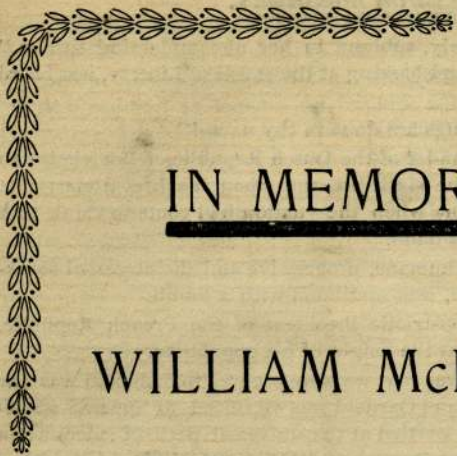


P268



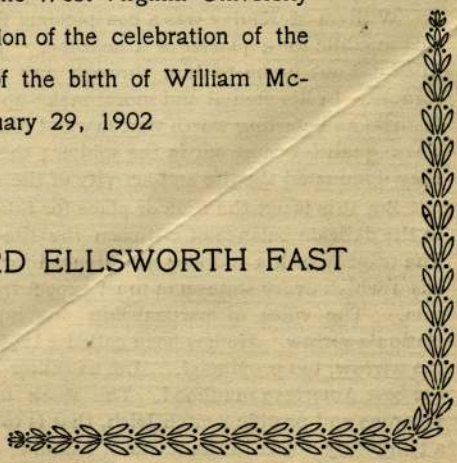
IN MEMORIAM

WILLIAM McKINLEY

AN ORATION

delivered at the West Virginia University
on the occasion of the celebration of the
anniversary of the birth of William Mc-
Kinley, January 29, 1902

By RICHARD ELLSWORTH FAST



WILLIAM MCKINLEY.

Madam Roland, "queenly, sublime in her uncomplaining sorrow," standing by the guillotine and looking at the statue of Liberty, was heard to say:

"Oh, Liberty, what things are done in thy name!"

William the Silent, Founder of the Dutch Republic, fell a victim to the assassin's bullets in the sixth attempt upon his life, a martyr to Protestantism, at the moment when the "nation had come to think with his brain and to act with his hand."

Alexander II, the most humane, progressive and disinterested sovereign Russia had ever known, was mutilated with a bomb.

Carnot, the honest and patriotic President of the French Republic, was stabbed to death when at the height of his popularity.

We had flattered ourselves that we were secure; for Lincoln was the victim of a period of strife, and Garfield was sacrificed to appease political rancor. The world was startled at the universal peril of rulers when Humbert of Italy was shot. But when William McKinley fell with a message of peace and good will upon his tongue, and with the right hand of friendship and fellowship extended to all his fellow-creatures, the world was appalled, and has not yet found words to express its feelings. It is some consolation to the living to be able to pay a tribute to the memory of the illustrious and beloved dead.

William McKinley was a conspicuous figure in the political life of this republic for a quarter of a century. The exalted stations that he filled did not come to him through any accident or fortuitous circumstances. In his mental and moral make-up were the qualities of steadfastness and sterling worth that marked him for places of responsibility. These qualities came out in the soldier; they developed in the lawyer; they dominated the life and activity of the statesman.

But this is not the time or place for fulsome eulogy or for weighing in the delicate balance of criticism the life-work of the late President. The tragedy of his undoing has silenced for some time to come that criticism which every statesman must expect from the ranks of the opposition. The voice of partisanship was hushed in the presence of the Nation's sorrow. He has been called a typical American. The term is too narrow, too provincial. Let us rather call him a representative of the best American manhood. The stock from which he comes is the vigorous and prolific Scotch-Irish, that is to say, Scotch, filtered through a temporary abode in the north of Ireland; for the name MacKinlay is as thoroughly Scotch as MacDonald or MacGregor. During the last

