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## STONEWALL JACKSON.

### A Soldier's Story of a Soldier.

*(From the New York World.)*

VIRGINIA, July, 1865.

Among the prominent actors in the great drama of the late revolution, there was one whose curious figure riveted every eye. He was a man between thirty-five and forty, erect, stiff, clad in dingy grey, with the measured carriage, and brief curt voice of the soldier on duty. When he smiled, it is true, his face was charming, and when his piercing look grew soft, his eye was full of the kindliest sweetness, but his lips were habitually compressed, his glance keen, penetrating and inquisitive under the rim of the faded cadet cap, drawn down low upon the forehead. He rode ungracefully, though not badly, appearing to manage his horse without an effort of volition. In manner he was absent, preoccupied and absorbed, carried away apparently by some possessing thought, which rendered him oblivious of time and place. He would raise his hand, sometimes both hands, aloft in the hottest hours of the battle, and with closed eyes utter half-audible prayers. His walk was a stride, which the most ardent of his admirers would not have ventured to call graceful. He sat stiffly erect upon his camp stool, or in his pew at church, refusing to enjoy the luxury of reclining in the least degree. He was silent, shy, awkward, homely in dress and appearance, and constrained in manner, without wit, without humor, without any apparent endowment distinguishing him from the dullest and most common-place of his species. And yet this powerfully excited the admiration and affection, not only of his own people, but of many of his adversaries; who in the homely figure of Stonewall Jackson saw the embodiment of goodness, military genius, and almost unbroken victory.

His life has been written, and need not here form the subject of separate treatment. Up to 1861, there was little in his career to attract attention. A poor boy, born beyond the Alleghanys in Virginia, he managed to get to West Point; thence passed as lieutenant of artillery to Mexico, where he fought recklessly; then became professor at Lexington; then colonel of Virginia volunteers at Harper's Ferry in April 1861. Thence forward his career is well known—how he decided the fate of the first battle of Manassas by the charge which pierced the federal center; how he marched in the dead of winter upon Bath and Romney, driving out the federal garrison there; and how he then entered upon the celebrated campaign of the valley, which has made the names of Keinstown, McDowell, Winchester, Cross Keys, and Port Republic, famous in military history. From the valley he came to the Lowlands and decided with his veteran corps, the hot day of Cold Harbour; next came his defeat of General Pope at Cedar Run; then the remarkable march to Manassas in the rear of Pope, followed by the victory there, and the two days afterwards at Oxhill; then the capture of Harper's Ferry with 11,000 men and more than seventy pieces of artillery; then Sharpsburg, where he sustained General McClellan's main attack with his right wing under Hooker, and repulsed it; then Fredericksburg, where he drove back General Franklin's column of 55,000 men, assailing the confederate right; and then Chancellorsville, where with 22,000 men he fell unexpectedly on the right of General Hooker, and achieved the greatest, perhaps, of all his victories. He fell there, struck down, by an accidental shot of his own men, and thence forward victory seemed to desert the southern standard. The confederates repulsed the federal forces, thereafter but never defeated them.

The campaign alluded to will always be famous in military annals; and the character of the man who fought them a legitimate subject of praise. Their effect upon the fortunes of the war was incalculable. In other quarters the clouds might lower; but here light shone. Victories over astounding odds; extrication from perils threatening destruction, and defeat of adverse combinations so powerful that apparently no effort could resist them, were the phenomena which attracted to this soldier, the eyes of friends and enemies alike. Who and what was the man who achieved such great and uninterrupted success? That was the question in many mouths; and what was the secret of this continued triumph over obstacles which would have crushed the most experienced masters of the art of war? The reply is simple. Jackson was one of those leaders—"few and far between"—who are born with a supreme genius for war; and who overcome all barriers in their path by the native superiority of their faculties. The qualities which constitute the character of a great soldier are breadth of view, foresight, prudence, enterprise, nerve, and imperturbable coolness. All faculties must contradictory must meet and work harmoniously in him. Caution pushed to the point of apparent timidity; daring so extreme as to appear pure recklessness; the gift of looking to the most minute details, and that of banishing from the mind all details whatsoever, grasping the army under him as a sharp and tempered weapon, and striking the great blow at the right moment and in the right place. The mystery of mysteries is, that not seldom do men possess this rare and supernatural genius for war, without marked ability in other directions. Not to go beyond the home arena; Stuart, Ashby, and other prominent leaders of the late war were not regarded as men of conspicuous ability out of their sphere; and Jackson was so commonplace an individual except in his profession, that those who knew him best, never ceased to wonder at his success. With the singular exception of the obstinate courage with which he fought his guns at Cherubusco, and Chepultepec he had displayed, up to his thirty-seventh year, no unusual ability of any description whatever. He was a commonplace lecturer, a mediocre writer, a thinker without apparent originality, and in all the lesser endowments of the man of society was strikingly deficient. He seemed not to know what men meant by imagination and fancy; he was without wit, utterly destitute of all appreciation of mirth or humor; and seems to have regarded *belles lettres*, and what is called "good company" as perfectly frivolous. His most intimate friends had never heard him utter a profound or striking sentence; his writings were innocent of anything like force or originality. A fair and impartial judgment of the man, from anything which he had ever said, written or performed, would have been that he was merely a plodding professor. Those who did not join in this opinion would have differed from it in a manner not very flattering. There were those who conscientiously believed that Jackson's eccentricity amounted to insanity of mind.

