

VT. THAD. STEVENS
PAM. From Hon. J. Morrill
to J. K. Paul

EULOGIES *Apr. 17, 1869*

OR
From Hon. J. S. Morrill, *to J. K. Paul*
HON. THADDEUS STEVENS,
& From Hon. J. S. Morrill
to J. K. Paul

MR. CAMERON, OF PA., AND MR. MORRILL, OF VT.,
Mr Cameron of Pa and Mr
DELIVERED

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

Morrill of Vt

DECEMBER 18, 1868.

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1869.

sarcasms of the dead statesman and forget his life-long love and devotion to a downtrodden race.

Mr. President, I move the adoption of the following resolutions:

Resolved, That the Senate has received with profound sensibility the announcement of the death of Hon. THADDEUS STEVENS, late a member of the House of Representatives from the State of Pennsylvania.

Resolved, That from a sincere desire of showing every mark of respect for the memory of Hon. THADDEUS STEVENS, the members and officers of the Senate will go into mourning by the usual mode of wearing crape on the left arm.

Resolved, That as a further mark of respect for the memory of Mr. STEVENS, the Senate do now adjourn.

Mr. MORRILL, of Vermont. Mr. President, THADDEUS STEVENS was a native of Vermont, taught and a teacher in her schools, but ultimately a graduate at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, and removed in his early manhood to Pennsylvania, where for many years he ranked as a well-seasoned politician and something more than a prominent citizen of that flourishing State. Like so many other men of our country, with an experience not discreditable here to proclaim, as it has been and still may be in other lands, he raised himself, unaided by fortune or family, from obscurity to distinction and honor.

It having been my fortune to serve in the House of Representatives, and for some years on the same committee, with Mr. STEVENS, receiving from him uninterrupted courtesy and kindness while long seated in the House by his side, it was impossible to have been unmindful of those characteristics which so often challenged public attention, and it will be excused, perhaps, if I venture to give, however imperfectly, some of the impressions made upon me by a man whose career has been so notable as to secure prominence in the history of a great people and in movements which it may be said, like the traces of glaciers on mountain tops, notch the age.

It is too soon after the storm, and we are too near to waves of contending principles and parties to review the merits of particular acts with which Mr. STEVENS has been more or less identified; and the humbler task will be mine, therefore, of giving an outline picture of the man, or of sketching some of his most distinctive features and traits as they appeared to a near and not uninterested observer.

In the early moments of tenderness and grief for the memory of associates and friends removed from conspicuous spheres of action, plain truth and just discrimination speak in muffled tones, and panegyric alone ventures

forth in full voice. Christian charity and the instincts of the human heart would portray only the brighter tints, avoiding shade though of the most veritable sort. But the safety of the public requires that the faults of the statesman shall not be concealed even though the faults of the man receive more generous charity. The disgraceful coalition of Fox with Lord North history still impales, but the personal faults of the former, hereditary or educational, are imputed to the age or charged to Lord Holland, the father. Could we, in the present instance, consult the deceased, as we may by referring to his own example, although he was an unbeliever in the pomp and grief of all congressional eulogies, we should find he would have been unwilling that the sun itself should be represented without its spots; or, if a wart had been on his face he would have objected with Cromwellian sturdiness to its suppression in his picture; and his fate, like that of many other distinguished men,* has been to die, leaving no lineal successors, none to feel the joy which well-earned praise bestowed upon an illustrious ancestor inspires, and none to shrink from the touch of impartial justice when the final judgment of posterity is pronounced. But simple justice, even the sharp espionage of criticism, will not dwarf the man. Strike from him a limb, and still something of Hercules will remain.

Beneath a rugged exterior Mr. STEVENS had a heart that loved children, the downtrodden, and the poor; and he could not fail, in spite of differences of policy or of principle, to secure the affection and respect of a multitude of friends; but being at the same time a frank man, who bravely accepted the last link in the chain of his logic; never concealing the rough edge of his judgments upon public measures or public men, and being ever more ready to risk a fall in a wrestle with his foes than to conciliate them by any soft concessions, the muster-roll of his enemies grew almost equally large and formidable.

