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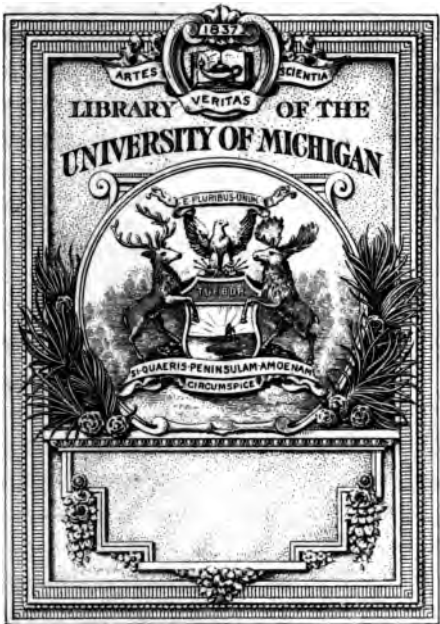
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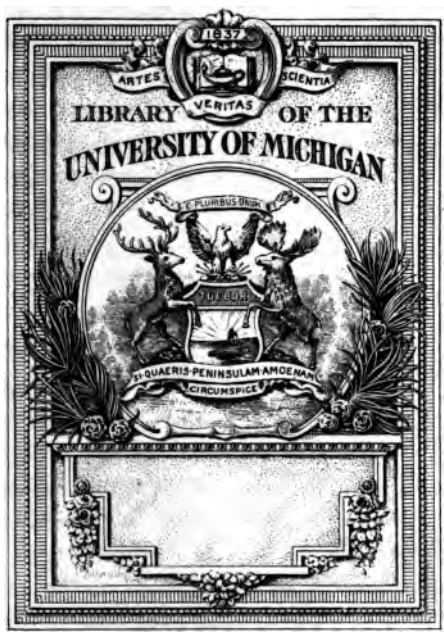


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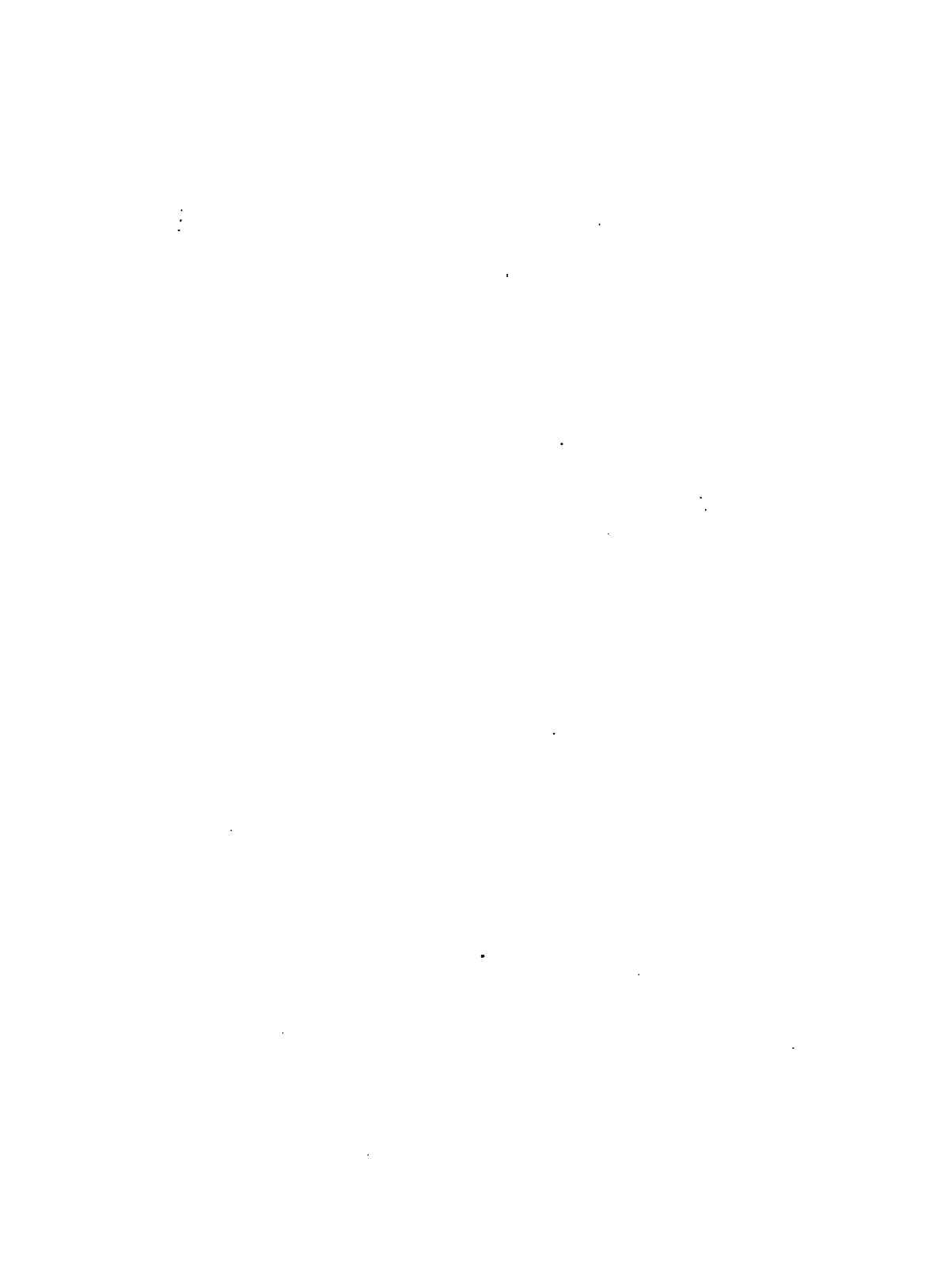
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THADDEUS STEVENS:

COMMONER.

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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It has been remarked that republics are ungrateful to their servants. The people forget the great services rendered by those who have put self out of sight in their desire to serve others. Especially true is this in an age like the present—so full of political curiosity and so wanting in political talent. With the desire of calling attention to the inestimable value to the nation of the life of that great public servant, Thaddeus Stevens, and the importance of his *stalwart* policy in securing the results of the war, the author has written. The unthinking endeavor to cast a stigma on the word *stalwart* by associating it with the spoils system. But it means more than that. The word stands for that bold, courageous, and loyal policy which will be the lasting glory of the Republican party. No one better represented it than



Thaddeus Stevens. We may call him "the first stalwart."

The author expresses the hope that the examination of the "great commoner's" record may lead others to a greater appreciation of the Pennsylvania statesman's services, and of the grand work accomplished by a direct, manly, and *stalwart* policy in national affairs.

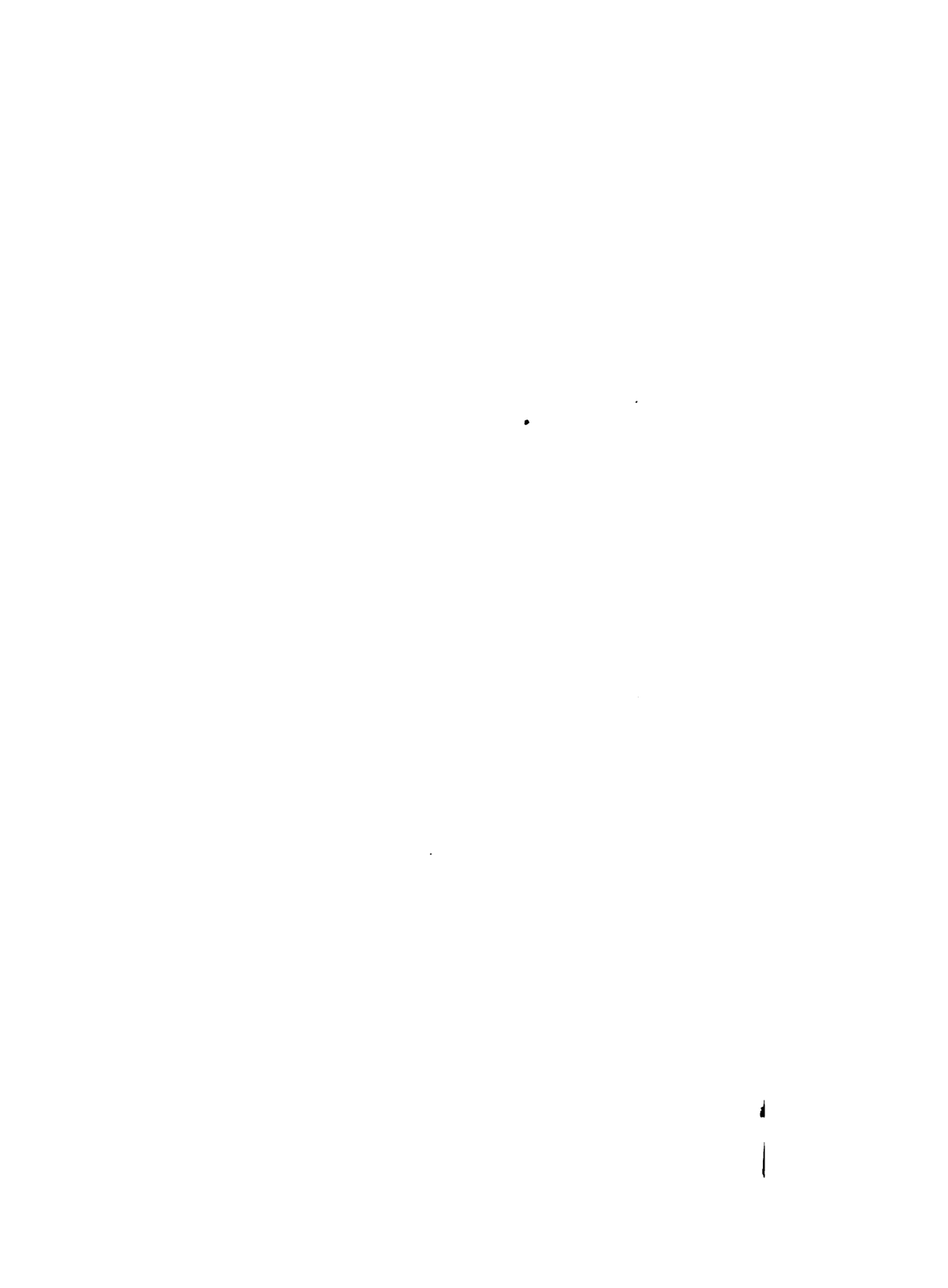
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# THADDEUS STEVENS:

## COMMONER.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### EARLY LIFE. — EDUCATION. — PROFESSION.

THE political world tried to wake up about the last part of the eighteenth century. The American revolution was a start in the dark. The French revolution was a nightmare—the world tried to wake. It could only open its eyes for a second, tortiously struggle, “swear a prayer or two, then sleep again.” Reform bills in England, abolition of the slave-trade, and the like, were but twists and turns. It was not till “emancipation,” “suffrage,” “amnesty,” and reconstruction had supplemented “all men are created equal” with “all men continue equal,” that the world fairly awoke. In that great awakening there was one who more than any other, it seems to me, was a mastering spirit and genius. When this nineteenth century shall be peacefully laid away (if the century that gave birth to telegraphs and railroads and

steamboats and sewing-machines and reapers and the free ballot and liberty and equality can ever be laid peacefully away), I doubt if among all the "large-hearted heroes born in better years," the muse of history will find one more hostile to slavery, more devoted to freedom, more desirous of happiness and equality for all men, than Thaddeus Stevens, surnamed the "Great Commoner." Garrison's fame may last longer, but Garrison was only an abolitionist. He agitated nothing beyond that. When 1863 brought emancipation, he declared the work done. Even Sumner, at first, merely declared hostility to the slave oligarchy. Lincoln said, "I drift," and waited for the people's voice. But Stevens, throughout his whole career, never had but one purpose, — absolute equality for all men before the law.

I do not propose a complete biography. The time has not come for that. In an age when political impotency is confounded with political chastity, it is useless to draw the picture of a man. But, while it is yet day, and before the nation has wholly followed the strange gods of political æstheticism and imbecility, it is well to ponder for a moment over the record of one who was a man, a hero, a king.

Stevens

I will not dwell upon his ancestry. It was lowly enough, no doubt. It *had* to be, to produce so human and great a character as his. The nearer to the earth, the nearer to the common parent, endless generator of all energies. Like all men of genius, Stevens derived his distinguishing characteristics from his mother, a woman who possessed great strength of mind, and whose will was iron. The story of his parents is best told by himself. "I really think the greatest gratification of my life resulted from my ability to give my mother a farm of two hundred and fifty acres, and a dairy of fourteen cows, and an occasional bright gold piece, which she loved to deposit in the contributors' box of the Baptist Church, which she attended. This always gave her great pleasure, and me much satisfaction. My mother was a very extraordinary woman. I have met very few women like her. My father was not a well-to-do man, and the support and education of the family depended on my mother. She worked day and night to educate me. I was feeble and lame in youth; and, as I could not work on the farm, she concluded to give me an education. I tried to repay her afterwards, but the debt of a child to his mother, you know, is one of the debts we can never pay. Poor

woman! The very thing I did to gratify her most hastened her death. She was very proud of her dairy and fond of her cows; and, one night going to look after them, she fell and injured herself, so that she died soon after."

Alexander Harris, in a résumé of the character of Thaddeus Stevens, contained in his work, "The Political Conflict in America," tells how this mother, during the terrible spotted-fever plague, became a ministering angel to all the people for many miles around her home, visiting from family to family, and relieving their needs in every capacity in which she was able to help them. In these visits she was attended by young Thaddeus, who, on these circuits of mercy, obtained a glimpse of life which left an indelible impress on mind and heart alike. Such sights of pain and poverty and death so operated upon his sensibilities as to make him ever afterwards kindly disposed to the sick and poor of every class. "To such," says Mr. Harris, "to the end of his life, he was ever ready to extend a helping hand." Dr. Henry Carpenter, of Lancaster, who was Mr. Stevens's physician for many years, as well as an intimate friend, tells the following incident: Lydia Jane P——, a Quaker widow of considerable literary

taste and ability, with whose husband Mr. Stevens had been well acquainted, was left with a family, and in very destitute circumstances. First, Stevens gave her a farm in fee simple. Then, desiring still further to help her, he brought her eldest son, Byron P——, to Lancaster to educate him. The boy had disease of the knee-joint, which rendered that member stiff. Soon after Byron's arrival in Lancaster, Mr. Stevens called on Dr. Carpenter, and asked him if he had noticed the boy. He replied that he had, and stated his trouble. Mr. Stevens said that a good many physicians had been consulted, who said that nothing could be done, and asked the doctor if he could do anything to relieve him. He replied that he could, and after about five weeks' treatment the boy was able to walk about. And as soon as Mr. Stevens saw him out without crutches, he was delighted, and expressed his thanks and gratitude to the doctor. He wished to know what the charge was, and when the physician replied, that it was a matter of benevolence on all sides, and there was no charge, he insisted upon giving him a very handsome fee, saying, at the same time, — "Now, doctor, if you come across any poor boy that is deformed or disabled in his limbs in any manner, take him in hand



and relieve him, and I will pay you liberally for it."

So Thaddeus Stevens was born to poverty, enslaved by physical deformity, acquainted with the ills of others. With such surroundings in his youth, it was natural that he should follow straight the road which led therefrom; to toil for those who could not work; to speak for those whose lips were dumb; to lift the trodden-down, and make the cause of the oppressed his own. And hence a commoner.

The place of his birth was Danville, Caledonia County, Vermont. The date, April 4, 1792. It was a proper year for his birth. It was the year England voted the gradual abolition of the slave-trade! It was the year that saw Louis XVI. dethroned, and the French Revolution born! It was the year that prepared Hayti for Toussaint and emancipation. I say it was a proper year for the birth of one, who, more than any other man, was to destroy human slavery and pronounce human equality on this Western Continent. The education which his mother procured for young Stevens was by no means inferior, and in 1815 he graduated at Dartmouth College, and immediately found occupation as a teacher in the Academy of Dr. Perkins, at York, Pennsylvania. At that time

THADDEUS STEVENS.

he is described by a gentleman who then ~~was~~ in the same place, as "one of the most backward, retiring, and modest young men he had ever seen."

"But at his desk he had the look  
And air of one who wisely schemed,  
And hostage from the future took,  
In trained thought and lore of books.  
Large-brained, clear-eyed, — of such as he  
Shall Freedom's *grand* apostles be."

Engaged in preparing himself for the law, he passed some time here following the course so many great advocates before him had trod — teaching by day, the horn books at night. But when the time had come for admission to the bar, to his surprise he found the door closed. For certain members of the bar in the county where he had been living, had passed resolutions to the effect that no person should be recognized as a lawyer who followed any other vocation whilst preparing himself for admission. The blow was aimed at Stevens. It is difficult to imagine what cause of dislike they possessed against him. Was it the contempt which thoroughly trained lawyers always have for their less fortunate brothers, who are obliged to acquire their knowledge in the hard, practical road of life, struggling for existence? Or did

they accuse him of "not belonging to the 'better element,'" that potent argument of modern times! Or, perhaps, like the independents of the present day, who cannot find a flaw in an opponent's character, they shrugged their shoulders and said darkly, "we object to his methods"! Stevens was equal to the emergency. He quietly made his way to Harford County, Maryland, where he applied to the court then in session for admission, was examined, a certificate granted him, and in a few days, settled at Gettysburg, he began the practice of the law. The exhibition of selfish exclusiveness and discrimination on the part of the York bar was another circumstance to urge him on in his work to obtain for all an equal chance.

It was a dark opening. He had few friends. He had little money. His fellow-members of the bar were Pharisees of the strictest type. They referred to him as the "club-footed attorney." The poorer class of clients came to him. Most of these had been discarded by his rivals. What little money he had saved slowly dwindled away. Poverty stared him in the face. Failure seemed imminent. At times the hours were unendurable. At times he determined to give up the profession. Almost broken-hearted he struggled and struggled, hope ever growing

fainter. Strange, when life is merely a scene of invariable melancholy, where every moment is a moment of anguish, that we should wish to continue on that scene and prolong that moment, fearful lest the next may bring a severer fate. What power of attraction there is in mere existence, with its illusions of joy and realities of sorrow! And yet we cling to it like the shipwrecked mariner to the floating spar. The indomitable will his mother gave him was all that was left him, when at last the morning broke. A murder had been committed in the neighborhood. So brutal were the circumstances surrounding it, no lawyer of standing could be retained for the defence. In despair the friends of the accused went to Mr. Stevens, who accepted the retainer. To the preparation and trial of this cause he brought all his talents and energy. The verdict was against his client, but his adroit and brilliant defence was as great a surprise to every one as was Patrick Henry's early forensic triumph when he "pleaded against the parsons." The lane had turned. From this onward, the sun shone. In an incredibly short time his clientelage assumed large proportions. He became a real estate owner. His fame spread through neighboring counties. He was a man of influence in the town. Success was assured.

In those days a lawyer's reputation could be made or marred by a single case. The nearness of Gettysburg to Maryland, whence slaves were constantly escaping into the free states, gave opportunity to Stevens, who defended many of the refugees, to take a close look at that peculiar institution, curse to North and South alike. That look left lasting impress. In other years, the sighs of his unfortunate clients, fleeing from slavery, might have been heard in the philippics he thundered against the champions of barbarism. The struggles of those unfortunate ones found utterance in the great statutes of freedom the commoner spread upon his country's roll. Could we get at all the facts, I think we should find this early life at Gettysburg the growing period in his life, the heroic time. One's heart goes out to a man struggling as he did under all difficulties—deformed, friendless, half starved, hated, perhaps feared. Fighting terrific odds; fighting alone. Fighting for what? Himself? You cannot explain it on that theory. Was it fame? No man held it lighter. Was it wealth? No man cared less for it. When he died, they found among his effects bills and notes to the extent of a hundred thousand dollars, which he never pressed for payment, knowing the makers needed the money more than he did. That long

struggle had something deeper in it than mere gain. You can trace back every act and word of his life to those bitter days. They were times of terror to him. But, as Emerson says, "times of terror are generally times of heroism." Stevens found the door of "the throng, miscalled society," closed against him; saw only the vices and abuses of social life, its knaves and dupes, and he was arrayed against it. He had visions of misery he would have no other know, and his hand was opened to the human need. He had studied his profession under difficulties, he would extend education "without money and without price" to all. He had looked upon the victim of the fetter and the lash, and he labored for his release. He found men hostile to each other, felt the truth of the lines, —

"Amid the woods the tiger knows his kind,  
The panther preys not on the panther brood,  
Man only is the common foe of man,"

and he would break the barrier which separates them and offer the inheritance to all. This was the result of those early difficulties. It was a Gettysburg, indeed, — a mortal struggle and a happy victory.

## CHAPTER II.

### MASON AND ANTI-MASON. — ENTRANCE INTO POLITICS. — A PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATOR.

ON September 26, 1831, the first national anti-masonic convention assembled at Baltimore. Twelve States were represented, the New England and Middle States, Ohio and Maryland making the number. Among the delegates present, the following stood conspicuous: Abner Phelps and Amasa Walker, of Massachusetts; Benj. F. Hallett, of Rhode Island; William Henry Seward, James Geddes, Myron Holley, and William G. Verplanck, of New York; the Vanderpoels, of New Jersey; Samuel McKeehan, Owen Stover, and Thaddeus Stevens, of Pennsylvania. Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania sent complete delegations. Only one delegate was present, south of Mason and Dixon's line, namely, from Maryland. It was the first national political convention in which Mr. Stevens had a seat; and he made his mark. The delegates from the Eastern States went home with the inquiry, "Why have we not heard

of Lawyer Stevens before? To them he was the most eloquent man in the convention. On September 28, a ballot was taken for President and Vice-President, resulting in the nomination of William Wirt (once a mason) and Amos Ellmaker, respectively. Both candidates received one hundred and eight out of one hundred and eleven votes cast. Mr. Wirt's letter of acceptance was admirable in its tone. Like everything that charming man did, it was patriotic and wise. "Not only," wrote Mr. Wirt, "have I never sought the office, but I have, long since, looked at it with far more dread than desire, being fully aware of its dreadful responsibilities, and of the fact, demonstrated in past experience, that no degree of purity and intelligence that can be exerted in the discharge of its duties, can protect the possessor from misrepresentation and aspersion." After congratulating the convention that the object of its members was not to proscribe all who were masons, but merely to assert the supremacy of the constitution and the laws, he proceeded as follows: "Any secret society, which by the force of mysterious oaths and obligations, and by the extent of its combination, seeks to disturb the action of our laws, to set them at defiance, to ride over and control them, to usurp the government, to hold the lives, peace



and happiness of society at their mercy, and to establish a reign of terror over the initiated and uninitiated, is a political monster, as fearful as the *invisible tribunal* of Germany, or the *inquisition* of Spain, and ought to be extirpated, without delay, by the use of all the peaceable means which the constitution and laws of our country furnish." Farther on he declared that, from his own experience, and from what had been told him, and from the fact of Washington's connection with the order, he assured the convention that he could not believe the intentions of the masons were at war with their duties as patriotic men and Christians. "I have continually regarded masonry as nothing more than a social and charitable club for the promotion of good feeling among its members, and for the pecuniary relief of their indigent brethren." The letter was too moderate to suit the more ardent anti-masons, but the majority felt satisfied that it would place the party in a most patriotic light. Mr. Wirt's estimate of the convention may be found in a letter written by him to Salmon P. Chase, under date of November 11, 1831. He there says, "the convention was one of the most respectable assemblies I have ever seen, either in a legislative or any other character. The Chief Justice of the United States [John Marshall],

and several other gentlemen, myself among them, were invited to attend a reading of some of their reports; and never have I witnessed the display of more talent and dignity on any occasion." But the campaign was one-sided from the start. With Gen. Jackson, Henry Clay, and Floyd in the field, the race was a hopeless one for Wirt. But throughout it all, he maintained an honorable dignity, a freedom from personality and a patriotic course, rare even among the best of men. No pressure or emergency ever stirred him to commit any sharp trick, or make any bargain. Writing to his friend, Judge Carr, December 5, 1831, he says: "It has been suggested to me by a clergyman, that the Presbyterians are thinking of coming to my aid. I belong to their church. They are said to number a hundred and twenty thousand votes. My advice to them is, to stick to their religion, and not to sully it by mixing in political strife. They will make more hypocrites than Christians by such a course." Later presidential aspirants have not been thus delicate. The result of the contest was two hundred and nineteen electoral votes for Gen. Jackson, forty-nine for Clay, eleven for Floyd, seven for Wirt. The seven votes received by Mr. Wirt came from Vermont (the state of Thaddeus Stevens' birth).

