

Thomas Claxton

(- 3 Dec 1821)

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In this city, on Saturday evening last, after an indisposition by which he has been more or less afflicted for several years, Mr. Thomas Claxton, Doorkeeper of the House of Representatives of the United States. This responsible station he has filled, with zeal and exemplary fidelity, for thirty-two years. On the first organization of this government, he was appointed Assistant Doorkeeper, and not long afterwards succeeded to the higher station. His original profession was that of a printer, which, however, he did not practically follow after being appointed to his late station. Mr. C. was one of those upright and worthy men who enjoyed general respect, and was regarded by the Members of Congress generally as a friend and equal, rather than as an inferior in station. For many years past, he was biennially re-appointed to the office he held without a dissenting voice.

His death recalls to our mind an occasion in which his name was introduced in Debate in the House of Representatives in one of the most impressive bursts of eloquent feeling that we ever witnessed. It was in the month of March, 1814, towards the close of a debate on the Loan Bill, when the Opposition party in that House had rallied all their strength and poured forth all their eloquence against the prosecution of the War, and some of them had bitterly denounced it as "an inglorious war," that Mr. Cheves rose and delivered a speech of great effect, and even meriting the epithet of brilliant. We copy from it the following extract, as containing a just tribute to the memory of our deceased friend:

"An inglorious war! Insult not the gallant men who have fought and bled in your battles, and yet live with high claims to your applause. Tread not so rudely on the ashes of the heroic dead. Could the soul of Lawrence speak from the cerements which confine his moldering body, in what appalling language would he rebuke the man who should assert that the contest in which he so nobly conquered and so nobly died, was an inglorious war! Will you tell that worthy man [Claxton] who fills with so much fidelity and usefulness a station in your service on this floor, that this is an inglorious war? He has beheld one son triumph over his country's foes, and live to hear and receive the applause and gratitude of his country. He has seen another fall in the arms of victory, heroically aiding in an achievement, which if it be not unparalleled, is certainly not exceeded in the annals of history. Happy Father! Yet I would call him miserable and hopeless man were this an inglorious war. But I must call him a most happy Father, for God and nature have implanted in our bosoms a principle which elevates us above the love of life, and friends, and makes us think their loss a blessing, when they are yielded up in the cause of a beloved country, on the altar and in the spirit of patriotism. It is this principle which makes that excellent father reflect not merely with composure, but with pleasure, on the child of his love giving up his life in battle - his blood mingling with the wave, and his body entombed in the bosom of Erie. Yes, he would rather feel the consciousness that his gallant boy fought with Perry, and died in the glorious battle of the 10th September, than now embrace him in his arms, again animated with the strong pulse of life -- again pouring into the parental bosom his filial duty, and lighting up a father's pride and joy."