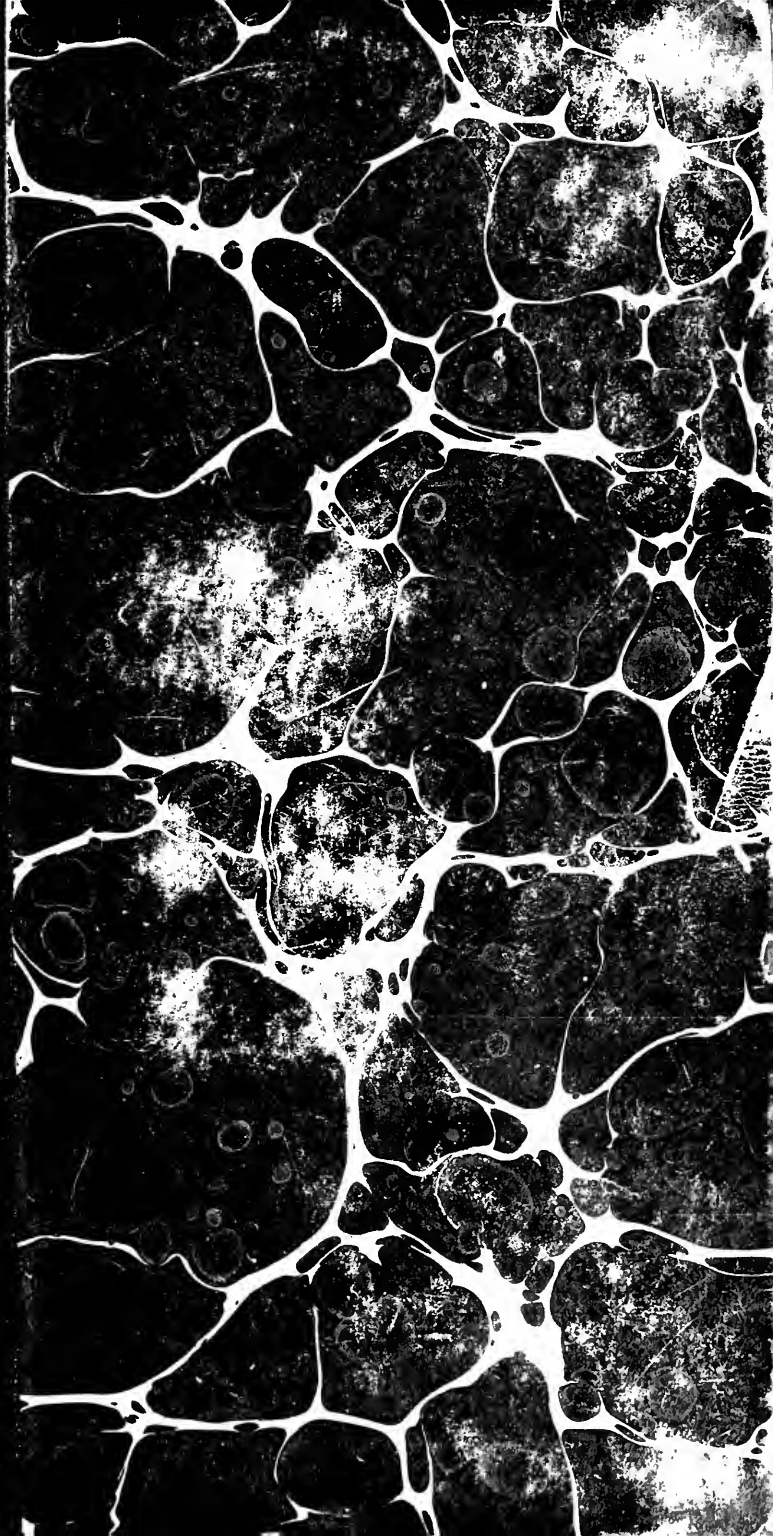


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ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT AT
CANTON, OHIO  SEPTEMBER 30, 1907



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1907

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We have gathered together to-day to pay our meed of respect and affection to the memory of William McKinley, who as President won a place in the hearts of the American people such as but three or four of all the Presidents of this country have ever won. He was of singular up-

rightness and purity of character, alike in public and in private life; a citizen who loved peace, he did his duty faithfully and well for four years of war when the honor of the nation called him to arms. As Congressman, as governor of his State, and finally as President, he rose to the foremost place among our statesmen, reaching a position which would satisfy the keenest ambition; but he never lost that simple and thoughtful kindness toward every human being, great or small, lofty

or humble, with whom he was brought in contact, which so endeared him to our people. He had to grapple with more serious and complex problems than any President since Lincoln, and yet, while meeting every demand of statesmanship, he continued to live a beautiful and touching family life, a life very healthy for this nation to see in its foremost citizen; and now the woman who walked in the shadow ever after his death, the wife to whom his loss was a calamity more crush-

ing than it could be to any other human being, lies beside him here in the same sepulcher.