At this day it is hard to realize the height reached by party spirit in this attempted destruction of masonry. Prominent men deserted the order. That the movement was looked upon by wise and virtuous men as proper and necessary, it is sufficient to point to the names of Adams, William Henry Seward, Myron Holley, Carroll of Carrollton, John Marshall, Richard Rush, Pliny Merrick, and Thaddeus Stevens. These men believed the country to be in danger. The abduction and murder of William Morgan (who had in press a work detailing the secrets of the first three degrees in masonry) by prominent members of the masonic order, aroused the greatest indignation throughout New York, Pennsylvania, and New England. Those who did not belong to the order saw in this violation of law, an attempt to subvert the liberties of the country. In the titles and honors of the order the anti-masons thought they saw the building up of an aristocratic and feudal hierarchy which must eventually override the free institutions of the land. In its secrecy, they saw plots and treason. "Standing secrecy," said Thaddeus Stevens, "always implies shame and guilt." In its rules and regulations they saw the concealment of crime, and succor to the vicious. They charged that in the first degree, the candidate

pledges himself under oath, and upon forfeiture of his life, if he does not redeem the pledge, to ever conceal and never reveal the secrets of masonry which he has then received, is about to receive, or which may thereafter be entrusted to him. That among the secrets, which the candidate may and must be instructed in if he takes the second degree, is that of his pledge of passive obedience to the laws of all the lodges and all regular summonses sent him by a brother of that degree. If he takes the third degree, among those secrets are pledges to fly to the relief of a brother of that degree, when masonically required so to do, at the risk of his own life; should there be a greater probability of saving the life of the brother requiring, than of losing his own, to apprise a brother of all approaching danger, if possible, and to conceal the secrets of a brother master mason, when communicated to him as such, murder and treason only excepted, and they left at his discretion. And if he takes the royal arch degree, among those secrets are pledges to extricate a brother of that degree from danger, if he can, whether that brother be right or wrong,—to promote his political preferment before that of all others of equal qualifications, and to conceal his secrets, murder and treason not excepted, so

that concealment of crime was made a masonic duty.

They further charged that Morgan was murdered on the 19th of September, 1826. That to this fearful consummation none were privy, but those who had, as masons, sworn to assist each other, right or wrong, and to conceal each other's murder and treason. That, after the murder, all the precaution possible was taken for concealing it, but this not proving successful, and legal prosecution being threatened, the criminals frequently met and consulted together for their mutual safety. That the most influential among them insisted that, if called by the legal authorities of the country to testify, they one and all must swear they knew nothing of the matter; otherwise they would be forsworn to masonry, and might lose the life they would thus forfeit. That as witnesses, as magistrates, as sheriffs, as grand jurors, as petit jurors, as legislators, these masons and others with whom they were intimate *would* know nothing about it. That in all their civil relations they violated their oaths and most sacred duties. That they spirited away witnesses they feared would know too much, they perjured themselves in court, they prevented the judicial ascertainment and punishment of the foulest criminals, they made

common cause in behalf of these criminals against the rights of the citizens and the laws of land. When people cried out that Washington was a mason, they admitted that Washington and his brother officers of glorious memory were masons; but pointed to the fact, that farther than the third degree they did not go in the early days of our independence, that Washington never visited a lodge but once or twice after 1768, that he never presided in one, and that afterwards he in effect renounced masonry. They sneered at the credulity of those who believed in the antiquity of the institution, and showed that the origin of speculative masonry was traced to the year 1717, in England, and the averments of a more ancient deduction were entirely fabulous. No arguments could make an anti-mason think otherwise. He believed the nation's life imperilled, and he cried "havoc, and let slip the dogs of war." In Massachusetts, Abner Phelps, Thomas Walley, William Marston, and others, by memorial, prayed Governor Levi Lincoln to interfere and put a stop to masonry within the borders of the Bay State. The governor, while sympathizing with many of their views, felt his official position would not warrant his interference, and refused the prayer. In New York the mails were

flooded with petitions and memorials begging the governor's aid. But the best organization of the anti-masons was to be found in Pennsylvania, shaped by the hand of Thaddeus Stevens. Open as the day, he hated the secrecy of night. Believing in equal opportunities for all, his spirit was aroused that there were privileges and rights possessed by a few, which could not become the property of the many. Remembering the Constitution abolished titles, he saw in the appellations of masonic votaries an enmity to the spirit of our laws. He looked abroad and saw in the free States men protesting against the exclusive order; he turned to the baronial States of the South and heard no murmur. Where slavery existed, masonry flourished; where freedom and equality ruled, it decayed. His mind was made up. This way his path led. No privileges, no exclusive rights, no *imperium in imperio* was his motto. He was among the first to take up the cudgel, and the very last to lay it down. As an anti-mason he took his seat in the lower house of the Pennsylvania Legislature in the fall of 1833. The anti-masons had received a severe defeat in the late presidential campaign. But defeat was nothing to a man like Stevens. He immediately made himself the leader of the anti-masons, and organized the

members of the Legislature of that persuasion into a thoroughly trained force, of which he was the absolute ruler. His first step was to introduce the following resolution : —

“ *Resolved*, That a committee be appointed to inquire into the expediency of providing by law for making Freemasonry a good cause of peremptory challenge to jurors in all cases, when one of the parties is a Freemason and the other is not ; and on the part of the Commonwealth, in all prosecutions for crimes and misdemeanors, when the defendant is a mason ; and also, when the judge and one of the parties are Freemasons, to make the same provisions for the trials of causes as now exist when the judge and either of the parties are related to each other by blood or marriage ; and to make the same provision relative to the summoning and return of jurors, where the sheriff and either of the parties are Freemasons, as now exists where they are related to each other by blood or marriage ; and that said committee have power to send for persons and papers.”

On the second reading of the resolution, the vote was thirty-four yeas to forty-five nays, and Mr. Stevens was defeated. Nothing daunted,



he held closely to his cause. The next year, on a resolution offered by him, instructing the judiciary committee to bring in a bill to suppress masonry, he was again defeated, the vote standing thirty-eight to fifty-eight. But the year following, he secured the appointment of a committee to investigate the evils of Freemasonry and other secret societies. This committee was called the "Star Chamber Committee." It at once entered upon its work, and subpoenas were served upon many of the most distinguished masons in the State. But those who had received subpoenas refused to testify. They claimed the State had no right to interfere with any organization which did not hinder justice or obstruct the laws; that the institution of masonry existed when the Constitution was adopted, and it was unconstitutional therefore now to destroy it; that it was an institution which existed for mutual enjoyment and improvement, and the Constitution of the United States guaranteed the right of pursuit of happiness. The committee, thus balked, appeared before the house, and asked authority to commit for contempt. This was refused, and the investigation fell through. Well, this was a defeat, some will say. True, but the generalship displayed by Stevens in the contest won

admiration from the most bitter masons. Look at it for a moment. In 1831 the anti-masons had received a crushing defeat. The movement received a decisive check. In 1833 and in 1834, in the Pennsylvania Legislature, Stevens and the anti-masons were signally defeated. In Massachusetts, and even in New York, the struggle was at an end, every one had lost his interest in the matter. But in 1835 we find Stevens has carried his point and obtained his committee. Now, that could only have been accomplished by a master tactician. That required the highest grade of generalship, and it was given by Stevens. At this late day one can judge coolly of the merits of that struggle. There is little doubt that those masons who sympathized with the Morgan crusade forgot their civil duties. There is also little doubt of the fact that the masonic fraternity has ever contained among its members many of the best patriots this country has produced. But there is one thing the agitation produced which cannot be forgotten. The attention of men was called to the true principles of republican government, to the impropriety of titles, to the necessity of equal privileges for all, to the great ideas of freedom and equality. In one respect this was of vital interest to the country. Anti-masonry received

its final defeat in 1835. The same year the abolition of slavery became a question of national importance in American politics. The anti-masonic agitation had no small effect in rousing the anti-slavery sentiment. The one question disappeared, the other made the most important issue in our politics. I think the desire of equality and freedom, which animated the anti-masons, was not destroyed, but was transferred to the anti-slavery movement. Why there should have existed at that particular time such a burning thirst for freedom and equality in the breasts of so many, cannot be explained. Like as at certain periods in the world's history, assassination and atheism have been epidemic. You cannot explain it. You cannot hide it. It exists. That is sufficient. It is in the air. Many of the distinguished anti-masons became the leaders in the new agitation. Seward and Adams and Holley and Stevens and a host of others passed into the control of the new movement that was to be the crowning glory of America.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE FREE SCHOOL. — THE BUCKSHOT WAR.

THE Pennsylvania Constitution of 1790 provided that "the Legislature, as soon as may be, shall provide by law for the establishment of schools throughout the State, in such manner that the poor may be taught gratis." But it was not till 1834 that a bill establishing a general free school system could be passed. And then so great was the opposition to it among the Democrats, that at the next election an anti-free school Legislature was chosen. [Strange that the Democracy partake so largely of the advantages of the free schools, and yet so bitterly antagonize them.] Thaddeus Stevens naturally enough became the ardent supporter of the free school educational system, and was its special champion on the floor of the House. The hostility of the Democracy and the wealthy taxpayers of Pennsylvania to its new education system in 1835 is almost incredible to the present generation! Mr. Stevens was returned from his own county only by a small majority,

and under positive instructions to vote for the repeal of the law. Instead of doing so, he became its chief defender, and when the bill repealing the law came from the Senate, where it had passed, to the House, he made what is conceded to have been the most effective speech of his life. In fact, he himself styled his labors in that cause as "the crowning utility of his life;" and at another time he remarked he should feel himself abundantly rewarded for all his efforts in behalf of universal education if a single child, educated by the Commonwealth, should drop a tear of gratitude on his grave. During its delivery in the hall of the House at Harrisburg, the scene was dramatic and the interest intense. The orator was forty-three years old. He was in the fullness of his vigor. There was nothing weak or literary about him. His action was virile. His classic countenance, noble voice, and directness of style, coupled with the glorious cause he was advocating, created such a feeling among his fellow-members that for once at least a Legislature rose superior to all selfish interests, and obeyed the instincts of a higher nature. The motion to repeal the law failed, and the number of votes pledged to sustain it were changed upon the spot. Inevitable defeat at first seemed

imminent; but an unequivocal victory was the result. The free school was saved to Pennsylvania. The name of its savior was Thaddeus Stevens. How hopeless the cause appeared at the beginning of the session may be learned from the fact that there were presented to the Legislature 558 petitions with 31,988 names in favor of the Repeal, and only 49 petitions, containing but 2,575 signers, against it!

For a brief moment I would call the attention of the reader to certain events, of little importance now (save so far as they show the character of Mr. Stevens under trying circumstances), known in Pennsylvania politics as the "Buckshot War."

In the election of 1838, Charles J. Ingersol, Democratic candidate for Congress in the Philadelphia district, was declared defeated by the first count. His supporters believed him to have been elected, and charged that frauds had been committed in a district known as the Northern Liberties, and demanded that the whole vote of that district, amounting to four or five thousand votes, should be thrown out. This they asked of the return judges, who numbered ten Democrats and seven Whigs, and who, of course, decided the question on political grounds. If the whole vote of the said district

was disregarded, it made a vast difference in the political complexion of the House and Senate at Harrisburg. As the judges were divided, two sets of returns declaring different members elected were forwarded by the Whig and Democratic judges respectively to the Secretary of State. The Whig return reached the Secretary first, wherefore he chose to consider it the only legal one. The Whigs said they had been cheated of their rights by Democratic canards and false statements. The Democrats contended that the Whigs were trying to force a minority representation on them. Which delegation would be received at Harrisburg was the one question on everybody's lips. Thaddeus Stevens had made up his mind early, as usual; and immediately, as leader of the Whigs, laid his adroit plans. No man ever received such Democratic maledictions as he did. Every movement of the Whigs was charged to him. It was said he was encouraging insurrection and disobedience to the laws. He was called an arch traitor, a destroyer of his country's peace. But it did not disturb the commoner in the least. Nothing in the way of personal abuse ever did. He relentlessly pursued the course he had mapped out. At eleven o'clock on the forenoon of Dec. 4, 1868, the

clerk called the House to order, and both of the Philadelphia returns were handed in and received ; so the two delegations were apparently admitted. So close were the two parties numerically, that should either delegation be thrown out, the other party would organize the House. Great confusion prevailed during the reading of the roll by the clerk. As soon as the clerk finished the reading, some one nominated one William Hopkins for speaker, and tellers were appointed. Now came Mr. Stevens's opportunity. He rose in his place, and, in a clear voice, named as speaker Thomas S. Cunningham ; appointed tellers, himself put the motion, announced his candidate elected, and conducted him to the chair. Such audacity fairly stunned the Hopkins party. But they soon recovered, and under the lead of Thomas B. McElwee, pushed Cunningham from his chair, and placed the Democrat in his stead. And now the greatest excitement and disorder prevailed. Both speakers were sworn in. One party adjourned the House till 2.30 p. m. the next day ; while the other faction announced that the House would meet the next day at ten. But the Democrats left trusty guards around the capitol and firmly held the same.



At the meeting of the Senate there was great confusion; and Stevens, who was present as a spectator, barely escaped with his life. Harrisburg trembled with excitement. The governor issued proclamations; the civil magistrates did likewise. The Democrats, thinking the Whigs had possession of the arsenal, surrounded it, and planted cannon in front in order to lay siege to it. Everywhere men could be seen moving in squads as if an insurrection were imminent. Committees of safety and committees of conference were appointed. On Dec. 5, the governor wrote to the captain of the United States Dragoons at Carlisle, impertuning him forthwith to march the troops at his command to Harrisburg, for the protection of the constituted authorities of the Commonwealth, for the suppression of the insurrection, and for the preservation of our Republican form of government, agreeably with the Constitution of the United States.

Two days later he wrote to the President of the United States, asking his aid and interference. To his request, the President (Martin Van Buren), through the Secretary of War, made an unfavorable reply. "The commotion," he wrote, "which now threatens the peace of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, does

not appear to arise from any opposition to the laws, but grows out of a political contest between the different members of the government, most, if not all of them, admitted to be the legal representatives of the people constitutionally elected, about their relative rights, and especially in reference to the organization of the popular branch of the Legislature. To interfere in any commotion growing out of a controversy of so grave and delicate a character, by the Federal authority, armed with the military form of the government, would be attended with dangerous consequences to our republican institutions. In the opinion of the President, his interference in any political commotion in a State, could only be justified by the application for it, being clearly within the meaning of the fourth section of the fourth article of the Constitution, and of the Act of Congress passed in pursuance thereof, and while the domestic violence brought to his notice is of such a character that the State authorities, civil and military, after having been duly called upon, have proved inadequate to suppress it." The governor called for troops. A thousand, under command of Gen. Patterson, came from Philadelphia. Gen. Alexander was in command at Harrisburg of a number of troops

from Carlisle. All over the State the militia was being gathered together and put in order for marching to the capital at a moment's notice. The Cunningham party, seeing the danger of longer continuing the struggle, and feeling perhaps that their opponents had a *prima facie* case at least, weakened and enough deserted to the Hopkins House, to give that organization a decided majority, and by Dec. 25 all had gone over to the Hopkins Legislature, save only one — Thaddeus Stevens. He could die. He would never surrender. How fiercely partisan spirit raged in this remarkable political contest, may be seen from the testimony of Col. Pleasanton, which I find in Niles' National Register, vol. 57, p. 27. Col. Pleasanton said: "On the 20th of January last, I called to see Col. McElwee, a member of the House of Representatives from Bedford, on some public business, at his lodgings in the evening. He was undressed, and about to go to bed, but entered into conversation with me on the subject of my business, in the course of which he referred to the character of the volunteer troops from Philadelphia, who had been in service in the preceding month of December at this place. He spoke very favorably of them, and said that it was well for them that so many of them were

Democrats, as otherwise they would never have lived to have reached Harrisburg. He then stated that on the announcement here that the troops from Philadelphia would obey the order of the governor, and would march for Harrisburg, it was agreed by himself and two or three others whom he did not name, to prevent their arrival at this place at all hazards, supposing at the moment that, as the troops belonged to Philadelphia, they were all Whigs, and favorable to the State administration. To carry out this agreement, he said it was determined to remove a few of the rails on the railroad at the most dangerous part of it, and also to form a mine under the most exposed part, to be filled with gunpowder, so that in the confusion which would arise from the train of cars containing the troops being overthrown by thus running off the track, *the mine might be sprung, and the whole body of them be blown into the air together!* For this purpose, he himself had purchased three barrels of gunpowder, and said that he had paid forty dollars out of his own pocket for the purchase. To convince me that he was serious in what he stated to have been their design, he further said that his associates therein were men of tried courage, and, having been officers of the army during the

late war, knew how to execute the project they had conceived. This design was abandoned by them in consequence of information having been received subsequently to the purchase of the gunpowder, that the troops then on their route from Philadelphia were not all of the same political party, a large portion of them belonging to the Democratic party, to which Col. McElwee and his associates also belonged. He further said that it was to this circumstance alone that the arrival of the troops from Philadelphia at Harrisburg without injury or loss was to be attributed. The design was abandoned because it would have been impossible to have separated the Democrats from the Whigs in its execution, and protected them from the danger of the explosion."

As I said above, Mr. Stevens did not go over to the majority. Pride and a consciousness of being right in his own course prevented him. He informed his constituents that he believed the organization of the "Hopkins House" illegal, and therefore ought not be expected to act with it. Still he agreed to attend the special session to be held in May of that year. At the very beginning of the session his enemies endeavored to have his seat declared vacant. A committee was appointed under a resolution

offered by McElwee to investigate Stevens's claim to a seat and his forfeiture of the same. The committee gave him notice of the time and place of the hearing. To all of which he sent a protest \* stating his position. Thirty-eight Democrats, however, entered the following protest to the action of the majority. It states so clearly the principles involved in the discussion that I give it in full.

*"The Protest of the Democratic Members of the House of Representatives, against the proceedings of the majority of that body in relation to Mr. Stevens.*

"The undersigned, members of the House of Representatives, present the following reasons for their vote on the resolution that the admission of Thaddeus Stevens 'be postponed for the present, and that a committee of five be appointed to investigate the claims of the said Thaddeus Stevens to a seat in the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and whether he has, if duly elected, forfeited his seat, by mal-conduct.' And the undersigned demand, under the rules of this House, that these reasons be placed upon the journal thereof. The third section of the first article of the Constitution provides that 'no person shall be a representative who shall not

\*Niles' National Register, Vol. 56, p. 223.

have attained the age of twenty-one years, and have been a citizen and inhabitant of the State three years next preceding his election, and the last year thereof an inhabitant of the district in and for which he shall be chosen a representative, unless he shall have been absent on the public business of the United States or of this State.' It is not disputed by the majority in this House, nor by any member of it, that the qualifications pointed out in this article, or either of them, are possessed by Thaddeus Stevens; nor is it pretended that he was not elected a representative of the county of Adams, and that the certificate of his election was made out, and returned through the Secretary of the Commonwealth, according to the provisions of the several acts relating to elections now in force, and in strict conformity with the established usages of this House.

*"We contend, therefore, —* First, That in the absence of a constitutional qualification, the speaker cannot refuse to administer the oath of office to a member elect, when he appears at the bar to be sworn: nor can the House, without an illegal assumption of power, exclude such member elect from a seat. The inquiry contemplated by resolution above referred to, cannot therefore be ordered, because the House has no

power to punish a member elect for mal-conduct before admission. It matters not how grave may be the charges brought against him, — it matters not how gross may be his mal-conduct as a private individual, — it is of no consequence that he may have spoken or written disrespectfully of the House or its members. The Constitution nowhere indicates these things as operating to disqualify a member elect from taking his seat in the first instance, and the House has no legal power to raise a committee to try an offender whom they have no power to punish if found guilty of the charges preferred against him.

“ *We contend*, — Second, That the principles advocated in this House, that *non-user* of office is sufficient to work forfeiture, is false and untenable in law as regards an elective representative office, and that no precedent can be found even among the parliamentary records of Great Britain for the establishment of such a doctrine, though in that country the parliament is the supreme power, and there is no written constitution to restrain it, unless the *Magna Charta* and the Bill of Rights may be considered to be such. It is true that in England there are offices of an executive character of which *non-user* may cause a forfeiture; but even there the



forfeiture must be declared while the non-user continues, and before the claimant shall appear to assume the duties of his trust. In a Republican Government, where the Constitution is the supreme law, no forfeiture can take place except for causes indicated by the Constitution itself.

“ *We contend*, — Third, That this House has no power to exclude a member elect for writing or speaking contemptuously of the House, its proceedings, or its members, because a member elect, being unqualified by oath, is to such intents and purposes a private citizen; and the seventh section of the ninth article of the Constitution which declares that ‘the printing press shall be free to every person who undertakes to examine the proceedings of the legislature or any branch of government, and no law shall ever be made to restrain the right thereof,’ withdraws the citizen from any jurisdiction which the legislature may seek to exercise for the use of this privilege.

“ *We contend*, — Fourth, That no vacancy has been created in the representation of the county of Adams by death or resignation; and that in no other conceivable mode could the seat of Thaddeus Stevens have been vacated, but by the action of the house or by law. He could not

be expelled, because he was not a qualified member of the house, and the house had no power of expulsion from a seat he did not hold.

“It cannot be pretended that he has resigned, for the reason that he could not resign to any other than the presiding officer of the body of which he was a member elect; and no such resignation has been made. The people of Adams county, who elected him to a seat in this house, could not have received his resignation, nor could they have proceeded to fill by a new election the place so resigned; because such an election would not be valid under the Constitution, nor could the house have recognized the validity by receiving the returns.

“If a vacancy could have been created by a resolution of the house, or by law, then, if such resolution or law had been passed, it would have been the duty of the speaker, in accordance with the nineteenth section of the first article of the Constitution, and the provisions of the act of the 10th of February, 1799, to issue his writ directed to the sheriff of Adams county, commanding him, on a day therein expressed, to hold an election for the supply of the vacancy. No such resolution or law has been passed, and therefore the right of Thaddeus Stevens to a seat in this House has never been impaired, and

cannot now be disputed. For these reasons the undersigned do solemnly PROTEST against the majority in refusing to admit Thaddeus Stevens, a member elect from the county of Adams, to his seat in this House—believing that such a refusal is a direct violation of the law and the Constitution, and involves a principle destructive of the rights and liberties of the people of this Commonwealth.”

