

TWO NOTABLE GRAVES

The Last Resting Places of James Buchanan and Thaddeus Stevens.

Within the limits of this city, but as far apart as their bones can get and yet be in it, says a Lancaster correspondent of the *Pittsburg Dispatch*, lie buried James Buchanan and Thaddeus Stevens. The stones that bear their names are a mile and a-half from each other; in the northwest corner of the city, Stevens, in the southeast, Buchanan. Born within a year, they climbed the same political eminence and died within three months of each other. But they climbed by opposite paths, lived so far apart that their hands never met, and the opposition of their ashes is only the survival of their life-long antagonism. Conestoga creek, however, which sweeps in a graceful curve around the foot of the hill upon whose brow Buchanan sleeps, also drains the graveyard in which Stevens is buried, and the sociability which obtains among drops of water has doubtless brought about a mingling of their elements, in which the spirit of neither takes much satisfaction.

Woodward Hill cemetery is a beautiful burying place, occupying a nose of high ground which bends the course of Conestoga creek. It is at the very verge of the city, and the rumble of the streets, the thunder of the railway and all the sounds of the town are very much softened before they reach it. There are not many flowers in it, but cedars and poplars abound, with here and there a maple. It is the oldest cemetery in Lancaster, and the grandfathers of the city sleep there. Near the top of the eastern slope, in the most conspicuous part of the burying ground, stands an oblong sarcophagus of white marble about seven feet long, half as wide and say five feet high. A wreath of oak leaves and acorns surrounds it near the top, and underneath, upon the western side, is the inscription:

.....
HERE REST THE REMAINS OF
JAMES BUCHANAN,
Fifteenth President of the United States.
Born in Franklin county, Pa., April 23, 1791.
Died at Wheatland, June 1, 1868.
.....

Upon the eastward opposite face is carved only:

.....
"BUCHANAN."
.....

as though to the sleeper underneath those letters spelled a sentiment noble enough to adorn any monument. The tomb is simple almost to severity. The oak wreath around the top and a plain moulding at the bottom are the only departure from the squareness of the stone. It is supported by a base of granite resting on the grave itself, the only one in the lot. Buchanan, like Stevens, lived his almost fourscore years and died a bachelor. The lot, 10 by 30, is surrounded by a plain iron fence, with granite corner posts; a vacant lot at one side and a graveled walk at the other separates it in a measure from the other lots. Rose bushes are planted here and there in it and the luxuriance of the grass does not indicate that the foot of the pilgrim is frequent in it.

Following the main thoroughfares of the city at the opposite end of the diagonal you come to a small corner lot full of tombstones for the most part unpretentious. There are few large monuments. It has a common look. Along the west side runs a brick wall, on the north an iron fence, on the east palings, and on the south a tight fence of boards whitewashed. The city seems to have crowded upon it as though the living begrudged the dead room to rest in. Dwelling houses and shops stand close to it. The stones are thickly set, so close together as to almost warn the next comer that there is "standing room only." There are no broad, winding avenues for carriages. Following a narrow path and then treading your way between the graves where there is no path, you come, as many curious and reverential come, to the tomb of Stevens. It is of gray granite, a piece of his native Vermont hills. In size and shape it is almost identical with the stone that surmounts the grave of Buchanan. Panels of white marble are let into the sides, and on the one to the northward, below a curtain of black marble, cut as though rolled up that it might be seen, is the inscription:

.....
THADDEUS STEVENS,
BORN AT DANVILLE, CALEDONIA CO., VT.,
APRIL 4, 1792.
DIED AT WASHINGTON, D. C.,
AUGUST 11, 1868.
.....

On the western end is cut the name,

.....
"STEVENS."
.....

in script. On the opposite end, with a gilt star above them—a pinchbeck effort at ornament out of all keeping with the simplicity of the stone—are the dates that bound his life:

.....
1792—1868
.....

On the southern face of the tomb is the inscription, so characteristic of the man who sleeps beneath it:

.....
"I repose in this quiet and secluded spot,
Not from any natural preference of solitude,
But finding other cemeteries limited as to race
By charter rules,
I have chosen this that I might illustrate
In my death
The principles which I advocated
Through a long life:
Equality of man before his Creator."
.....

The stern old man would not permit his bones to be buried in a cemetery where a negro might not be his neighbor if he desired. A rose-bush is trained against the eastern end of the stone, and others are planted here and there within the lot. Wood violets and dandelions lift their blue and yellow out of the rank grass. The lot is very small, and is quite taken up with the tomb of Stevens and the graves of two relatives. On one of them stands a rough wooden cross, decorated with bits of cedar which once were green but now are brown and falling to pieces. There is also a little flag, bleached and weather worn with the number of a Grand Army Post still legible upon it.