While the aims of Mr. STEVENS were noble—rarely petty or inconsequential—and his measures, if we do not include his financial idiosyncracies, were almost invariably on the highest planes of morality and philanthropy, or at least of national breadth and gravity; such as the educational system, successfully championed in his adopted State; such as his earnest efforts

*Burke, Sam. Johnson, Washington, and Jackson.

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to secure the largest sum of wages to American workmen through his advocacy of a protective tariff; such as his broad and unstinted support of works of intercommunication from the Atlantic to the Pacific; such as his life-long and persistent hunting down of slavery; yet he cannot be said to have been fastidious, possibly not always over-scrupulous, as to the means used to accomplish the end.

Economy with him rarely rose to the dignity of a great public virtue, as in his estimation it was too cheap and often too nearly allied with demagogism and niggardliness to be treated with constant hospitality. The work of cutting down appropriations was foreign to his taste, and he appeared unhappy when the Government or its officers got less than they asked for. To see the demands of public or private claimants cut short was as painful to him as would have been the sight of bloody surgery. When any measure of great utility, as he understood it, was to be consummated and ordinary means seemed inadequate, then it justified prodigality. Public treasure and public lands were seldom too precious in his eyes to be scattered for objects national in their scope, and he had no apprehensions, not being a jobber himself, that, so scattered, surrounding jobbers might harvest the major part of the future blessings to spring up from such broadcast dispensations. He was an ultra partisan, not, however, of men, nor of parties, but of measures, and he rarely discovered many virtues in men except among those holding coincident and coextensive views and purposes with himself.

He was a bold and sometimes a successful party leader. Popular assemblages, no less than military, revere audacity, and no infirmity, nor age, nor defeat, nor all combined, ever impaired the imperial will or the dauntless courage of this redoubtable leader of the House of Representatives, though he was often confronted by the angriest elements of political antagonism, and sometimes even by the sour and fixed determination of a majority of his own party. It mattered little whether he carried the measures he had in charge upon their own merits—confident that they had merits—or by the swifter enginery of parliamentary tactics, or by a sneer, not less swift and possibly more irrefutable, at some weak argument of an indiscreet opponent. On the road to Jerusalem himself, he did not regard it his fault if others, tagging at the same load, supposed they were on the journey to

Rome. At all times equal to debate, the force of "the previous question" was to him no less pertinent. Though equal to argument, the torture of his wit he found equally unanswerable and often easier and briefer. For all trimmers he exhibited the fiercest scorn, and his pulverizing and merciless assaults upon opponents inspired his own followers with courage, or they assumed it if they had it not, dreading the rigor with which he drummed out of camp the rear of his own party, or those who, not ambitious to be in advance of public opinion, evinced cowardly and balky symptoms in the closing conflict of the yeas and nays.

Though he aspired to lead and was never an apt follower, nor to be counted upon much as a coadjutor of measures not advised or devised by himself, he was wholly untinged by vanity, and seemed nearly as oblivious to the praise of friends as to the censure of enemies. Without self-conceit and iron-clad against criticism, especially newspaper criticism, he never courted flattery nor counted it as any part of his wages. Envious of nobody, careless of his own reputation, he was wholly satisfied when satisfied with the result, and neither revised his own speeches nor paid much attention to the revised speeches of anybody else. Though deaf himself to personal compliments, he cordially praised and remembered all those who voted rightly, and was an inexorable hater of those who did not or dodged. Rarely wounded in any contest his wounds never bled, but healed without scars, as he had no memory for the blows he provoked and received, still less apology or regret for such as he had given. It may be added that whoever attacked him with such spirit as to show he might be regarded as having been bitten, and not merely barked at, was commiserated as one shortly to appear at some whipping-post, as all knew such attacks were likely to be repaid with vengeance of some sort, and curiosity was on tip-toe to see whether by pungent logic or by a stunning left-handed word charged with an explosive and pitiless sarcasm.