The committee appointed under McElwee’s resolution made a report adverse to Mr. Stevens, and on the resolution declaring the seat of Mr. Stevens vacant, the vote was fifty-eight in favor of, to thirty-four against, the resolution. A special election was thereupon ordered, and Mr. Stevens was chosen by a handsome vote. He then presented himself to the legislature and took the oath of office. I am indebted to Niles’ Register\* for Mr. Stevens’s address to his constituents at the time of this special election. The address is as follows:—

“FELLOW-CITIZENS: In accordance with your wishes, I presented myself to the body now exercising the duties of the House of Representatives of this Commonwealth, and desired to have administered to me the oath prescribed by

\* Vol. 56, p. 216.

law. A majority of that body, using the same unconstitutional and unlawful means which invested them with official authority, refused to allow me to occupy that seat to which I had been called by the free choice of my fellow-citizens. Under the most shallow, hypocritical and false pretences, they have declared my seat vacant, and imposed upon you the expense of a new election, to be held on the 14th of June next. In doing so, they have committed an unprecedented outrage on the rights of the people. If submitted to by the people, liberty has become but a mere name. Already is the Constitution suspended, and the most sacred contracts between the State and individuals are violated with the most daring and reckless audacity. The tyrants who have usurped power have determined to oppress and plunder the people. It is for you to say whether you will be their willing slaves. If they are permitted finally to triumph, you hold your liberty, your lives, your reputation, and your property at their will alone.

“I had hoped that no circumstances would occur which would render it necessary for me to be again a candidate for your suffrages. Both my inclination and my interest require me to retire from public life. But I will not exe-

cute that settled intention when it will be construed into cowardice or despondency. To refuse to be a candidate now would be seized upon by my enemies as evidence that I distrust the people, and am afraid to entrust to them the redress of their own wrongs. I feel no such fear, no such distrust. Without intending any invidious comparison, I have always said what I still believe, that the people of Adams county have more intelligence, and not less honesty, than the people of any county of the State. To such a people I can have no fear in appealing against lawless aggression. To them I appeal to restore to me that which was their free gift, and therefore my right, and of which I have been robbed by those who 'feel power and forget right.'

"I present myself to you as a candidate to fill that vacancy which was created to wound my and your feelings. I do not want to receive a party nomination from my friends. The question now to be decided is above party considerations, and would be disgraced by sinking it to the level of a party contest. Every freeman must be impelled to resist this public outrage as a personal wrong to himself. Everything dear to him in his country, — his liberty, the liberty of his children, and the title to his

property, — admonish him to rise above every paltry personal consideration, and rebuke tyranny at that great tribunal of freedom—the ballot box.

“ While, however, you are determined, resolute and energetic, let me implore you not to imitate the example of our oppressors, but do everything calmly and temperately. This admonition is hardly necessary to the orderly citizens of Adams county ; but when oppression is so intolerable as at present, it is difficult for the most peaceable and quiet men to control their indignation.

“ With respect and gratitude, your obedient  
servant, THADDEUS STEVENS.

“ HARRISBURG, May 25, 1839.”

It is interesting to note how the “ whirligig of time brings its revenges round.” A year afterwards this very McElwee, who had taken the leading part in excluding Mr. Stevens, was himself expelled from the Legislature by a vote of fifty-eight to twenty-six, and did not present himself as a candidate for re-election.

I have dwelt on this subject of the “ Buckshot War,” not because it is of any special interest to-day, but simply because it gives us an insight into the courage, adroitness, and virile tactics

of the man who but a few years before had been described as "backward, retiring and modest." In this manner does defeat and difficulty strengthen, while success weakens. On every question, save that of education; had he suffered defeat; but from every reverse he grew stronger. Like Antæus, invigorated by touching his mother earth, he rose the stronger for the fall. The audacious manner in which he nominated and declared elected his own candidate for speaker, his utter lack of fear, as regards results when in the right, his aversion to compromise, his refusal to barter away his manliness and honor for personal advantages, were typical of the man, and were the distinguishing characteristics of his later years. The Thaddeus Stevens of reconstruction fame is plainly recognizable in the representative from Adams county. It is all there, — courage, power, persistency, honor. They were all his. In 1841 he left the Legislature and devoted himself to his profession. At the time, the Harrisburg Telegraph paid a well deserved tribute to Mr. Stevens' ability and character as a legislator, which I now append. I am indebted to Mr. Harris's work for knowledge of it: —

"To judge of the varied powers of Thaddeus Stevens, it is only necessary to review his

course during the brief limit of the present session. In this review would be included his powerful argument on the right of petitions, even from a meeting of repudiators; his cogent appeals on the necessity of placing a constitutional limit to the State debt, and taking from any future Legislature the power of continuing the present system of wasteful expenditure without any provision to meet liabilities incurred thereby; his able and practical remarks on the vital importance of the protective policy to the interests of our nation, showing how the flood of commerce poured into England under the Navigation Act; how Holland, once the commercial carrier of the whole world, was paralyzed under the influence of free trade doctrines; and how the first principle of legislation demands that home labor should be fostered and protected. Whoever has heard Mr. Stevens, at this session or at any other, cannot hesitate to accord to him the most commanding abilities and sound constitutional sentiments. Hence it is, standing as he does, a giant among his pigmy opponents, that every shaft of malice and invective is hurled at him by every *puny whipster*, who, like the fool of Crete, exposes his waxy softness to the fervid glow of his eloquent reply.



“It is not so much our wish to eulogize Mr. Stevens as to direct the public attention to the position he has attained, and so well maintains. We want the eyes of the Commonwealth directed toward him. We want him judged of by his acts, and not through the false medium of political vituperation. We desire to see his course scanned with impartial discrimination, and on its issue we want our Commonwealth to pronounce its judgment. If he varies a line from the most matured principles of legislative economy, let that judgment be of condemnation, but if he pass the trial, justice demands that the praises be awarded to him which are the meed of every public servant who has labored long and faithfully for the best interests of the Commonwealth.”

After so many years of constant political strife, the return to law was refreshing to Stevens, and brought him needed rest. The law is a jealous mistress. He paid her the demands she exacted in industrious toil and intense application. What occupation is so delightful as that of the country lawyer? His leisure for thought and reading, unharassed by the importunate inquiries of nervous traders! The respect shown him by the villagers! His supposed importance to the existence of society! All

this and more make the life of the country squire quaint, agreeable, satisfactory. But the quiet town of Gettysburg was not the field for a man like Thaddeus Stevens. His place was where great things are to be done. Soon after the session of the Legislature closed (1842) he moved to Lancaster, Penn., and there made his permanent home. With astonishing rapidity his clientelage grew. Almost immediately he sprung into one of the most lucrative practices in Pennsylvania. His greatest success was before the jury. Here was his throne. He never took or used notes of the evidence. He relied wholly on his memory. In argument he cited but few authorities, and those directly to the point. He always examined, before they were called, the important witnesses on his side. He trusted to the strength of his own case, rarely indulging in lengthy cross-examinations. He moulded the "twelve honest men of the hundred" to his will. He was not a first class lawyer in the true meaning of the term. He was too great a man to be that. His mind and heart were too ample to be slaves to precedent and mistaken judgment. Nor yet could he be called an eloquent advocate in the true sense of *that* term; but the directness of his attack and the fury of his charge swept his antagonist from

the field. His earnestness, his singleness of purpose, took the place of rhetoric, learning, and style. He always picked out two or three points in a case, and spent his energy on these, and thus drove into the minds of the jury the facts on which he relied and from which they could not escape. Here, as everywhere else with him, it was power, will, virility, that gave him the victory. The "honey-tongued charms of persuasion" were not his. He did not endeavor to convince his antagonist. He knocked him down with one blow. Some stubborn fact, some bitter sarcasm, or some terrific conclusion, felled his foe. He feared no one, and all dreaded him. He was successful when far keener attorneys failed. He was always on the alert. He was always ready. As Cecil said of Lord Burleigh, "he toiled terribly."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PHILIPPICS.

IF the return to private life was satisfactory to Mr. Stevens, yet its quiet was tiresome, and he longed for a wider political field than he had before known. So in 1848 he presented himself as a candidate for Congress from the Lancaster district. He was nominated in the Whig convention and was elected. When the 31st Congress met, it found a contest awaiting it at the very outset. The election of Speaker was one of the most exciting struggles that had occurred in Washington for years. Mr. Stevens was no believer in the false prudence that dictates a silent and reserved course for a congressman's first term. Being elected to represent his district, the commoner felt it his duty to put his hand to the plough at once. He entered the fight immediately,—nay, more, was a candidate for Speaker himself this very first year of his congressional service, to the extent of four votes. And so great was the confidence placed

in him by the friends of freedom, that, according to Joshua Giddings, the eight Free-Soil members of the House were willing to vote for him (a Whig) for Speaker without other pledges than his antecedent opinions and acts. Monday, Dec. 3, 1849, the Thirty-first Congress assembled. It was a notable body. In the Senate sat Hannibal Hamlin, of Maine; John P. Hale, of New Hampshire; Daniel S. Dickinson and William Henry Seward, of New York; Thomas Corwin and Salmon P. Chase, of Ohio; Pierre Soulé, of Louisiana; Jefferson Davis and Henry S. Foote, of Mississippi; Thomas H. Benton, of Missouri; Lewis Cass, of Michigan; and Sam Houston, of Texas;—while high above them all towered the great triumvirate, Webster, Clay, Calhoun. Nor was the House less distinguished. Maine sent Elbridge Gerry; New Hampshire was represented by Amos Tuck; Massachusetts had a distinguished delegation: Charles Allen, George Ashmun, Robert C. Winthrop, Julius Rockwell, Horace Mann, and others. Alexander Stephens, Robert Toombs, and Howell Cobb were there from Georgia. There was George W. Julian, of Indiana; Humphrey Marshall, of Kentucky; Joseph M. Root and Joshua Giddings, of Ohio; and David Wilmot, of Pennsylvania. This Congress was for-

tunate in its great names, but it needed them all, every one of them. Anti-slavery had become the great issue in the country. This Congress was to grapple with that question at any rate. Everything pointed that way. Texas had recently been annexed against the protest of the Northern free States, and contrary to the promises of the South. The North was aroused. She had been sleeping on her arms too long. She did not fear the threats of the South. She distrusted sometimes the faithfulness of her own servants. Seward, notwithstanding his brilliant panegyrics on freedom, was ever open to compromise. Some even doubted the sincerity of John P. Hale. They felt with him it was a parliamentary struggle, in which tact, wit, composure, good humor, were the weapons. True, Giddings was fearless and Chase bold. Horace Mann let no opportunity slip to record himself among the lovers of freedom. But all generally acted on the defensive. A man was needed who knew how to attack; who would fly at the throat of the monster, Slavery, and hang there like grim death. Such a man was found in Thaddeus Stevens. He of all others was fitted to hurl the spear of Ithuriel. He entered the contest without reproach and without fear.

The first matter before the House was the

election of a speaker. On the first roll-call, Howell Cobb received one hundred and three votes to ninety-six for Mr. Winthrop, there being twenty-two scattering. The second, third, and fourth calling of the roll showed little change. The next day there was little change in the voting; so, too, on the third. The contest went on, day after day, with varying changes. On the fortieth ballot, William J. Brown received one hundred and twelve votes, lacking only two of an election. But it being discovered that Mr. Brown had been in communication with David Wilmot, and had agreed to make the committees satisfactory to the Free-Soilers, he was immediately dropped and passed out of the list of candidates. Still the contest went on; and, finally, on Dec. 22, a resolution that a plurality should elect having been passed, Mr. Cobb received the highest number of any one candidate, and was declared elected. In announcing the committees, the chair placed Mr. Stevens on the judiciary, to which position he was well fitted.

On Feb. 20, 1850, the House being in committee of the whole on the state of the Union, on the reference of the President's Annual Message, Mr. Stevens delivered his first philippic against slavery. He began by

referring to the means used in the slavery discussion by members from the South, as calculated to use up time, without advantage to the country, and as being revolutionary. He proceeded as follows: "Here, then, we have a well-defined and palpable conspiracy of Southern members combined to stop the supplies necessary to the existence of the government, disorganize and dissolve it, until the bands that bind the Union together are severed, and, as a gentleman early in the session desired, 'discord reigns.' . . . Let us inquire, what is the grave offence, the mighty wrong, which can justify a threat big with such portentous consequences? The refusal of Congress to propagate or to establish a doubtful, or even an admitted good in the territories, would surely be no cause for rebellion or revolution, much less would the refusal to extend an evil, an admitted evil, an unmitigated wrong. Will an intelligent and free posterity believe it, when impartial history records that the only cause for this high threat was the apprehension that the Congress of this *free* Republic would not propagate, nor permit to be propagated, the institution of human slavery in her vast territories now free? Yet such is the simple fact. It is proper, then, to inquire whether the thing



sought to be forced upon the territories, at the risk of treason and rebellion, be a good or an evil. I think it is a great evil which ought to be interdicted; that we should oppose it as statesmen, as philanthropists, and as moralists, notwithstanding the extraordinary position taken by the gentleman from Alabama.

"While I thus announce my unchangeable hostility to slavery in every form, and in every place, I also avow my determination to stand by all the compromises of the Constitution, and carry them into faithful effect. Some of those compromises I greatly dislike; and, were they now open for consideration, they should never receive my assent. But I find them *in* a Constitution formed in difficult times, and I would not disturb them." With a master's hand he described the evils of slavery.

"That republic," said he, "must be feeble, both in peace and war, that has not an intelligent and industrious yeomanry, equally removed from luxury and from poverty. The middling classes, who own the soil and work it with their own hands, are the main support of every free government. Despotism may be powerful and long sustained by a mixed population of serfs and nobles. But free representative republics, that rely upon the voluntary action of the peo-

ple, never can. Under such governments, those who defend and support the country must have a stake in the soil; must have interests to protect and rights to defend. Slave countries never can have such a yeomanry! never can have a body of small proprietors who own the soil and till it with their own hands, and sit down in conscious independence under their own vine and fig tree. There is no sound connecting link between the aristocrat and the slave. True, there is a class of human beings between them; but they are the most worthless and miserable of mankind. The poor white laborer is the scorn of the slave himself. For slavery always degrades labor. The white people who work with their hands are ranked with the other laborers — the slaves. They are excluded from the society of the rich. Their associations, if anywhere, are with the colored population. They feel that they are degraded and despised, and their minds and conduct generally conform to their condition. The soil occupied by slavery is much less productive than a similar soil occupied by freemen; men who are to receive none of the wages of their labor, do not care to multiply its fruits. Sloth, negligence, improvidence, are the consequence. The land, being neglected, becomes poor and

barren ; as it becomes exhausted, it is thrown out as waste, for slave labor never renovates its strength."

When Mr. Stevens rose to speak, few of the Southern members turned to hear him. In fact, they sat with averted faces as if it was a matter which in no wise concerned them. But, as the speaker depicted the evils of slavery and told them unwelcome truths, they turned nervously in their seats as though the devil had come to torment them before their time. As he went on and showed how education in a slave community must be inevitably confined to the rich ; as he told them that their boast of military glory was empty, since the North furnished the soldiers, while the South gave the epaulettes merely ; as he depicted the leprous growth of the black evil, finally destroying the whole system, they turned with anxious gaze toward the man who was eloquent simply because he had something to say and dared say it. Nay, they were almost awed at his boldness when, turning toward certain representatives from the North who tried to face both ways, he cried out in a voice that penetrated the whole chamber — " Sir, for myself, I should look upon any Northern man, enlightened by a Northern education, who would directly or indirectly, by omission

or commission, by basely voting or cowardly skulking, permit slavery to spread over one rood of God's free earth, as a traitor to liberty and recreant to his God!" How all that must have cut poor Winthrop, who had directed all the powers of his mind to find a way to act with both sides on a question to which there could be but one side. Mr. Stevens told them not to threaten too much, that though the North, and especially his own State, had sent many a doughface to Congress, there were men at home who could not be frightened, and then closed with a peroration which cannot be omitted here.

"The eloquent gentleman from Virginia [Mr. Seddon], the other day, in his beautiful peroration, personated the great States of Virginia, Kentucky, and Louisiana, and in their name apostrophized the good, and I will add, the great man who now occupies the executive chair; and in their name besought him, as he loved the place of his birth, the place of his nurture, and the place of his residence, not to forsake his Southern brothers in this emergency, but to stand by them in the defence of human bondage. How much more effective, enduring, and hallowed would that eloquence have been, had the orator's lips been touched with a coal

from the Altar of Freedom! Then could he have gone with friendly anxiety to that noble, benevolent and heroic man, and admonished him that, although he had gathered all the earthly laurels that can be reaped by the sickle of death, yet if he would have his name descend to posterity with increasing lustre, he must, by one great, just, and patriotic example, wipe out the only spot that obscures the sun of his glory. He might with propriety have taken with him the learned gentleman from Alabama [Mr. Hilliard] and together have pointed him to that solemn hour, which to him, and to all of us who are treading the down hill of life, must soon arrive, when the visions of ambition and of earthly wealth shall have passed from before his eyes, and left him nothing but a gaping grave.

“The accomplished gentleman from Alabama might, with peculiar propriety, do what, with profane lips I dare not, go to his illustrious friend, and with fervid piety and eloquence more thrilling than that which made Felix tremble, implore him by a love deeper than that of birthplace, of nurture, and of residence, by the love of his own immortal soul, to be warned in time by the awful, the inexorable doom, ‘Accursed is the man-stealer!’ He might,

perhaps, have pointed him to the gloomy journey that leads through the dark shadow, and shown him how ineffably brighter are the glories of that kingdom where *all* are free. Perchance, too, he would have noticed the thronging thousands travelling to that same dread tribunal, summoned to give evidence of deeds done in the body; some of whom were bondsmen and slaves on earth, but whose disembodied spirits were then disenthralled, erect, tall as the proudest of earth's oppressors; and asked him to inquire of his own conscience, who was most likely to meet a hearty welcome there — he, whose cause was advocated by the supplicating voices of thousands with whom he had dealt justly on earth, and made free indeed, or he, whose admission should be withstood by myriads of crushed and lacerated souls, showing their chains, their stripes, and their wounds to their Father, and to his Father: to their God, and to his Judge." It was no ordinary moment. The Southern members said to themselves, "The enemy has a general now. This man is rich, therefore we cannot buy him. He does not want higher offices, therefore we cannot allure him. He is not vicious, therefore we cannot seduce him. He is in earnest. He means what he says. He is bold. He cannot be flattered or

frightened." Ithuriel had come at last. Ever afterward the Abolitionists turned their eyes towards this Pennsylvania Whig, who without boast or promise of what he would do, had carried the war into the enemy's camp. From that day on, the anti-slavery cause had no surer champion on the floor of Congress than Thaddeus Stevens, the slave no more faithful protector. The great California debate, which made and ruined so many reputations, and brought to a head the compromise measures of 1850, afforded Mr. Stevens another opportunity to attack the slave power. Few debates have occurred in the halls of Congress so important in the questions involved, so remarkable in the character of the participants. If that debate on Mr. Clay's compromise resolution buried Mr. Webster, it is equally true that it raised Mr. Seward to the highest point of his fame. Politicians said, that man is the presidential candidate of 1856. How those sentences ring even to-day! How the great son of York thrilled his audience, as with earnest face and voice trembling with emotion, he cried out, "Shall California be received? For myself, upon my individual judgment and conscience, I answer, Yes. For myself, as an instructed representative of one of the States — of that one even of

the States which is soonest and longest to be pressed in commercial and political rivalry by the new commonwealth — I answer, Yes: let California come in. Every new State, whether she come from the East or the West — every new State, coming from whatever part of the continent she may, is always welcome. But California, that comes from the clime where the West dies away in the rising East — California, which bounds at once the empire and the continent — California, the youthful queen of the Pacific, in her robes of freedom, gorgeously inlaid with gold, is doubly welcome.”

It was three months after Mr. Webster's sad speech before Mr. Stevens had an opportunity to express his views on the California question. The long discussion and wrangle in the Senate had caused a feeling of disgust at the subject in the minds of all. But so great was the stake that the public mind still followed the debate, looking for some outlet that could bring peace and honor to the distracted nation. On June 10, 1850, in committee of the whole on the state of the Union, on the President's Message relating to California, Mr. Stevens delivered his second philippic. The power to admit new States he claimed to have been expressly given by the Constitution, but to have been limited to



territory belonging to the Union. He then went on to assert the belief that the legislation for the territories was conferred on Congress alone. He ably controverted Mr. Clay's proposition that Congress can abolish, prohibit or establish slavery in the territories. He showed it was not unjust that a slaveholder should lose his slave property by removing to a free territory, because the common law did not recognize property in man, and quoted in support thereof Lord Mansfield's famous decision in the case of the Somerset. By the *common law*, if a slave escapes from a slave State into a free State, he is free. That principle he admitted was prevented from operating in the States by a clause in the Constitution. But it was in full force, he claimed, in the territories where that provision did not extend. While it is thus found that Congress had the right to prohibit and abolish slavery in the territories, he argued that it did not follow that it had the power to *establish* it. His reference to his critics was in his most bitter style of personal invective. "I do not remember," he said, "one of the numerous gentlemen who have referred to my remarks, who has attempted to deny one of the facts or refute one of the arguments; they have noticed them merely to vituperate their author.

To such remarks there can be no reply by him who is not willing to place himself on a level with blackguards. I cannot enter that arena. I will leave the filth and slime of Billingsgate to the fishwomen, and to their worthy coadjutors, the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. Millson], from North Carolina [Mr. Stanly], from Kentucky [Mr. Stanton], from Tennessee [Mr. Williams], and all that tribe. With them I can have no controversy. When I want to combat with such opponents and such weapons, I can find them any day by entering the fish market, without defiling this hall. There is in the natural world a little, spotted, contemptible animal, which is armed by nature with a fetid, volatile, penetrating *virus*, which so pollutes whoever attacks it as to make him offensive to himself and all around him for a long time. Indeed, he is almost incapable of purification. Nothing, sir, no insult shall provoke me to crush so filthy a beast!" Strong as was his hatred for the Southern slaveholder, it was the Northern doughface who had to receive his utter contempt. He compared the two thus: "I entertain no ill-will toward any human being, nor any brute, that I know of, not even the skunk across the way, to which I referred. Least of all would I reproach the South. I honor her courage and

fidelity. Even in a bad, a wicked cause, she shows a united front. *All* her sons are faithful to the cause of human bondage, because it is *their* cause. But the North—the poor, timid, mercenary, drivelling North—has no such united defenders of her cause, although it is the cause of human liberty. None of the bright lights of the nation shine upon her section. Even her own great men have turned her accusers. She is the victim of low ambition—an ambition which prefers self to country, personal aggrandizement to the high cause of human liberty. She is offered up a sacrifice to propitiate Southern tyranny—to conciliate Southern treason.” At another time, referring to the willingness of the North to sacrifice all principles to personal gain, he said, bitterly, “Some of my colleagues voted for all those western measures, to give away all the wet lands to States, and all the dry lands to corporations; and slave laws to the South, in order to get a tariff, and they got it—didn’t they?” Few men were more chagrined at Webster’s change of face than Stevens. He had been led to understand that Mr. Webster would declare for freedom, and when the blow came on March 7th it aroused his indignation to the highest pitch. In the closing lines of his California

speech it is supposed he had the great New Englander in mind when he said : " Sir, so long as man is vain and fallible, so long as great men have like passions with others, and, as in republics, are surrounded with stronger temptations, it were better for themselves if their fame acquired no inordinate height until the grave had precluded error. The errors of obscure men die with them, and cast no shame on their posterity. How different with the great ! How much better had it been for Lord Bacon, that greatest of human intellects, had he never, during his life, acquired glory, and risen to high honors in the state, than to be degraded from them by the judgment of his peers. How much better for him and his, had he lived and died unknown, than to be branded through all future time as the

' Wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind.'