When the commonplace professor, who seemed to emerge from his dullness only to do something absurd, was placed in command of a brigade, people began to laugh and shrug their shoulders. Instead of a chevalier, on a prancing steed, in splendid trappings, and "breathing beauteous battle," they saw before them an eccentric figure in a dingy grey coat, on a peaceful-looking cob, his knees drawn up, his body bent forward, a leather stock sawing his ears, and his appearance, in every point of view, ungainly. They laughed—soon they became quiet. When he fell at Chancellorsville, there was not a man in the army who had not "known what was in him from the first." The name of "Poor Tom Jackson" was left to be disintered by his biographers. Virginia had recognized and saluted, in his person, one of the greatest of her immortals

In truth under this dull exteror, were the golden faculties which make the king of men. Eulogy is easy, in presence of this great career, but let us dismiss all such unprofitable work, and rationally inquire what endowments went to accomplish the successes of Jackson.

Underlying all was a supreme sprit of combativeness. It is a fancy that he did not love fighting. He reveled in it. War was horrible in his eyes, it is true, from the enormous public and private misery which it occasioned; but he none the less loved the conflict of opposing forces. In battle, under his calm exterior, he had the *gaudium certaminis.* You could see that he was a fighting animal, from his ponderous jaw. We say "animal," because at such moments Jackson, the compassionate Christian, became Jackson the veritable bull-dog. His combativeness when thus aroused, was obstinate, enormous. To fight to the death was his unfaltering resolve; and his own invincible resolution was infused, into his troops; they became inspired by his ardour, and were more than a match for two or three times their number, fighting without this stimulus. With Jackson leading them in person, on fire with the heat of battle, the Stonewall Brigade and other troops which had served under him long, felt themselves able to achieve impossibilities. But combativeness and military ardor do not make a great commander; without them no officer can accomplish much, but more is needed to achieve the glories of arms. Enterprise is necessary; and this word for want of a better, must express a quality of Jackson's mind which more than all else gave him his astonishing success. His rule was never to allow an enemy to rest; to attack whereever it was possible, and to press on until all opposition was broken down, and the day gained. The remarkable activity shown in his campaigns is an evidence that he possessed this trait as a general, in more eminent degree perhaps than any of his cotemporaries. A sluggish or unwary adversary was doomed already, when he least expected it; Jackson was before him, attacking with all the advantages of a surprise. It was said that he marched his men nearly to death, and it was true. But these excessive drains upon their physical strength were compensated by victories, by spoils, and an immense accession to the moral strength of his command. Nor did he fail to preserve, thus, thousands of lives, which would have been lost by more deliberate and conventional warfare. He always preferred to arrive, by forced marches, in face of an unprepared enemy, and drive them before him, with comparatively small loss, to a more leisurely advance which would find them ready to meet him. He aimed to succeed rather by sweat than blood. His famous flank movements proved a terrible tax on the strength of his troops; but after their exhausting march, the men finished the work without bloodshed almost, and soon forgot their weariness in the sweet sleep which follows toil and victory. Aggressive warfare was the fundamental principal of his military system. He preserved the unvarying conviction, throughout his whole career, that the true policy of the South was one of invasion. So far did he carry this, that after Port Republic, he was passionately bent on advancing into Pennsylvania, though General McClellan was knocking at the doors of Richmond, with an army of 150,000 men. After the battles of the Chickahominy, he rose from his camp-couch, one night, where he was lying, talking with a friend, and violently striking the pillow with his clenched hand, exclaimed: "Why don't we go to Pennsylvania now? The Scipio Africanus policy is the best!" To march, to manoeuvre, to flank, to strike—to advance, retreat, keep his enemy in constant fear—such was his system. He never rested, and took no account of hours or seasons. He seems to have considered all weather good to fight in, and to have discarded the general conviction of military men that night attacks are hazardous. The Bath expedition was undertaken in the dead of winter; and, at Fredericksburg he projected and attempted to execute a final assault upon the federal army, which was to begin "precisely at sunset." At Chancellorsville, at nine o'clock at night, when he fell, he was preparing for that movement of his left wing, which was to envelope General Hooker, and decide the fate of the federal army. No other general living would have ventured upon so dangerous an undertaking; but Jackson had decided upon it without hesitation.