half of the eighteenth century more than half a million Scotch and Scotch-Irish immigrants came to America, who were chiefly distributed throughout the middle zone of the United States, upon which they have left as broad and permanent an impress as has the old Puritan stock upon the northern belt from Massachusetts to Oregon. This Scotch-Irish element, together with the German, has never received the recognition at the hands of historians that its influence upon our national life merits. Too much stress has been laid sometimes upon the influence exerted upon national life by the New England element. From this Scotch-Irish race has come the majority of the statesmen, jurists, scholars and men of affairs throughout the middle zone. It is a big-boned, strong-muscled, long-lived race, whose propagation and continuation have been prolific, whereas the old New England stock has barely maintained itself in its original environment. A paternal grandfather fought in the Revolution. Maternal ancestors were the victims of the cruelties of Claverhouse. The senior William McKinley was an ironmaster; and a maternal grandfather was a maker of cannon and bullets for the Revolutionary army. From such an ancestry William McKinley inherited chiefly poverty and brains, with deep convictions and a serious view of life; a combination that forebodes the doing of things. His boyhood was spent at Poland, Ohio, a village of schools and churches, with a population made up of New Englanders, Pennsylvania Dutch, and "Pennamites" or Pennsylvania English—a community in which reigned political and social agitation and religious controversy. Such an atmosphere naturally breeds a desire for higher education. Behold the young McKinley at the age of seventeen leaving the Poland Seminary and entering junior at Meadville; so far had he got with the aid of money supplied by sister Anne saved by teaching school. Illness follows and he returns home, and later enters the teaching business himself, whereby to earn more money to pursue his education. Fond of mathematics, caring little for Latin, and with no aptitude or liking for debate or oratory, he nevertheless received some commendation as a "good and easy writer." At eighteen this "lad of medium height and muscular build, with straight black hair, gray eyes, deep-set under heavy brows, and with a heavy chin," on a June day in 1861, memorable year, responded to Lincoln's call for volunteers. Old Fremont, stern disciplinarian, was mustering officer. There was some question as to age and state of health. But the veteran looked the young applicant over, tapped his chest, looked into his steady eyes, and said, "You'll do." So has he

faced the test on many occasions and in many places, and the American people have said, "You'll do."

The Civil War arrested his education in the seminaries and colleges; but it afforded him a four years course more potential as an educational force than all the years he had spent on Latin and mathematics in the seminary.

He marches away a private, one among the youngest in a regiment where all are young, with Rosecrans for Colonel, Stanley Mathews Lieutenant-Colonel, and Rutherford B. Hayes as Major. Soon it is Sergeant McKinley. Gallant and thoughtful he furnished his command with food and coffee while under fire; with result, a lieutenant's commission. Before the end of the war our serious young boy has become Captain McKinley, and is brevetted Major. How did it happen? Let his old commander ex-President Hayes tell us:

"Young as he was, we soon found that in business, in executive ability, young McKinley was a man of rare capacity, of unusual and unsurpassed capacity, especially for a boy of his age. When battles were to be fought or service was to be performed in warlike things, he always took his place. The night was never too dark; the weather was never too cold; there was no sleet or storm or hail or snow or rain that was in the way of his prompt and efficient performance of every duty." When the war ended he declined, what any one else with less self-poise would have grasped at, namely, a commission in the regular army. Scotch covenant-like he fought for a principle, and military life as a profession offered him no attractions. He laid aside his sword and took up Blackstone. But we are told that "he valued highly his army experience—as a great educating influence, in patriotism, in discipline of mind and body, in the subordination of self to duty, and in the intellectual development which he got from close association with older men of superior ability."

From the office of Judge Glidden he passes to the Albany Law School, and from thence to the bar, at the age of twenty-four, with an office in Canton. Within two years this even-tempered, serious-minded young man, in the face of discouraging political odds, is elected prosecuting attorney of his county; and his "feet are firmly planted on the first rounds of the ladder of success." His opportunity has come.

