



JOHN HAY

SECRETARY HAY

HON. JOHN HAY, LL. D., American statesman, diplomat, journalist, poet, and prose writer, was born at Salem, Ind., Oct. 8, 1838. He received his academic education at Springfield, Ill., and graduated at Brown University in 1858. After his admission to the Illinois Bar, he became private secretary to President Lincoln, and was thus enabled to gather much information which he incorporated in his "Life of Lincoln," written in collaboration with John G. Nicolay. He served successively as Secretary of Legation at Paris, Madrid, and Vienna, and was chargé d'affaires at Vienna. In 1879, he became first assistant Secretary of State, and held that office until 1881, when he was elected president of the International Sanitary Conference. In 1897, he was United States ambassador to England, where he won golden opinions; and in the following year became a member of President McKinley's cabinet as Secretary of State. Among his best-known works are "Castilian Days" and "Pike County Ballads," which contains the famous poem, "Jim Bludsoe." An English authority speaks of him as "a fine example of the man of letters and of public affairs."

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE PRESIDENT MCKINLEY

DELIVERED AT WASHINGTON, D. C., AT THE JOINT MEMORIAL SESSION OF
THE U. S. SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEB. 27, 1902

FOR the third time the Congress of the United States are assembled to commemorate the life and the death of a President slain by the hand of an assassin. The attention of the future historian will be attracted to the features which reappear with startling sameness in all three of these awful crimes; the uselessness, the utter lack of consequence of the act; the obscurity, the insignificance of the criminal; the blamelessness—so far as in our sphere of existence the best of men ^{could} be held blameless—of the victim. Not one of our murdered ^{Presidents} who ^{had} had an enemy in the world; they were all of such ^{pre-eminence} pre-eminence purity of life that no pretext could be given for the attack of passion; they were all men of democratic instincts, who could never

have offended the most jealous advocates of equality; they were of kindly and generous nature, to whom wrong or injustice was impossible; of moderate fortune, whose slender means nobody could envy. They were men of austere virtue, of tender heart, of eminent abilities, which they had devoted with single minds to the good of the Republic. If ever men walked before God and man without blame, it was these three rulers of our people. The only temptation to attack their lives offered was their gentle radiance—to eyes hating the light that was offence enough.

The stupid uselessness of such an infamy affronts the common sense of the world. One can conceive how the death of a dictator may change the political conditions of an Empire; how the extinction of a narrowing line of kings may bring in an alien dynasty. But in a well-ordered Republic like ours, the ruler may fall, but the State feels no tremor. Our beloved and revered leader is gone—but the natural process of our laws provides us a successor, identical in purpose and ideals, nourished by the same teachings, inspired by the same principles, pledged by tender affection as well as by high loyalty to carry to completion the immense task committed to his hands, and to smite with iron severity every manifestation of that hideous crime which his mild predecessor, with his dying breath, forgave. The sayings of celestial wisdom have no date; the words that reach us, over two thousand years, out of the darkest hour of gloom the world has ever known, are true to life to-day: "They know not what they do." The blow struck by our dear friend and ruler was as deadly as ~~any~~ ^{any} ~~could~~ ^{could} hate could make it; but the blow struck at anarchy was deadlier still.

What a world of insoluble problems such an event excites in the mind! Not merely in its personal, but in its public

aspects, it presents a paradox not to be comprehended. Under a system of government so free and so impartial that we recognize its existence only by its benefactions; under a social order so purely democratic that classes cannot exist in it, affording opportunities so universal that even conditions are as changing as the winds, where the laborer of to-day is the capitalist of to-morrow; under laws which are the result of ages of evolution, so uniform and so beneficent that the President has just the same rights and privileges as the artisan; we see the same hellish growth of hatred and murder which dogs equally the footsteps of benevolent monarchs and blood-stained despots. How many countries can join with us in the community of a kindred sorrow! I will not speak of those distant regions where assassination enters into the daily life of government. But among the nations bound to us by the ties of familiar intercourse—who can forget that wise and mild Autocrat who had earned the proud title of the Liberator? that enlightened and magnanimous citizen whom France still mourns? that brave and chivalrous King of Italy who only lived for his people? and, saddest of all, that lovely and sorrowing Empress, whose harmless life could hardly have excited the animosity of a demon. Against that devilish spirit nothing avails—neither virtue nor patriotism, nor age nor youth, nor conscience nor pity. We can not even say that education is a sufficient safeguard against this baleful evil—for most of the wretches whose crimes have so shocked humanity in recent years were men not unlettered, who have gone from the common schools, through murder to the scaffold.