There is a singular appropriateness in the inscription on his monument. Mr. Cortelyou, whose relations with him were of such close intimacy, gives me the following information about it: On the President's trip to the Pacific slope in the spring of 1901 President Wheeler, of the University of California, conferred the degree of LL. D. upon him in words so

well chosen that they struck the fastidious taste of John Hay, then Secretary of State, who wrote and asked for a copy of them from President Wheeler. On the receipt of this copy he sent the following letter to President McKinley, a letter which now seems filled with a strange and unconscious prescience :

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT :

President Wheeler sent me the inclosed at my request. You will have the words in more permanent shape. They seem to me remarkably well chosen, and

stately and dignified enough to serve—
long hence, please God—as your epitaph.

Yours, faithfully,

JOHN HAY.

“UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,

“Office of the President.

“By authority vested in me by the regents of the University of California, I confer the degree of Doctor of Laws upon William McKinley, President of the United States, a statesman singularly gifted to unite the discordant forces of the Government and mold the diverse purposes of men toward progressive and salutary action, a magistrate whose poise of judgment has been tested and vindicated in a

succession of national emergencies; good citizen, brave soldier, wise executive, helper and leader of men, exemplar to his people of the virtues that build and conserve the state, society, and the home.

“Berkeley, May 15, 1901.”

It would be hard to imagine an epitaph which a good citizen would be more anxious to deserve or one which would more happily describe the qualities of that great and good citizen whose life we here commemorate. He possessed to a very extraordinary degree the gift of

uniting discordant forces and securing from them a harmonious action which told for good government. From purposes not merely diverse, but bitterly conflicting, he was able to secure healthful action for the good of the State. In both poise and judgment he rose level to the several emergencies he had to meet as leader of the nation, and like all men with the root of true greatness in them he grew to steadily larger stature under the stress of heavy responsibilities. He

was a good citizen and a brave soldier, a Chief Executive whose wisdom entitled him to the trust which he received throughout the nation. He was not only a leader of men but preeminently a helper of men; for one of his most marked traits was the intensely human quality of his wide and deep sympathy. Finally, he not merely preached, he was, that most valuable of all citizens in a democracy like ours, a man who in the highest place served as an unconscious

example to his people of the virtues that build and conserve alike our public life, and the foundation of all public life, the intimate life of the home.

Many lessons are taught us by his career, but none more valuable than the lesson of broad human sympathy for and among all of our citizens of all classes and creeds. No other President has ever more deserved to have his life work characterized in Lincoln's words as being carried on "with malice toward none, with charity

toward all." As a boy he worked hard with his hands; he entered the Army as a private soldier; he knew poverty; he earned his own livelihood; and by his own exertions he finally rose to the position of a man of moderate means. Not merely was he in personal touch with farmer and town dweller, with capitalist and wageworker, but he felt an intimate understanding of each, and therefore an intimate sympathy with each; and his consistent effort was to try to judge all by

the same standard and to treat all with the same justice. Arrogance toward the weak, and envious hatred of those well off, were equally abhorrent to his just and gentle soul.

Surely this attitude of his should be the attitude of all our people to-day. It would be a cruel disaster to this country to permit ourselves to adopt an attitude of hatred and envy toward success worthily won, toward wealth honestly acquired. Let us in this respect profit by the exam-

ple of the republics of this Western Hemisphere to the south of us. Some of these republics have prospered greatly; but there are certain ones that have lagged far behind, that still continue in a condition of material poverty, of social and political unrest and confusion. Without exception the republics of the former class are those in which honest industry has been assured of reward and protection; those where a cordial welcome has been extended to the kind of enterprise which

benefits the whole country, while incidentally, as is right and proper, giving substantial rewards to those who manifest it. On the other hand, the poor and backward republics, the republics in which the lot of the average citizen is least desirable, and the lot of the laboring man worst of all, are precisely those republics in which industry has been killed because wealth exposed its owner to spoliation. To these communities foreign capital now rarely comes, because it has been found

that as soon as capital is employed so as to give substantial remuneration to those supplying it, it excites ignorant envy and hostility, which result in such oppressive action, within or without the law, as sooner or later to work a virtual confiscation. Every manifestation of feeling of this kind in our civilization should be crushed at the outset by the weight of a sensible public opinion.

