



"WHITEHAVEN," THE DENT HOMESTEAD NEAR ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI.

Redrawn from an old drawing owned by Mrs. U. S. Grant.

GRANT'S LIFE IN MISSOURI.

BY HAMLIN GARLAND,

Author of "Main-Travelled Roads," "Prairie Folks," etc.

GRANT AS A PIONEER FARMER IN MISSOURI AND REAL ESTATE BROKER IN ST. LOUIS.—PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF HIM BY THE WIFE OF HIS OLD PARTNER IN THE REAL ESTATE BUSINESS.—REMOVAL TO GALENA.

WHEN Ulysses Grant, having resigned from the army and left his post on the Pacific slope, returned to St. Louis in the autumn of 1854, he found the city and country much the same as when he had last seen them. Colonel Dent, his father-in-law, still lived at "Whitehaven," and through the autumn and the following winter Grant had his residence there too, taking a hand in everything which needed to be done about the place. Probably it was during this winter that Colonel Dent set aside some sixty or eighty acres of land for Mrs. Grant and the captain; and together they began to plan the campaign of 1855.

Grant began at the bottom, as a laborer, for he had nothing to start with—no money, no tools, no horses. He and young Jefferson Sappington bound wheat side by side, in the good old fashion, behind stalwart, shining negro cradlers. The people were more markedly Southern in character than those of Grant's native county, and many were slaveholders. Their houses were modifications of the backwoodsman's cabin, like those in the Ohio valley, with the wide galleries of the South added. Some of them are standing to-day, picturesque and hospitable in appearance, consistent and dignified as types of native architecture. Around many of



MRS. U. S. GRANT AND HER TWO ELDEST CHILDREN, FREDERICK D. AND ULYSSES S. JR., ABOUT 1854.

From a daguerreotype taken at St. Louis, now owned by Mr. U. S. Grant, Jr., and reproduced here with his permission.

them stood little shanties of hewn logs in which the slaves lived in careless squalor. The abolition movement was at its height at this time, and had affected some of the advanced thinkers to the point of liberating their black men; but Colonel Dent and most of his immediate neighbors remained slaveholders to the last.

GRANT CLEARS A FARM AND BUILDS A CABIN FOR HIS FAMILY.

Grant lived one year under his father-in-law's roof, and then, in the early fall of 1855, he set forth to build a home of his own upon the land which Colonel Dent had set aside for his use, and to that end he felled trees and hewed logs. At last the logs were ready to put into place, and invitations were sent out for "the raising."

The calls were cheerily answered, for Captain Grant had already made a favorable impression upon the neighbors by his hard work and by his unassuming manners. The helpers swarmed in like bees. The Sappingtons, the Longs, and the Wrights sent in hands, both white and black. Fenton Long took a corner position, Captain Grant another, and at a third intersection was stationed one of Colonel Dent's negroes, a powerful axman, for the notching and fitting where the logs intersected required men who were quick on their feet and strong and true with the ax. "I remember it all very well," says Henry Clay Wright.* "The building was a big, two-room cabin of hewn logs, with a hall in

*Captain Henry Clay Wright, provost marshal during the war. Grant afterwards made him Appraiser of the Port at St. Louis.



"HARDSCRABBLE," THE FARM-HOUSE BUILT BY CAPTAIN U. S. GRANT IN 1855, NEAR ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI.

the middle. It had also an upper story with two large rooms. It was a very comfortable place to live in." It is still standing, but has been removed to a nearby village as a relic.

Grant having in mind the conditions under which the house was built, and foreseeing the conditions under which he must continue to live, immediately called his residence "Hardscrabble." It was, as a matter of fact, more ambitious than the first homes of many young married people of the neighborhood, and though the furniture was scanty and plain, a rude sort of comfort was possible within its walls. Grant is said to have put in the windows and doors himself. Frederick Dent, Grant's West Point comrade and brother-in-law, helped him to other necessities in the way of tools and furniture.