Our minds cannot discern the origin nor conceive the extent of wickedness so perverse and so cruel; but this does not exempt us from the duty of trying to control and counteract

it. We do not understand what electricity is; whence it comes or what its hidden properties may be. But we know it as a mighty force for good or evil—and so with the painful toil of years men of learning and skill have labored to store and to subjugate it, to neutralize, and even to employ its destructive energies. This problem of anarchy is dark and intricate, but it ought to be within the compass of democratic government—although no sane mind can fathom the mysteries of these untracked and orbitless natures—to guard against their aberrations, to take away from them the hope of escape, the long luxury of scandalous days in court, the unwholesome sympathy of hysterical degenerates, and so by degrees to make the crime not worth committing, even to these abnormal and distorted souls.

It would be presumptuous for me in this presence to suggest the details of remedial legislation for a malady so malignant. That task may safely be left to the skill and patience of the National Congress, which has never been found unequal to any such emergency. The country believes that the memory of three murdered comrades of yours—all of whose voices still haunt these walls—will be a sufficient inspiration to enable you to solve even this abstruse and painful problem, which has dimmed so many pages of history with blood and with tears.

Before an audience less sympathetic than this, I should not dare to speak of that great career which we have met to commemorate. But we are all his friends, and friends do not criticise each other's words about an open grave. I thank you for the honor you have done me in inviting me here, and not less for the kind forbearance I know I shall have from you in my most inadequate efforts to speak of him worthily.

The life of William McKinley was, from his birth to his

death, typically American. There is no environment, I should say, anywhere else in the world which could produce just such a character. He was born into that way of life which elsewhere is called the middle class, but which in this country is so nearly universal as to make of other classes an almost negligible quantity. He was neither rich nor poor, neither proud nor humble; he knew no hunger he was not sure of satisfying, no luxury which could enervate mind or body. His parents were sober, God-fearing people; intelligent and upright, without pretension and without humility. He grew up in the company of boys like himself, wholesome, honest, self-respecting. They looked down on nobody; they never felt it possible they could be looked down upon. Their houses were the homes of probity, piety, patriotism. They learned in the admirable school readers of fifty years ago the lessons of heroic and splendid life which have come down from the past. They read in their weekly newspapers the story of the world's progress, in which they were eager to take part, and of the sins and wrongs of civilization with which they burned to do battle. It was a serious and thoughtful time. The boys of that day felt dimly, but deeply, that days of sharp struggle and high achievement were before them. They looked at life with the wondering yet resolute eyes of a young esquire in his vigil of arms. They felt a time was coming when to them should be addressed the stern admonition of the Apostle, "Quit you like men; be strong."

It is not easy to give to those of a later generation any clear idea of that extraordinary spiritual awakening which passed over the country at the first red signal fires of the war between the States. It was not our earliest apocalypse; a hundred years before the nation had been revealed to itself,