It is not to be wondered at that unweary or indolent opponents became the victims of a strategy so bold and aggressive. General Banks is an example. A more unfortunate appointment could not have been made by the federal government. Banks seems to have been without enterprise, and greatly wanting in that watchful care which his position, in front of so dangerous a foe, required. Jackson surprised him at Strasburg, and drove him from the valley, almost without resistence. The manoeuvering around Port Republic was another example of his superiority to General Fremont, whose plan, of advancing with one column, upon Jackson's rear, while another was sent to intercept him, was turned against him and became the occasion of his ruin. The rapidity of Jackson's marches in the valley campaign, and expedition to the rear of General Pope was marvelous; but there was something still more striking in the enterprise which suggested these movements. To a soldier so fertile in resources, so rapid, daring, and unhesitating, victory was almost a foregone conclusion.

The difference between enterprise and foolhardiness is that between calculation and chance. Jackson's military movements, were always based upon close calculation, and he was certainly not wanting in foresight and caution. He seems have known perfectly well what it was in his power to achieve, and as thoroughly what was beyond his strength. He risked much, upon many occasions, but appears to have been justified in his calculations of the ultimate result. It will be objected to him by military men, that he hazarded too much, at times, and was only extricated by good fortune. There appears to be some justice in this; but the resources of his genius were enormous, and doubled his numbers. Some of his ideas seem absurd, when coolly looked at. When asked what he would have done, if, after the battle of Winchester, the converging columns of the enemy had cut him off at Strasburg, he replied he would have fallen back upon Maryland for reinforcements." Such a movement must, it would appear, have terminated in his destruction; but it would be difficult to find a man of his old command, who would have doubted his ultimate triumph even then.

His genius was for great movements, and decisive blows; and, thus, his services, became more and more valuable as his rank increased. He was better as brigadier than as colonel; better still as major-general; and as lieutenant-general was best of all. It is useless to ask what he would have been as commander-in-chief without a superior at Richmond. But the brain which conceived and executed the campaign of the valley must have been equal to any position.

Jackson's other merits as a general were great. He was a bad organizer and disciplinarian, but admirable in his selection of men for important command. He conducted his campaigns upon the soundest rules of military science, and where he diverged from the beaten track of precedent, did so from considerations connected with the nature of the country in which he operated, the peculiarities of his adversary, or the character of the troops upon which he depended.

He kept open, generally, his line of retreat, and provided for disaster—though it was hard to realize that failure ever entered into his calculations. He had the soldier's eye for position, and chose his ground both for infantry and artillery with the exactness of genius; but if all arrangements were made, and his plans required battle, would fight on any ground. He depended most upon his infantry, but loved artillery from his early association with that branch of the service, never appearing so well pleased as when directing in person the fire of his cannon, amid a shower of shot and shell. When once engaged, he seemed to discard all idea of defeat, and to regard the issue as assured. And, what was more important, his men seemed to share his conviction. Even at Keinstown he believed the federal forces would have retired in ten minutes if one of his own brigades had not been ordered to fall back. A man less open to the conviction that he was whipped, could not be imagined. His indomitable combativeness, it might have been said, made him set his teeth against Fate, and endeavor to place his heel upon Destiny itself.