So now, in this crisis of the fate of liberty, if any of the renowned men of this nation should betray her cause, it were better that they had been unknown to fame. It need not be hoped that the brightness of their past glory will dazzle the eyes of posterity, or illumine the pages of impartial history. A few of its rays may linger on a fading sky, but they will soon be whelmed

in the blackness of darkness. For, unless progressive civilization, and the increasing love of freedom throughout the Christian and civilized world are fallacious, the Sun of Liberty, of *universal* liberty, is already above the horizon, and fast coursing to his meridian splendor, when no advocate of slavery, no apologist of slavery, can look upon his face and live." From these acrimonious philippics let us turn for a moment and view another side of Stevens's character. If at times he seems bitter, harsh and uncompromising, we are to bear in mind that he was fighting a great battle where the amenities of social life have no place. He was bearing witness to great truths, and "great truths," said Vauvenargues, "come from the heart." No warmer heart than that of Thaddeus Stevens ever beat in the human bosom. He loved his fellow-man like none other, and his friendship for those who labored for the welfare of mankind was strong as iron. He was bound with no slight friendship to his colleague, Henry Nes, who died Sept. 10, 1850, and whose death he announced to the House on the 13th of the same month. In describing his many virtues, one notes how strongly he dwelt on those humanizing qualities in his character which always won the affection of the great commoner.

"Few men possessed as great and as enviable popularity as Dr. Nes. His popularity was not accidental or evanescent, for his constituents had known him from his childhood. It was founded in the most amiable qualities in the human heart. Benevolence, generosity, and unfeigned pity for misfortune, were prominent characteristics of his nature. No child of affliction was ever so poor or humble as to seek his professional or pecuniary assistance in vain. The poor and the afflicted were all his friends, and their sorrow at his grave will do more honor at his obsequies than would the most splendid equipages of the great. He has left behind him numerous, respectable, attached and mourning friends, but not a single enemy. If the blessings of the unfortunate, and the sincere prayers of pure and grateful hearts can furnish a safe passport to a better world, his has been a happy exit from this."

Mr. Clay's omnibus bill failed, but it paved the way for the various compromise measures of 1850, and the Thirty-first Congress ended its days, foolishly thinking that it had saved the Union and slavery as well.

Dec. 1, 1851, the Thirty-second Congress assembled. Many who had taken so prominent a part in the deliberations of the previous

Congress were no longer there. Calhoun was dead. Clay was soon to follow. Charles Sumner sat in Daniel Webster's place. Benton had been defeated. The old régime was dying. A new light was coming over the horizon.

The consideration of the Army Appropriation bill afforded Mr. Stevens an opportunity to deliver another philippic against slavery. It was less harsh than some of his earlier attacks, but through it all one notices that grim humor which in later years characterized his utterances. For example, in referring to Robert Toombs, he said: "But the gentleman from Georgia—I speak of the gentleman from Georgia only—a part for the whole—and when you take a small part you have got nearly all." In closing, he addressed himself directly to the slaveholders and warned them of the coming storm in these words:—

"Do you believe that the North, tame as she is, when so often trod upon, will never turn? And, if the issue shall be made, the result cannot be doubtful.

"I know your answer will be that then you will vindicate yourselves by a separate confederacy. I see and feel that this is the tendency of your movement; but are you quite sure that with your increasing slaves and increased

burdens, you can protect yourselves against foreign foes and servile dangers?

“You could find no nation who would enter into a treaty with you for the extradition of your fugitives from labor. You would be in constant collision with surrounding nations, and war would ensue. Your chivalry would not permit you to yield upon that point. And, with impending or existing wars, might not some Spartacus of African blood arise, and call his brethren to arms to shake off oppression? With the sympathies of the civilized world in their favor, might they not find allies who would compel you to grant them a just emancipation? These dangers are not to be treated lightly. St. Domingo found energetic leaders who were able to inflict terrible retribution upon their former masters. The ancient gladiator, with an army of slaves, ravaged the very heart of Italy, and for three years held one of her richest and finest provinces against the whole imperial power of Rome. I know you would scorn the idea of treating with such an enemy, but if it be true, as your greatest statesman has declared, that in such a conflict every attribute of the God of armies would be upon their side, might they not bury their chains beneath the ruins of your empire?”



"These are painful reflections, but no candid and intelligent statesman can calmly contemplate passing events, and exclude from his saddened mind these fearful forebodings. May the sound sense and true patriotism of the American people arrest the headlong career of reckless men."

With such bold utterances did the commoner address the supporters of the slave oligarchy. At this day it is hard to realize that to make a speech like that, at that time, required the exercise of the greatest courage. But Stevens was never found wanting in that regard.

Mr. Stevens was a leader, and therefore he must have followers. But, with only a handful of freemen on whom he could rely, it was folly to attack the South with its united front. His opportunity had not arrived. In order to be master he must have forces to lead. Even Archimedes must have a point on which to rest his lever before he can move the world. From 1853 to 1859, Mr. Stevens remained a private citizen, attending to the demands of an arduous profession, being engaged in the trial of most of the important causes before the Pennsylvania courts. However, he watched every move on the political chess-board, and kept himself in the political current, allowing

no important fact to escape him. During these years of professional activity there is little to tell of him. He himself once said, "I have no history ; my life-long regret is that I have lived so long and so uselessly." But if his life was without special interest at this time, it was far different with the political world, which was teeming with new ideas, new men and new parties.

## CHAPTER V.

### AD INTERIM — THE GREAT YEAR 1854 — BIRTH OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.\*

At the presidential election of 1852, the Democrats had a popular plurality of 202,000. They carried twenty-seven out of thirty-one States, and cast 254 electoral votes out of 296. In the Senate the Democrats had a clear majority of fourteen, and in the House a majority of eighty-four. The Free-Soil party had polled only 157,000 votes. Besides this immense advantage there were other circumstances which aided the democracy. The finances were in a healthy condition. Industry and trade were signally prosperous. People no longer grew excited over the tariff question. The great yield of gold in California had had a stimulating effect on enterprise and emigration; and the North was getting over the excitement engendered by the fugitive slave law. When the Thirty-third Congress assembled, a bill to

\* See Appendix.

organize the territory of Nebraska was referred to the committee on territories. It was reported back by Senator Douglass. On Senator Dixon of Kentucky giving notice that he should offer an amendment providing that the act of 1820 (Missouri Compromise) should not be so construed as to apply to the territory contemplated by this act, nor to any other territory of the United States, Mr. Douglass had the bill recommitted. Subsequently the bill was reported in a different shape, so as to create the two territories of Kansas and Nebraska, with the provision that all questions pertaining to slavery in the territories and in the new States, to be formed therefrom, should be left to the action of the people thereof through their appropriate representatives, and that the provisions of the Constitution and laws of the United States, in respect to fugitives from service, should be carried into faithful execution in all the organized territories the same as in the States. In the bill admitting Missouri, (1820) as a slave State, was the following section:—

“SECT. 8. *Be it further enacted*, That in all that territory ceded by France to the United States, under the name of Louisiana, which lies north of thirty-six degrees, and thirty minutes of north latitude, not included within

the limits of the State contemplated by this act, slavery and involuntary servitude, otherwise than as the punishment of crimes, shall be, and is hereby forever prohibited.”

The territory which the Kansas-Nebraska bill was intended to organize was within the above prohibition. In that part of the bill providing for the election of a delegate to Congress, was the following :—

“That the Constitution and all laws of the United States, which are not locally inapplicable, shall have the same force and effect within said territory as elsewhere in the United States.”

But the amended bill as reported back from the committee added this :

“Except the section of the act preparatory to the admission of Missouri into the Union, approved March 6, 1820, which was superseded by the principles of the legislation of 1850, commonly called the compromise measure, and is declared inoperative.”

Now this territory, under and by virtue of the sacred terms of the Missouri Compromise, had been dedicated to freedom forever. Missouri had been admitted on this condition, and the slave power had her slave senators and representatives all these years. This proposition to abrogate the Missouri Compromise roused the

North. The North felt she had yielded enough in the compromise measures of 1850, and this attempt to do away with the sacred compact of 1820 brought the North to her feet. A most exciting debate now took place in the Senate, and in place of the above, the following reservation was adopted:—

“Except the section of the act preparatory to the admission of Missouri into the Union, approved March 6, 1820, which being inconsistent with the principle of non-intervention by Congress with slavery in the States and territories, as recognized by the legislation in 1850 (commonly called the compromise measure), is hereby declared inoperative and void, it being the true intent and meaning of this act not to legislate slavery into any territory or State, nor to exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the Constitution of the United States.”

The bill thus amended finally passed the Senate by a vote of thirty-seven to fourteen. The bill passed the House one hundred and thirteen to one hundred. It was approved by President Pierce, and became a law. It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back. The North now was aroused to action. The Whig

party was moribund. The power of the Free-Soilers was contemptible. Something must be done. Something was done. The Republican party was born. The repeal of the Missouri Compromise opened the way. There were earnest men in all parties who were unwilling longer to endure the crime and tyranny of slavery. To unite these various elements was the one thing necessary. The stalwart State of Michigan, ever true to justice and right, took the lead, and many of her great citizens, among them, names now of proud historic import, issued the following call for a mass convention of freemen : —

“ TO THE PEOPLE OF MICHIGAN.

“ A great wrong has been perpetrated. The slave power has triumphed. Liberty is trampled under foot. The Missouri compromise, a solemn compact entered into by our fathers, has been violated, and a vast territory, dedicated to freedom, has been opened to slavery.

“ This act, so unjust to the North, has been perpetrated under circumstances which deepen its perfidy. An administration placed in power by Northern votes has brought to bear all the resources of executive corruption in its support.

“ Northern Senators and Representatives, in

face of the overwhelming public sentiment of the North, expressed in the proceedings of public meetings and solemn remonstrances, without a single petition in its favor on their table, and not daring to submit this great question to the people, have yielded to the seductions of executive patronage, and Judas-like, betrayed the cause of liberty: while the South, inspired by a dominant and grasping ambition, has, without distinction of party, and with a unanimity almost entire, deliberately trampled under foot the solemn compact entered into in the midst of a crisis threatening to the peace of the Union, sanctioned by the greatest names in our history, and the binding force of which has, for a period of more than thirty years, been recognized and declared by numerous acts of legislation. Such an outrage upon liberty, such a violation of pledged faith, cannot be submitted to. This great wrong must be righted, or there is no longer a North in the councils of the nation. The extension of slavery under the folds of the American flag, is a stigma upon liberty. The indefinite increase of slave representation in Congress is destructive of that equality between freemen which is essential to the permanency of the Union.

“The safety of the Union, the rights of the



North, the interests of free labor, the destiny of a vast territory and its untold millions for all coming time, — and, finally, the high aspirations of humanity for universal freedom, — *all* are involved in the issue forced upon the country by the slave power and its plastic Northern tools.

“In view, therefore, of the recent action of Congress upon this subject, and the evident designs of the slave power to attempt still further aggressions upon freedom — we invite all our fellow-citizens, without reference to former political associations, who think that the time has arrived for a *Union* at the North to protect *Liberty* from being overthrown and down-trodden, to assemble in

MASS CONVENTION,

On Thursday, the 6th of July next, at 1 o'clock, P. M.,

AT JACKSON,

there to take such measures as shall be thought best to concentrate the popular sentiment of this State against the aggressions of the slave power.”

At the time and place appointed the convention assembled, but the city hall was too small to accommodate the vast number, so an adjournment was had to a beautiful grove adjacent to

the city. And there, "under the oaks," the first Republican convention was organized. One of the moving spirits of this meeting, in fact its master, was a merchant of Detroit, known then only as Zach. Chandler.

The resolutions of that convention were the first united resistance to "the shame that had cursed the country for seventy years," and were in these words:—

"The Freemen of Michigan, assembled in convention in pursuance of a spontaneous call, emanating from various parts of the State, to consider upon the measures which duty demands of us, as citizens of a free State, to take in reference to the late acts of Congress on the subject of slavery and its anticipated further extension, do

*Resolve*, That the institution of slavery, except in punishment of crime, is a great moral, social and political evil; that it was so regarded by the fathers of the Republic, the founders and best friends of the Union, by the heroes and sages of the Revolution who contemplated and intended its gradual and peaceful extinction as an element hostile to the liberties for which they toiled; that its history in the United States, the experience of men best acquainted with its workings, the dispassionate confession of those

who are interested in it ; its tendency to relax the vigor of industry and enterprise inherent in the white man ; the very surface of the earth where it subsists ; the vices and immoralities which are its natural growth ; the stringent policy, often wanting in humanity and speaking to the sentiments of every generous heart, which it demands ; the danger which it has already wrought, and the future danger which it portends to the security of the Union and our constitutional liberties—all incontestably prove it to be such evil. Surely, that institution is not to be strengthened or encouraged against which Washington, the calmest and wisest of our nation, bore unequivocal testimony ; as to which Jefferson, filled with a love of liberty, exclaimed : ' Can the liberties of a nation be ever thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that their liberties are THE GIFT OF GOD? that they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just ; that His justice cannot sleep forever ; that, considering numbers, nature and nationality means only a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation is among possible events ; that it may become probable by supernatural interference! The

Almighty has no attribute which can take sides with us in such a contest!' And as to which another eminent patriot in Virginia, on the close of the revolution, also exclaimed: 'Had we turned our eyes inwardly when we supplicated the Father of mercies to aid the injured and oppressed, when we invoked the Author of Righteousness to attest the purity of our motives and the justice of our cause, and implored the God of battles to aid our exertions in its defence, should we not have stood more self-convicted than the contrite publican?' We believe these sentiments to be as true now as they were then.

"*Resolved*, That slavery is a violation of the rights of man as a man; that the law of nature, which is the law of liberty, gives to no man rights superior to those of another; that God and nature have secured to each individual the inalienable right of equality, any violation of which must be the result of superior force; and that slavery therefore is a perpetual war upon its victims, that whether we regard the institution as first originating in captures made in war, or the subjection of the debtor as the slave of his creditor, or the forcible seizure and sale of children by their parents, or subjects by their king, and whether it be viewed in this country as a '*necessary evil*' or otherwise, we find it to

be, like imprisonment for debt, but a relic of barbarism as well as an element of weakness in the midst of the State, inviting the attack of external enemies, and a ceaseless cause of internal apprehension and alarm. Such are the lessons taught us, not only by the histories of other commonwealths, but by that of our own beloved country.

*Resolved*, That the history of the formation of the Constitution, and particularly the enactment of the ordinance of July 13, 1787, prohibiting slavery north of the Ohio, abundantly shows it to have been the purpose of our fathers not to promote, but to prevent the spread of slavery. And we, reverencing their memories and cherishing free republican faith as our richest inheritance, which we vow, at whatever expense, to defend, thus publicly proclaim our determination to oppose by all the powerful and honorable means in our power, now and henceforth, all attempts, direct or indirect, to extend slavery in this country, or to permit it to extend into any region or locality in which it does not now exist by positive law, or to admit new slave States into the Union.

*Resolved*, That the Constitution of the United States gives to Congress full and complete power for the municipal government of the ter-

ritories thereof, a power which, from its nature, cannot be either alienated or abdicated without yielding up to the territory an absolute political independence, which involves an absurdity. That the exercise of this power necessarily looks to the formation of States to be admitted into the Union; and, on the question whether they shall be admitted as *free* or *slave* States, Congress has a right to adopt such prudential and preventive measures as the principles of liberty and the interests of the whole country require. That this question is one of the gravest importance to the free States, inasmuch as the Constitution itself creates an inequality in the apportionment of representatives, greatly to the detriment of the free, and to the advantage of the slave States. This question, so vital to the interests of the free States, (but which we are told by certain political doctors of modern times, is to be treated with utter indifference), is one which we hold it to be our right to *discuss*; which we hold it the duty of Congress, in every instance, to determine in unequivocal language, and in a manner to *prevent* the spread of slavery and the increase of such unequal representation. In short, we claim that the North is a *party to the new bargain, and is entitled to have a voice and influence in settling*

*its terms.* And in view of the ambitious designs of the slave power, we regard the man or the party who would forego this right, as untrue to the honor and interest of the North and unworthy of its support.

“*Resolved,* That the repeal of the ‘Missouri Compromise,’ contained in the recent act of Congress, for the creation of the territories Nebraska and Kansas, thus admitting slavery into a region, till then sealed against it by law, equal in extent to the thirteen old States, is an act unprecedented in the history of the country, and one which must engage the earnest and serious attention of every Northern man. And as Northern freemen, independent of all former party ties, we here hold this measure up to the public execration, for the following reasons:—

“That it is a plain departure from the policy of the fathers of the Republic in regard to slavery, and a wanton and dangerous frustration of their purposes and their hopes.

“That it actually admits, *and was intended to admit,* slavery into said territories, and thus (to use the words applied by Judge Tucker of Virginia to the fathers of that commonwealth), ‘sows the seeds of an evil which, like a leprosy, hath descended upon their posterity with accumulated rancor, visiting the sins of the

fathers upon succeeding generations.' That it was sprung upon the country stealthily and by surprise, without necessity, without petition, and without previous discussion, thus violating the cardinal principle of republican government, which requires all legislation to accord with the opinions and sentiments of the people.

"That on the part of the South, it is an open and undisguised breach of faith, as contracted between the North and South in the settlement of the Missouri question in 1820, by which the tranquillity of the two sections was restored; a compromise binding upon all honorable men.

"That it is also an open violation of the compromise of 1850, by which, for the sake of peace, and to calm the distempered impulse of certain enemies of the Union, and at the South, the North accepted and acquiesced in the odious 'fugitive slave law' of that year.

"That it is also an undisguised and unmanly contempt of the pledge given to the country by the present dominant party at their national convention in 1850, not to '*agitate the subject of slavery in and out of Congress*,' being the same convention which nominated Franklin Pierce to the Presidency.

"That it is greatly injurious to the free States, and to the territories themselves, tending to



retard the settlement and to prevent the improvement of the country by means of free labor, and to discourage foreign immigrants resorting thither for their homes.

“That one of its principal aims is to give to the slave States such a decided and practical preponderance in all the measures of government as shall reduce the North, with all her industry, wealth and enterprise, to be the mere province of a few slaveholding oligarchs of the South — to a condition too shameful to be contemplated.

“Because, as openly avowed by its Southern friends, it is intended as an entering wedge to the still further augmentation of the slave-power by the acquisition of the other territories, cursed with the same ‘leprosy.’

“*Resolved*, That the obnoxious measures to which we have alluded ought to be *repealed*, and a provision substituted for it, prohibiting slavery in said territories, and each of them.

“*Resolved*, That after this gross breach of faith and wanton affront to us northern men, we hold ourselves absolved from all ‘*compromises*,’ except those expressed in the Constitution, for the protection of slavery and slave-owners; that we now demand measures of protection and immunity for ourselves; and among them

we demand the REPEAL OF THE FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW, and an act to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia.

"*Resolved*, That we notice without dismay certain popular indications, by slaveholders on the frontier of said territories, of a purpose on their part to prevent by violence the settlement of the country by non-slaveholding men. To the latter we say : Be of good cheer, persevere in the right, remember the Republican motto. 'THE NORTH WILL DEFEND YOU.'

"*Resolved*, That postponing and suspending all differences with regard to political economy or administrative policy, in view of the imminent danger that Kansas and Nebraska will be grasped by slavery, and a thousand miles of slave soil be thus interposed between the free States of the Atlantic and those of the Pacific, we will act cordially and faithfully in unison to avert and repeal this gigantic wrong and shame.

"*Resolved*, That in view of the necessity of battling for the first principles of Republican government, and against the schemes of aristocracy, the most revolting and oppressive with which the earth was ever cursed or man debased, we will co-operate and be known as Republicans until the contest be terminated.

*Resolved*, That we earnestly recommend the calling of a general convention of the free States, and such of the slaveholding States, or portions thereof, as may desire to be there represented, with a view to the adoption of other more extended and effectual measures in resistance to the encroachments of slavery; and that a committee of five persons be appointed to correspond and co-operate with our friends in other States on the subject.

*Resolved*, That in relation to the domestic affairs of the State, we urge a more economical administration of the government, and a more rigid accountability of the public officers; a speedy payment of the balance of the public debt, and the lessening of the amount of taxation; a careful preservation of the primary school and university funds, and their diligent application to the great objects for which they were created, and also further legislation to prevent the unnecessary or imprudent sale of the lands belonging to the State.

*Resolved*, That in our opinion the commercial wants require the enactment of a general railroad law, which, while it shall secure the investment and encourage the enterprise of stockholders, shall also guard and protect the rights of the public and of individuals, and that the prepa-

ration of such a measure requires the first talents of the State."

I have given the platform at length because it states the issue so well and shows the mission of the Republican party. If a nation's history is best read in its laws, a party's genius is best seen in its platforms.

The nominee of the convention for Governor was Kinsley S. Bingham, and his great popularity combined with the strength of the new party gave him an easy victory. On July 13, 1854, the first Republican convention in Wisconsin was held, the members being those "who were opposed to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the extension of the slave power." Massachusetts followed July 19, 1854, and resolved in convention, "that in co-operation with the friends of freedom in sister States, we hereby form the Republican party of Massachusetts." In this same convention Mr. Sumner said: "As Republicans we go forth to meet the oligarchs of slavery." On the day of the date of the Wisconsin convention, a mass convention was held in Vermont of persons "in favor of resisting, by all constitutional means the usurpations of the propagandists of slavery." On the same day a convention was held in Columbus, O., of those "in favor of breaking the chains

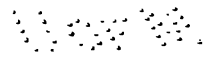
now forging to bind the nation to the car of American slavery." In both Ohio and Vermont the name Republican was used as the party designation. Likewise, on the same day with the conventions in Ohio, Vermont and Wisconsin, did the inauguration of the Republican party in Indiana take place. When we remember that the history of the nation since 1860 has been simply the record of the Republican party, and when we remember that the years from 1860 to 1870 comprise the Heroic Epoch of our history shall we hesitate to declare the year which witnessed the birth of that grand party one of the landmarks in our country's progress—the great year 1854! Up to that time parties had been formed on questions of locality, mercantile interest, constitutional construction, administrative reform. For the first time, we see in the platform of this party all material considerations trampled under foot and the flag of liberty raised to the fore. Well might William Henry Seward say that the Republican party, "being founded on immortal principles, was therefore indestructible in its essence and eternal in its career." It was born in weakness; it was raised in glory. It started as the defender of the friendless; in a short time the rich and powerful crowded to it as a protector. It owed

its birth and glory not to Christianity. The churches hastened early to record themselves in favor of human bondage. It was something deeper than love of sects that brought men together in that great combination. It was the moral sentiment in man, to whose existence we owe what is pure and strong in this world. "To the energy of the private conscience," says James Martineau, "God has committed the true welfare of the race." Whether there is a Divinity that shapes our end may be disputed by some, but if a strong proof were wanted of the existence of a Divine being, I would point to the great anti-slavery struggle, its failures and its final success under the Republican party, as the best of evidence. Whenever that party was just, God Almighty was to it more than generous. When it faltered, disaster awaited it. When it was true to its convictions, victory crowned its arms. How often during the dark hours 1860-1864, the lightest breath might have turned the scale! Suppose Pickett had charged an hour earlier at Gettysburg! Suppose the "Monitor" had arrived at Hampton Roads an hour later! Suppose Granger had not driven Longstreet back at Chickamauga! Who forgets Abraham Lincoln's solemn prayer and promise to free the slave if our arms should

drive the invader from Maryland! Say not it is all chance! If the divine finger in human history was ever seen it was seen there. "Some ships come into port that are not steered." If a date is of any value, the date of the birth of this party of liberty should be imprinted on every school-boy's mind, for it is the birth of freedom, it is the prelude to our Heroic Epoch! And now great events follow each other rapidly.

May 22, 1856, Charles Sumner is stricken down in the Senate. About a month later the first national Republican convention is held and Fremont is nominated for the presidency, and for that office receives 1,341,264 votes, against 1,838,169 for Buchanan, and 874,534 for Fillmore. Now following fast comes the Dred Scott decision, the Lecompton struggle, the Lincoln and Douglass canvass in Illinois, Mr. Seward's "Irrepressible Conflict" speech at Rochester, and finally the John Brown raid and his execution December 2, 1859. On that fatal date Theodore Parker, about to die, writing from Florence to friends in this country, says: "Such is my confidence in Democratic institutions that I do not fear the final result. There is a glorious future for America — *but*, the other side of the Red Sea." Nov. 6, 1860, the old régime comes to an end. And on

Nov. 7, 1860, Wendell Phillips announced to his excited audience in Music Hall in Boston, that, "if the telegraph speaks the truth, for the first time in our history the slave has chosen a President of the United States." In truth, the Heroic Epoch had begun.





