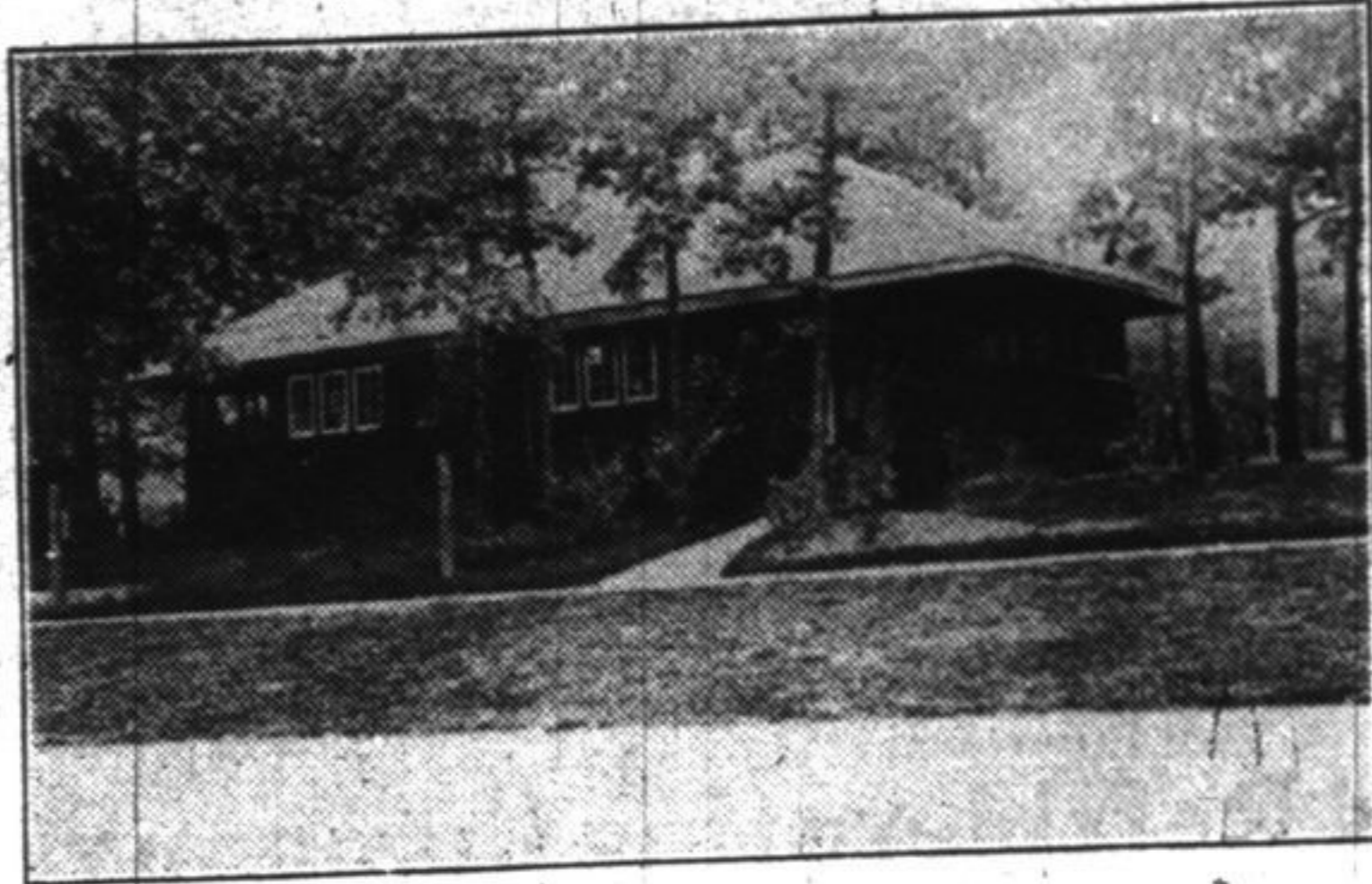


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WILLIAM MCKINLEY

Speech of
HON. GEORGE EDMUND FOSS
In the House of Representatives, January 29, 1916

