

**CIVILIZATION IN THE
UNITED STATES, FIRST AND
LAST IMPRESSIONS OF
AMERICA**

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Civilization in the United States, first and last impressions of America by Matthew Arnold

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MATTHEW ARNOLD

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CONTENTS.

I. GENERAL GRANT. AN ESTIMATE.	
PART I.	3
PART II.	33
II. A WORD ABOUT AMERICA	69
III. A WORD MORE ABOUT AMERICA	111
IV. CIVILIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES	157

GENERAL GRANT.

GENERAL GRANT.

PART I.

I HAVE heard it said, I know not with what degree of truth, that while the sale in America of General Grant's *Personal Memoirs* has produced three hundred thousand dollars for the benefit of his widow and family, there have not in England been sold of the book three hundred copies. Certainly the book has had no wide circulation here, it has not been much read or much discussed. There are obvious reasons for this. The book relates in great detail the military history of the American Civil War, so far as Grant bore part in it ; such a history cannot possibly have for other nations the interest which it has for the United States themselves. For the general reader outside of America, it certainly cannot ; as to the value and importance of the history to the military specialist, that is a question on which I hear very conflicting opinions expressed, and one on which I myself can

have, of course, no opinion to offer. So far as the general European reader might still be attracted to such a history, in spite of its military details, for the sake of the importance of the issues at stake and of the personages engaged, we in Europe have, it cannot be denied, in approaching an American recital of the deeds of "the greatest nation upon earth," some apprehension and mistrust to get over. We may be pardoned for doubting whether we shall in the recital find measure, whether we shall find sobriety. Then, too, General Grant, the central figure of these *Memoirs*, is not to the English imagination the hero of the American Civil War; the hero is Lee, and of Lee the *Memoirs* tell us little. Moreover General Grant, when he was in England, did not himself personally interest people much. Later he fell in America into the hands of financing speculators, and his embarrassments, though they excited sorrow and compassion, did not at all present themselves to us as those of "a good man struggling with adversity." For all these reasons, then, the *Personal Memoirs* have in England been received with coldness and indifference.

I, too, had seen General Grant in England, and did not find him interesting. If I said the truth, I should say that I thought him ordinary-looking,