## CHAPTER VI.

### HEROIC EPOCH.

MR. STEVENS's whole heart was bound up in the welfare of the Republican party. He was among the first to join it, and he never deserted. He was a delegate to its first national convention, and as a Republican representative from Lancaster, he entered the Thirty-sixth Congress Dec. 5, 1859. He was past his prime. He seems to have realized this, if we may judge from his remarks at the obsequies of his colleague, Hon. John Schwartz. Speaking of him he said: "He was an aged man, and it may be thought that his loss, private and public, was less than if cut off in the vigor of manhood. I may be so. Mr. Speaker, there are but few in this House who with me can appreciate the force of that suggestion. Who can realize how unfit he is, whose energies are paralyzed by age or disease, to mingle in the turbulent and boisterous arena of public life?" On his first entrance into Congress, ten years before, he was imme-

diately engaged in a contest on the speakership question. The Thirty-sixth Congress afforded a similar struggle. Mr. Stevens championed the cause of Galusha A. Grow, and made his nomination. It was two months before a candidate could be elected, and the fortunate one was William Pennington of New Jersey. During one of the debates which occurred during the long struggle, some one sneering at Stevens's pretended knowledge of affairs at the White House, inquired where he obtained it. The commoner, with a comical look on his face, informed him he must remember the President was one of his constituents. The second session of the Thirty-sixth Congress was bound to be a stormy one. The election of Mr. Lincoln was construed by the slave States as a warning that their power was at an end. The action of South Carolina, the embassy from Virginia to that State, the weakness, nay, criminal negligence, of the administration, offered ample opportunity for acrimonious debate. Mr. Stevens saw plainly that there could be no compromise, no peaceable secession. The only door to a more perfect union was through war. *Ense petit placidam*. And so when the House resumed, on Jan. 29, 1861, the consideration of the report of the special committee of thirty-three, Mr. Stevens took the

first opportunity to address the House. He was the leader of the Republicans. It was a sad hour. "Will the Union go to pieces?" men asked with pale lips. Statesmen of renown knew not what position to take. All were at sea. It was therefore with the greatest interest that men listened to what the great commoner had to say. "The hour's come, likewise the man." The curtain rose upon the grandest drama the world had ever witnessed. The grim, iron-willed man stepped forward to do his appointed work. Amidst many illustrious men he was the most striking figure of them all. He had no doubt. He did not know fear. Like Carlyle's Mirabeau, he had swallowed all formulas. He seized the opportunity to hew out America's giant curse, and those rigid lips never relaxed while he thought a single root or branch retained vitality.

He spoke in no uncertain tones. After apologizing for the poor state of his health, which would prevent his voice being heard in all parts of the hall, he announced his belief that there could be no compromise, in these words: "I regret, sir, that I am compelled to concur in the belief stated yesterday by the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. Pryor], that no compromise which can be made will

have any effect in averting the present difficulty. I concur in that belief because it is my belief, although I regret the fact; for when I see these States in open and declared rebellion against the Union, seizing upon her public forts and arsenals, and robbing her of millions of the public property; when I see the batteries of seceding States blockading the highway of the nation, and their armies in battle array against the flag of the Union; when I see, Sir, our flag insulted, and that insult submitted to, I have no hope that concession, humiliation and compromise can have any effect whatever . . . Virginia sends ambassadors to the head and front of the empire that is proposed to be erected upon the ruins of this government, for the purpose of getting South Carolina to appoint commissioners for the purpose of proposing amendments to the Constitution of the United States, to secure their rights, as they say; and that kingdom of South Carolina peremptorily refuses to appoint any such commissioners, for the reason that it has no desire or design of promoting the ultimate object set forth in the joint resolutions of the State of Virginia — that is the procurement of amendments to, or new guarantees in, the Constitution of the United States. Thus ends negotiation; thus ends con-

cession; thus ends compromise, by the solemn declaration of the seceding party that they will not listen to concession or compromise."

Regarding the resolution of the General Assembly of South Carolina, declaring that the separation of that State from the Federal Union is final, he said:—

"The question of the dissolution of the Union is a grave one, and should be approached without excitement, or passion, or fear. Homilies upon the Union, and jeremiads over its destruction, can be of no use, except to display fine rhetoric and pathetic eloquence. The Southern States will not be turned from their deliberate and stern purpose by soft words and touching lamentations. After the extent to which they have gone, it would do them no credit; condemnation, which is now felt for their conduct, would degenerate into contempt." He ridiculed the idea of the right of secession; claimed the nation was *one people*, and that the government had the power, authority, and right (nay, it was its duty!) to coerce obedience and to treat the plotters of disunion as traitors. "I would certainly not advise the shedding of American blood, except as a last resort. If it should become necessary, I see no difficulty, with the ordinary forces of the United States, to dissi-

pate the rebels, whether of high or low degree." }  
He depicted the weakness of a Southern confederation ; showed the puerility of South Carolina constructing a navy, and then, while urging peace, declared it must not be purchased by dishonorable concessions. } "Let there be no bloodshed until the last moment ; but let no cowardly counsels unnerve the people ; and then, at last, if needs be, let every one be ready to gird on his armor, and do his duty. Sir, I am reminded that is not the language of Pennsylvania, as represented by the united voices of her two Senators. I know it is not. But I do not believe that either of them represented the principles of any considerable portion of the people of that State. While Pennsylvania would go, as I would, to the verge of the Constitution and of her *principles*, to maintain peace, I believe it is a libel on the good name of her virtuous people to say that she would sacrifice her principles to obtain the favor of rebels. I believe it to be a libel on her manhood to say that she will purchase peace by *unprincipled* concessions to insurgents with arms in their hands. If I thought such was her character I would expatriate myself. I would leave the land where I have spent my life from early manhood to declining age, and would seek

some spot untainted by the coward breath of servility and meanness. To her pleasant valleys I would prefer the rugged, bold State of my nativity [Vermont]; nay, any spot in the most barren Arctic region, amid whose pure icicles dwells manly freedom." The North had spoken by the lips of her bravest son. Yes, she would wait long before shedding blood; but if it must come to that, she would accept the issue rather than yield one inch of principle. Well might Mr. Phillips say of the Yankee, "he is slow to fight, but he fights but once." The Thirty-sixth Congress found the country in an excited, feverish condition. It left it pierced by treason, broken by disunion, distracted, poor, defenceless. When Abraham Lincoln entered upon his duties he found but few assets on which to administer. No man better described the shameful condition in which the country's property was left by the Democratic party than did Zach. Chandler in his speech on the Pension bill. "Mr. Jefferson Davis came from the Cabinet of Franklin Pierce into the Senate of the United States, and took the oath with me to be faithful to this government. During four years I sat in this body with Mr. Jefferson Davis, and saw the preparations going on from day to day for the overthrow of this

government. With treason in his heart and perjury upon his lips he took the oath to sustain the government that he meant to overthrow.

“Sir, there was method in that madness. He, in co-operation with other men from his section and in the Cabinet of Mr. Buchanan, made careful preparation for the event that was to follow. Your armies were scattered all over the broad land, where they could not be used in an emergency ; your fleets were scattered wherever the winds blew and water was found to float them, where they could not be used to put down the rebellion ; your treasury was depleted until your bonds bearing six per cent. principal and interest payable in coin, were sold for eighty-eight cents on the dollar for current expenses and no buyers. Preparations were carefully made. Your arms were sold under an apparently innocent clause in an army bill providing that the Secretary of War might, at his discretion, sell such arms as he deemed it for the interest of the government to sell.” Mr. Stevens once described the action of Buchanan’s Cabinet as follows : “They transferred most of the best weapons of war from the North, where they were manufactured, to the South, where they could be readily seized. They plunged the nation



into a heavy debt in time of peace. When the treasury was bare of cash, they robbed it of millions of bonds and whatever else they could lay their hands on. They fastened upon us an incipient free-trade system, which impaired our revenue, paralyzed our national industry, and compelled the exportation of our immense production of gold. They had reduced our navy to an unserviceable condition, or dispersed it to the farthest ocean. Our little army was on the Pacific coast, sequestered in Utah, or defending the Southern States from their own Indians." With the country in that condition it was evident that the real ruler of the nation must be the Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means on the part of the House.

With the Thirty-seventh Congress, Thaddeus Stevens began his undisputed rule of the country as the Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means. Few men have ruled over an empire like the one he controlled. He held, as it were, the destinies of a nation in his hand. He directed the spirit of the war in the halls of Congress. Men yielded to him even when they believed him wrong. The power of bringing men to his side, of submitting them to him, he possessed in a remarkable degree. But deeper than all that was the man's *reality* which made him a cloud

by day, a pillar of fire by night. There was no sham about him. No cant. He believed in something; was in earnest; was real; and men trusted him, not wholly feared him, nay, at heart they loved and admired him. He stood for something. He had an object in view, and he pursued it relentlessly to the end — the equality of all men before the law. He meant fight, too, if it was necessary. He was the opposite of Seward, who was the orator of the party. Mr. Seward had immense faith in the Union; laughed at disunion; thought the war could not last sixty days at the most; told everybody so; was buoyant and spring-like; chipper as the lark. "What do you think, now?" said Jerry Black to Seward, after the Union cause had met with its most serious disasters during the war, and despair was casting its deepest shadows. "Why," said Mr. Seward, "I think, as I have always thought, that the Union will be saved." "Well," said the ex-Attorney-General, "you are the most sanguine man I ever saw." "Not unreasonably so," said Mr. Seward. "What would you say if you were to see a man with pains in his back, fever in his pulse, and his skin covered with eruptions?" "I should say he had the small-pox and would die," said Mr. Black. "I should not," said Mr. Seward; "I

should say he would live, for in such cases it is the rule to live, and the exception to die."

Stevens looked at facts. He took no chances ; did not speculate on events. He did what had to be done, — never was weak or literary. He did something. He knew the war, which was the result of seventy years' crime, was something more than a midnight insurrection, and with energy he devoted himself to the increasing of the army, to the passage of appropriations large enough to maintain the power of the government and strengthen the hands of the Executive. As early as July 24, 1861, in reply to Mr. Colfax, he said :—

"Now, the gentleman does not expect, I suppose, that this war is only to last for a few months, and that we will not need this money. He does not expect it will cease of itself. I look upon it, as I have looked upon it ever since these States went deliberately into treason, as one which will be a protracted and bloody war. Some gentlemen have an idea that our enemies, being rebels, will surrender—will succumb in the course of a few months, and with little expense, and that they will not fight what they have undertaken. I flatter myself with no such hope. I believe that the battles which are to be fought are to be desperate and

bloody battles, and that they are to be numerous. I believe that many thousand valuable lives will be lost, and that millions of money will be expended. The only question is, whether this government is prepared to meet all these perils, and to overcome them. If they are, they must submit to taxes which are burdensome: which the people, I know, at any other time, would not submit to for a moment, but which I believe they will now submit to." Did not history justify Mr. Stevens's prediction? What fitter hand was there to provide the means of maintaining the war? One of the peculiar incidents of the heroic epoch was the manner in which the lawyers stuck to technicalities. They were always crying out, "It is not in the Constitution."

No man ever disposed of such nonsense better than did the commoner in the debate on the Confiscation bill. "We are told," said he, "that because the Constitution does not allow us to confiscate a certain species of property, therefore we cannot liberate slaves. Mr. Speaker, I thought the time had come when the laws of war were to govern our action; when Constitutions, if they stood in the way of the laws of war, in dealing with the enemy, had no right to interfere. Who pleads the Constitution

against our action? Who says the Constitution must come in bar of our action? It is the advocates of rebels, of rebels who have sought to overthrow the Constitution and trample it in the dust, who repudiate the Constitution. Sir, these rebels, who have disregarded and set at defiance that instrument are, by every rule of municipal and international law, estopped from pleading it against our action. The law established in the days of Cicero — *Inter arma silent leges* — is a law that has been in force down to the present time; and any nation which disregards that law is a poor, pusillanimous nation, which submits its neck to be struck off by the enemy." Now such direct language as that is refreshing. It is cathartic. It purifies the whole system. It is of far greater import than had it been wrought into heavy-sounding, phlegmatic periods, or gracefully inlaid with the scattered thoughts of carpet knights, while the views expressed are far truer than the doubts of hesitating lawyers, "letting I dare not wait upon I would." But the best of it is yet to come. In referring to the slaves and their freedom, he believed the government had power to and could free the blacks. "But it is said the South will never submit — that we cannot conquer the rebels — that they will suffer

themselves to be slaughtered, and their whole country to be laid waste. Sir, war is a grievous thing at best, and civil war more than any other; but if they hold this language, and the means which they have suggested must be resorted to; if their whole country must be laid waste and made a desert, in order to save this Union from destruction, so let it be. I would rather, Sir, reduce them to a condition where their whole country is to be re-peopled by a band of freemen, than to see them perpetrate the destruction of this people through our agency. I do not say it is time to resort to such means, and I do not say that the time will come, but I never fear to express my sentiments. It is not a question with me of policy, but a question of principle. If this war is continued long, and is bloody, I do not believe that the free people of the North will stand by and see their sons and brothers and neighbors slaughtered by thousands and tens of thousands by rebels, with arms in their hands, and forbear to call upon their enemies to be our friends, and to help us in subduing them. I, for one, if it continues long, and has the consequences mentioned, shall be ready to go for it, let it horrify the gentleman from New York, or anybody else. That is my doctrine, and that will

be the doctrine of the whole free people of the North, before two years roll round, if this war continues.

“As to the end of the war, until the rebels are subdued, no man in the North thinks of it. If the government are equal to the people, and believe they are, there will be no bargaining, there will be no negotiation, there will be no truces with the rebels, except to bury the dead, until every man shall have laid down his arms, disbanded his organization, submitted himself to the government, and sued for mercy. And, Sir, if those who have the control of the government are not fit for this task, and have not the nerve and mind for it, the people will take care that there are others who are — although, Sir, I have not a bit of fear of the present administration, or the present Executive.

“I have spoken more freely, perhaps, than gentlemen within my hearing might think politic, but I have spoken just what I felt. I have spoken what I believe will be the result; and I warn Southern gentlemen, that if this war is to continue, there will be a time when my friend from New York will see it declared by this free nation, that every bondman in the South belonging to a rebel — recollect, I confine it to them — shall be called upon to aid us

in war against their masters, and to restore this Union."

Thus early did he foresee what the logic of events would produce. None saw so soon, so clearly, what the result of the war must be. None knew better than he the Southern character and temperament. He perceived the only way to win was to strike decisive blows. He knew the most lethal weapon was to free and arm the slaves, and as early as the first day of the second session of the Thirty-seventh Congress (Dec. 2, 1861), he introduced a bill to emancipate the slaves. The world thought the war on the part of the North was a struggle to perpetuate the Union. Stevens understood the signs of the time better than that. He knew the result of the war was freedom. On Jan. 22, 1862, he had an opportunity to declare his views on that point. "This is no accidental rebellion," said he. "We are in the midst of a crisis which a sagacious statesman foretold thirty years ago, before the agitation existed. The rebels are proud, haughty, and obstinate. Their training has led them to believe that they are born to command. They will suffer disastrous defeat before their pride is humbled. They have a vast country to overrun. They declare they will suffer it to become a smoking ruin before



they will submit. That issue must be accepted. Better lay their whole country waste than suffer the nation to be murdered. Better depopulate them, and plant a new race of freemen on their desolated and deserted fields, than suffer rebellion to triumph. Such is the voice of the free people of the North. If our rulers prove equal to the wishes of the people, there will be no negotiation, no parley, no truce, until every rebel shall have laid down his arms, disbanded his organization, and submitted to the government. The people are humane and this is humanity.

"How, then, and when will this war end? In other words, how can the South be wholly exhausted? Let us not be deceived. Those who talk about peace in sixty days are shallow statesmen. When, I again ask, will this war be ended? I can venture to answer that it will not end until the government shall more fully comprehend the magnitude of the crisis; until they have discovered that this is an internecine war in which one party or the other must be reduced to hopeless feebleness, and the power of further effort shall be utterly annihilated. You must adopt a new mode of warfare. You may raise larger armies; you may gain battle after battle; you may overrun much of their territory: you cannot hold it. Their soldiers are as

brave as yours. So long as they are left the means of cultivating their fields through forced labor, you may expend the blood of tens of thousands of freemen, and billions of money, year after year, without being any nearer the end. Their domestic institutions give them great advantage over the free States in time of war. They need not, and they do not, withdraw a single hand from the cultivation of the soil. Their freemen never labor. Every able-bodied man can be spared for the army. Although the black man never lifts a weapon, he is really the mainstay of the war.

“And now, pray, which is most to be abhorred, a rebellion of slaves fighting for their liberty, or a rebellion of freemen fighting to murder the nation? Which seems to you the most cruel, calling on bondsmen to quell the insurrection, or shooting down their masters to effect the same object? You send forth your sons and brothers to shoot and sabre and bayonet the insurgents, but you hesitate to break the bonds of their slaves to reach the same end. What puerile inconsistency!

“Self-preservation is our first duty. And in a just war we have a right to put in practice against the enemy every measure that is necessary to weaken him and disable him from

resisting us and supporting injustice. The slave is in a state of war with his master. Why not employ the enemy of our enemy to weaken his power?

“The occasion is forced upon us, and the invitation presented to strike the chain from four millions of human beings, and create them *men*; to extinguish slavery on this whole continent; to wipe out, so far as we are concerned, the most hateful and infernal blot that ever disgraced the escutcheon of man; to write a page in the history of the world whose brightness shall eclipse all the records of heroes and of sages.”

He spoke the truth, but, Cassandra-like, was not believed. He was ahead of his party and his time. When the repeal of the corn laws came about under the Protectionist, Peel, people said, “Ah! the famine forces Peel’s hand.” So with Lincoln and emancipation. It was only when the invaders rushed into Maryland and were almost at the doors of the Capitol that he took his oath to liberate the blacks. Not till then. But the battle had been fought for him by Stevens in the House, and it required only the fear and terror of an invasion to force Lincoln’s hand. At the beginning of the year 1862, the whole Union army amounted to more

than five hundred thousand men. The second session of the Thirty-seventh Congress ended July 17, 1862. Important military events had taken place during its continuance — the battle of Fair Oaks, the Seven Days' battle of the Peninsula, Malvern Hill, the contest between the Monitor and Merrimac, the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson, the battle of Pittsburg Landing and the capture of New Orleans, were among the most noted.

But before that Congress assembled for its third session, one of the most important events of Lincoln's administration took place. Sept. 22, 1862, the President issued the following proclamation:—

“That, on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforth, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any effort they may make for their actual freedom.”

In his message to Congress, when it assembled Dec. 1, 1862, the President explained the proclamation by showing that in giving freedom to the slave we assure freedom to the free, honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve. The way he claimed was plain, peaceable, glorious, just — a way which, if followed, the world would ever applaud, and God would forever bless.

It may seem to some that at times Mr. Stevens disregarded rules and usages in order to accomplish his purposes ; that with him the end justified the means ; that he acted arbitrarily ; put aside the plain postulates of the Constitution, and hurried on to the goal. Not so. In fact, the opposite was the truth. No man believed in the Constitution and laws more than he. No one followed them more closely in cases where they should be followed. Before the war, he always held himself bound by the compromises of the Constitution, though he disputed the wisdom of many of them. When the war came he asserted that the Constitution never was framed with the view of a civil war, and that least of all could those who had thrown it off claim its protection. And he sneered at those who were afraid to step outside of the Constitution in time of war, but tried to cover their

policy by twisting the great charter. His position is well defined in the debate on the admission of West Virginia.

The Constitution provided that no new State shall be formed or erected within the jurisdictions of any other State, nor any State be formed by the junction of two or more States, or parts of States without the consent of the Legislatures of the States concerned, as well as of the Congress.

Mr. Stevens voted for the admission of the new State but took occasion to put on record an explanation of his vote. "By the Constitution, a State may be divided by the consent of the Legislature thereof, and by the consent of Congress admitting the new State into the Union. Now, Sir, it is but mockery, in my judgment, to tell me that the Legislature of Virginia has ever consented to this division. There are two hundred thousand, out of a million and a quarter of people, who have participated in this proceeding. They have held a convention, and they have elected a Legislature in pursuance of a decree of that convention. Before all this was done the State had a regular organization, a Constitution under which that corporation acted. By a convention of a very large majority of the people of that State, they changed their Consti-

tution, and changed their relations to the Federal Government from that of one of its members to that of secession from it. Now, I need not be told that that is treason. I know it. And it is treason in all the individuals that participated in it. But so far as the State municipality or corporation was concerned, it was a valid act and governed the State. Our Government does not act upon the State. The State, as a separate and distinct body, was the State of a majority of the people of Virginia, whether rebel or loyal, whether convicts or freemen. The majority of the people of Virginia was the State of Virginia, although individuals had committed treason. The State of Virginia has never given her assent to the separation. Now, then, these seceding States have declared that they are no longer members of the Union—they have raised an army and a power which the governments of Europe have recognized as a belligerent power. We ourselves, by what I consider a most unfortunate act, not well considered—declaring a blockade of their ports—have acknowledged them as a power. We cannot blockade our own ports. It is an absurdity. We blockade an enemy's ports. Declaring a blockade is admitting the power of those you blockade. We should have repealed the law

creating those ports of entry, and thus stopping their intercourse with the world. If we had repealed the laws making them ports of entry, there would have been no need of a blockade. No nation would have had a right to send vessels there even though we might not have had a ship of war within a hundred miles.

“Now then, Sir, these rebellious States being a power, by the acknowledgment of European nations and of our own nation, subject and entitled to belligerent rights, they become subject to the rules of war, and the Constitution has no longer the least effect upon them.

“I say, then, we may admit West Virginia as a new State, not by virtue of any provision in the Constitution, but under the absolute power which the laws of war give us under the circumstances in which we are placed. I shall vote for this bill upon that theory, and upon that alone; for I will not stultify myself by supposing that we have any warrant in the Constitution for this proceeding.”

In all these speeches one cannot help noticing how honest and open the man is. He always places himself on the undisputed fact. He does not try to find authorities or excuses for his action. He does not need them. He is a hero carrying on a great war. His own personal



prowess will carry him through, when treatises on engineering would fail. Being a hero he speaks the truth. See how impregnable were the positions he took during those stormy days. First, there should be no compromise with traitors. Second, there could be no peaceable solution of the great problem, war was inevitable. Third, it was the duty of the government to put down the rebellion and coerce the rebels. Fourth, that of necessity the war must be long and bloody. Fifth, that in a state of war the rebellious States could not claim the protection of a Constitution they had forsworn. Sixth, that therefore confiscation was a duty, and emancipation just. Seventh, that we had foolishly acknowledged the South as a belligerent power, and therefore she must be subdued like any foreign enemy. Now the truth of all these propositions was denied by statesmen of the Seward stamp. Suppose Mr. William Henry Seward had been Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, where, pray, would the nation have drifted? Certainly not to victory. With any other man in Stevens's place, the issue might have been doubtful. But with the old hero and commoner at the head, victory was assured. Antagonized on all sides by all factions, he held the ship of State true to her

course. In a great war, the most important battles are fought not in the field but in the legislative chamber. The greatest general is the one in civil life. If the civil power be corrupt or weak the military power will surely fail. The hero of Vicksburg, Atlanta, or New Orleans may be no more important a figure than the leader of the House. *His* battles are of a different kind, but equally decisive. With the issuing of the emancipation proclamation affairs took a fresh start. From that time forth victory seemed to turn northward. The second nomination of Lincoln, his triumphant election followed by the wonderful second inaugural address showed plainly where the North stood and whither tending. Always busied about the welfare of his country and the interests of his fellow-man, never ambitious for higher office, the commoner paid little attention in informing people what his purpose in life was. That they could judge of from his acts. But in Jan. 1865, in the course of a debate with Mr. Pendleton he announced his only ambition and perhaps described that of the Ohio statesman.