It may be said of him with truth, that he deserved victory. No man was more careful in the use of every precaution to ensure success. The idea that he blundered on without prudence or system, and achieved his successes only by some mysterious good fortune, is a mere fancy. No soldier was ever less indebted to luck; no one ever proceeded in military matters upon profounder logic. He knew his strength and his weakness, but the difference between him and others was, that he made his estimates more correctly. He did not look to numbers only, but to morale, the situation, the spirits of his troops. With the three hundred of Leonidas, he would have attempted great things; with the fifty thousand survivors of Napoleon's *Grand Armie*, crushed in morale by Waterloo, he would have attempted nothing. If his men were on fire with ardor, and the enemy, though treble their number, were disorganized by surprise, or for other reasons, he would advance to the assault without fear of defeat.

In every point of view, as we have said, he deserved success. No general ever made a greater use of mystery. He saw from the first that he commanded men of education, thought, speculation—the most inquisitive of private soldiers. Without due precaution taken they were certain to know what it was inexpedient for the private soldier to know; his designs would be penetrated, and be noised abroad. Hence his inscrutable mystery. He would not permit his men to inquire the names of the towns through which they passed, and on the march against General McClellan at Richmond issued a general order directing the troops to reply "I don't know," to every question. Meeting a man straggling toward a cherry-tree he said, "where are you going?" "I don't know," was the reply. "To what regiment do you belong?" "I don't know." "What do you mean?" "I don't know." Jackson laughed quietly and passed on. He said that if his coat knew what he designed he would take it off and burn it. He would encamp for the night at cross roads, and the quidnuncs were in dispair at their inability to determine toward what point of the compass he would march on the morrow. About to abandon the valley, he publicly directed careful maps to be made of the region, as though intending a campaign therein. When one of his staff engaged dinner a few miles ahead of his advancing column, he admonished him of his error. How did he know that the column would pass that point?"

He had the faculty of waiting for his adversary. No man was ever more determined not to be forced to fight before he was ready. His retreats appeared panic stricken, but were in reality the deliberate movements of a master of the art of war. He was never more dangerous than when flying. From dreams of success, and visions of complete victory, his opponent was apt to be rudely awakened. In May, 1862, General Banks, then at Harrisonburg, telegraphed that the rebel Jackson had been driven from the valley, and was in rapid retreat on Richmond. The commentary was Jackson's swift and unexpected march upon Milroy at McDowell; his complete defeat of that officer, and his equally rapid advance upon General Banks at Harrisonburg—before which the federal commander was forced in turn to retreat in confusion.

Until all his arrangements were made no adversary could draw him into action. When the moment came, he saved the officer opposed to him all trouble on that score. He initiated the matter by attacking with all his strength. If one assault failed, he made a second. If his first line gave way he brought up his second. If the second had bad fortune, his reserve was led into action—and if these did not at once retrieve the fortunes of the day, he placed himself in front of them and led them in person, fully determined to conquer or die.

There were few who failed him at such moments. The sight of Jackson upon these occasions, seemed to turn the heads of the troops. They forgot all else and grew reckless; and when men become reckless, they go far. Cedar Run furnished an instance of this. The left wing, formed of Jackson's veterans, was broken; and in ten minutes the battle would have been lost. There were no reserves to put in, and Jackson rallied the troops in person. The result was such as we have described. A single shout of "Stonewall Jackson! Stonewall Jackson!" ran along the line, and it was re-formed in a moment. In front of them they saw a sword shining through the smoke of action, and recognized the old faded cap, and piercing eyes of their chief. The result was a new assault, and one of the most important of Jackson's victories.

His tenacity and strength of will seemed to have no limit. Nothing appeared to affect that supreme resolution. Such a man is the master of fate, and, with his iron hand, directs events. Napoleon trusted to his star, and Jackson, it was said, believed in "his destiny"—a word which he construed, apparently, to mean success against his enemies, wherever he encountered them. There seems to be good ground for the belief that he regarded himself as a passive instrument in the hands of Providence, to accomplish great events, and had satisfied himself that the Lord of Hosts would uphold him. This conviction, supported by abilities of the first order, made him almost irresistible.