From the standpoint of our material prosperity there is only one other thing as

important as the discouragement of a spirit of envy and hostility toward honest business men, toward honest men of means; this is the discouragement of dishonest business men.

Wait a moment; I don't want you to applaud this part unless you are willing to applaud also the part I read first, to which you listened in silence. I want you to understand that I will stand just as straight for the rights of the honest man who wins his fortune by honest methods

as I will stand against the dishonest man who wins a fortune by dishonest methods. And I challenge the right to your support in one attitude just as much as in the other. I am glad you applauded when you did, but I want you to go back now and applaud the other statement. I will read a little of it over again. "Every manifestation of ignorant envy and hostility toward honest men who acquire wealth by honest means should be crushed at the outset by the weight of a sensible

public opinion." Thank you. Now I'll go on.

From the standpoint of our material prosperity there is only one other thing as important as the discouragement of a spirit of envy and hostility toward honest business men, toward honest men of means, and that is the discouragement of dishonest business men, the war upon the chicanery and wrongdoing which are peculiarly repulsive, peculiarly noxious when exhibited by men who have no excuse of

want, of poverty, of ignorance for their crimes. My friends, I will wage war against those dishonest men to the utmost extent of my ability, and I will stand no less stoutly in defense of honest men, rich or poor. Men of means and, above all, men of great wealth can exist in safety under the peaceful protection of the state only in orderly societies, where liberty manifests itself through and under the law. That is what you fought for, you veterans. You fought for the supremacy

of the national law in every corner of this Republic. It is these men, the men of wealth, who more than any others, should in the interest of the class to which they belong, in the interest of their children and their children's children, seek in every way, but especially in the conduct of their lives, to insist upon and to build up respect for the law. It is an extraordinary thing, a very extraordinary thing, that it should be necessary for me to utter as simple a truth as that; yet

it is necessary. It may not be true from the standpoint of some particular individual of this class of very wealthy men, but in the long run it is preeminently true from the standpoint of the class as a whole, no less than of the country as a whole, that it is a veritable calamity to achieve a temporary triumph by violation or evasion of the law, and we are the best friends of the man of property, we show ourselves the staunchest upholders of the rights of property when we set our faces like flint

against those offenders who do wrong in order to acquire great wealth, or who use this wealth as a help to wrongdoing.

I sometimes feel that I have trenched a little on your province, Brother Bristol, and on that of your brethren, by preaching. But whenever I speak of the wrongdoing of a man of wealth or of a man of poverty, poor man or rich man, I always want to try to couple together the fact that wrongdoing is wrong just as much in one case as in the other, with the fact that right

is just as much right in one case as in the other. I want the plain people of this country, I want all of us who do not have great wealth, to remember that in our own interest, and because it is right, we must be just as scrupulous in doing justice to the man of great wealth as in exacting justice from him.

Wrongdoing is confined to no class. Good and evil are to be found among both rich and poor, and in drawing the line among our fellows we must draw it

on conduct and not on worldly possessions. Woe to this country if we ever get to judging men by anything save their worth as men, without regard to their fortune in life. In other words, my plea is that you draw the line on conduct and not on worldly possessions. In the abstract most of us will admit this. It is a rather more difficult proposition in the concrete. We can act upon such doctrines only if we really have knowledge of, and sympathy with, one another. If both

the wage-worker and the capitalist are able to enter each into the other's life, to meet him so as to get into genuine sympathy with him, most of the misunderstanding between them will disappear and its place will be taken by a judgment broader, juster, more kindly, and more generous; for each will find in the other the same essential human attributes that exist in himself. It was President McKinley's peculiar glory that in actual practice he realized this as it is given to but few men

to realize it; that his broad and deep sympathies made him feel a genuine sense of oneness with all his fellow-Americans, whatever their station or work in life, so that to his soul they were all joined with him in a great brotherly democracy of the spirit. It is not given to many of us in our lives actually to realize this attitude to the extent that he did; but we can at least have it before us as the goal of our endeavor, and by so doing we shall pay honor better than in any other

way to the memory of the dead President whose services in life we this day commemorate.









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