

"A STILL, STRONG MAN."*

One of the striking contrasts of our political history is that between Grover Cleveland as he appeared in 1884,— especially to the Republicans, brought up in fear of the very thought of Democratic rule in national affairs,— and the Grover Cleveland portrayed in Mr. Parker's "Recollections." The writer well remembers

* Recollections of Grover Cleveland. By George F. Parker. Illustrated. New York: The Century Co.

how, though he had been nurtured on "The Nation," and had no fear of independent voting, and determined as he was not to vote for Blaine, he could yet not bring himself to vote for the obscure man against whom scandalous charges had been brought, and who seemed to have little to recommend him to the confidence of the country for the supreme gift of the people. Good men trembled when the returns came in, showing that Cleveland had been elected, fearing that the unskilled pilot would run the ship on the rocks, that the results of the Civil War would be lost.

These fears seem childish, now that we have come to know that masterful pilot, his sturdy patriotism, his lofty ideals, his steadiness in action, his great ability; but they were very real then. One of the greatest of Grover Cleveland's many services to the country was his clearing away forever of the conviction, held by numberless conscientious Republicans, that the Democrats would not be loyal to the settlement of the great struggle between the North and the South, that they could not be trusted with the control of the government. When his administration had manifested its fine temper, that bogey was destroyed, and the two parties could meet on equal terms as contestants for power.

Mr. Parker's book is not intended as a formal biography, but it answers every purpose of a biography from the political side, and it presents the real Grover Cleveland with great skill. The author was thrown into close relations with President Cleveland during his first administration, and was depended on by him until his death as adviser, as the medium for communicating with the public, as energetic and skilful in doing what Mr. Cleveland himself could not do in gaining newspaper coöperation and support for the government. He thus held Mr. Cleveland's confidence for the rest of his life, and from the intimacy thus maintained he is able to show us the real man as perhaps no other living person could.

The early history of Mr. Cleveland is given briefly but sufficiently. His struggles were those of many a poor clergyman's son, the one disappointment having been his inability to secure a college education on account of the burden resting upon him of supporting his mother and sisters. The same cause kept him from enlisting in the army; his two brothers went as soldiers, and he burdened himself with debt for many years to furnish a substitute for himself. His rise to public confidence and professional success in Buffalo, and his phenomenal victory in New York as candidate for the gov-

ernorship, though almost unknown to the people of the State, are described with sufficient fullness.

President Cleveland never, when in active political life, quite gained popularity with the people. He was very reserved, very much opposed to any line of conduct that might look as if he were trying to gain popular favor, too sturdily independent to bend to popular demands, too sensitive in political and personal honor to use office or influence to advance his own interests or those of his friends. Many instances of this are given, from which we select a characteristic one.

"One day during the last winter of his life, when in one of his reminiscent moods, he surprised me by saying, 'Parker, it has always been said that it was something of a drawback to a man, if he wanted anything, to have been one of my friends; and I guess that in some respects this judgment was about right.' Continuing, he explained: 'I simply could not bring myself to the point of using the public service, or of being open to the charge of using it, for personal ends. It would, however, be unjust to accuse me of discriminating against my friends, as my record shows; but I would rather, a thousand times, go to my grave with the reputation I have gained in this respect than to have had anybody say with truth that I had used official patronage for the payment of private debts.'"

Differing in feeling and practice from some men of high position, he insisted that his parlor and his table were his own, and declined to use them for furthering political plans or interests.

That Mr. Cleveland possessed personal qualities which endeared him to all who were brought into friendly contact with him, comes as something of a surprise to those who knew only of his rugged honesty and his violent controversies with Congress and with many of the leaders of his party. Probably no other president has ever bound so closely to himself the men whom he chose as members of his cabinet. Every man of them remained his intimate personal friend until death. There seems to have been a charm in his simple manhood and his sympathetic nature that won all who came within the circle of personal relations with him. And as different as was the man Cleveland from the austere self-contained President, so different was the ponderous literary style of his public documents from his playful and self-revealing letters to his friends.

Among the portions of the book most valuable to the student of history is that which gives the inside story of the activities of Cleveland's friends to make him the candidate of his party in 1892. Rarely are the details of any important campaign given as frankly as these are given by Mr. Parker; and rarely is there

a campaign in which there is so little for the most high-minded to be ashamed of. The whole management was highly creditable to Mr. Cleveland and to his friends, and is very interesting as a revelation of character as well as of the methods of political campaigning. Equally interesting is the story of Mr. Cleveland's selection of his cabinet officers and leading officials; of the famous Venezuela message which came so dangerously near involving us in a war with England, and is regarded by many of Cleveland's admirers as his greatest official mistake; of his attitude towards those in his own party who were pursuing the false gods of free silver and populism. All is told in a straightforward way that carries conviction. Much as Grover Cleveland has come to be admired as one of our best presidents, this book will increase admiration for him both as president and as man.

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