Going from one graveyard to the other you pass the plain brick house where Stevens lived. Two barber poles stand in front of it now, and as I walked past it last night the soft notes of a banjo floating through the open windows betokened the color of the occupants. Lydia Smith, the mulatto housekeeper of the old commoner, bought the house with the \$5,000 legacy left her and her son, Ike, who lives in it, is a noted banjo player. She spends the greater part of her time in Washington. She is quite smart yet, but has not lost all traces of her former comeliness, and manages her business with much shrewdness.

Wheatland, the home of Buchanan, is an estate of some twenty acres, on the lower side of the Marietta turnpike, a mile west of Lancaster. It is beautifully situated in the midst of an agricultural region of unsurpassed beauty and the very perfection of tillage. A broad lawn, well set with stately trees and shrubbery, now in bloom, hedging its walks and carriage drives, sweeps in front of the house. On the brow of the slope back from the turnpike is a grove of hickory timber, and between the rear of the mansion and this woods are extensive orchards and gardens. Everything betokens care and attention the result of considerable valetudinarianism and liberal expenditure by its present owner, Miss Harriet Lane Johnston, whose regard for her uncle's

memory and affectionate recollections of their pleasant home life here alike induce this care of Wheatland. The house is an old-fashioned, wide front two-story brick building with portico in front, the library on the east wing and the kitchen and laundry on the west, while on the sides of the wide hall running through it are the dining room and parlor. The rooms are all capacious, light, plain and comfortable. The library, china and many quaint pieces of furniture, the property of the ex-President, and now his niece's by purchase or inheritance, are still here, though some of the most valuable and cherished heirlooms of the household are at the Johnston winter residence in Baltimore or distributed among other of Buchanan's relatives.

The wills of the two men are recorded in the same book within sixty pages of each other. I have never gone the length of taking handwriting as an infallible and sufficient index to character, but certainly many of the traits characteristic of the writers may be read in and between the lines of these old documents. Buchanan was a methodist with a little m, a stickler for forms, a reverent worshipper of precedents; so cautious in action that while his friends lauded him as a conservative, his enemies denounced him as a coward. He was above all things a gentleman and a punctilious moralist. He would hesitate to commit an unusual wrong, scarcely so much because it was wrong, as because it was unusual.

Stevens had no regard for the minor moralities of life when he was bent on accomplishing a great purpose. Zealous, ardent, impetuous and unscrupulous, he debauched the politics of his country and bought his way into the halls of legislation, there to take the bravest and grandest stand upon the greatest measures. He sought always the end, regardless of the means. If he could establish a common school system in Pennsylvania, strike the shackles from the black man and reconstruct the governmental system of the Southern States without transgressing the decalogue or the constitution so good. If not, so much the worse for the decalogue and the constitution. In the slang of modern politics, he would be classed as a "git thar" statesman. While Buchanan hesitated at the gates of Paradise to adjust his stock, Stevens would have set about reconstructing Satan's government without waiting to take off his overcoat.

Buchanan, retiring to the lonely seclusion of Wheatland too late for his fame, set about preparing for stately dignity. "In the name of God, amen, his will begins," "I, James Buchanan, late President of the United States, being of sound mind, etc.," and goes on to distribute his property, taking punctilious care to guarantee that each bequest should reach the object for which it was inherited. The writing is a courtier's hand, fine and delicate as a woman's. Each letter seems to have been written with deliberation and with a copy before him. Every alternate line is left blank, as though to add importance to the document. There is not a blot nor an erasure on the paper from the opening to the signature.

Stevens at the time when he had to be carried from his bed to his seat in the Hall of Representatives, seems to have dashed off his will while some new member was making a statistical speech. It starts out hurriedly:

"Last will and testament of Thaddeus Stevens of Lancaster."

He writes with the heavy hand he used in slapping public events. The document carries the marks of haste in every line. There is no superfluous legal verbiage about it. Here a word or two is omitted from a sentence. There the expression has not suited him. He dashes the pen through it and goes on. He is in a hurry to get the thing done, without regard to how. He gives the proceeds of \$500 to the sexton of the graveyard in Peacham, Vermont, where his mother and brother lie buried, "on condition that he keep the graves in good order and plant roses and other cheerful flowers in each of the four corners of said graves every spring."

Further on he remembers his mother again in a bequest to a Baptist church, of which faith she was, with the explanation: "I do this in memory of my mother, to whom I owe whatever of prosperity I have had in this world, and which, small as it is, I desire emphatically to acknowledge."

Directing the sale of some property, he drops this hint: "As \$5,000 has been offered for it, it should not go for less."

Then again, as though it had suddenly occurred to him, he says: "I bought the property of Jacob Ellinger at Sheriff's sale at much below its real value. I only want my own," and goes on to direct that it shall be sold and the proceeds in excess of what it cost him returned to the Ellinger heirs.