when after long discussion and much searching of heart the people of the colonies had resolved that to live without liberty was worse than to die, and had therefore wagered in the solemn game of war "their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor." In a stress of heat and labor unutterable, the country had been hammered and welded together; but thereafter for nearly a century there had been nothing in our life to touch the innermost fountain of feeling and devotion; we had had rumors of war—even wars we had had, not without sacrifices and glory—but nothing which went to the vital self-consciousness of the country, nothing which challenged the nation's right to live. But in 1860 the nation was going down into the Valley of Decision. The question which had been debated on thousands of platforms, which had been discussed in countless publications, which, thundered from innumerable pulpits, had caused in their congregations the bitter strife and dissension to which only cases of conscience can give rise, was everywhere pressing for solution. And not merely in the various channels of publicity was it alive and clamorous. About every fireside in the land, in the conversation of friends and neighbors, and deeper still, in the secret of millions of human hearts, the battle of opinion was waging; and all men felt and saw—with more or less clearness—that an answer to the importunate question, Shall the nation live? was due, and not to be denied. And I do not mean that in the North alone there was this austere wrestling with conscience. In the South as well, below all the effervescence and excitement of a people perhaps more given to eloquent speech than we were, there was the profound agony of question and answer, the summons to decide whether honor and freedom did not call **them** to revolution and war. It is easy for partisanship to

say that the one side was right and that the other was wrong. It is still easier for an ignorant magnanimity to say that both were right. Perhaps in the wide view of ethics one is always right to follow his conscience, though it lead him to disaster and death. But history is inexorable. She takes no account of sentiment and intention; and in her cold and luminous eyes that side is right which fights in harmony with the stars in their courses. The men are right through whose efforts and struggles the world is helped onward, and humanity moves to a higher level and a brighter day.

The men who are living to-day and were young in 1860 will never forget the glory and glamor that filled the earth and the sky when the long twilight of doubt and uncertainty was ending and the time for action had come. A speech by Abraham Lincoln was an event not only of high moral significance, but of far-reaching importance; the drilling of a militia company by Ellsworth attracted national attention; the fluttering of the flag in the clear sky drew tears from the eyes of young men. Patriotism, which had been a rhetorical expression, became a passionate emotion, in which instinct, logic and feeling were fused. The country was worth saving; it could be saved only by fire; no sacrifice was too great; the young men of the country were ready for the sacrifice; come weal, come woe, they were ready.

At seventeen years of age William McKinley heard this summons of his country. He was the sort of youth to whom a military life in ordinary times would possess no attractions. His nature was far different from that of the ordinary soldier. He had other dreams of life, its prizes and pleasures, than that of marches and battles. But to his mind there was no choice or question. The banner floating in the morning breeze was the beckoning gesture of his country. The

thrilling notes of the trumpet called him—him and none other—into the ranks. His portrait in his first uniform is familiar to you all—the short, stocky figure; the quiet, thoughtful face; the deep, dark eyes. It is the face of a lad who could not stay at home when he thought he was needed in the field. He was of the stuff of which good soldiers are made. Had he been ten years older he would have entered at the head of a company and come out at the head of a division. But he did what he could. He enlisted as a private; he learned to obey. His serious, sensible ways, his prompt, alert efficiency soon attracted the attention of his superiors. He was so faithful in little things that they gave him more and more to do. He was untiring in camp and on the march; swift, cool and fearless in fight. He left the Army, with field rank when the war ended, brevetted by President Lincoln for gallantry in battle.

In coming years when men seek to draw the moral of our great Civil War, nothing will seem to them so admirable in all the history of our two magnificent armies as the way in which the war came to a close. When the Confederate army saw the time had come, they acknowledged the pitiless logic of facts and ceased fighting. When the army of the Union saw it was no longer needed, without a murmur or question, making no terms, asking no return, in the flush of victory and fulness of might, it laid down its arms and melted back into the mass of peaceful citizens. There is no event since the nation was born which has so proved its solid capacity for self-government. Both sections share equally in that crown of glory. They had held a debate of incomparable importance and had fought it out with equal energy. A conclusion had been reached—and it is to the everlasting honor of both sides that they each knew when the war was

over and the hour of a lasting peace had struck. We may admire the desperate daring of others who prefer annihilation to compromise, but the palm of common sense, and, I will say, of enlightened patriotism, belongs to the men like Grant and Lee, who knew when they had fought enough, for honor and for country.