“So far as the appeals of the learned gentleman [Mr. Pendleton] are concerned, in his pathetic winding up, I will be willing to take my chance, when we all moulder in the dust.

He may have his epitaph written, if it be truly written : ' Here rests the ablest and most pertinacious defender of slavery and opponent of liberty.' And I will be satisfied if my epitaph shall 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 down-trodden of every race and language and color.' I shall be content, with such an eulogy on his lofty tomb, and such an inscription on my humble grave, to trust our memories to the judgment of after ages."

But times change verily. For now this " pertinacious defender of slavery and opponent of liberty " poses as the æsthetic candidate for the Presidency in 1884, and receives the applause of the independent press and the callow youth of the nation. *O tempora! O mores!*

The early part of the year 1865 was filled with much discussion as regarded peace and the propositions of the rebel commissioners. Mr. Stevens upheld the expressed views of the President on that point. The idea of a Southern Confederacy, acknowledged by the North as the terms of peace, was extremely distasteful to him, and he fiercely combated the idea. At that time he showed how well he understood

the Southern character, for he foretold the birth of the Ku Klux and guerilla warfare, which succeeded the end of the war.

On April 14, 1865, good, careful Abraham Lincoln died by the assassin's hand. A man full of cares, carrying a great weight of responsibility, but "happy in his life, fortunate in the opportunity of his death." Since the greatest of Roman writers wrote those words concerning Germanicus, they have never been applied to a more opportune death. He lived to see the Union restored, Richmond taken, Lee's army surrendered, slavery at an end, his malignant opposers silenced; then he died, and all the bitterness of his enemies changed to silent respect or repentant gratitude. Rising from the humblest position in the nation to the highest among men, he ennobled that great office more than the office ennobled him. But, alas! the man that was to take his place was a being of a far different order; one who belonged, if to any era, to that of the troglodytes. At the very outset, while in the act of taking the oath of office, he showed himself to the world in a state of beastly intoxication. It shocked the sensibilities of every honest man. It was a peculiarly sad spectacle to Stevens, who was a man of the most temperate habits.

And here let me rehearse the circumstance which made Mr. Stevens so rigid in this regard:—

While he was engaged in his profession at Gettysburg, he was a member of a sort of club of congenial spirits who were accustomed to meet round at each other's houses and spend the evening in playing cards and drinking liquor. One evening, one of the party, a great favorite, who was cashier of the bank in Gettysburg, becoming a little inebriated, was escorted home by two of his friends, who opened the door of his house and left him in the entry, supposing he would find his way up-stairs. In the morning, when his wife came down, she found him on the floor—dead! When Mr. Stevens heard of it, he went into his cellar with a hatchet, broke open the heads of his wine and whiskey barrels, and would never taste anything of the sort afterwards. When he became an old man and very delicate, his physician prescribed some alcoholic stimulus as a medicine. He absolutely refused to touch it. After holding out for several days, he came to the doctor's office one morning, and dragging himself wearily up the steps, took hold of each side of the door frame to draw himself into the room. On his complaining of great prostration,

the doctor told him frankly that he must either take what was prescribed or die. "Then," said he, "I'll take it."

But the vice of intemperance was the least of the new President's faults. He came into power at a most dangerous period,—the time when a reaction might take place, and all that the war gained, be lost. Heaven and history only know how that miserable old man tried to produce such a reaction and turn back the wheels of time.

Mr. Stevens recognized that liberty had a traitor in the White House, and that the battle for freedom was only half won. At the very opening of the next session of Congress, Dec. 4, 1865, he threw down the gauntlet to the President by making his motion for a special committee on reconstruction. Many thought it unwise; but then it was "Old Thad" that did it, and they kept their feelings to themselves. If Mr. Stevens knew how to conduct the war so as to destroy the South, he knew well how to reconstruct that country. To him, more than to any one man, we owe the safeguards which now protect the black and prevent the slaveholder from evading the results of the war. Stevens realized that there must be no reaction; that every door must be closed and locked, and

that the future would depend wholly on the thoroughness with which the work was done then. He knew the mistake of our ancestors when, having beheaded Charles, in a few years they allowed the hated race to sit upon the throne. No such experiment as that was to be made. If we could not have indemnity for the past, we must have security for the future. If the rebellious States were to come back into the Union, they must come with solemn guarantees. And to this work — all for others, and not for himself — he gave his dying years.

The first thing to do was to prevent the new chief magistrate from undoing the work of the war; and to guard against this, it was necessary for Congress to reconstruct the South rather than trust that work to the tender mercies of the Border State President. Mr. Stevens, under a suspension of the rules, on the first day of the first session of the Thirty-ninth Congress, introduced his now famous reconstruction resolution. It ran as follows:—

*Resolved*, That a joint committee of fifteen members shall be appointed, nine of whom shall be members of the House, and six members of the Senate, who shall inquire into the condition of the States which formed the so-called Confederate States of America, and report whether

they or any of them are entitled to be represented in either House of Congress, with leave to report at any time by bill or otherwise; and until such report have been made and finally acted upon by Congress, no member shall be received into either House from any of the said so-called Confederate States; and all papers relative to the representation of the said States shall be referred to the said committee without debate." Of that committee Mr. Stevens was chairman.

Nothing could be more iron-clad than that. None but Stevens could have drafted such a paper, none but he would have offered it to the House. But there was work to do, and the President must be checked at once. The President's love for amnesty was not fully appreciated by the Republicans. On Dec. 18, Stevens had all parts of the President's message relating to the subject of reconstruction referred to the joint committee on reconstruction. On this occasion he made a very solid and brilliant speech on the subject, and outlined strongly his views as to the way in which the Southern States should come back into the Union; and wiser than many of his associates, he saw the *necessity* of negro suffrage, as well as its justice. And in this fashion did he pro-



claim himself: "Our fathers repudiated the whole doctrine of the legal superiority of families or races, and proclaimed the equality of men before the law. Upon that they created a revolution and gave birth to the Republic. They were prevented by slavery from perfecting the superstructure whose foundation they had thus broadly laid. For the sake of the Union they consented to wait, but never relinquished the idea of its final completion. The time to which they looked forward has come. It is our duty to complete their work. If this Republic is not now made to stand on their great principles, it has no honest foundation, and the Father of all men will shake it to its centre. If we have not yet been sufficiently scourged for our national sin, to teach us to do justice to all God's creatures, without distinction of race or color, we must expect the still more heavy vengeance of an offended Father, still increasing his inflictions as he increased the severity of the plagues of Egypt until the tyrant consented to do justice. And when the tyrant repented of his reluctant consent, and attempted to enslave the people, as our Southern tyrants are attempting to do now, he filled the Red Sea with broken chariots and drowned horses, and strewed the shores with dead carcasses.

“This is not a ‘white man’s government’ in the exclusive sense in which it is used. To say so, is political blasphemy, for it violates the fundamental principles of our gospel of liberty. This is man’s government; the government of all men alike; not that all men will have equal power and sway within it. Accidental circumstances, natural and acquired endowment and ability, will vary their fortunes. But equal right to all the privileges of the government is innate in every immortal being, no matter what the shape or color of the tabernacle which it inhabits . . . . Without the right of suffrage in the late slave States, I believe the slaves had far better been left in bondage. This doctrine of a ‘white man’s government’ is as atrocious as the infamous sentiments that damned the late Chief Justice to everlasting fame; and, I fear, to everlasting fire!” The motion prevailed, and the committee entered on its great work.

The first step taken was to continue the Freedmen’s Bureau. The act was called “An Act to continue in force, and to amend ‘An Act to establish a Bureau for the relief of Freedmen and Refugees,’ and for other purposes.” Of course Johnson vetoed the bill, and of course the Senate and House promptly passed

the bill, notwithstanding the veto, and it became a law. The second step was to confer equal rights on all inhabitants of the so-called Confederate States. This, with other provisions affecting representation, and the validity of the public debt, was secured by the Fourteenth amendment. The resolution proposing such amendment, was of course vetoed by the President, passed both Houses of Congress, by the requisite majority, and was received at the State Department June 16, 1866. The amendment was not wholly satisfactory to Mr. Stevens. But he did not oppose its passage, as he fully realized that it was necessary to do something, and, rather than antagonize it and lose all, he gave it his aid. But a few days afterwards, in proposing a more comprehensive and stronger scheme to the House, he took the opportunity to remark that something more was necessary than had already been done.

“Notwithstanding surrounding discouragements, the exhortation, ‘Be not weary in well doing,’ encourages me to make one more, perhaps an expiring effort, to do something which shall be useful to my fellow-men; something to elevate and enlighten the poor, the oppressed and the ignorant, in this great crisis of human affairs. I do not feel that this august body,

this grand council of a nation of freemen, has done anything worthy of its glorious opportunity, worthy of its duty to the immortal beings whose destinies for good or evil, for happiness or woe, it holds in its hands; when I reflect with how few acts of justice, with how few wise enactments, most of us seem content to close our labors, and disperse to the periphery of the nation in search of cool shades, purling trout streams, and to see our bulls and beeves. I beg it to be understood, I do not claim a right to speak this reproachfully or complainingly. Especially, when I consider my own life — too much of which has been spent in idleness or frivolous amusement — and find myself almost ready to yield, before every man is secured equal rights and impartial privileges, I cannot avoid feeling humbled. I cannot escape the pangs of self-condemnation. Congress has certainly done some good legislation to aid the white man, if he choose, to protect the poor of all races and colors. But nothing has been done to enable any but the white man to protect himself. How precarious and worthless is that protection which depends wholly on the will of others, and leaves oneself defenceless!" He then explained the details of the plan he offered, which, if accepted,

would make the future secure, and then touchingly closed, thus :—

“In this, perhaps my final action on this great question, upon a careful review, I can see nothing in my political course, especially in regard to human freedom, which I would wish to have expunged or changed. I believe that we must all account hereafter for deeds done in the body, and that political deeds will be among those accounts. I desire to take to the bar of that final settlement the record which I shall this day make on the great question of human rights. While I am sure it will not make atonement for half my errors, I hope it will be some palliation.

“Are there any who will venture to take the list, with their negative seal upon it, and will dare to unroll it before that stern Judge who is the Father of the immortal beings whom they have been trampling under foot, and whose souls they have been crushing out?”

As soon as Congress adjourned, the President, or “the man at the other end of the avenue,” as Stevens loved to call him, mounted a higher horse than ever, and rode rough-shod over all. Men were “kicked out,” as the phrase was, under the “my policy” rule ; and hungry rebels became the chief magistrate’s boon companions.

When the second session of Congress began in December, Mr. Stevens was already active, old and feeble as he was, in his hostility to Johnson. And every move made by the President was promptly checkmated by the "commoner." In fact Johnson's apostacy was Stevens's opportunity and the black man's boon. For it is more than probable that had not the Southern plan been disclosed by the chief magistrate, none would have dreamed of the dangers ahead, and the safeguards would have been wanting which his folly brought about. On the re-assembling of Congress, Mr. Stevens pressed strongly his schemes for reconstruction, always having in view that there should be no reconstruction unless the corner-stone was equal rights for all. Jan. 3, 1867, in offering his substitute to the bill providing for the restoration of the States lately in insurrection to their full political rights, he made an argument more lengthy than one would suppose his health would allow. But so dear was the cause, that mind and soul triumphed over matter, and nobly he championed the cause of freedom. And thus he described the state of the negro at that date: "We have broken the material shackles of four million slaves. We have unchained them from the stake so as to allow them locomotion, pro-

vided they do not walk in paths trod by white men. We have allowed them the unwonted privilege of attending church, if they can do so without offending the sight of their former masters. We have even given them that highest and most agreeable evidence of liberty as defined by the 'great plebeian,' the 'right to work.' But in what have we enlarged their liberty of thought? In what have we taught them the science and granted them the privilege of self-government? We have imposed upon them the privileges of fighting our battles, of dying in defence of freedom, and of bearing their equal portion of the taxes; but where have we given them the privilege of even participating in the formation of the laws for the government of their native land? By what civil weapon have we enabled them to defend themselves against oppression and injustice? Call you this liberty? Call you this a free republic, where four millions are subjects but not citizens? Then Persia, with her kings and satraps, was free! Then Turkey is free! Their subjects had liberty of motion and labor, but the laws were made without and against their will; but I must declare that, in my judgment, they were as really free governments as ours is to-day. Think not I would slander my native

land: I would reform it. Twenty years ago I denounced it as a despotism. Then, twenty million white men enchained four million black men. I pronounce it no nearer to a true republic now, when twenty-five millions of a privileged class exclude five million from all participation in the rights of the government. The freedom of a government does not depend upon the quality of its laws, but upon the power that has the right to create them. During the dictatorship of Pericles, his laws were just, but Greece was not free. During the last century Russia has been blessed with most remarkable emperors, who have generally decreed wise and just laws, but Russia is not free. No government can be free that does not allow all its citizens to participate in the formation and execution of her laws. These are degrees of tyranny; but every other government is a despotism. It has always been observed that the larger the number of the rulers the more cruel the treatment of the subject races. It were better for the black man if he were governed by one king than by twenty million. . . . But it will be said, 'this is negro equality.' What is negro equality, about which so much is said by knaves, and some of which is believed by men who are not fools? It means, as



understood by honest Republicans, just this and no more : Every man, no matter what his race or color, every earthly being who has an immortal soul, has an equal right to justice, honesty and fair play with every other man ; and the law should secure him those rights. The same law which condemns or acquits an African should condemn or acquit a white man. The same law which gives a verdict in a white man's favor, should give a verdict in a black man's favor, on the same state of facts. Such is the law of God, and such ought to be the law of man."

Next following the above measure came the famous reconstruction bill of 1867. Here again Mr. Stevens drew his physical forces together in order to still further impress his ideas of the duty of the hour, and to warn the country that mercy is oftentimes among the worst forms of cruelty, and so he speaks : —

"For the last few months Congress has been sitting here, and while the South has been bleeding at every pore, Congress has done nothing to protect the loyal people there, white or black, either in their persons, in their liberty, or in their property. Although we are insensible to it, the whole country is alive to the effect of the supineness with which this Congress has conducted itself. I of course have no right to

reproach anybody. I do not reproach any one. I simply grieve that such is the condition of the country, one which is not realized apparently by the House, and especially that part of it which is responsible to the nation. We are enjoying ourselves in a tolerable way, those of us who have health and spirits, while the South is covered all over with anarchy and murder and rapine." And thus, describing the state of affairs, he addressed himself directly to those who were pleading for leniency to traitors: "I know that gentlemen on the other side of the House believe that this is a harsh measure; and so does the gentleman from Ohio on this side, who to-day, and the other day, made beautiful appeals to our sense of humanity, and depicted the glory of a great nation forgiving criminals for unrepented crimes. I am aware that gentlemen, here and elsewhere, have seemed to be ambitious to enunciate principles of forgiveness, benevolence, and many still more startling and saintly than those of the Athenian or Galilean sage. Sir, generosity and benevolence are the noblest qualities of our nature, and when you squander them upon vagabonds and thieves you do that which can command no respect from any quarter. The sublime, I might almost say divine, doctrines or

religion promulgated by Socrates, and so much more nobly and divinely expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, seem to require acts of self-restraint almost beyond the reach of man. And yet, in urging forgiveness, they refer simply to private offences, to personal transgressions, where men can well forgive their enemies and smother their feelings of revenge without injury to anybody. But what has that to do with municipal punishment? What has that to do with political sanction of political crimes? When public tribunals, municipalities, nations, pass sentence for crimes committed and decree confiscation for crimes unrepented, there is no question of malignity. When the judge sentences the convict he has no animosity. When the hangman executes the culprit he rather pities than hates him. These acts have no faculty of cruelty in them. Cruelty does not belong to their vocabulary. These officers of the law are but carrying out what the law decrees. The law commands, the law executes; but the law is unimpassioned. The law has no feeling of malignity, no feeling of vengeance. Gentlemen mistake, therefore, when they make these appeals to us in the name of humanity." Was the miserable sophistry of "mercy" and "amnesty" ever better answered?

Nor did he stop here. "An old man broken with the storms of state," he never faltered in his course, but with iron will worked on in the interests of freedom and justice. Believing that our sympathies should be enlisted for the loyal Unionist who had lost all, for the Union soldier who was maimed, for the black man who was to begin life anew without the means to sustain it, he set himself to work to have confiscation decreed of rebel property for the benefit of those three classes. And when the confiscation bill came up on March 19, 1867, he announced that to that end he should devote the small remnant of his life. So, with one foot in the grave, he still pursued his grand objects. Supplementary reconstruction bills, "military bills," and what not were drafted, debated and passed under his hand. In a debate on one of these bills in July, 1867, he expressed himself in vigorous terms regarding the treatment which should have been extended to the rebels. His views thereon will commend themselves to every fearless patriot. "While I would not be bloody-minded, yet if I had my way I would long ago have organized a military tribunal under military power, and I would have put Jefferson Davis and all the members of his Cabinet on trial for the murders at Andersonville, the murders at Salisbury, the

shooting down our prisoners of war in cold blood. Every man of them is responsible for those crimes. It was a mockery to try that wicked fellow, Wirz, and make him responsible for acts of which the Confederate Cabinet were guilty. Of course they should be condemned. Whether they should be executed afterwards I give no opinion. As to the question of confiscation, I think that a man who has murdered a thousand men, who has robbed a thousand widows and orphans, who has burned down a thousand houses, escapes well, if, owning \$100,000 he is fined \$50,000 as a punishment and to repair his ravages. I do not say, nor do I ask, that anybody should be executed in this country. There has got to be a sickly humanity here which I dare not get alongside of for fear I might catch it. And it is now held by one of the most liberal and enlightened gentlemen in this country, that we should even pay a portion of the damages inflicted on the rebels, and pay a portion of the rebel debt."

In those days the friends of liberty, knowing that the "commoner" had not long to last, crowded into the House whenever it was known that he was to speak, though for a second. And all wondered at the man's vitality. The press had his biography set up

in print, momentarily expecting his death. His face grew thinner day by day, his lips were bloodless, and his dark wig, with its hair hanging by the pale cheeks, gave him the appearance of a corpse. His gestures were angular, his movements stiff and constrained, and he was often supported by others while speaking. What he said could not be heard in the galleries, save when stung at the cowardice of his associates, he flamed up and the excitement carried his voice to the remotest corner. Still, he followed on in the course he had laid out for himself, and had so faithfully followed. Some of the short speeches in those latter days were among his best. One in particular, I remember, which illustrates so well his sarcasm, his mother wit, and sterling sense of humanity, that I give it in full. It was in reply to Mr. Brooks of New York.

“Mr. Speaker — I have listened with very great pleasure (as I always do) to the golden-mouthed gentleman from New York in his attempt to prove the Bible a lie. That book says that God created of one blood all the nations of the earth. The question at issue between the gentleman from New York and the authors of that sacred volume, I shall not attempt to decide. It is too high for me. But,

Sir, the gentleman has given us a history of the negro race from, I believe, the time of the Queen of Sheba. I am not sure whether he included her in that race or not. But, going over the whole field from that time to this, he has, I think, very well described the shape of the negro's foot, the crook of his ankle, the contour of his face. And then the gentleman went on to consider the intellect of the negro. Now, does the gentleman by all this mean to say that the sons of Ethiopia — of whom the great poet of antiquity speaks as the 'blameless sons of Ethiopia,' among whom the gods always retired when they wished to spend an innocent and a quiet hour — have not immortal souls; that they are to be classed among 'the beasts that perish'; and that God, who is to judge them, will not damn him if he deserves it? (Laughter.) I am sorry, Sir, if such has come to be the condition of that race in this country. I had thought that the members of that race had shown in our day some evidences of strength and power. To be sure, I looked upon them as barbarians for having, with their own hands in defence of liberty, stricken down thousands of the friends of the gentleman who has been enlightening us to-day. (Laughter.) This conduct on their part did, I confess, show a

cruelty and a barbarism which are perhaps hard to excuse. But the gentleman must recollect that all are not equally mild in their demeanor, and that even the white man might have done the same thing had he been in a similar condition. As to intellect, there are various degrees of it. In that regard, the gentleman from New York towers above the rest of us, though, I fear, he sometimes abuses his superiority by the declamation which he travels out of his road to inflict upon us with regard to the various nations of the earth. But that in intellectual gifts the gentleman stands above all of us, no man who has heard him to-day or heretofore can deny; and I do not, I assure you, Sir, speak this ironically (laughter), for I do not know when I have heard anything more eloquent than the discourse which the learned gentleman has given us to-day. But I have one proposition to make. For the oratorical championship of America I am willing to match Fred Douglass or Langston against the gentleman from New York. I will allow the latter gentleman to select two out of three of the judges. Let the topic be anything the gentleman pleases, except the negro's shin (laughter), and if at the end of the discussion he does not 'throw up the sponge' I will admit that the negro is an inferior animal — not only



inferior to the gentleman from New York, but inferior to the rest of us." (Laughter.)

The long struggle with the President finally culminated in the impeachment trial. The moving spirit, of course, could have been none other than Thaddeus Stevens. Others there were equally ready to be the standard-bearer in that fight. But all felt that Mr. Stevens should have the first place. And, on Feb. 22, 1868, as chairman of the committee on reconstruction, he reported the following resolution: "*Resolved*, That Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, be impeached of high crimes and misdemeanors in office." Feb. 24, Mr. Stevens and John A. Bingham were appointed a committee to notify the Senate of the action of the House. On the next day Mr. Stevens and Mr. Bingham appeared at the bar of the Senate and were announced as the committee from the House of Representatives. It was a proud moment for the "commoner." It was the culminating point of his long struggle with Johnson. The battle had been fought, and he stood before the Senate to do what none other had ever done — to impeach the President of the United States. Of his appearance on that solemn occasion Mr. Sumner has given ample testimony. "I know not if Mr. Stevens could be called an

orator. And yet I doubt if words were ever delivered with more effect than when, broken with years and decay, he stood before the Senate, and in the name of the House of Representatives and of all the people of the United States, impeached Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, of high crimes and misdemeanors in office. Who can forget his steady, solemn utterance of this great arraignment? The words were few, but they will sound through the ages. The personal triumph in his position at that moment was merged in the historic grandeur of the occasion. For a long time, against opposition of all kinds, against misconceptions of the law, and against apologies for transactions without apologies, he had insisted on impeachment; and now this old man, tottering to your door, dragged the Chief Magistrate of the Republic to judgment. It was he who did this thing, and I should do poor justice to his life if on this occasion I failed to express my gratitude for the heroic deed. His merit is none the less because other influences prevailed in the end." Mr. Stevens's failing health prevented his attending to the duties of the trial in any great degree. His part had really been played in getting the House to pass the resolution of impeachment. Still, with the grave

staring wide before him, he addressed himself to whatever work was waiting for him. One of his last acts in that Fortieth Congress was his championship of the free school system for the District of Columbia. He wished to do for that district what he had done for his own State.

“Obeyed the voice at eve obeyed at prime.”

Well might one of his eulogists say, “There is not a child in Pennsylvania conning a spelling-book beneath the humble rafters of a village school, who does not owe him gratitude; not a citizen rejoicing in that security which is found only in liberal institutions, founded on the equal rights of all, who is not his debtor.” On July 27, 1868, Congress took a recess, and Mr. Stevens had the satisfaction of knowing that though his failing condition told him he might never again carry on his great battles of freedom in that arena which had known him so long, yet nearly every wish had been granted him. He had seen slavery abolished; he had seen the freedmen lifted to equality of political rights by act of Congress; he had seen the colored race throughout the whole land lifted to equality of civil rights by act of Congress. It only remained that he should see them throughout the whole land lifted to the same equality in

political rights, and then the promises of the Declaration of Independence would be all fulfilled. But he was called away before this final triumph.