There was a marvelous versatility in his resources both offensive and defensive. When he rose—all unperplexed as to what he should say or by what had been said—none could predict to what weapon from his miscellaneous arsenal he would resort, but whether it proved to be of pagan or Christian temper, of ancient or modern invention, it was likely to be thrust to the quick. He was respectable in pathetic

and even eloquent appeals; excellent in the impregnable logic of statement; superb in the indignant flashes of denunciation; unrivaled in repartee; and always at home in rude and burly satire. With much pith and marrow in his discourse he had little of the mere rhetorician, never running out of his way after dainty words nor elaborating graceful sentences, and might have been expected to risk his unsounded capabilities in song with less reluctance than a poetic quotation. Not unfamiliar with the classics, and resorting to them occasionally with felicity, he could yet stoop to sources less refined in order to overwhelm, if not to bedaub, an adversary. He was a chief dreaded by many and admired by more. He could be courtly and dignified in his manner—generally was so—or put on a rough and bantering style amusing to friends but rather terrific to those who were not. General courtesy in debate, however, was his prevailing habit, and toward those who annoyed him most when it might have been presumed that he felt the least inclined to gentleness, he had a knack of loading his manner, by way of irony, with a suavity slightly exaggerated and visible to all save the party thus unconsciously afflicted. He never wearied his hearers by too frequent or too protracted speaking, and was far too sagacious to make a weak or unnecessary speech, or to tender inflated or spurious wit for the genuine coin. But with all his affluence as a debater, his temperament could not restrain some eccentricities of his nature, or slips of the tongue, which exposed him to bitter reproaches as well as friendly regrets. Human grievances and oppressions roused his passions, and when roused he could not be warranted against eruptions of temper as likely to throw stones into the gardens of friends as of enemies. Having a tough and wiry constitution, he bore any amount of fatigue and some excesses with little pain or injury. Punctual in his attendance at the committee-room, not inattentive to a multifarious correspondence, watching with sleepless vigilance all bills on the Calendar, and preparing to mend or maim the leading propositions of every committee, taking part in the daily debates, and though weary at evening from labor and the languor of more than three-score years and ten, he yet in the morning, "dreaming he was a boy again," would often have in unexpected readiness a carefully prepared speech, written in his own rapid, scrawling, thorn-hung style, upon such subjects as he felt to be important and to

which he wished to direct the attention of the country; but when he aimed merely to carry the House his speeches were extemporaneous and of marked brevity. Barren of oratorical ostentation, he not only never gave the House a surfeit of himself, but was visibly impatient when others became tedious, silencing all legislative loquacity, if the temper of the House permitted—and of that he was an expert judge—by any parliamentary device within his reach. Weakening no cause by learned length or refinement he yet always appeared to have a reserved force ready to repel unlooked-for attacks from any quarter.

Not always averse to the exhilaration and late hours of a diner-out, nor of jubilant company and occasional diversions anywhere, he was nevertheless sure to be at his post when wanted, and seldom lacked luck or vigor in the closing rubber of debate.

Mr. STEVENS was a little lame, having a defect hardly to be concealed—an imperfect foot—similar to that of Scott and Byron, though, unlike the latter, he never attempted its concealment, and being unaccustomed to all borrowed aid consented reluctantly to lean even upon a cane. Like John Quincy Adams and some others, he never required the aid of glasses, for "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated."

Having been a life-long bachelor, for years extensively engaged in business as an iron manufacturer, as well as in the practice of the law, whatever may have been his habits of study they were not likely to have been systematic, yet they certainly cannot have been marked by idleness; and his memory, retentive and capacious, enabled him to grasp beyond the learning appropriate to his profession the general store of a scholar, but a scholar without pedantry or nicety, as he grasped general principles with little knowledge of and less taste for minor details. He sought for comprehensive results in the briefest time, and in his devotion to literary and professional reading never could have been a drudge. The quickness of his apprehension, indeed, was so great that he could almost afford to cast off the pain of slow and careful study.