William McKinley, one of that sensible million of men, gladly laid down his sword and betook himself to his books. He quickly made up the time lost in soldiering. He attacked his Blackstone as he would have done a hostile intrenchment; finding the range of a country law library too narrow, he went to the Albany Law School, where he worked energetically with brilliant success; was admitted to the bar and settled down to practice—a brevetted veteran of twenty-four—in the quiet town of Canton, now and henceforth forever famous as the scene of his life and his place of sepulture. Here many blessings awaited him; high repute, professional success, and a domestic affection so pure, so devoted and stainless that future poets, seeking an ideal of Christian marriage, will find in it a theme worthy of their songs. This is a subject to which the lightest allusion seems profanation; but it is impossible to speak of William McKinley without remembering that no truer, tenderer knight to his chosen lady ever lived among mortal men. If to the spirits of the just made perfect is permitted the consciousness of earthly things, we may be sure that his faithful soul is now watching over that gentle sufferer who counts the long hours in their shattered home in the desolate splendor of his fame.

A man possessing the qualities with which nature had endowed McKinley seeks political activity as naturally as a growing plant seeks light and air. A wholesome ambition; a rare power of making friends and keeping them; a faith,

which may be called religious, in his country and its institutions; and, flowing from this, a belief that a man could do no nobler work than to serve such a country—these were the elements in his character that drew him irresistibly into public life. He had from the beginning a remarkable equipment; a manner of singular grace and charm; a voice of ringing quality and great carrying power—vast as were the crowds that gathered about him, he reached their utmost fringe without apparent effort. He had an extraordinary power of marshalling and presenting significant facts, so as to bring conviction to the average mind. His range of reading was not wide; he read only what he might some day find useful; and what he read his memory held like brass. Those who knew him well in those early days can never forget the consummate skill and power with which he would select a few pointed facts and, blow upon blow, would hammer them into the attention of great assemblages in Ohio, as Jael drove the nail into the head of the Canaanite captain. He was not often impassioned; he rarely resorted to the aid of wit or humor; yet I never saw his equal in controlling and convincing a popular audience by sheer appeal to their reason and intelligence. He did not flatter or cajole them, but there was an implied compliment in the serious and sober tone in which he addressed them. He seemed one of them; in heart and feeling he was one of them. Each artisan in a great crowd might say: That is the sort of man I would like to be, and under more favorable circumstances might have been. He had the divine gift of sympathy, which, though given only to the elect, makes all men their friends.

So it came naturally about that in 1876—the beginning of the second century of the Republic—he began, by an election to Congress, his political career. Thereafter for four-

teen years this chamber was his home. I use the word advisedly. Nowhere in the world was he so in harmony with his environment as here; nowhere else did his mind work with such full consciousness of its powers. The air of debate was native to him; here he drank delight of battle with his peers. In after days, when he drove by this stately pile, or when on rare occasions his duty called him here, he greeted his old haunts with the affectionate zest of a child of the house; during all the last ten years of his life, filled as they were with activity and glory, he never ceased to be homesick for this hall. When he came to the Presidency, there was not a day when his Congressional service was not of use to him. Probably no other President has been in such full and cordial communion with Congress, if we may except Lincoln alone. McKinley knew the legislative body thoroughly, its composition, its methods, its habit of thought. He had the profoundest respect for its authority and an inflexible belief in the ultimate rectitude of its purposes. Our history shows how sure an executive courts disaster and ruin by assuming an attitude of hostility or distrust to the Legislature; and, on the other hand, McKinley's frank and sincere trust and confidence in Congress were repaid by prompt and loyal support and co-operation. During his entire term of office this mutual trust and regard—so essential to the public welfare—was never shadowed by a single cloud.

He was a Republican. He could not be anything else. A Union soldier grafted upon a Clay Whig, he necessarily believed in the "American System"—in protection to home industries; in a strong, aggressive nationality; in a liberal construction of the Constitution. What any self-reliant nation might rightly do, he felt this nation had power to do, if required by the common welfare and not prohibited by our written charter.