## CHAPTER VII.

### "FOND GAILLARD."

CARLYLE tells us in his essay on Mirabeau, that the great Frenchman had about him that "*fond gaillard*" (basis of gayety), which carried him through many difficulties. Stevens possessed the same quality in a remarkable degree. Beneath the bitter sarcasm, the merciless thrust, the unsparing ridicule, there was always a solid ground-work of true wit, a "*fond gaillard*," a basis of gayety. Though life was to him a battle and not a dream, one long struggle, a constant contention with difficulties, yet there crops out everywhere, this "basis of gayety."

In the halls of Congress how often he annihilated the weary argument of some doubting Thomas by a single query, a droll assertion,—not now preserved—for often in the record we come across the reporter's note, that "Mr. Stevens, of Pennsylvania, from his seat made some remark inaudible to the reporter."

To a certain degree, Mr. Stevens met the fate of John Randolph, who said that all the bastard wit of the country was left at his door. But Stevens used his powers of raillery and ridicule simply as a weapon to a great end. He must destroy his antagonist, and the best fitted weapon must be used. The tools to him who can use them. During the debate on the abolition of slavery, some gentlemen thought such a course unadvisable, as it would tend to excite the South. Stevens pricked that bubble of imbecility by informing the members that it reminded him of the timid captain in the Revolution, who raised a company of soldiers with which to fight the British, and when his company was brought before the enemy and were about to shoot, cried out, "For God's sake, don't fire; for don't you see it will make them a great deal madder!" During the discussion on one of the early emancipation resolutions, which was in a very mild form, the "great commoner" expressed his inability to see what made one side so anxious to pass, or the other side so anxious to defeat it, for he considered it about the "most diluted milk and water gruel" proposition that was ever given to the American nation. In fact, he said, the only reason he could discover why any gentlemen

requisite two-thirds, and so we had to seat the Republican in order to carry on reconstruction. Your case was good enough, but it was that two-thirds vote that killed you,—that fatal two-thirds." And he hobbled off with his peculiar chuckle. Voorhis appreciated the situation and smiled as well. When Gen. Taylor came to Washington, shortly after the war, he visited Sumner, Stevens, and others with reference to a meeting of Jefferson Davis and Northern leaders. He expressed his delight at the cordial and elegant greeting extended him by Mr. Sumner, but complained because he could not get a definite answer. "Why, Sumner talked for two hours on Greece and Rome, and uttered numberless quotations from dead languages, but never reached the point; while Thaddeus Stevens, who was the most honest of them all, said in his opinion Jefferson Davis and the rest of us ought to have been executed long since."

The easy way in which he referred to his own health has also this "basis of gayety." During his later years he was carried up the Capitol steps in the arms of two brawny negroes. One day he looked toward them affectionately, and said: "What shall I do when you die?" A correspondent of the Philadelphia Times says

that one autumn Mr. Stevens was very ill with an attack of dropsy of the heart and chest. Such was the pressure of the water upon his heart and lungs that he could scarcely breathe. The doctors prescribed very powerful remedies, but they seemed to have no effect. So great was the fear of suffocation, that when the doctor paid his last visit for the night, at 10 P. M., in answer to his "good-night," Mr. Stevens said: "Good-night, doctor: I don't know whether I'll see you again?" The physician said something re-assuring, knowing, however, that his condition was most critical. The next morning when he went over to see his patient, he found him sitting in bed smiling and very lively. "Ah! good morning, doctor: I'm all right this morning; medicine began to take effect a couple of hours after you left." And then with a grim and gratified smile, "I've disappointed those fellows again, but last night I was mighty afraid I'd have to head a little procession up the hill," with a motion of his hand toward the cemetery. "Those fellows" were certain politicians who were waiting for the succession. One of the best specimens of Stevens's drollery and raillery is found in a speech to his constituency, at the time Johnson was "swinging round the circle."



“I come not to make a speech, but for the want of one. When I left Washington I was somewhat worn by labors and disease, and I was directed by my physician neither to think, to speak, or read until the next session of Congress, or I should not regain my strength. I have followed the first injunction most religiously, for I believe I have not let an idea pass through my mind to trouble me since Congress adjourned. The second one — not to speak — I was seduced from keeping by some noble friends in the mountain districts of Pennsylvania, and I made a speech at Bedford, the only one I have made. The third one — not to read — I have followed almost literally.

“It is true, I have amused myself with a little light frivolous reading. I have taken up the dailies and publications of that kind, and read things that would make no impression on my mind. For instance, there was a serial account from day to day of a very remarkable circus that travelled through the country, from Washington to Chicago and St. Louis, and Louisville back to Washington. I read that with some interest, expecting to see in so celebrated an establishment — one which, from its heralding, was to beat Dan Rice and all the old circusses that ever went forth — I expected great

wit from the celebrated character of its clowns (laughter). They were well provided with clowns: instead of one there were two, as the circus was to have a large circulation. One of these clowns was high in office and somewhat advanced in years: the other was a little less advanced in office, but older in years. They started out with a very respectable stock company. In order to attract attention they took with them, for instance, a celebrated general; they took with them an eminent naval officer, and they chained him to the rigging so that he could not get away, though he tried to do so once or twice.

“They announced the most respectable stock company that ever went forth with a menagerie or a circus, though they had no very good man for the spring-boards, but they took with them for a short distance a very good man accustomed to ground and lofty tumbling, called Montgomery Blair (laughter). And as they wanted to get up side shows, as is always precedent where anything is to be made out of these concerns, they switched him off in various directions with a hand organ and a monkey (laughter). In the East they called his monkey Senator Doolittle, because he looked so much like one (laughter). Up through the mountain region

where I encountered them, Montgomery Blair was there, and his monkey and organ was called Judge Kinnel.

“But the circus went on all the time, giving performances at different points, sometimes one clown performing and sometimes the other. So far as I was able to judge, the younger clown was the most vigorous, and had the most energy and malignity. The elder clown, owing to the wear and tear of age and suffering — you know he had his arm broken and his jaw broken, and his neck broken almost (laughter) — inducing a necessity for opiates, which had very much broken down his vigor — I looked upon his performance as rather silly. For instance the younger clown told them, in the language of the ancient heroes who trod the stage, that he had it in his power, if he chose, to be Dictator. The elder clown pointed to the other one, and said to the people, ‘Will you have him for President, or will you take him for King?’ (Laughter.) He left you but one alternative.

“You are obliged to take him for one or the other, either for President or King, if ‘My Policy’ prevails. I am not following them all round. I shall not describe to you how sometimes they cut outside the circle and entered into street broils with common blackguards;

how they fought at Cleveland and Indianapolis, and other points, I shall not tell you ; for is it not all written down in Colonel Forney's Chronicle? (Laughter and cheers.)

" But, coming round, they told you, or one of them did, that he had been everything but one. He had been a tailor, I think he did not say drunken tailor : no, he had been a tailor (laughter). He had been a constable (laughter). He had been city alderman (laughter). He had been in the Legislature. God help that Legislature (great merriment). He had been in Congress and now he was President. He had been everything but one — he had never been a hangman, and he asked leave to hang Thad Stevens" (laughter).

## CHAPTER VIII.

### GOES OVER TO THE MAJORITY.

POWER is only a tool. It belongs to nobody. Its possessor is merely a trustee thereof as the opulent is simply steward of his wealth. The purpose is the man. "The tools to him who can use them." Stevens's purpose was the equality of all men. He supplemented Jefferson's "all men are created equal," by "born equal, men continue so before the law." So far as the tools the Almighty gave him would allow, he had accomplished his work. It is sad that he could not live to see complete justice done to the ostracized unionist, and hold intact the box for the negro's ballot. That would have rounded his life. But it was ordered otherwise. "Th' unfinished window in Aladdin's tower, unfinished must remain." He had lived long enough to behold many of the fruits of his labor. He saw slavery dethroned, the broad gulf in the nation closing, the black man standing in the light of freedom. And so, having fulfilled the work

given him to do, on the 11th day of August, A. D. 1868, he went over to the majority. His place is with our "large-hearted heroes, born in better years." "He sleeps with the primeval giants, he has gone over to the majority. *Abiit ad plures.*"

As he was dying, he said to his nephew that the great questions of the day were reconstruction, the finances, and the railway system of the country. He expressed the belief that Grant would be elected President, and would carry out the spirit as well as the letter of the reconstruction laws. And in that hope he died. On Aug. 13, his body was removed to the rotunda of the Capitol, the coffin being borne by five colored and three white pall-bearers. The guard of honor were the Butler Zouaves, a colored military organization of Washington. The remains were then taken to Lancaster and deposited in a humble cemetery, and for his epitaph he had written the following:—

I repose in this quiet and secluded spot, not from any natural preference for solitude, but finding other cemeteries limited by charter rules as to race, I have chosen it that I might be enabled to illustrate in my death the principles which I have advocated through a long life—equality of man before his Creator.

This was all he did for his own resting-place. But in his will, written during the last year of his life, he did not forget to make ample provision for the care of his mother's lot — that mother to whom he ascribed whatever success he had met in life. And the clause ran thus: "That the sexton keep her grave in good order, and plant roses and other cheerful flowers at each of the four corners of said grave every spring." And farther on in the will, in devising \$1000 in aid of the establishment at his home of a Baptist church, of which society his mother was an earnest member, he says:—

"I do this out of respect to the memory of my mother, to whom I owe what little of prosperity I have had on earth, which, small as it is, I desire emphatically to acknowledge."

Nothing is more touching than the strong love for his mother which pervaded the whole life of this man, whom so many thought cruel, bitter, and self-willed.

I fear it is rash in me to have praised such a hero in these "piping times of peace," when civil service pamphleteers and public penurists thrive. But it is because he was so much of a man, and they so little; because he sank his own personal advantage in the propagation of a royal purpose, while they feign the possession

of sentiments that will bring them praise and gain, that I have told this meagre story of his life, and for this brief space held back his name and fame from the eternal silence whither he has gone. He belongs with the giants of the race, with the defenders of justice, with the friends of truth, with the lovers of liberty—the stalwarts of humanity! “Politician, calculator, time-server, stand aside! A hero statesman has passed to his reward.”



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## APPENDIX.

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I. MISSOURI COMPROMISE.

II. SUMNER'S EULOGY ON STEVENS.

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## APPENDIX.

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### I.

#### MISSOURI COMPROMISE.

THE inciting cause making possible the birth of the Republican party was the repeal of the Missouri Compromise contained in the Kansas-Nebraska legislation. It is therefore altogether fitting and proper that all should understand the full meaning and history of that phrase, the "Missouri Compromise."

Jan. 8, 1818, the Speaker of the House of Representatives presented to that body a petition from sundry inhabitants of the Territory of Missouri praying that said Territory might be erected into a State, and admitted into the Union, on an equal footing with the original States. On March 16, a bill to that effect was reported to the House, read twice, and then referred to the Committee of the Whole. Feb. 15, 1819, the House being in committee of the whole, Mr. Tallmadge (of New York) moved to amend the bill by inserting the following proviso:—

*“ And provided, — That the further introduction of slavery or involuntary servitude be prohibited, except for the punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been fully convicted; and that all children born within the said State, after the admission thereof into the Union, shall be free at the age of twenty-five years.”*

This proviso was strongly opposed by Henry Clay, and brilliantly supported by Mr. Taylor, of New York, who stated the argument in favor of it with great force. Regarding the power of Congress to insert such a proviso, Mr. Taylor spoke as follows:—

“ Congress has no power unless it be expressly granted by the Constitution, or necessary to the execution of some power clearly delegated. What, then, are the grants made to Congress in relation to the Territories? The third section of the fourth article declares, that ‘ the Congress shall have power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States.’ It would be difficult to devise a more comprehensive grant of power. The whole subject is put at the disposal of Congress, as well the right of judging what regulations are proper to be made, as the power of making

them is clearly granted. Until admitted into the Union, this political society is a territory; all the preliminary steps relating to its admission are territorial regulations. Hence, in all such cases, Congress has exercised the power of determining by whom the Constitution should be made, how its framers should be elected, when and where they should meet, and what propositions should be submitted to their decision. After its formation, the Congress may examine its provisions, and if approved, admit the State into the Union, in pursuance of a power delegated by the same section of the Constitution, in the following words: 'New States may be admitted by the Congress into the Union.' This grant of power is evidently alternative; its exercise is committed to the sound discretion of Congress; no injustice is done by declining it. But if Congress has the power of altogether refusing to admit new States, much more has it the power of prescribing such conditions of admission as may be judged reasonable. The exercise of this power, until now, has never been questioned. The act of 1802, under which Ohio was admitted into the Union, prescribed the condition that its Constitution should not be repugnant to the ordinance of 1787. The sixth article of that ordinance

declares, 'there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said Territory, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.' The same condition was imposed by Congress on the people of Indiana and Illinois. These States have all complied with it, and framed constitutions excluding slavery. Missouri lies in the same latitude. Its soil, productions, and climate are the same, and the same principles of government should be applied to it. . . .

"The sovereignty of Congress in relation to the States is limited by specific grants; but, in regard to the Territories, it is unlimited. Missouri was purchased with our money, and, until incorporated into the family of States, it may be sold for money. Can it then be maintained that although we have the power to dispose of the whole territory, we have no right to provide against the further increase of slavery within its limits? That, although we may change the political relation of its free citizens by transferring their country to a foreign power, we cannot provide for the gradual abolition of slavery within its limits, nor establish those civil regulations which naturally flow from self-evident truth? No, sir, it cannot; the practice

of nations and the common sense of mankind have long since decided these questions.

"History will record the decision of this day as exerting its influence for centuries to come over the population of half our continent. If we reject the amendment and suffer this evil, now easily eradicated, to strike its roots so deep in the soil that it can never be removed, shall we not furnish some apology for doubting our sincerity when we deplore its existence? shall we not expose ourselves to the same kind of censure which was pronounced by the Saviour of mankind upon the Scribes and Pharisees, who builded the tombs of the prophets and garnished the sepulchres of the righteous, and said, if they had lived in the days of their fathers, they would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets, while they manifested a spirit which clearly proved them the legitimate descendants of those who killed the prophets, and thus filled up the measure of their fathers' iniquity? . . .

"Now, whence came the people who, with a rapidity never before witnessed, have changed the wilderness between the Ohio and the Mississippi into fruitful fields? who have erected there, in a period almost too short for the credibility of future ages, three of the freest



and most flourishing States in our Union? They came from the eastern hive: from that source of population which, in the same time, has added more than one hundred thousand inhabitants to my native State, and furnished seamen for a large portion of the navigation of the world: seamen who have unfurled your banner in every port to which the enterprise of man has gained admittance, and who, though poor themselves, have drawn rich treasures for the nation from the bosom of the deep. Do you believe that these people will settle in a country where they must rank with negro slaves? Having neither the ability nor the will to hold slaves themselves, they labor cheerfully while labor is honorable; make it disgraceful, they will despise it. You cannot degrade it more effectually than by establishing a system whereby it shall be performed principally by slaves."

I have given these short extracts as they state faithfully the logic and sentiment of the argument in favor of the famous amendment.

The amendment was agreed to; seventy-nine voting for it and sixty-seven against it.

The bill came up the next day before the House, being reported by the Committee of the Whole. Every thing was agreed to at once, save Tallmadge's amendment, which was discussed

at length. Mr. Scott, of Missouri, made a vigorous protest against the amendment. He entertained the opinion that, under the Constitution, Congress had not the power to impose this or any other restriction, or to require of the people of Missouri their assent to this condition as a prerequisite to their admission into the Union. He contended this from the language of the Constitution itself; from the practice in the admission of new States under that instrument; and from the express terms of the treaty of cession. By the third article of that treaty of cession it was stipulated that "the inhabitants of the ceded territory shall be incorporated in the Union of the United States, and admitted, as soon as possible, according to the principles of the Federal Constitution, to the enjoyment of all the rights, advantages, and immunities of citizens of the United States, and, in the meantime, they shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty, property, and the religion which they profess." "The people of Missouri," said Mr. Scott, "are, if admitted into the Union, to come in on an equal footing with the original States. The people of the other States had the right to regulate their own internal police, to prescribe the rules of their own conduct, and, in the

formation of their constitutions, to say whether slavery was or was not admissible. How, then, are the citizens of Missouri placed on an equal footing with the other members of the Union? They are to be bound down by onerous conditions, limitations, and restrictions, to which I know they will not submit." The debate continued at length, being carried on by Mr. Storrs, of New York; Mr. Holmes, of Massachusetts; Mr. Colston, of Virginia; and Mr. Spencer, of New York. Mr. Tallmadge, the mover of the amendment, closed the debate. After referring to the violent language used by some members, the threats of war and disunion in which some had indulged, he said: "Sir, language of this sort has no effect on me; my purpose is fixed, it is interwoven with my existence, its durability is limited with my life; it is a great and glorious cause, setting bounds to a slavery the most cruel and debasing the world ever witnessed; it is the freedom of man; it is the cause of unredeemed and unregenerated human beings. Sir, if a dissolution of the Union must take place, let it be so. If civil war, which gentlemen so much threaten, must come, I can only say, let it come. My hold on life is probably as frail as that of any man who now hears me; but, while that hold lasts, it

shall be devoted to the service of my country — to the freedom of man. If blood is necessary to extinguish any fire which I have assisted to kindle, I can assure gentlemen, while I regret the necessity, I shall not forbear to contribute my mite. Sir, the violence to which gentlemen have resorted on this subject will not move my purpose, nor drive me from my place. I have the fortune and the honor to stand here as the representative of freemen, who possess intelligence to know their rights, who have the spirit to maintain them. I know the will of my constituents, and, regardless of consequences, I will avow it; as their representative, I will proclaim their hatred to slavery in every shape. As their representative, here will I hold my stand, until this floor, with the Constitution of my country which supports it, shall sink beneath me. . . . .

“Look down the long vista of futurity. See your empire, in extent unequalled; in advantageous situation without a parallel; and occupying all the valuable part of our continent. Behold this extended empire, inhabited by the hardy sons of American freemen — knowing their rights, and inheriting the will to protect them — owners of the soil on which they live, and interested in the institutions which they

labor to defend — with two oceans laving your shores ; and, tributary to your purposes, bearing on their bosoms the commerce of your people. Compared to yours, the governments of Europe dwindle into insignificance, and the whole world is without a parallel. But, sir, reverse this scene ; people this fair dominion with the slaves of your planters ; extend slavery — this bane of man, this abomination of heaven — over your extended empire, and you prepare its dissolution ; you turn its accumulated strength into positive weakness ; you cherish a canker in your breast ; you put poison in your bosom ; you place a vulture on your heart — nay, you whet the dagger and place it in the hands of a portion of your population, stimulated to use it by every tie, human and divine. Your enemies will learn the source and the cause of your weakness. As often as internal dangers shall threaten, or internal commotions await you, you will then realize that, by your own procurement, you have placed amidst your families, and in the bosom of your country, a population producing at once the greatest cause of individual danger and of national weakness. With this defect, your government must crumble to pieces, and your people become the scoff of the world.”

In taking the vote, the amendment was divided. The first part was carried 87 to 76, and the latter part was carried 82 to 78. So the whole amendment was agreed to. And the bill was ordered to be engrossed by a vote of 97 yeas to 56 nays. The bill then went to the Senate. Certain amendments were added in that branch, but the amendment regarding slavery was stricken out. The bill then went back to the House minus that clause, but with other amendments annexed. The two Houses could not agree, each adhering to its position, and the bill failed to become a law. Thus ended the Missouri legislation at that session of Congress. It will be noticed how strong was the anti-slavery sentiment in the House, though abolitionism had not then become a national question. The anti-slavery agitation was not then arousing the country. Members had not been elected on that issue. Yet the temper of the House was for freedom, and the boldness of the speeches of Northern (notably New York) members was in striking contrast with the timidity shown by their successors in later years.

Dec. 8, 1819, at the first session of the Sixteenth Congress, on motion of Mr. Scott, the several memorials of the Legislature of the Territory of Missouri and of the inhabitants of the

- said Territory, presented to the House at the last session of Congress, relative to the admission of that Territory into the Union, as a separate and independent State were referred to a select committee. The next day Mr. Scott reported a bill from the committee. On the first of March the bill was read the third time and the question stated, "Shall the bill pass?" Mr. Randolph, of Virginia, spoke against the bill at great length, on the ground of the unconstitutional and unjust restriction which it imposed on the people of Missouri, as a condition of their admission into the Union. The bill passed the House, ninety-one to eighty-two, and went to the Senate. At that time there was pending in the Senate, the House bill admitting Maine into the Union. When that bill was reported in the Senate from the committee to which it had been referred, it had tacked to it as an amendment, the whole of the bill authorizing the people of Missouri to form a constitution without any slavery restriction. Mr. Roberts, of Pennsylvania, then moved:—

"That the bill for the admission of the State of Maine into the Union, and the amendment thereto reported, be recommitted to the Judiciary Committee, with instructions so to modify its provisions as to admit the State of Maine into

the Union," (divested of the amendment embracing Missouri).

This opened the debate in earnest. And motions and substitutes followed in quick succession. It was a long debate and graced by many noble utterances. The most notable speech in the Senate was that of William Pinckney, of Maryland — William Pinckney, whom Theophilus Parsons styled the greatest lawyer the American bar had ever possessed. Pinckney had come to the Senate crowned with the laurels of the forum. The senate chamber was crowded. The talent, the taste and beauty of the land were there. All business was suspended in the House of Representatives, and members rushed into the upper chamber. His speech was a brilliant combination of eloquence and argument, beauty and strength, amplitude and condensation. Pinckney sowed his arguments broadcast. His speech is the best statement of the South side view of the Missouri Compromise. His central idea was that you must make the Union as to the new States what it is to the old. He treated the question from a purely constitutional standpoint. Beginning with a brilliant exordium, he directed his attention at once to the question before the Senate.

"Sir, it was but the other day that we were



forbidden (properly forbidden, I am sure, for the prohibition came from you), to assume that there existed any intention to impose a prospective restraint on the domestic legislation of Missouri — a restraint to act upon it contemporaneously with its origin as a State, and to continue adhesive to it through all the stages of its political existence. We are now, however, permitted to know that it is determined by a sort of political surgery to amputate one of the limbs of its local sovereignty, and thus mangled and disparaged, and thus only, to receive it into the bosom of the constitution. It is now avowed that while Maine is to be ushered into the Union with every possible demonstration of studious reverence on our part, and on hers with colors flying, and all the other graceful accompaniments of honorable triumph, this ill-conditioned upstart of the West, this obscure foundling of a wilderness that was but yesterday the hunting ground of the savage, is to find her way into the American family, as she can, with a humiliating badge of remediless inferiority patched upon her garments, with the mark of recent qualified manumission upon her, or rather with a brand upon her forehead, to tell the story of her territorial vassalage, and to perpetuate the memory of her evil propensities. It is

now avowed, that the robust District of Maine is to be seated by the side of her truly respectable parent, co-ordinate in authority and honor, and is to be dandled into that power and dignity of which she does not stand in need, but which undoubtedly she deserves. The more infantine and feeble Missouri is to be repelled with harshness, and forbidden to come at all, unless with the iron collar of servitude about her neck, instead of the civic crown of republican freedom upon her brows, and is to be doomed forever to leading strings, unless she will exchange those leading strings for shackles.