Charles Ford, the manager of the United States Express at St. Louis, was an old-time acquaintance of Grant's from Sackett's Harbor, and through his aid, according to Walter Camp and Captain Wright, Captain Grant acquired on easy terms a very fine span of express horses which became at once the wonder of the neighborhood. The acquirement of a span of horses set him up in business, and he at once began hauling wood to St. Louis and

props to the coal mines near by, and was able also to do teaming for his father-in-law. The tradition is that he was the first man to carry into St. Louis a full cord of wood at one load with two horses. His horses not merely helped him to earn money, they were a pleasure to him. He never forgot Ford's kindness.

GRANT'S RELATIONS WITH HIS NEIGHBORS, AND THEIR RECOLLECTIONS OF HIM.

Henry Wright at this time owned a grist mill not far from the Dent farm, and recalls a few scenes connected with Grant's life in Gravois. "Captain Grant used to come almost every week to my mill," says Mr. Wright, "to get corn and wheat ground. The first time I ever saw him was at a sale. He was a small, thin man then, with a close-cropped, brown beard. He had no overcoat, I remember, and he wore tall boots, quite unlike any others in the neighborhood. He was living with Colonel Dent at that time, and his cabin had not been built. I think he was at the sale to buy some hogs."

A second winter was spent in teaming to St. Louis, the barracks, and the mines, and in the spring Grant began to clear the land for a crop. There was little money to be

had by the wealthiest farmers, and none at all by Captain Grant, except by means of prop-hauling and wood-selling. "We all spent a good deal of time clearing land," says Jefferson Sappington, an old neighbor. "We burned a great deal of timber, but Grant burned none. He made everything count. There was a lot of young timber on his land, and that he made into props. He worked very hard, and raised wheat, corn, and garden stuff. There wasn't a lazy bone in his body. His tools were always in order. He was always a gentleman, and a kind, indulgent father. He loved horses and cattle, and every animal about his farm was a pet. He hadn't an enemy that I ever knew of, and I never knew him to have any trouble."

"We all liked him," says Captain Wright. "We knew him to be a man of education and a veteran of the Mexican War, and nobody ever presumed to be familiar with him. He had a quiet way of keeping people at arm's length." He took part in many of the neighborhood entertainments, at least to the point of accompanying Mrs. Grant to the quiltings or socials and looking on. He sometimes took a hand at cards with mild interest. "I remember his coming to my house once," continues Captain Wright, "and bringing Mrs. Grant to a quilting. They came on horseback, each with a child on behind. I used to see them often at dances, but of course Grant took no part in that." Oswald Sturdy recollects seeing him at the shooting matches in the early fall when they met to compete for the quarters of a bullock. "He was a fairly good shot at a mark, and sometimes carried off a quarter of beef," says Mr. Sturdy.

It was a laborious life, but had, after all, its peculiar pleasures. Once, long after, in walking over the old farm, Grant pointed out some stumps, and said: "I moistened the ground around those stumps with many a drop of sweat." He paused a little, and then added, "But they were happy days."

When they had lived perhaps a year in the new cabin, Mrs. Grant's brother Lewis moved away to the farther West, and the Grants took his house, a Gothic cottage, named "Wish-ton-Wish," which stood on the edge of a beautiful forest, across the creek from Whitehaven, about a mile distant, and overlooking the Gravois road, which was the main thoroughfare to St. Louis. In 1856 Mrs. Dent died, and Colonel Dent returned to St. Louis to live,

and Captain Grant took charge of Whitehaven and assumed control of the slaves, tools, and teams, such as they were.

As to what Grant thought of slavery at that time there is no available record, except that his neighbors all considered him a Northern man and not a slavery man. Doubtless he felt slavery to be wrong, but acquiesced in it to the extent of making use of the negroes left in his charge. His teaming to St. Louis and the barracks, where he sold firewood, still continued, and "he unloaded many a cord of wood in the back yards of St. Louis aristocrats of that time."*

Fellow-officers remember meeting him on the street during this period, "a man with an all-pervading air of hard luck and vain regrets," dressed in farmer fashion, with his trousers tucked into his old military boots. General Longstreet recalls a day in St. Louis when Grant was invited to be a party once more to an old-time game of "brag" with Longstreet and two other army comrades. "He seemed quite the same as when I saw him last, just after the Mexican War," says Longstreet; "a little older, and a little graver perhaps. He was dressed plainly but neatly. He talked very little about himself, merely answered questions, but seemed to enjoy the references to old times in the Mexican War."