His intellect, in all military matters, was remarkably clear, vigorous and practical. It has been said that there are some nimble and apprehensive spirits, whose natures appear too sharp and delicate for every-day work. To cut down a tree men do not use a razor, but an axe. It has a rougher edge than the razor, but is more effective. Jackson's military judgement was a ponderous weapon, and struck straight at the obstacle. He was opposed to half way measures, and in favor of decessive blows. Subtlety and dialectical hairsplitting found little favor with him. He knew what he wanted, and had a perfectly clear idea of the means by which he could secure his object. Refinements of strategy occupied little of his attention. He was for results, and saw how to attain them. Alone of all the southern generals he was in favor of attacking the federal army, on the evening of the battle of Fredericksburg; and at the council of war, held on that occasion, is said to have started from a doze, when called upon for his opinion, exclaiming, only half awake, "Drive 'em into the river." All his views were aggressive, and looked to attack, not defense. After Port Republic he said, "If the President will give me 60,000 men, I will be in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in two weeks. I will undertake it with 40,000." After Cold Harbor, as we have seen, he again wished to advance, exclaiming, "The Scipio Africanus policy is best." On the evening of the first battle of Manassas, his clear intellect, unclouded by subtleties, hesitations, or those *pros* and *cons* which paralyze action, saw the whole field before him; and he said, in his brief, curt voice: "Give me 10,000 men, and I will be in Washington to-night."

A few words more will terminate this hasty sketch of Jackson's military character. He was an intense and concentrative thinker, his piercing eyes saw far and deep. Without power, as we have seen, to utter, write or perform any notable thing in the ordinary commerce of human affairs, he brought to the great game of war immense powers of analysis and combination. Success was an equation which he worked out with mathematical precision. When an event took place like the gap left in his line at the second battle of Manassas, and Fredericksburg, or the falling back of the Stonewall Brigade at Keinstown, his whole plans miscarried. It was the error in the calculation which vitiated the result. Such were the faculties which seem, to the present writer, to have characterized Jackson, and produced his extraordinary successes. But it is difficult to discard the idea, after a full consideration of his career, that he was guided in his arduous campaigns by something resembling a species of intuition. Many of his followers openly stated their belief that he was "inspired," and the military critic will find, after all, in his career a certain intuition of genius which cannot be classified or described. He seemed to possess the faculty of seeing what was the right thing to do at the right time; not to come to his conclusion by any train of logic, but at a bound. Others exhibited supreme *talent*, trained to the highest perfection; but Jackson's military movements everywhere betrayed that subtle thing called *genius*. His glance was like the lightning which reveals the entire landscape before he benighted traveller, and shows him his road.

Passing from the characteristicks of Jackson the soldier, we may find some points of interest in the personal traits, of Jackson the man. It is interesting to know how such men look and speak; how they carry themselves under good or bad fortune; in what manner they "live and move and have their being. Jackson's demeanor upon the field was quite absorbed, and at times absent-minded, as though he were engaged in some profound calculation, or following some subtle train of thought. When spoken to at such moments, his head turned quickly, his eye glittered, and he listened with attention, replying in the fewest words possible. His tone was curt but not discourteous. His bearing, his smile, and the ready hand to his cap, on the contrary, were markedly courteous, nor has the present writer ever known him, under the most exciting circumstances, to loose this simple and modest air of kindly good breeding. He was the most approachable of corps commanders, and any private soldier might be sure of a friendly reply to any question which he asked. There was no air of authority, official stiffness, hauteur, assumption or coldness in his demeanor. He "looked like work," was unmoved by vanity, regarded his troops as his children, and when he fell, it was not the heart of wife and friend alone that felt the bow, but thousands who no longer felt the old enthusiasm, preluding victory.

There is little doubt that the views of the present generation, including the writer of these pages, concerning Jackson the soldier are more or less mingled with undue admiration. His faults are not seen; his merits may be exaggerated. But as a man, his virtues were recognized even by his opponents. The trait of character which conciliated most the regard and respect of his enemies was the profound sincerity and earnestness of his nature. There was no doubt about Jackson's utter truth and honesty. Life with him was a serious affair, and he seemed to have no time for enjoyment even. At West Point he studied conscientiously, avoiding all higher occupations; in Mexico he betook himself to hard fighting; and at Lexington his whole soul became absorbed in the performance of his humdrum duties, and the earnest endeavour to discover the will of his Maker and conform to that will in all things.