Even in a sketch as meager as this we can not pass over in silence his marriage. It means too much in a life-view of the man. One who has claim to speak with some knowledge has said: "The future seemed

to stretch away like a broad and sunny path, bordered by flowers, but in a little time the shadows of a great sorrow fell and left ineffaceable marks of suffering on the characters of the loving husband and wife. Two children were born to them, and both were claimed by death before the elder reached the age of four. The grief of the young mother wrecked her health and left her a victim to a nervous disease which made her a cripple for life, able to walk only with pain, and with a supporting arm. The devoted husband saw before him the tragic vision of a childless life and the companionship of an incurable invalid. No man ever accepted such a situation with more cheerful self-abnegation." Every one knows the rest of the story, how for a quarter of a century there was maintained a faithful and unfaltering love that never took thought that the act was worthy of praise. It may be that this home tragedy left some traces in the gravity of his demeanor, for the lines and shadows seemed to deepen when the face was in repose; but this only illuminated by contrast its native sweetness, purity, and strength.

His political system was patient and methodical. He did not trust to chance or fortune. He built up his political influence on a sure foundation and always by methods that were recognized as straightforward and honorable. His announcement of his candidacy for Congress in 1876 was as open and frank as his own nature. He assumed no false modesty, and made no pretense of reluctantly yielding to the irresistible importunities of friends. He wanted to go to Congress, and believed himself capable of doing good service for his State and district; and he said so in unmistakable terms. He is now (1877) 34 years old. Samuel J. Randall, of Philadelphia, the great Democratic protectionist, is Speaker of the House. James A. Garfield is the leader of the opposition on the floor. The young member from the Canton district, he of the grave demeanor, quiet manners, preoccupied look, and Napoleonic face, was not long in attracting attention; for he displayed a profound interest in questions of public economy. William D. Kelly, of Pennsylvania, surnamed "Pig-iron," was the champion of protection, father of the House, and a living, walking cyclopedia of facts and figures on all subjects relating to tariff, taxation, and public economics. During his first two terms William McKinley modestly and silently sat at the feet of this Gamaliel of Protection.

"Who is the young man over there," inquired a visiting newspaper man of one of the old occupants of the reporters' gallery, "the young man with the Napoleonic face?"

"Oh, that's old Pig-iron Kelly's lieutenant, Major McKinley of Ohio," was the answer.

It is said the old veteran Protectionist was favorably impressed with the modest attitude of his hard-working understudy, and more than once said, that when he left Congress he hoped his mantle as leader of the Protectionists would fall upon the shoulders of McKinley. Whether the young Elisha designed to inherit the mantle of Elijah, we do not know; but when the time came to choose a new leader, there was one man in the House above all others who was eminently qualified for the place. When in 1881 he took Garfield's place on the Ways and Means Committee, his fitness was at once conceded by all. He had specialized on the tariff and its history, its influence upon industry, and had at his command an endless array of facts that he made use of as weapons in debate. His career was the Alpha and Omega of the tariff. The first speech he made in Congress was on the tariff; the last speech he made in Congress was on the tariff. The evolution of his mind upon this question affords an interesting study, for it is evident that his views underwent some modification during the last year or two of his life. During the whole of the period of his services in Congress he was "the unfaltering, sturdy, consistent and intelligent advocate of the principle of protection to American industries by tariff duties imposed with the purpose of keeping the cheap labor products of European and Asiatic countries out of our vast and desirable American markets." Free trade to him was a dream of theorists, "which would bring industrial ruin and poverty to the United States, if it were put in practice, benefitting no class but the importing merchants of the seaboard cities." He was more radical than Garfield, who stood for a protective tariff that would ultimately lead to free trade. He did not even base his idea of the necessity of a tariff upon revenue with incidental protection. "Tariff bills," he said, "should aim primarily at protection, and tariff legislation should be scientific and permanent, with a view to the continuous prosperity of the industrial classes." Such was the McKinley gospel of Protection during the period of his career as a legislator. He was not merely a Protectionist, he was the highest of the high protectionists, and the famous bill which bore his name, bore his thought and work on every page. The political reverse of 1892 would have worked a change in the views of a man of weak convictions. His party leaders were discomfited. A move was on foot to abandon the high protectionist principle. But William McKinley was one of the few who refused to abandon it, and the old line of battle was

re-formed. Whatever may be our individual views upon the propriety or impropriety of the McKinley schedule of tariffs, one can not for a moment doubt the profound conviction of the man that his theory was right. In the effort to enlighten the nation and form a healthy sentiment in keeping with his own ideas, during a period of eight weeks, in 1894, he averaged seven speeches a day, varying in length from ten minutes to one hour, aggregating in all 357, delivered in eighteen States. This wonderful tour undoubtedly won for him the Presidential nomination in 1896.