GRANT'S POLITICAL OPINIONS AT THIS TIME.

A Northern man, married into a slave-owning family, and surrounded by slave-owning neighbors upon whom he was in a sense dependent, it would be interesting to know what were Grant's political sentiments and opinions at this time. But he rarely talked politics outside of his most intimate circle of friends. This much is certain, he voted for Buchanan in 1858; and George W. Fishback, the editor of the old "Missouri Democrat," intimates that Grant expressed to him a foreboding of trouble, and that he voted for Buchanan in the hope that Buchanan's election "would put the struggle four years farther off."

Captain H. C. Wright, who was running for the legislature on the Whig ticket that year, and met Grant at the polling place, says: "He came up to me and said, 'Mr. Wright, I have voted for you to-day, not on the ground of politics, for I am a

* He said, at a later date: "I barked a tree in driving into Congressman Blow's yard, and Mrs. Blow came out and gave me a valuable rating."

Democrat, but because I think you are the best man for the place.' He never talked politics with me afterward. We were all slaveholding farmers in that day, and Grant's wife had a couple of slaves, and yet we felt that he was not exactly one of us."*

Grant toiled hard, but gained little. This can hardly be counted against him, for the West was passing through a money panic, and the impending struggle between North and South was affecting everything bought and sold. The whole nation was in an uneasy condition. In spite of all drawbacks, however, up to a time when he fell ill of fever and ague, Grant steadily though slowly pulled ahead, so that when, in 1858, he determined to leave the farm, he had some little property to sell at public sale.

In the midst of his own trouble and poverty he still never forgot others. "I was appointed one of three road commissioners to lay off a road," Captain Wright relates, "and we met over near Grant's farm, at a blacksmith shop kept by a man named Wise. When I got there Wise was telling Fent Long about the burning down of a widow's house the night before. He said he was going to get up a subscription for her. Some of us offered to contribute what we could spare, and while we were talking about it, Grant came up and wanted to know what it was all about. Wise told him. 'Well,' said Grant, 'it certainly is a sad story; here are five dollars for her.' We all knew it was the pay for a load of props, and probably it was all the money he had; but that's the kind of a man he was."

REMOVAL TO ST. LOUIS.—MRS. BOGGS'S RECOLLECTIONS.

Of the next phase of Grant's life, we derive an intimate and very interesting view from the reminiscences of Mrs. Louisa Boggs, now living, a widow, in St. Louis. With her husband, Harry Boggs, Grant formed a partnership in the real estate business on giving up his farm and removing into the town of St. Louis.

"The proposition [for the partnership] came through the Dents, who were related

to Mr. Boggs," says Mrs. Boggs.* "Mrs. Grant was always ambitious for her husband, and it seemed a rise in affairs to come into town. Captain Grant had not done very well on the farm, partly because he was no hand to manage negroes. He couldn't drive them to work, and so took the brunt of it himself. I know he worked hard and faithfully; but he gave it up at last, and tried to get something to do in town. He walked the streets for some time, trying to get work, and at last Colonel Dent asked Mr. Boggs if he could not employ him. It never was in Ulysses Grant to push himself forward. Mr. Boggs was doing a good business then, and really needed somebody; so Captain Grant came into the firm, practically as a clerk, for he had no money to invest. He was to pay a bonus for the privilege, and afterwards did pay it, I believe. He did clerical work, and wrote a good clear hand, but wasn't of much use. He hadn't the push of a business man.

"He couldn't bring his family into town that winter, so he lived with us. We gave him an unfurnished, back room, and told him to fit it up as he pleased. It contained very little during the winter he lived there. He had a bed, and a bowl and a pitcher on a chair; and, as he had no stove, he used to sit at our fire almost every evening. On Saturdays he went home. He lived in this way all winter, for it was spring before he got his Lynch Street house and moved his little family into it. I can see him now as he used to sit so humbly at our fireside. He had no exalted opinion of himself at any time, but in those days he seemed almost in despair. He was not fitted for civilian life. We thought him a man of ability, but in the wrong place. His mind was not on business matters. His intentions were good, but he hadn't the faculty to solicit, or to keep small affairs in order.

