it was not long before the street rang with cheers."

I well remember the first visit I paid to Mrs. Lee on the General's taking possession of the house of the college president. There were many visitors present, who all came, with a sort of exalted reverence, to pay their formal respects to the General and Mrs. Lee. When we rose to take leave, my little son, who accompanied me, could not find his cap. What was my surprise to hear Mrs. Lee interrupt her husband in his animated talk with some distinguished gentlemen present—not to ask him to summon a servant to do her errand, but to say:

"Robert, Herbert Preston has lost his cap; will you go into the back parlor and see if he has left it there?"

We were not used then to hear the leader of our armies bidden to wait on a child!

At one of the first Commencements—I think the very first—at which General Lee presided after he became president of the college, the hall was filled with an immense crowd to whom he was the central object of interest. During the progress of the speeches, a little boy four years old became separated from his parents and went wandering up one of the aisles in frightened search of them. The General noticed the child's confusion, and, gaining his eye, beckoned him to come to him on the platform, where he sat surrounded by many of the brilliant officers of the late Confederacy. The tender signal was irresistible to the child. He instantly made his way to the feet of the General, sat down there, and leaned his head against his knee, looking up in his face with the utmost trust, apparently thoroughly comforted. Thus resting, he fell asleep, with his protector's arm around him, and when the time came for the General to take his part in the prescribed ceremonies we who were looking on were touched in no little degree as we saw him carefully rise from his seat and adjust the little head softly upon the sofa so as not to waken the confiding little sleeper.

His love for children was one of his most marked traits. He possessed the royal attribute of never forgetting faces or names; and not a boy in our streets ever took off his cap to salute him as he passed by on Traveler, nor a little girl courtesied to him on the sidewalk, that he did not for a moment check his rein to give an answering salute, invariably naming them, and perhaps the pleasure of a ride on the saddle before him. We found him early one Christmas morning at our door. He had come to bring some Christmas presents to my little boys; and I discovered that he had done the same for all the children of his friends. He told me once of an amusing scene he encountered, in which chil-

dren played a part, from which he laughingly said he retreated, ignominiously defeated. A few miles out of the town he was overtaken in his ride by a thunder-storm, and sought refuge in the house of a gentleman whom he knew. Mr. W—— and his wife were absent, but a group of children who were playing marbles on the parlor carpet came forward at once and made him welcome. But the attractions of the game were too powerful for their politeness and that of the little visitors they had with them; and as the General begged them not to stop their playing, they took him at his word and went on with their game. In a little while an altercation arose.

"Now, Mary," said Tom, "I call that cheating! You did n't do that thing fairly!"

"Take that back, Tom!" broke out Charlie. "You sha'n't say my sister cheats!"

"But she did," cried Tom, with sullen persistence, "and I'll say it again!" With that Charlie rose in his wrath and collared Tom; and Mary, trying to separate the combatants, burst into tears and cried out, "O General Lee, please don't let them fight!"

"My good fellows," said the General, grasping each boy by the shoulder, "there's some better way to settle your quarrels than with your fists." But in vain he tried to separate the little wrestlers. "I argued, I remonstrated, I commanded; but they were like two young mastiffs, and never in all my military service had I to own myself so perfectly powerless. I retired beaten from the field, and let the little fellows fight it out."

His ability to recall a name, after he had once heard it, was peculiar. One of the college professors told me that in riding out with him one day they passed an old mill, at the door of which stood the dusty German miller, with the most barbarous of German names, waiting with the hope of receiving a handshake from the leader under whom his sons had served. His wish was gratified, and the old man was made proud and happy. Not long after, the same professor was passing the same mill, when at the door the miller again presented himself. By no effort of memory could the queer German name be recalled by the professor; but before he had time to speak, the General rode straight to the door, and, with a cheerful "Good-morning," named the old man at once.

