

DEATH OF THADDEUS STEVENS.

One of the most remarkable men of these times, Mr. Thaddeus Stevens, died last night at Washington, in the seventy-sixth year of his age.

Mr. Stevens was a Vermonter by birth, a graduate of Dartmouth College, and in early life a teacher in Pennsylvania. He was admitted to the bar in 1816, and was for many years a prominent member of the Pennsylvania bar. He was known there, as later in Congress, for a sharp tongue and a very effective style of eloquence.

He served in the legislature from 1833 to 1837, and again in 1841; was a member of the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention in 1836, Canal Commissioner in 1838, and in 1848 was first elected to Congress. He served in the Thirty-first, Thirty-second, Thirty-sixth, Thirty-seventh, Thirty-eighth, Thirty-ninth and Fortieth Congresses.

In Congress he was from the first a vigorous, untiring and most skilful opponent of the slaveholders and their policy; and his peculiar talents showed to great advantage in the contest he carried on with them. He possessed a biting wit, an acrid humor, which made him the terror of his opponents. He had a thorough knowledge of the rules of the

House of Representatives, and was perhaps the most skilful "filibuster" ever in the House. His obstinacy and pertinacity enabled him often to worry his opponents into consent or silence.

In the House Mr. Stevens was only occasionally an eloquent speaker. As a rule his remarks were notable only for precision and clearness of statement. He was, however, an untiring worker in committees, and thus often carried the day over idler men, who suffered him to frame bills because he liked the work, which they did not like.

In the management of his favorite measures, in the House, he displayed remarkable tact and adroitness. He knew how to ask twice as much as he expected to get, and to accept half of what he had asked with an injured look. He was never cast down by defeat; but when beaten, began again, with imperturbable good nature. He bore no grudges against those who opposed him in discussion; but, on the other hand, he was unscrupulous in the pursuit of his object, and when, as in the great reconstruction debates of the spring of 1867, he found the best men in his own party opposed to him, he did not hesitate to use the democrats, who were simple enough to let him use them. Then was seen the curious spectacle of Thaddeus Stevens walking over to the democratic side of the House, and thanking Mr. Eldridge and others of the extreme democrats for their support.

As a lawyer Mr. Stevens was distinguished for extraordinary skill in the cross-examination of witnesses, and for singular clearness in his statements to a jury, which, contrary to a common habit, were always brief. As a legislator he became powerful by his pertinacity, his fearlessness, carelessness of opposition, and a courage which was never cast down by defeat. Also, he was a most skilful political manager; he knew how to use men; and was always ready to elevate to a place of power and influence a man whom he could use.

As a statesman, he was singularly ignorant and narrow-minded. The skill in management and the tact which he knew how to use in the preparation and passage of his favorite measures, he never thought to use in the framing of a policy. He had so long fought the slaveholders, that he never would do anything else. What was love of liberty in some other men, was in him rather hatred of oppressors; a generous sentiment, but not a wise or safe one for a statesman.

Of the questions of political economy which necessarily during and since the war became an important part of statesmanship, he appears to have known absolutely nothing. He imagined that the price of gold could be kept down by a statute forbidding men to buy or sell it. He did not scruple lately to assert that the national bonded debt ought to be paid off in greenbacks, which are only other evidences of debt. He attempted at one time to abolish by law gold as a standard of value.

In fact he thought laws could accomplish anything; and he imagined liberty to consist simply in the abolition of chattel slavery. Of any other kind of slavery he knew nothing; he never ceased his efforts to enslave trade; he would have made us the slaves of a most vicious and ruinous currency, if he had been able.

It must be said for him that he was not much more ignorant than the majority of American politicians of both parties. Like the others, he grew up and was trained in the great contest for and against slavery, and, like the others, he knew that question and none others. But his ignorance was more conspicuous, because he was more energetic, more enterprising than others; because his faith in himself was unhesitating; and in his mind a faith without works was useless and despicable.

There is no doubt of his sincerity. He believed firmly that greenbacks could be kept from depreciation by a law forbidding the sale of gold; that by law paper could be made the standard of value to the exclusion of gold; that it was necessary to the prosperity of the country to destroy our commerce. A Pennsylvania iron master once said to us: "Mr. Stevens, on the tariff, does not represent us; he represents only himself. I make as much iron in a week as he can make in a year; and his works are so badly situated that he can never make iron for a considerable time at a profit." Doubtless Mr. Stevens imagined that every iron master ought to be as badly off as he.

He was a remarkable man; and for a time during the anti-slavery struggle, a useful man. But for the last six years he has been out of his place in Congress; that he should have been made chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means only showed how little knowledge there was in Congress of the question of taxation, and how readily unhesitating self-assertion could carry the day. Latterly, his influence over the House began to decay. His frequent defeats told upon it. During the Congress previous to this one, he was denounced and opposed by Republican members, who yet often quailed before the tyranny he exercised over them—for by that name it was called. In the present Congress he was not a power; but was suffered to hold still the appearance of power.

Mr. Stevens was slight in frame, with a peculiar and not agreeable complexion, a large mouth, deep-set but clear and courageous eyes, and a good, but occasionally harsh voice. He did not look the orator; and it is doubtful if any stranger would have picked him out on the floor of the House as one of the most remarkable and influential men in it.