

AN EPOCHAL UTTERANCE.

To the Editor: Sir:—President McKinley passed from the stage of action as the official head of this great nation at a time when the eyes of the world were upon him, as, perhaps, never before in all his illustrious career.

On the day before he was stricken down by the assassin, President McKinley delivered an address to the entire civilized world, albeit he had before him as auditors but a few thousands of his own fellow citizens.

That address was an augury for the good of civilization. Its significant and far-reaching import was so apparent and so welcome that it is safe to say that that address was more quickly flashed around the world by electric telegraph than any other utterance made by President McKinley.

Why? Because the president spoke with intent to convey a message of hope, cheer and good-will to all nations.

He said to them in effect: This country has grown so great as a nation in its commercial life, we can no longer afford to be small, narrow and selfish in our dealings with other nations. Of necessity we have to look to the Old World for markets for our surplus products. The Old World must furnish us such products as are indigenous thereto, that we have to have. Wherefore, between this nation and the nations of the Old World, there must be maintained a policy of commercial reciprocity.

These words plainly imply that President McKinley was favorable to the inauguration of free trade (limited) as the fiscal policy of our government.

Let not the sticklers for protective tariff be startled by this bold assertion, and rush into print to confute its truth. They cannot confute it.

What else than free trade (limited) is commercial reciprocity?

Herein, then, consists the most striking feature of the late president's last and greatest speech. The chief apostle of the fiscal doctrine of high protective tariff outlined a policy diametrically opposite, to be adopted by this nation.

This was an utterance inspired by the genius of statesmanship. So, too, was it prompted by political sagacity. It was intended to forestall tariff reprisals by European countries. And it also foreshadowed intent on the part of the president, as the leader of the republican party, to "spike the guns" of the enemy (the democratic party) in the great forthcoming battle of words in 1904.

So sure as that battle is waged, one of the vital issues to be by it, for the time being, settled, will be the tariff policy of this government.

Democracy will demand the repeal of all tariff laws that are at all tinged with the color of trust protection; and will advocate imposition of tariff in scheduled rates, upon imports not in competition with our domestic trusts' products, with view only to deriving adequate revenue supplementary to internal taxation, to run the government. Under democratic regime, all foreign products that would come into direct competition with domestic products monopolized by trusts, would be put on the free list.

The writer is not in the confidence of the councillors of the democracy; he does not speak oracularly; he merely states his belief as to what will be the attitude of the democracy.

How can one err in holding such belief? Democracy would not be democracy did it take any stand upon the tariff question counter to or materially differing from that which is herein outlined.

President McKinley, with the keen acumen of a skilled politician, knew that such would be the position taken by the democracy; and in his last speech he broadly hinted that such, practically, would be the attitude of the administration and the republican party. It was with intent to obscure, if not remove, the clear line of cleavage between the two political parties on this important question of policy; to rob the democracy of a chance, as it were, to make pre-election ammunition by defining the issue and descanting upon it contrarywise to the position held by the dominant party.

The now silent speaker and leader plainly implied in his Buffalo speech, that material modification of the Dingley tariff law was desirable, and would be made to conform to a liberal policy of reciprocity between this nation and all other nations with which we have commercial dealings.

Said he: "The period of exclusiveness is past. The expansion of our trade and commerce is the pressing problem. The commercial wars are unprofitable. A policy of good-will and friendly trade relations will prevent reprisals. Reciprocity treaties are in harmony with the spirit of the times; measures of retaliation are not."

"If, perchance, some of our tariffs are no longer needed for revenue or to encourage and protect our industries at home, why should they not be employed to extend and promote our markets abroad?"

That is to say, why should we not adapt our tariff policy more to draw rather than repel the trade of foreign countries? If we have right to expect liberal patronage from other countries freed from the entrapment of restrictive tariffs, why have

not other countries equal right to expect from this country similar patronage in so far as they have goods and wares that we have to buy or want to buy?

This above-quoted utterance by the late president has not, mayhap, the binding force to shape and determine congressional action that it would have, had it been made in an official message. But, in view of the reverence in which he was held, and the hallowed remembrance with which his name and fame are cherished by the American people, may it not be possible that such utterance having been his last expression of desire concerning the future policy of this government in matters fiscal, will be even more impelling to action by his party than it would have been had he lived to officially recommend such course? In other words, may it not be proved that, "though dead he yet speaketh," and that the silent eloquence of his stilled tongue will be more potential than would have been his words, supported by the great weight of his winning personality?

His able, honest and forceful successor to the great trust and responsibilities of the executive office, declared to the world with earnest solemnity, standing in the presence of those who loved and revered their martyred chieftain, that he would carry out the McKinley policies.

Has not this nation, then, aye, and the whole world, an unmistakable augury of a most beneficent departure from the long-established, rigorous policy of commercial exclusiveness that has characterized our government?

"Even so," says some one yet incredulous as to the bearing this has to the sudden, violent taking off of President McKinley, "but why should our great chieftain have been removed from the scene just as he was about to lead in a way to the betterment of human conditions the world over?"

Because, brother, God Almighty in His infinite wisdom and His love and tender mercy did not want to jeopardize the chances of this wise and beneficent policy being carried out.

Had He permitted President McKinley to live to become the target of verbal assailment by political friends and foes because of his right-about-face position, who doubts but that there might have been grave probabilities of failure to inaugurate such a policy?

God's love for McKinley and for the world is of such measure that He snatched the great American away from the harassments and vexations which would have been his unhappy lot, and made the conditions surrounding his removal such as will give the world assurance that it will be the