He had the gentlest way possible of giving counsel and administering rebuke. I remember hearing him say, in a presence where such testimony was worth more than a dozen temperance lectures: "Men need no stimulant; it is something, I am persuaded, that they can do without. When I went into the field, at the beginning of the war, a good lady

friend of mine gave me two sealed bottles of very superb French brandy. I carried them with me through the entire campaign; and when I met my friend again, after all was over, I gave her back both her bottles of brandy, with the seals unbroken. It may have been some comfort to me to know that I had them in case of sudden emergency, but the moment never came when I needed to use them."

His skill and wisdom in managing the young men who crowded to the college after his accession as president was extraordinary. Owing to the closing of so many of the Southern schools of learning, the number of students was very large, reaching five hundred in the earlier sessions; but a case of discipline rarely occurred. He was accustomed to say to the students when they presented themselves in his office, on their entrance at college, "Now, my friends, I have a way of estimating young men which does not often fail me. I cannot note the conduct of any one, for even a brief period, without finding out what sort of a mother he had. You all honor your mothers: need I tell you that I know you will have that honor in reverent keeping?" So tender an appeal as this went straight to the heart of many a youth as no formal advice could have done.

He told me that once at Arlington, when he was on a visit home from one of the frontier posts, he went out one wintry morning, after a slight fall of snow, and strolled down one of the graveled walks. Hearing some one behind him, he turned and saw his eldest son fitting his little feet into the distinct tracks he had left in the snow, and making great strides in order to do this effectually. "I learned a lesson, then and there," he said, "which I never afterwards forgot. My good man, I said to myself, you must be careful how you walk, and where you go, for there are those following you who will set their feet where you set yours." Something similar to this has been told of another, but I had this from General Lee himself.

Few men were more skilled in the avoidance of everything that could wound the feelings of others. On the occasion of General Lee's being summoned to Washington to give testimony, an incident occurred which illustrates this characteristic. A connection of my own, who attended him as one of his complimentary staff, told me that when in Washington there were multitudes of persons—and among them many of the most distinguished in the land, North and South—seeking audience with General Lee; evening after evening was occupied with these interviews. Again and again had my friend been beset by a person who had no claim to be presented, and as often had he been waived aside on the plea that the number of gentlemen coming to be

introduced was so great as to embarrass his provisional staff. But this persistent Confederate watched his opportunity and made the best of it. Coming up to Colonel M—— when he was a little off his guard he whispered, "Take me up now; there is nobody being introduced at this moment."

"But don't you see that the General is surrounded by a group of officers and congressmen, and that it won't do to break in upon their conversations?"

But the old soldier would not be shaken off. So Colonel M—— thought the best way to end the matter would be to lead him up to the General, and thus in a moment put a stop to his pertinacity. Taking him, accordingly, by the arm, he drew him forward. The large circle opened and allowed a pathway, and the man was presented in due form and received with as much courtesy as if he had been a prince of the blood. Colonel M—— was about to lead him instantly away, when he suddenly stepped into the open space where the group had made way for him, and in a rather loud voice said:

"General, I have always thought that if I ever had the honor of meeting you face to face, and there was an opportunity allowed me, I would like to ask you a question which nobody but you can answer. I seem to have that opportunity now. This is what I want to know: *What was the reason that you failed to gain the victory at the battle of Gettysburg?*"

To have such an ill-timed question dropped like a bomb-shell in such a presence was, to say the least of it, embarrassing, and some curt rejoinder would have been natural and to the purpose; but General Lee's kind-heartedness would not permit a rude dismissal even to so unwarrantable a questioner. Advancing and gently taking him by the hand, while all the listening group stood round amazed at the man's presumption, the General quietly said:

"My dear sir, that would be a long story, and would require more time than you see I can possibly command at present; so we will have to defer the matter to another occasion."

This same friend gave me an instance of a similar encounter that concerned Mrs. Lee, whose simplicity and kindness of heart rivaled that of her husband.

The General and his wife were at the Virginia White Sulphur Springs, occupying one of the pretty cottages that had been set apart for them. The crowd of visitors was great, and everybody who had the least show for so doing was asking for introductions, for the war had not long been over.