The students laughed at the silent and awkward professor, who found enjoyment apparently in nothing but religious exercises and hard work; but they could not understand the "great thoughts" and certain joys which the taciturn soldier derived from his religion.

We do not venture, here, to state the exact religious views of this eminent man. He has been called a fatalist from his ultra indifference to danger; fatalism, proper, is an absurdity. That he held the Presbyterian view of predestination is certain; but to discover and perform the will of God, without regard to that or any other dogma, was his "meat and drink." With him, his religion was his life. It was the broad foundation of all his thoughts and words and deeds. He seemed to live, consciously, under the eye of God, and to shape all his actions with reference to the divine approval. He had no time to think whether this or that in his character, his actions, or his utterances, was "conventional" or not—pleased or displeased his fellow-men, Am I conforming my life to the will of God? was always, and under all circumstances, his only quest on.

From this profound and controlling piety sprung his virtues, his peculiarities, his true greatness. Contemplating the profound significance of his position as an immortal soul, tarrying for a reason only upon earth, and destined by its conduct here, to shape for all eternity its own weal or woe, all other things became poor and inconsiderable in his eyes; what men thought of him, how he appeared in society, what dress he wore, what food he eat, what worldly enjoyments he neglected, or what worldly honours he missed or secured. Something of the old spirit of the Man of Tarsus was in the heart of Jackson, who had his meditations and his work, and could afford to neglect the purple and the feasting, and endure all things for the faith that was in him.

It was impossible not to respect a man of such elevation of character. But many things even grow beautiful in Jackson when he became better known, and made men love him. He was a man of great kindness, of an extraordinary sweetness of temper, tenderhearted, easily moved to pity, and all pure emotions. He was simple and unostentatious in his manner and habits. He cared not what he ate, and would sleep in a fence corner as willingly as in a bed. His old coat was covered with dust collected from the battlefields of many regions, as he slept upon the earth, in rude bivouac, after the hard fought day. All this endeared him to his soldiers, at whose camp-fires he would stop to talk in the friendly fashion of the officers of Napoleon, and whose rations he would frequently share. The sight of his faded coat and cadet cap, was the sign to cheer, and "Old Jack" was personally adored, as in his military capacity he was regarded by his men as the greatest of leaders. His manner was stiff and his voice curt, but his smile was one of extraordinary sweetness. A lady declared it "angelic." It was certainly the most friendly imaginable, and charmed all who conversed with him. Even his peculiarities became sources of popularity, and endeared him to his troops. It was said of Suwarrow that his men mimicked him, gave him nicknames, and adored him. It was the same with Jackson. His troops laughed at his dingy old uniform, his cap tilting forward on his nose, his awkward strides, his abstracted air, and christening him "Old Jack," made him their first and greatest of favorites. There was one peculiarity of the individual, however, which they regarded with something like superstition. We refer to the singular position he had of raising his hands aloft, and then suddenly letting the arm fall at his side. On many occasions he made this strange gesture as his veterans moved slowly before him, advancing to the charge. At such moments his face would be raised to heaven, his eyes closed, and his lips would move evidently in prayer. The same gesture was observed in him at Chancellorsville while gazing at the body of one of his old command. He was plainly praying, with his hand uplifted, for the welfare of the dead man's soul.

Jackson died before he reached the age of forty, and had but two years of life for the display of his great faculties. But the period was long enough. In that contracted space of time he accomplished enough to render his name and fame immortal. Few human beings ever equaled him in the great art of making war—fewer still in purity of heart and life. It was a nature almost altogether lovely which lay under the faded uniform of the great soldier. No stain of insincerity, or meanness, or vain-gloriousness marred a character which combined the loftiest virtues of the gentleman, the soldier, and the Christian.

He sleeps now, cold to praise or blame; but a poor writer, proud to have touched his hand and followed him, offers this page to his illustrious memory.

J. E. C.

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The recipient of a Bible from a missionary recently expressed great gratitude for the gift.—After the missionary had given him his best talk about the riches and worth of the Bible, the recipient added, "yes, I know where I can get a plagued good fiddle for it."