When speaking Mr. STEVENS, notwithstanding his infirmities, stood erect and firmly poised, as if conscious that his foundation reached to the very center of the earth. His strongly cast head, surmounted by a dark and rather ponderous wig, and his stern visage, with brow, eye,

mouth, and chin, signet of the Almighty to make him a great House of Representatives grace or polish in his fire or force or jerky gesticulation hands often clench his words, and he striking by the changing played, whether grasped with the tone of his countenance had more authority than of swiftness have found it easy to matchless vigor and cult to rank him among His running undertone debates—sometimes, by the reporters—and day while in his seat, talk in the first half room, was characteristic mingled and lost in the hand with levity.

of all the varieties, common in more bewildering Boswell have treasured and ceaseless corruscated a genius less sugary than might have been found in of sentiment or in elegant surely not in terse severity of humor. In private and semi-grotesque mirth, sense, and satire, among friends and foes could it have been present any of the acknowledged colloquial wits of this or But the gusto with which and sparkling fun could level of a weak and trivial that he had a depth and pose, a bitterness of remark sight, which did not permit to trifle with the master nor with those principles table empire over his head

His wit was all his own, in working ores mined by in the common art of story witticisms—and his attempted failures—were rehearsed would often happen, and would

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mouth, and chin, indicating the "sign and
signet of the Almighty to command," all helped
to make him a grand and central figure in the
House of Representatives; but there was little
grace or polish in his periods or gestures—only
fire or force or jocularity. An angular and
jerky gesticulation, with his lean and bony
hands often clenched together, gave point to
his words, and he strongly pictured their mean-
ing by the changing moods of his face, which
played, whether grave or gay, in gruff harmony
with the tone of his voice and argument. His
countenance had more the stony features of
authority than of sweetness. A beholder would
have found it easy to believe him a man of
matchless vigor and potent will and not diffi-
cult to rank him among the great.

His running undertone commentary upon the
debates—sometimes, though rarely, caught up
by the reporters—and upon occurrences of the
day while in his seat, as well as his occasional
talk in the first half hour in the committee-
room, was characterized by wisdom and fun
mingled and lost in the whirl of business hand
in hand with levity. Never, indeed, was wit
of all the varieties, coarse and fine, exhibited
in more bewildering profusion. Could any
Boswell have treasured up all these pithy sallies
and ceaseless corruscations, the sportiveness of
a genius less sugary than sour and bitter, they
might have been found to be surpassed in purity
of sentiment or in elegance of phraseology, but
surely not in terse severity nor in wealth and
heartiness of humor. He daily wasted in this
private and semi-grotesque distribution of
mirth, sense, and satire, often indiscriminately
among friends and foes, a capital sufficient,
could it have been preserved, to rival almost
any of the acknowledged masters among the
colloquial wits of this or possibly of any age.
But the gusto with which he let loose his riotous
and sparkling fun could not reduce him to the
level of a weak and trivial joker, for the reason
that he had a depth and seriousness of pur-
pose, a bitterness of resolve, never out of
sight, which did not permit him, even in sport,
to trifle with the master questions of the day
nor with those principles which held indispu-
table empire over his head and heart.

His wit was all his own, and he had no skill
in working ores mined by others, failing even
in the common art of story-telling. When his
witticisms—and his attempts at wit were rarely
failures—were rehearsed in his presence, as
would often happen, and when, with the usual

fate of such brittle and brilliant wares, they
were sadly broken and dimmed by the clumsi-
ness of the retailer, I never knew him to reset
the dislocated parts of his jokes or to correct
even the baldest blunders; nor did I ever know
him to reproduce or to give a new edition of
the good things of which he was the constant
and prolific author. Born in a jovial moment,
often glowing with passion, they were foundlings
never after to be nursed by parental solicitude.

Through life he adhered mainly to the same
political principles, and no more thought of
rattling from his party when unblest by major-
ities than when in the heyday of its prosperity.