"I encountered a good-natured but absurd man from the far South," said Colonel M——, "whose enthusiasm for the Lee family was at

fever heat. His pompous way of talking was a constant amusement to me; and when he asked that I should intrude upon the gay group that always filled the piazza of the General's cottage and introduce him, I naturally hesitated somewhat, fearing lest he should overpower them by one of his magniloquent apostrophes. He joined me one evening just as we were passing the cottage door, where a party of visitors were being entertained by the General and his wife. 'Now is your time,' he whispered; and he forthwith drew me to the steps, where, as in duty bound, I presented him. Withdrawing a little, he assumed a Hamlet-like pose, and lifting his hand with a most dramatic air, he began:

"Do I behold the honored roof that shelters the head of him before whose name the luster of Napoleon's pales into a shadow? Do I see the walls within which sits the most adored of men? Dare I tread the floor which she who is a scion of the patriotic house of the revered Washington condescends to hallow with her presence? Is this the portico that trails its vines over the noble pair—"

"I stumbled back aghast," said Colonel M—, "at my own blunder, as I listened to this ridiculous speech, which I really believed was gotten up and conned for the occasion. But I was relieved in a moment when Mrs. Lee, quietly laying down her knitting and interrupting the rhetorical effort, with a kind look upon her face replied:

"Yes, this is our cabin; will you take a seat upon the bench?"

General Lee's considerate courtesy never failed him. He used to be overpowered with letters from every part of the South, on every imaginable subject, written by the wives and mothers of his old soldiers, asking questions which it was impossible for him to answer, and seeking aid which it was impossible for him to give. Indigent women would write, begging him to find places where their boys and girls might support themselves. Crippled soldiers by scores sought for help from him; and multitudes whose only claim was that they had fought for the Confederacy entreated his counsel and petitioned for his advice in every sort of emergency.

I once said to him, "I hope you do not feel obliged to reply to all these letters."

"I certainly do," was his reply. "Think of these poor people! It is a great deal of trouble for them to write: why should I not be willing to take the trouble to answer them? And as that is all I can give most of them, I give it ungrudgingly." And yet at this time he had five hundred young men under his management, and a corps of twenty-five professors; and this in a line of work totally novel to him.

His humility was as conspicuous as anything about him. His religious character was pronounced and openly shown. But he arrogated nothing to himself as a religious man. I was present once when my husband informed him of an effort just being made to supply our county with Bibles, of which it had been stripped to meet the wants of the army during the war. The Bible Society was being reorganized, and the General was pressed to accept the post of president—"For the sake of the cause; for the sake of the testimony his name would bear; for the sake of the example it would be to his five hundred students." My husband was called out before he had finished his plea, and I was left in the library for a few moments alone with the General. I shall not easily forget the expression of profound humility on his face, as with a subdued voice he turned to me and said:

"Ah, my dear madam, I feel myself such a poor sinner in the sight of God that I cannot consent to be set up as a Christian example to any one. This is the real reason why I decline to do what the colonel urges so strongly."

He was in the act of saying grace at his own dinner-table when the fatal stroke fell which terminated his life.

It was not in General Lee's nature to entertain feelings of bitterness against any human being. As was the case with Stonewall Jackson, he never used the word "Yankee"—the term so generally applied through the South to the soldiers of the Northern army. He always spoke of them as the "Federalists" or the "enemy." On the occasion of Mr. Greeley, Mr. O'Connor, and others coming to Richmond to offer bail for ex-President Davis, I heard him, with something more approaching to acrimony than I had ever been witness of, speak of some of the expressions used by Southern editors. "I condemn," he said, "such bitterness wholly. Is it any wonder the Northern journals should retort upon us as they do, when we allow ourselves to use such language as I found in some of our papers yesterday?"

As to the immediate personality of the man, we people of the South naturally enough think that, take him for all in all, physically, intellectually, socially, and morally, we never saw his equal. He was a superb specimen of manly grace and elegance. He had escaped that preciseness of manner which a whole life spent in military service is apt to give. There was about him a stately dignity, calm poise, absolute self-possession, entire absence of self-consciousness, and gracious consideration for all about him that made a combination of character not to be surpassed. His tall, erect figure, his bright color, his brilliant hazel eyes, his perfect white teeth (for he had never used tobacco), his at-

tractive smile, his chivalry of bearing, the musical sweetness of his pure voice, were attributes never to be forgotten by those who had once met him.