Mr. Speaker, seventy-three years ago today William McKinley was born in the little village of Niles in the state of Ohio. He remained there until he was about eleven years of age and then moved with his parents to Poland, in the same state, where, as his mother once said, there were better educational advantages for the children. He entered Allegheny College, and when the war broke out—then but 18 years of age—enlisted as a private soldier. He was promoted several times during the war, and at its close returned home with the commission of a brevet major "for gallant and meritorious services at the Battles of Obequan, Cedar Creek, and Fishers Hill." This commission was signed by Abraham Lincoln about one month before his death. Maj. McKinley then took up the study of law. For a time he was in the law school at Albany, N. Y., and later, returning to his native state, was admitted to the bar, and began the practice of law in the city of Canton, which remained his home until his death. He was elected prosecuting attorney of Stark county in 1871, but was defeated for re-election in 1873. In 1876 he was first elected to Congress. In 1880 he was made a member of the Committee on Ways and Means, taking the place of General Garfield, who at that time had first been elected president. In 1889 he became the chairman of that great committee which drafted the McKinley tariff law. In 1890 he was defeated for Congress and in 1891 he was elected governor of Ohio. In 1893 he was re-elected. In 1896 he was elected president of the United States. In 1900 he was re-elected. On the 6th day of September, 1901, while attending the exposition at Buffalo, he was shot by an assassin, and there lingered between life and death until the 14th, when he died. This briefly is a sketch of his life.

An Inspiring Career

His was an inspiring career. Every phase of it has something worthy of emulation and hope to American youth and manhood.

It would be pleasant to retrace the steps of his early boyhood and picture the American home from which he sprang; his early school life and the building of character; his participation in the debates, where he acquired that simplicity and directness of speech which, with a well-modulated voice and a strong earnestness and fervency of expression, made him later one of the most impressive orators of his time. I would like to dwell upon his career as a soldier; the brilliant achievements upon the field; that dramatic incident when, in the flame of battle, amid flying shot and bursting shell, he bore the order of his colonel, afterwards president of the United States, to a distant regiment. And then, too, when Sheridan on his immortal ride down the valley of the Shenandoah, found him rallying his men, the first to meet him and state definitely the military situation. I would like to relate his struggles as a young lawyer waiting for clients, and later his success at the bar, and his ability as a prosecutor before the courts of Stark county. I would like to speak of him as the citizen, loyal and true, and then as the man, his gentleness and his many amiable traits of character and particularly his constant devotion to the invalid partner of his joys and sorrows. But time would fail me to speak of the many interesting sides of his life, and so I pass on to his national career.

From 1876 down to the day of his death he was in public life, as a member of Congress, as governor of his state, and as president of the United States. For twenty-five years he stood in the blaze of the fierce light of public criticism, and there never was a whisper of suspicion as to his integrity, his honor, or character. (Applause.)

His Industry

McKinley was industrious and concentrated all of his faculties to a given purpose. When he first entered public life he threw his whole soul and energy into it. He made it his business not only to be a good member of Congress but to be the best member of Congress that he knew how, and it is this difference between doing a thing well and doing a thing the best you know how that makes the difference between the ordinarily successful man and the eminently successful man. The extra effort which is applied in the latter case has laid the foundation for the great characters in history.

Concentration of Energies

Then, too, the proper concentration of efforts along a given line of action is infinitely better than the diffusion of energies over a whole field

of labor, some of which may be profitable and some unprofitable.

McKinley, in one of his speeches, said:

"Labor is the only key to opportunity. You are all here to do something—to work out a destiny, to discover the forces of nature and make them serve men's uses and God's purposes."

McKinley while in Congress directed his efforts largely in one direction. He sought to do something, and he found that something to be the mastery of a great political principle which he believed meant more for the happiness of the American people than anything else—protection to American industries. (Applause.) He applied himself day and night to that one thing until it became the master of his great idea.