"I don't recall that he was ill when he lived with us, but he seemed to me much depressed. He would smile at times, but I never heard him laugh aloud. He was a sad man. He was always a gentleman, and everybody loved him, for he was so gentle and considerate; but we didn't see what he could do in the world. He had resigned from the army, and had failed at farming, and so, after trying him in busi-

*A curious incident of this time was the appointment of U. S. Grant as an appraiser of the negroes of the estate of Richard Wells. The report to the Honorable Probate Court is signed by U. S. Grant, Thaddeus Lovejoy, and James L. Kennerly. "It was simply a neighborly act," says Captain Wright, "such as any man would do for a friend."

*In an interview held expressly for McClure's Magazine, Mrs. Boggs was for many years a teacher in the public schools of St. Louis. The author of the present paper, in his conversations with her, found her a thoughtful and cultivated woman, with a very clear memory of those antebellum days to which her reminiscences relate.

ness, what could we think but that he was a man without a vocation? He did not blame us for thinking poorly of his powers; he thought poorly of himself. I don't think he saw any light ahead at that time, not a particle. I don't believe he had any ambition other than to educate his children and take care of his family.

"His mind was always somewhere else. He said very little unless some war topic came up. If you mentioned Napoleon's battles or the Mexican War or the question of secession, he was fluent enough. He used to talk politics with us very well, but at that time it was not generally known where he stood, though we never doubted his position. He was Northern, while Mr. Boggs and I were both Southern in sentiment.

"He was always a very domestic man, and extremely homelike in his ways. His wife had very great influence over him, and he had the highest regard for her. Mrs. Dent was always friendly. She believed in him. She was a very imaginative woman, and used to have wonderful dreams. She had a dream once of Ulysses wherein she saw everybody bowing down to him, and she persisted in thinking her dream a prophecy of future greatness for Ulysses, though the rest of us gave it little thought.

"The partnership with Mr. Boggs continued nearly a year, but at last hard times came on, and all business grew 'panicky,' and there was not enough in the venture for two families to live on. So Grant drew out, and tried, without success, to get into something else."

J. G. McClelland, of the firm of McClelland, Hilyer, and Moody, St. Louis, supplies some additional information with regard to the partnership of Boggs and Grant. "Our firm," says he, "had the parlors of an old French mansion on Pine Street between Second and Third. Moody had the back room, and Hilyer and I the front. We allowed Harry Boggs to have a desk there, and Grant and Boggs had some kind of a partnership in the real estate business. Grant didn't seem to be just calculated for business, but a more honest, more generous man never lived. I don't believe he knew what dishonor was."

AN APPLICANT FOR THE OFFICE OF COUNTY ENGINEER.

The firm announced itself by a card as prepared to buy and sell real estate, collect loans and rents, and also to buy and

sell negotiable paper. This business demands a persuasive and tireless talker, and again Ulysses Grant found himself at a disadvantage. "He had no power to banter or beguile or persuade," says his old friend George W. Fishback. In August, 1859, the discouraged but still struggling man tried for a new position. The office of county engineer was about to be vacant, and immediately upon hearing of this, Grant wrote the following letter to the Board of County Commissioners, which had the power of appointing to this office:

ST. LOUIS, August 15, 1859.

HON. COUNTY COMMISSIONERS,
ST. LOUIS CO., MO.

Gentlemen: I beg leave to submit myself as an applicant for County Engineer should the office be rendered vacant, and at the same time to submit the names of a few citizens who have been kind enough to recommend me for the office. I have made no effort to get a large number of names, nor the names of persons with whom I am not personally acquainted.

I enclose herewith, also, a statement from Professor Reynolds, who was a classmate of mine at West Point, as to qualifications.

Should your honorable body see proper to give me the appointment, I pledge myself to give the office my entire attention, and shall hope to give general satisfaction.

Very respectfully,

Your Ob't Sv't,

U. S. GRANT.

Appended to the application was the following endorsement from J. J. Reynolds, then Professor of Mechanics and Engineering in Washington University, St. Louis, and afterwards a Union general in the Civil War:

"Captain U. S. Grant was a member of the class at the Military Academy at West Point which graduated in 1843. He always maintained a high standing, and graduated with great credit, especially in mathematics and engineering. From my personal knowledge of his capacity and acquirement, as well as of his strict integrity and unremitting industry, I consider him in an eminent degree qualified for the office of County Engineer."