“ I am told that you have the power to establish this odious and revolting distinction, and I am referred for the proofs of that power to various parts of the Constitution, but principally to that part of it which authorizes the admission of new States into the Union. I am myself of opinion that it is in that part only that the advocates for this restriction can, with any hope of success, apply for a license to oppose it, and that the efforts which have been made to find it in other portions of that instrument, are too desperate to require to be encountered. I shall, however, examine those other portions before I have done, lest it should be supposed by those who have relied upon them, that what

I omit to answer I believe to be unanswerable. The clause of the Constitution which relates to the admission of new States, is in these words : ' The Congress may admit new States into this Union,' etc., and the advocates for restriction maintain that the use of the word, ' may,' imports discretion to admit or to reject : and that in this discretion is wrapped up another, — that of prescribing the terms and conditions of admission in case you are willing to admit. *Cujus est dare ejus est disponere.* I will not for the present, inquire whether this involved discretion to dictate the terms of admission belongs to you or not. It is fit that I should first look to the nature and extent of it. I think I may assume, that if such a power be anything but nominal, it is much more than adequate to the present object ; that it is a power of vast expansion, to which human sagacity can assign no reasonable limits ; that it is a capacious reservoir of authority, from which you may take, in all time to come, as occasion may serve, the means of oppression as well as of benefaction. I know that it professes at this moment to be the chosen instrument of protecting mercy, and would win upon us by its benignant smiles : but I know, too, it can frown and play the tyrant, if it be so disposed. Notwithstanding the softness which it

now assumes, and the care with which it conceals its giant proportions beneath the deceitful drapery of sentiment, when it next appears before you it may show itself with a sterner countenance, and in more awful dimensions. It is, to speak the truth, Sir, a power of colossal size : if, indeed, it be not an abuse of language to call it by the gentle name of *a power*. Sir, it is a wilderness of powers, of which fancy, in her happiest mood, is unable to perceive the far distant and shadowy boundary. Armed with such a power, with religion in one hand, and philanthropy in the other, and followed with a goodly train of public and private virtues, you may achieve more conquests over sovereignties, not your own, than falls to the common lot of even uncommon ambition. . . . Slavery, we are told is now rolling onward with a rapid tide towards the boundless regions of the West, threatening to doom them to sterility and sorrow, unless some potent voice can say to it, ' Thus far shalt thou go and no farther.' Slavery engenders pride and indolence in him who commands, and inflicts intellectual and moral degradation on him who serves. Slavery, in fine, is unchristian and abominable. Sir, I shall not stop to deny that slavery is all this and more : but I shall not think myself the less authorized

to deny that it is for you to stay the course of this dark torrent, by opposing to it a mound raised up by the labors of this portentous discretion on the domain of others : a mound which you cannot erect but through the instrumentality of a trespass of no ordinary kind — not the comparatively innocent trespass that beats down a few blades of grass which the first kind sun or the next refreshing shower may cause to spring again — but that which levels with the ground the lordliest trees of the forest, and claims immortality for the destruction which it inflicts. . . . 'New States *may* be admitted by the Congress into this Union.' It is objected that the word 'may,' imports power, not obligation — a right to decide — a discretion to grant or refuse. To this it might be answered, that *power is duty* on many occasions. But let it be conceded that it is discretionary. What consequence follows? A power to refuse in a case like this, does not necessarily involve a power to exact terms. You must look to the *result*, which is the declared object of the power. Whether you will arrive at it or not may depend on your will : but you cannot compromise with the result intended and professed. What, then, is the professed result? To admit a State into this Union. What is that Union? A confed-

eration of States equal in sovereignty, capable of everything which the Constitution does not forbid, or authorize Congress to forbid. It is an equal union between parties equally sovereign. They were sovereign, independently of the Union. The object of the Union was common protection for the exercise of already existing sovereignty. The parties gave up a portion of that sovereignty to insure the remainder. As far as they gave it up by the common compact they have ceased to be sovereign. The Union provides the means of defending the residue: and it is into that Union that a new State is to come. By acceding to it, the new State is placed on the same footing with the original States. It accedes for the same purpose, that is, protection for its unsundered sovereignty. If it comes in shorn of its beams — crippled and disparaged beyond the original States, it is not into the original Union that it comes. For it is a different sort of a Union. The first was Union *inter pares*. This is a Union between *disparates*, between giants and a dwarf, between power and feebleness, between full proportioned sovereignties and a miserable image of power — a thing which that very Union has shrunk and shrivelled from its just size, instead of preserving it in its true dimensions. It is

into 'this Union,' that is, the Union of the Federal Constitution, that you are to admit or refuse to admit. You can admit into no other. You cannot make the Union, as to the new State, what it is not as to the old: for then it is not *this Union* that you open for the entrance of a new party. If you make it enter into a new and additional compact, is it any longer the same Union? . . . Is the right to hold slaves a right which Massachusetts enjoys? If it is, Massachusetts is under this Union in a different character from Missouri. The power of Congress is different—everything which depends upon the Union, is in that respect, different.

"But it is immaterial whether you legislate for Missouri as a State or not. The effect of your legislation is to bring it into the Union with a portion of its sovereignty taken away.

"It is said that the word *may*, necessarily implies the right of prescribing the terms of admission. Those who maintain this are aware that there are no express words (such as, upon such terms and conditions as Congress *shall* think fit), words which it was natural to expect to find in the Constitution, if the effect intended for was meant. They put it, therefore, on the word *may*, and on that alone.

"Give to that word all the force you please,

what does it import? That Congress is not bound to admit a new State into this Union. Be it so for argument's sake. Does it follow that when you consent to admit into this Union, a new State, you can make it less in sovereign power than the original parties to that Union : that you can make the Union as to it, what it is not to them : that you can fashion it to your liking by compelling it to purchase admission into a Union, by sacrificing a portion of that power which it is the sole purpose of the Union to maintain in all the plenitude which the Union itself does not impair ? Does it follow that you can force upon it an additional compact not found in the compact of Union : that you can make it come into the Union less a State, in regard to sovereign power, than its fellows in that Union : that you can cripple its legislative competency (beyond the Constitution, which is the part of Union, to which you make it a party as if it had originally been a party to it), by what you choose to call a *condition*, but which, whatever it may be called, brings the new government into the Union, under new obligations to it, and with disparaged powers to be protected by it?

“ I have thus endeavored to show that even if you have a discretion to refuse to admit, you



have no discretion, if you are willing to admit, to insist upon any terms that impair the sovereignty of the admitted State, as it would otherwise stand in the Union by the Constitution which receives it into its bosom. To admit or not, is for you to decide. Admission once conceded, it follows as a corollary that you must take the new State as an equal companion with its fellows: that you cannot recast or new-model the Union *pro hac vice*: but that you must receive it into the actual Union, and recognize it as a parcener in the common inheritance, without any other shackles than the rest have, by the Constitution, submitted to bear, without any other extinction of power than is the work of the Constitution acting indifferently upon all.

“A territory cannot surrender to Congress by anticipation, the whole or any part, of the sovereign power, which, by the Constitution of the Union, will belong to it when it becomes a State and a member of the Union. Its consent, is therefore nothing. It is under the government of Congress: if it can barter away a part of its sovereignty, by anticipation, it can do so as to the whole: for where will you stop? If it does not cease to be a State, in the sense of the Constitution, with only a certain portion of sovereign power, what other smaller portion will have that

effect? If you depart from the standard of the Constitution, that is, the quantity of domestic sovereignty left in the first contracting States, and secured by the original compact of Union, where will you get another standard? Consent is no standard: for consent may be gained to a surrender of all.

"Sir, if we too closely look to the rise and progress of long-sanctioned establishments and unquestioned rights, we may discover other subjects than that of slavery with which fraud and violence may claim a fearful connection, and over which it may be our interest to throw the mantle of oblivion. What was the settlement of our ancestors in this country but an invasion of the rights of the barbarians who inhabited it? That settlement, with slight exception, was effected by the slaughter of those who did no more than defend their native land against the intruders of Europe, or by unequal compacts and purchases, in which feebleness and ignorance had to deal with power and cunning. The savages who once built their huts where this proud Capitol, rising from its recent ashes, exemplifies the sovereignty of the American people, were swept away by the injustice of our fathers and their domain usurped by force, or obtained by artifices yet more criminal. Our continent

was full of those aboriginal inhabitants. Where are they or their descendants? Either 'with years beyond the flood,' or driven back by the swelling tide of our population from the borders of the Atlantic to the deserts of the West. You follow still the miserable remnants, and make *contracts* with them that seal their ruin. You purchase their lands, of which they know not the value, in order that you may sell them to advantage, increase your treasure, and enlarge your empire. Yet further: you pursue as they retire; and they must continue to retire until the Pacific shall stay their retreat, and compel them to pass away as a dream. Will you recur to those scenes of various iniquity for any other purpose than to regret and lament them? Will you pry into them with a view to shake and impair your rights of property and domain? . . .

The power is, 'to admit new States into this Union': and it may be safely conceded that here is discretion to admit or refuse. The question is, what must we do, if we do anything? What must we admit, and into what? The answer is, a State — and into this Union. The distinction between Federal rights and local rights is an idle distinction. Because the new State acquires Federal rights, it is not, therefore, in the

Union. The Union is a compact: and is it an equal party to that compact, because it has equal Federal rights? How is the Union formed? By equal contributions of power. Make one member sacrifice more than another, and it becomes unequal. The compact is of two parts: 1. The thing obtained — federal rights; 2. The price paid—local sovereignty.

“You may disturb the balance of the Union, either by diminishing the thing acquired, or increasing the sacrifice paid. What were the purposes of coming into the Union among the original States? The States were originally sovereign, without limit, as to foreign and domestic concerns. But being incapable of protecting themselves singly, they entered into the Union to defend themselves against foreign violence. The domestic concerns of the people were not, in general, to be acted on by it. The security of the power of managing them by domestic legislature, is one of the great objects of the Union. The Union is a *means*, not an *end*. By requiring greater sacrifices of domestic power, the end is sacrificed to the means. Suppose the surrender of all, or nearly all, the domestic powers of legislation were required: the means would there have swallowed up the end.”

The opponents of slavery had argued that the restriction against involuntary servitude should be introduced, because slavery was un-Republican and the Constitution guaranteed a Republican form of government to every State. On this branch of the argument Mr. Pinckney spoke as follows: "The government of a new State, as well as of an old State, must, I agree, be Republican in its *form*. But it has not been very clearly explained what the *laws* which such a Government may enact can have to do with its *form*. The form of the Government is material only as it furnishes a security that those laws will protect and promote the public happiness, and be made in a Republican spirit. The people being, in such a Government, the fountain of all power, and their servants being periodically responsible to them for its exercise, the Constitution of the Union takes for granted, (except so far as it imposes limitations), that every such exercise will be just and salutary. The introduction or continuance of civil slavery is manifestly the mere result of the power of making laws. It does not in any degree enter into the form of government. It pre-supposes that form already settled, and takes its rise not from the particular frame of the government, but the general power which every government

involves. Make the government what you will in its organization and in the distribution of its authorities, the introduction or continuance of involuntary servitude by the legislative power which it has created, can have no influence on its pre-established form, whether monarchical, aristocratical, or republican. The form of government is still one thing, and the law, being a simple exertion of the ordinary faculty of legislation by those to whom that form of government has entrusted it, another. The gentlemen, however, identify an act of legislation, sanctioning involuntary servitude, with the form of government itself, and they assure us that the latter is changed retroactively by the first, and is no longer Republican.

“But if a Republican form of government is that in which all the men have a share in the public power, the slaveholding States will not alone retire from the Union. The constitutions of some of the other States do not sanction universal suffrage, or universal eligibility. They require citizenship, and age, and a certain amount of property, to give a title to vote or to be voted for: and they who have not these qualifications are just as much disfranchised, with regard to the government and its power, as if they were slaves. They have civil rights,

indeed, (and so have slaves in a less degree) but they have no share in the government."

He then discussed at length the clause of the Constitution, relating to the migration or importation, before the year 1808, of such persons as any of the States then existing, should think proper to admit; and closed his speech by expressing a hope that (what he deemed) the perilous principles urged by those in favor of the restriction upon the new State, would be disavowed or explained, or that, at all events, the application of them to the subject under discussion would not be pressed, but that it might be disposed of in a manner satisfactory to all, by a prospective prohibition of slavery in the territory to the North and West of Missouri. Mr. Pinckney's remarks had left a deep impression on every one. His speech was declared far superior to that of Rufus King, to whose arguments Pinckney had given most of his attention. The South had stated her position on the great question through the lips of the nation's greatest lawyer. No one rose to reply, and Mr. Otis, of Massachusetts, moved an adjournment, which was carried. This was February 15. On the 17th, the vote was taken on the bill. The amendment of Mr. Thomas, of Illinois, was as follows:—

“And be it further enacted, That in all that territory ceded by France to the United States, under the name of Louisiana, which lies north of thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes north latitude, excepting only such part thereof as is included within the limits of the State contemplated by this act, slavery and involuntary servitude, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall be and is forever prohibited. *Provided always*, That any person escaping into the same, from whom labor or service is lawfully claimed in any State or territory of the United States, such fugitive may be lawfully reclaimed, and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labor or service as aforesaid.” This amendment was adopted by a vote of thirty-four to ten. The bill was then engrossed and read a third time. The bill as amended then went to the House. And on February 23, the House disagreed to those amendments which incorporated the admission of Missouri in the bill admitting Maine. And then the House rejected all the amendments to the bill admitting Maine. The Senate was equally firm and refused to recede from its amendments. A committee of conference was then appointed. It will be remembered the Missouri bill which had passed



the House was now in the Senate. On March 2, a message from the Senate announced the passage of the Missouri bill (with the Thomas and Storrs amendment excluding slavery from the territory west of the Mississippi, north of thirty-six degrees thirty minutes north latitude, except within the proposed State of Missouri). The same day the managers of the conference recommended the Senate to recede from its amendments to the said Maine bill, and both houses to strike out from the Missouri bill (originating in the House) the section excluding slavery, and insert thereof the Thomas amendment above referred to. This accommodation was agreed to, and the Missouri bill thus amended passed both Houses. The bill to admit Maine was approved March 3, 1820. The act to authorize the people of Missouri Territory to form a Constitution and State government, and for the admission of such State into the Union on an equal footing with the original States, and to prohibit slavery in certain territories, was approved March 6, 1820. And thus ended the famous struggle. And in this manner did our ancestors enter into a solemn agreement prohibiting slavery north of thirty-six degrees thirty minutes north latitude in the territory ceded us by France, under the name of Louis-

iana, save that part admitted under the name of Missouri. They thought the question settled. They never supposed that solemn treaty would be broken. Alas ! they knew not the corrupting power of slavery. That was left for their posterity to learn in blood !

## II.

### SUMNER'S EULOGY.

*Remarks of Charles Sumner in the United States Senate.  
December 18, 1868.*

"THE visitor, as he paces the corridor leading to the House of Commons, stops with reverence before the marble statues of the men who, during two centuries of English history, adorned that famous chamber. There are twelve in all, each speaking to the memory as he spoke in life; beginning with the learned Selden and the patriot Hampden; with Falkland, so sweet and loyal in character; Somers, so great as a defender of constitutional liberty; and embracing in the historic group the silver-tongued Murray; the two Pitts, father and son; Fox, always first in debate; and that orator whose speeches contribute to the wealth of English literature, Edmund Burke.

"In the lapse of time, as our history extends, similar monuments may illustrate the approach to our House of Representatives, arresting the reverence of the visitor. If our group is confined to those whose fame has been won in the House

alone, it will be small ; for members of the House are mostly birds of passage only perching on their way to another place. Few remain so as to become identified with the House, or their service there is forgotten in the blaze of other service elsewhere, as was the case with Madison, Marshall, Clay, Webster and Lincoln. It is not difficult to see who will find a place in this small company. There must be a statue of Josiah Quincy, whose series of eloquent speeches is the most complete of our history before Webster pleaded for Greece ; and also a statue of Joshua R. Giddings, whose faithful championship of freedom throughout a long and terrible conflict, makes him one of the great names of our country. And there must be a statue of Thaddeus Stevens, who was, perhaps, the most remarkable character identified with the House, unless we except John Quincy Adams ; but the fame of the latter is not that of a representative alone, for he was already illustrious from various service before he entered the House.

“All of these hated slavery, and labored for its overthrow. On this account they were a mark for obloquy, and were generally in a minority. Already compensation has begun. As the cause which they upheld so bravely is exalted, so is their fame. By the side of their far-sighted,

far-reaching and heroic efforts, how diminutive is all that was done by others at the time! How vile the spirit that raged against them!

"Stevens was a child of New England, as were Quincy and Adams; but after completing his education he found a home in Pennsylvania, which had already given birth to Giddings. If this great central State can claim one of these remarkable men by adoption only, it may claim the other by paternity. Their names are among its best glories.

"Two things Stevens did for his adopted State, by which he repaid largely all her hospitality and favor. He taught her to cherish education for the people, and he taught her respect for human rights. The latter lesson was slower learned than the former. In the prime of life, when his faculties were in their highest vigor, he became conspicuous for earnest effort, crowned by most persuasive speech, whose echoes have not yet died away, for those common schools, which, more even than railroads, are the hand-maids of civilization, besides being the true support of republican government. His powerful word turned the scale, and a great cause was won. This same powerful word was given promptly and without hesitation to that other cause, suffering then from constant and most

cruel outrage. Here he stood always like a pillar. Suffice it to say that he was one of the earliest of abolitionists, accepting the name and bearing the reproach. Not a child in Pennsylvania, conning a spelling-book beneath the humble rafters of a village school, who does not owe him gratitude; not a citizen, rejoicing in that security which is found only in liberal institutions, founded on the equal rights of all, who is not his debtor.

“When he entered Congress it was as champion. His conclusions were already matured, and he saw his duty plain before him. The English poet foreshadows him when he pictures—

‘One in whom persuasion and belief  
Had ripened into faith, and faith become  
A passionate conviction.’

Slavery was wrong and he would not tolerate it. Slave-masters, brimming with slavery, were imperious and lawless. From him they learned to see themselves as others saw them. Strong in his cause and in the consciousness of power, he did not shrink from any encounter, and, when it was joined, he used not only argument and history, but all those other weapons by which a bad cause is exposed to scorn and contempt. Nobody said more in fewer words, or gave to language a sharper bite. Speech was with him

at times a cat-o'-nine-tails, and woe to the victim on whom the terrible lash descended.

"Does any one doubt the justifiableness of such debate? Sarcasm, satire, and ridicule are not given in vain. They have an office to perform in the economies of life. They are faculties to be employed prudently in support of truth and justice. A good cause is helped if its enemies are driven back ; and it cannot be doubted that the supporters of wrong and the procrastinators shrank often before the weapons he wielded. Soft words turn away wrath ; but there is a time for strong words as for soft words. Did not the Saviour seize the thongs with which to drive the money-changers from the temple? Our money-changers long ago planted themselves within our temple. Was it not right to lash them away? Such an exercise of power in a generous cause must not be confounded with that personality of debate which has its origin in nothing higher than irritability, jealousy, or spite. In this sense, Thaddeus Stevens was never personal. No personal thought or motive controlled him. What he said was for his country and mankind.

"As the rebellion assumed its gigantic proportions, he saw clearly that it could be smitten only through slavery ; and, when after a bloody

struggle it was too tardily vanquished, he saw clearly that there could be no true peace except by founding the new government on the equal rights of all. And this policy he urged with a lofty dogmatism which was as beneficent as uncompromising. The rebels burned his property in Pennsylvania, and there were weaklings who attributed his conduct to the smart at his loss. How little they understood his nature! Injury provokes and sometimes excuses resentment. But it was not in him to allow a private grief to influence his public conduct. The losses of the iron-master were forgotten in the duties of the statesman. He asked nothing for himself. He did not ask his own rights except as the rights of man.

“I know not if he could be called an orator, perhaps, like Fox, he were better called a debater. And yet I doubt if words were ever delivered with more effect than when, broken with years and decay, he stood before the Senate, and in the name of the House of Representatives, and of all the people of the United States, impeached Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, of high crimes and misdemeanors in office. Who can forget his steady, solemn utterance of this great arraignment? The words were few, but they will sound



through the ages. The personal triumph in his position at that moment was merged in the historic grandeur of the occasion. For a long time, against opposition of all kinds, against misconceptions of the law and against apologies for transactions without apology, he had insisted on impeachment; and now this old man, tottering to your door, dragged the Chief Magistrate of the Republic to judgment. It was he who did this thing; and I should do poor justice to his life if on this occasion I failed to express my gratitude for the heroic deed. His merit is none the less because other influences prevailed in the end. His example will remain forever.

"In the House, which was the scene of his triumphs, I never heard him but once: but I cannot forget the noble eloquence of that brief speech. I was there by accident just as he rose. He did not speak more than ten minutes; but every sentence seemed an oration. With unhesitating plainness he arraigned Pennsylvania for her denial of equal rights to an oppressed race, and rising with the theme, declared that this State had not a Republican government. His explicitness was the more striking because he was the Representative of Pennsylvania. I presume the speech will be found in the Globe. Nobody, who has con-

sidered with any care what constitutes a Republican government, especially since the definition supplied by our Declaration of Independence, can doubt that he was right. His words will live as the courageous testimony of a great character on this important question.

“The last object of his life was the establishment of equal rights throughout the whole country by the recognition of the requirement of the Declaration of Independence. I have before me two letters in which he records his convictions, which are, perhaps, more weighty, because the result of most careful consideration, when age had furnished experience and tempered the judgment.

“‘I have,’ says he, ‘long, and with such ability as I could command reflected upon the subject of the Declaration of Independence, and finally have come to the sincere conclusion that universal suffrage was one of the inalienable rights intended to be embraced in that instrument.’ It is difficult to see how there can be any hesitation on this point, when the great title-deed expressly says that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. But this is not the only instance in which he was constrained by the habits of that profession, which he practised so successfully.

A great Parliamentarian of France has said: 'The more one is a lawyer the less he is a Senator.' *Plus on est avocat moins on est Sénateur.* If Stevens reached his conclusion slowly, it was because he had not completely emancipated himself from that technical reasoning which is the boast of the lawyer rather than of the statesman. The pretension that the power to determine the 'qualifications' of voters, embraced the power to exclude for color, and that this same power to exclude for color was included in the asserted power of the States to make 'regulations' for the elective franchise, seems at first to have deceived him; as if it was not insulting to the reason, and shocking to the moral sense, to suppose that any unalterable physical condition, such as color of hair, eyes, or skin, could be a 'qualification,' and, as if it was not equally offensive to suppose, that under a power to determine 'qualifications' or to make 'regulations,' a race could be disfranchised. Of course, this whole pretension is a technicality set up against human rights. Nothing can be plainer than that a technicality may be employed in favor of human rights, but never against them. Stevens came to his conclusion at last, and rested in it firmly. It was his final aspiration to see it prevail. He had seen much

for which he had striven, embodied in the institutions of his country. He had seen slavery abolished. He had seen the freedman lifted to equality of political rights, by act of Congress; he had seen the colored race throughout the whole land lifted to equality of civil rights, by act of Congress. It only remained that he should see them throughout the whole land lifted to the same equality in political rights; and then the promises of the Declaration of Independence would be all fulfilled. But he was called away before this final triumph. A great writer of antiquity, a perpetual authority, tells us, that, 'the chief duty of friends is not to honor the departed by idle grief, but to remember their purposes, and to carry out their mandates.' These are the words of Tacitus. I venture to add that we shall best honor him whom we now celebrate, if we adopt his aspiration, and strive for its fulfilment.

"It is as a defender of human rights, that Thaddeus Stevens deserves our homage. Here he is supreme. On other questions he erred. On the finances his errors were signal. But history will forget these and other failings, as it bends with reverence before those exalted labors by which humanity has been advanced. Already he takes his place among illustrious names,

which are the common property of mankind. I see him now, as I have so often seen him during life. His venerable form moves slowly and with uncertain steps ; but the gathered strength of years is in his countenance, and the light of victory on his path. Politician, calculator, time-server, stand aside ! A hero-statesman passes to his reward."



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