What is the secret of the strength and sincerity of McKinley's convictions on the tariff question? We may say with safety it was his environment. The section of Ohio in which he lived had become a vast aggregation of workshops and factories, built up on the development of iron, steel, and allied industries. He had seen Canton grow from 4,000 to 35,000; Youngstown from 2,500 to 35,000; Salem from 2,000 to 10,000; Akron from 3,000 to 40,000; with a similar growth in such places as Niles, Massilon, Alliance, Mansfield and Wooster. All this phenomenal development he had attributed to a protective tariff. Along with the manufacturing development had kept pace rural and agricultural development. Such an environment was calculated to make a protectionist of any man. We have laid stress upon these facts because it has been said that McKinley was a man of one idea. Perhaps, had he never been called to the Presidency, he might have passed into history as a man of one idea, without challenge. The test of true worth and greatness lies in this, that a man can measure up to the necessities created by his opportunities. Every cemetery contains some mute inglorious Milton or Cromwell. When posterity shall have come to study the wide range of work and knowledge of William McKinley as disclosed in his public addresses, which alone make one enormous volume, touching upon topics covering almost the entire list of public questions, his proper station as a man of public affairs will be accorded him.

He has been classed as one of the three greatest campaign orators of his day. He possessed the qualities that go to make up a great stump orator: "simplicity and directness of statement; a clear, far-reaching voice; a winning personality; an inborn faculty for giving to spoken thoughts such a projectile force as will secure for them a lodgment in other minds; and finally, physical endurance. All these qualifications McKinley possessed in a high degree." Less comprehensive in thought and less happy in illustration than Garfield; less spontaneous and mag-

netic than Blaine ; he nevertheless possessed in a higher degree than these two famous orators the "gift for going straight to the understanding of the plain people." One who followed him in his great tour of 1802 has thus described him : "He never tells a story in his speeches ; he is the personification of seriousness and earnestness ; he quotes no poetry ; he strives for no merely oratorical effects ; he never abuses his political antagonists or the opposition party. He always starts out to convince the understanding of his hearers ; then, when he has presented his facts and set forth his processes of reasoning, logically and persuasively, he warms up, his deep-set eyes glow, his form seems to tower, his voice rings out like a trumpet, and he drives in his argument with sledge-hammer blows of short, sonorous, epigrammatic sentences. He has wonderful staying qualities. He is never exhausted. To every fresh audience he brings the charm of a vigorous presence."

One secret of his success as an orator lay in his power to state great truths in the form of maxims. It is said that popular governments produce great maxim-makers. Washington and Cleveland were wont to relapse into silence. Lincoln uttered his arguments through the medium of jokes. But McKinley gave out a maxim that left little to be said in opposition, and which, by its simplicity, confounded his opponents. "It is better to open the mills than to open the mints ;" "The maker must find the taker ;" "A patriot makes a better citizen than a pessimist ;" are maxims that will last through the ages.

We can go no further into his public career. It is all comparatively recent. It is all familiar to us. But with his second election to the Presidency there had come about a new era of good feeling throughout the country, such as in a large degree obliterated party lines, and such as had not existed since the days of President Monroe. He held the confidence and esteem of the nation. As a chief magistrate his eminent rank was recognized abroad. His policies had been vindicated, and his great life-work had reached a culmination that rarely comes to any one. His last great speech was a message of peace and good will to the world. That speech is his testament to the nations. Then it was that he fell. His name and fame are left in safe hands.

"Kingdoms, the pride of dust to dust return,
As History's dying hand lets fall the scroll,
But flaming through eternal paths will burn
The Godward fire of an heroic soul."