The Master of a Great Principle

Some of his critics have said that he was a man of one idea, and that was the argument which was frequently used against him when he was nominated for president of the United States and in the campaign following. But it is better to be a master of one thing than to be a master of none. It is better, as Josh Billings once said, "to know less than so many things that ain't so." The men who have been great in history have been masters of an idea. It is written in the Holy Writ that if one is faithful over a few things he will be made ruler over many things. McKinley became a master of the great principle of protection, and linked his personality interchangeably with it, so that when the people of this country beheld him they saw, as it were, in him the principle for which he stood. When the dark hour of financial disaster, want, misery, and unhappiness came the people called unto this man as their only Moses to lead them out of the wilderness, and the master of one idea became the ruler of many. (Applause.) But some of his critics said: "Well, wait; you will find that he only knows one thing." And yet McKinley had acquired an ability to concentrate his whole self upon the thing immediately before him that to every great emergency during his administration he proved himself more than equal.

The master of the tariff became the master of the currency and the Commander in Chief of the Army and the Navy, the master mind of a war between this country and Spain.

Political Honesty

Another characteristic of McKinley was his political honesty. He was honest in his speech; he was honest in his action—he made the one square with the other.

One of the most striking incidents in American political life occurred in the Republican national convention in 1888, held in the city of Chicago. He had come to that convention as a delegate from the state of Ohio, instructed to cast his vote for John Sherman for president. When Sherman's success seemed impossible of realization some of McKinley's friends began to vote for him. Immediately he arose, and, standing upon a chair in the convention, made this speech, so typical of the man:

"Mr. President and gentlemen of the convention, I am here as one of the chosen representatives of my state. I am here by resolution of the state Republican convention, passed without a single dissenting voice, commanding me to cast my vote for John Sherman for president and to use every worthy endeavor for his nomination. I accepted the trust because my heart and judgment were in accord with the letter and spirit and purpose of that resolution. It has pleased certain delegates to cast their votes for me as president. I am not insensible to the honor they would do me, but in the presence of the duty resting upon me I can not remain silent with honor. I can not consistently with the wish of the state whose credentials I bear, and which has trusted me; I can not with honorable fidelity to John Sherman, who has trusted me in his cause and with his confidence; I can not consistently with my own views of personal integrity consent or seem to consent, to permit my name to be used as a candidate before this convention. I would not respect myself if I could find it in my heart to do so or permit to be done that which could even be ground for anyone to suspect that I wavered in my loyalty to Ohio or my devotion to the chief of her choice and the chief of mine. I do not request—I demand—that no delegate who would not cast reflection upon me shall cast a ballot for me." (Applause.)

After McKinley made that short speech the eyes of the country be-

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came riveted upon him. Here was a type of a public man of which the country had seen too little, and from that hour he grew in popular esteem. The people had marked the man.

His Loyalty to Party Principles
Another characteristic of McKinley was his unflinching loyalty to party principle. When other men wavered he did not. When the McKinley bill became a law and the following election brought his party to defeat, loud and angry were the criticisms all over the country against him and the measure for which he stood. But his only reply was that the people had not had time to understand the McKinley law, but they would see in their salvation. McKinley at this time, in one of his speeches, said: "The friends of protection should not now falter. The fight is only begun. If temporarily lost, it is not to be given up. Courage was never more needed and never more expected by the people from the representatives than now. It is the demand of the hour and the requirement of the situation."

He was loyal to the principle which he believed to be true, in defeat as well as in victory. The strongest test that comes to men is the test of loyalty to principle when seemingly engulfed in disaster, but the man who courageously stands by his guns will some day become the hero of the hour.

His Trust in the People

McKinley was not only true to himself, but he was true to the people. It might be said of him, as he once said of Lincoln, that "he was of the people, for the people, and never above the people." In his speech upon the life of that great man (and does he not draw a picture even of himself) he said:

"What were the traits of character which made Abraham Lincoln prophet and master, without a rival, in the greatest crisis of our history? What gave him such mighty power? To me the answer is simple—Lincoln had sublime faith in the people. He walked with and among them. He recognized the importance and power of an enlightened public sentiment and was guided by it."

His Americanism
McKinley was, above all things, an American. (Applause.) His whole life breathed the broad, true spirit of sterling Americanism; he was the product of the American home and was always true to it. He was the product of the American school and (Continued on page 7)

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