His domestic life was idyllic in its beautiful simplicity. His devotion to his invalid wife, who for many years was a martyr to rheumatic gout, was pathetic to see. He had her often conveyed to our various medicinal springs in Virginia, himself riding on horseback beside her carriage. I recall one instance in which he preceded her by a few days in order that he might have an apparatus prepared, under his skillful engineering, by means of which her invalid-chair was placed upon a little platform and carefully lowered into the bath, in order that the descent and ascent of steps might be avoided. His tenderness to his children, especially his daughters, was mingled with a delicate courtesy which belonged to an older day than ours—a courtesy which recalls the *preux chevalier* of knightly times. He had a pretty way of addressing his daughters, in the presence of other people, with a prefix which would seem to belong to the age of lace ruffles and side-swords.

"Where is my little Miss Mildred?" he would say on coming in from his ride or walk at dusk. "She is my light-bearer; the house is never dark if she is in it."

He was passionately fond of nature, and never wearied of riding about on Traveler among our beautiful Virginia hills and mountains, with one of his daughters invariably at his side. His delight in the early flush of the spring, in the rich glow of the summer, and in the superb coloring of our autumn landscape, was wonderfully fine and keen. "No words can express," says one of his daughters, "the intense enjoyment he would get out of a brilliant sunset."

He was fond of literature, and indulged all his life in a wide range of reading quite apart from the bearings of his profession. When at home he was always in the habit of reading aloud to his family. "My first and most intimate acquaintance with Sir Walter Scott's metrical romances," one of his daughters says, "came through papa. He read them to us when we were children, till we almost knew them by heart, and the best English classics were always within reach of his hand. One of the last winters of his life he read aloud to the family group the latest translation of the Iliad and the Odyssey."

General Lee possessed one quality which only those who came into close intimacy with him were much aware of—he had a delicious sense of humor. Many a student was turned aside from some perilous course by a sly shaft, feathered with his keen wit, or by some humor-

ous question which conveyed a gentle reproof, of which only he for whom the reproof was intended could understand the bearings. He could be very stern when it was necessary, but somehow his sternness never embittered.

When he became president of the college he immediately had morning prayers established in the chapel; and never during his incumbency was he known to be absent from them, if he was well and at home. The only things with which he ever grew impatient were self-indulgence and failure in duty. The voice of duty was to him the voice of God. Under no circumstances was he willing to disobey it, nor could he understand how others could be. This was something he continually impressed upon his students. What is duty to God and man, and how to do that duty, were the two leading questions of his life. His persistent assiduity in giving himself up to every detail of college discipline and life was so scrupulous as sometimes to lead to the suggestion on the part of professors of a little more indulgence towards himself, but they never succeeded in getting him to relax the rigid rules by which he governed every action.

One of the last acts of his life was a filial one. Accompanied by his daughter Agnes he went to Florida to visit the grave of his father, "Light-Horse Harry Lee." This journey—his last earthly one—was a sort of sacred pilgrimage. As he returned from Florida he sought out, in North Carolina, the final resting-place of his lovely daughter Annie, who had died in that State in the early freshness of her beautiful girlhood, just at the moment when her father was winning his most brilliant successes. Agnes told me, when she came home, of her father's extreme unwillingness to be made a hero of anywhere, and of the reluctance he manifested, which it took many pleas to overcome, to show himself to the crowds assembled at every station along his route who pressed to catch a sight of him.

"Why should they care to see me," he would say, when urged to appear on the platform of the train—"why should they care to see me? I am only a poor old Confederate." This feeling he carried with him to the latest hour of his life.

One who had been a member of his staff, and who was present in the death-chamber most of the time during his last illness, told me how impressed he was with the General's unwillingness to give any expression to his thought. "Not," he said, "that he was incapable of speaking; but a supreme reticence, that was to me very noble, held him back. He seemed averse to any utterance of the sacred secrets of his soul, lest they should afterwards be spoken aloud in the ear of the world."

Margaret J. Preston.