To this a hearty endorsement was added by D. M. Frost, afterwards the well-known Confederate general, who begins his endorsement by saying: "I was for three years in the corps of cadets at West Point with Captain Grant, and afterwards served with him for some eight or nine years in the army."

In addition to these testimonials, the names of nearly forty very well-known citizens were appended to the letter; so that Grant must have been at this time a man of fair standing and influence in the

city. He did not get the appointment, for two reasons: the rival applicant was well known in his capacity as an engineer; and Grant was a Democrat, while three of the five commissioners were Republicans.

A little later Grant secured a position in the custom house, but within a month the collector died, and Grant was again out of a place. It seemed as if there was nothing in the world for him to do. He again walked the streets in search of employment, but nothing offered. He had now been a year or more in St. Louis without earning anything considerable, and his small store of savings was gone. He had been forced to leave the house in Lynch Street where he had first established his family on bringing them into town, and take a humbler one in Barton Street, though the first seemed humble enough. He was obliged also to borrow money, and by the following spring his affairs were in a deplorable state.

The most vivid account of Grant's condition in these trying, hopeless days is given by Mr. George W. Fishback, a well-known citizen of St. Louis, and at that time editor of the "Missouri Democrat." Mr. Fishback had known Grant and his family previously in Ohio. He himself removed to St. Louis the same year in which Grant resigned from the army and rejoined his family at the Dent farm. "All of Captain Grant's associations and (apparent) sympathies at that time," says Mr. Fishback,* "were pro-slavery in character. He said he was a Democrat, and had voted for Buchanan for President, but his father-in-law was a slave-owner, and his wife and her whole family were intensely Southern. It is quite probable that in the midst of all his discouragements he came to a clear comprehension of the condition of things in all the border States, and held the fiery and sectional sentiments of the Southern people at their proper valuation. He no doubt foresaw the threatened civil war, and felt that as an old defender of the flag he had better take his chances among his own people of the Northern States. In the winter of 1859 and 1860 he resumed his calls at the office of the 'Democrat' and spoke freely of the folly and dangers of secession, but at the same time declared his opposition to the principles and tendencies of the Republican party.

*From a paper written by Mr. Fishback expressly for the use of McClure's Magazine. Mr. Fishback's testimony is of the highest value.

"After his decision to remove to Galena I met him on Main Street one day, in the spring of 1860. He greeted me kindly, but seemed to be in a very distressed and disconsolate frame of mind. I had never before seen him so depressed. He was shabbily dressed, his beard was unshorn, his face anxious, the whole exterior of the man denoting a profound discouragement at the result of his experiment to maintain himself in St. Louis. He said: 'I know something of the leather business, and I think I can do better up in Galena with my brothers.' He then asked me if I would buy or hire one of his house servants. She was an excellent woman, he said, and had been in the family some time, but as she was a slave he could not take her North. 'I must leave,' he said; 'I can't make a go of it here.' I declined to buy the slave woman, and I did not see him again until he entered the State as colonel of an Illinois regiment."

It will thus be seen that life in St. Louis had become very difficult for Captain Grant. He had made a brave fight, but it was against too great odds. As the heat of political discussion waxed, it became more difficult to maintain friendly relations with his neighbors, for he was at heart a lover of liberty. He was in a false position, an intolerable position. He had in his household at this time two servants given to his wife by Colonel Dent, and what to do with them became a problem. He at last turned them over to John F. Long in security for a small indebtedness, and the slaves finally fell back into the possession of Colonel Dent. It was a time of being despised of men and of lesser men. His father-in-law was a grievance with his invectives against the "Yankees." Even his friends Mr. and Mrs. Boggs shared in the growing bitterness of sectional hate, and his surroundings grew each day more intolerable. Undoubtedly, regard for the wishes of his wife had led him to remain near her parents longer than he otherwise might have done. Now he told her that he must leave St. Louis, and, with a brave resolution to share his fortunes to the end, Mrs. Grant consented.

Perhaps it was the quiet mother who softened the disappointed father's heart; at any rate, Jesse Grant "took hold of Ulysses's affairs" once more, and offered him a place in his leather store at Galena, Illinois, the Western branch of his business, which was then in charge of his two sons, Orville and Simpson.