Whenever he stood forth, as he often did, in
behalf of some of the immortal principles under-
lying liberty or human rights, he rarely failed
to make conspicuous his full strength, dis-
playing at once the profundity of his convic-
tions and the breadth of his philosophy, the
energy of his invective, and the flash of his wit,
as well as the power and earnestness of his
speech. His style was clear, yet abrupt and
concise; animated, yet massive; and though
lacking ideality, never lacked vigor. Whether
he led a conquering majority or a forlorn hope
he never watered the truth to make it more
popular; but waving the banner of a paramount
idea, and self-assured sooner or later of victory,
he bid defiance to foes, to time, and fate.

Mr. STEVENS retained his intellectual activity
to the end of his days, and could not at the
latest moment be persuaded to forego any
position, however irksome, to shield himself
from labor or responsibility, as if determined
"to die like a camel in the wilderness, with his
burden on his back." Age brought for him
no quietude; success no abatement of his in-
domitable spirit; and never could it have been
truly said of him as of Wilkes, in his old age,
that he was "a volcano burnt out." Carried
at last to the House of Representatives for
months in a chair, he clung to his prerogatives
as chairman of committees with as unquench-
able tenacity as the Pope of Rome clings to
the scepter of secular power. Death came
when tired nature itself surrendered. He was
released from life at an auspicious moment,
when the highest object of his desire—the abo-
lition of American slavery—had been com-
pleted; and if he loved life too well to con-
template death with the Christian's faith and
joy, he yet was able calmly to appreciate the
triumphs of his political philosophy—knowing
that at last his country, founded on a rock, was

whole and wholly free. The teachings of Socrates and Plato were to him scarcely less inspired than those of the author of the "Sermon on the Mount," whose doctrines he politically seemed to obey as divine.

We have had but one Franklin, but one John Randolph, and we are not likely to have more than one THADDEUS STEVENS; but the latter, adorned with no title save that of a common Representative of the people, and chiefly after the autumnal age of sixty-five, when men are usually expected to shun both physical and intellectual toil, has won his niche of fame in the Capitol of his country as assuredly as either of the former well-defined but widely different national celebrities.

The practical benevolence of Mr. STEVENS to those in want within his own neighborhood was of that kind which is "not puffed up and vaunteth not itself," nor did it spend its force in a theoretical universality to the practical exclusion of everybody in particular; but the fires which he supplied to many hearthstones of the poor, shielding them from the hard exposures of a rigorous climate, will forever warm the hearts of the recipients, and some tears will bedew the grave of one who declared, (January 13, 1865,) in a brief speech which finely exhibits his robust manner, that he would be satisfied if *his* epitaph should be written thus:

"Here lies one who never rose to any eminence, and who only courted the low ambition to have it said that he had striven to ameliorate the condition of the poor, the lowly, the downtrodden of every race and language and color."

The memory of Mr. STEVENS will not perish, because he never permitted his humanity to grow old, and because, in spite of any other

deductions, he wasted no time in self-seeking displays, but devoted his highest faculties to measures alive with liberty, loyalty, and love of his country.

And yet, Mr. President and Senators, there is no fame more fleeting than that acquired even by veterans in political service. The whole body of congressional debates for any fifty years, after a brief flight of time, will be compressed into a volume not larger than that now required for a single session, and the volume so abridged may, perhaps, "fit readers find though few." Those of us who are in this process to be dropped out, like the bad poems in a revised edition, may reckon it some advantage that we are to be little known. Of all the wan and weary candidates eager for the fame of the political forum few can hope to leave the world so much better than they found it as to secure the perpetual and grateful remembrance of after ages. It is obvious, then, that to become the early prey of oblivion is the doom of nearly all who are led, by the "infirmity of noble minds," to seek reputation through ephemeral services in the field of politics; no registry here on the rolls of fame secures to any name a place in the book of life; and, after all, the highest reward that can await the true patriot, the wisest, and the best—the elevation really to be coveted—is the approval of that Being to whom we are indebted for present life and the hope of such an immortality as will not be dependent upon the frail memory of coming generations, destined to be too busy with their own times to look curiously back upon the personal history of those who will have become almost invisible in the long receding procession of the past.