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1901-09-18

Senate.

The President took the chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

#### DEATH OF PRESIDENT McKINLEY

Vice-President of the Executive Council

Senator O'CONNOR

Mr. President, before the business of the day is called on, I ask the assent of the Senate to move a motion without notice.

Honorable Senators. - Hear, hear.

Senator O'CONNOR

I move-

That the Senate do agree to the following resolution : - " We, the members of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia, express our deep sympathy with the people of the United States in the death of their President, and our abhorrence of the crime which has removed from the scene of his memorable labours an earnest, upright, and honoured man, whose loss the civilized world deplores."

Sir, at

a time when the whole civilized world is mourning in sympathy with the people of the United States and with the widow of their late President, I think it is proper that we, as a legislative body, should express our opinion as conveyed in this motion. The man whose life has been taken by an assassin was in every sense devoted to his country. In the time of her darkest hour, when a man's best services were given on the battlefield, his were given with a devotion and ft bravery which the whole of the people of the United States have attested, and in times of prosperity, when wise guidance and public spirit and purity of public and private life were required, his services were also given with a like devotion and a like love of his country. And when the people of the United States had conferred upon him an honour which is without exception the highest honour in the gift of any people on this earth, when they had placed him in the position of their President, he was beginning to display in a larger field those high qualities of statesmanship of which he had given promise throughout the whole of his life. It was, sir, when he was in that position, and at a most critical period of the history of his country, that he was stricken down by a crime, cruel and purposeless. How cruel and how purposeless must appear when we remember that he was the chosen ruler of 70,000,000 people; that he occupied his position by the free choice of that people, and that he administered the laws made by their representatives, and administered them with humanity and with a sympathy for all suffering, and for every kind of misfortune, which would do credit to any man in any station. It may be that the period of his rule had not given him opportunities which other Presidents had of displaying great qualities, but I think his term of office will be particularly memorable to the English-speaking peoples of the world, because it was in his time that the great people of the Western Republic determined to step out from their isolation, and to take their part in the politics of the world. And how much that means to us, and how much it means to the whole English-speaking peoples of the world, I think may be remembered in time to come, when that which has been looked upon merely as a dream becomes an actuality - the union of that great cordon of English-speaking peoples which now surrounds the earth.

Sir, to

the widow - that brave, devoted woman, who was in every sense a helpmate and a comrade to the President in his life's work - the hearts of all of us will go out in sympathy. The inestimable consolation is hers- and I say it, sir, with all reverence - the consolation of a Higher power, the fixed belief that their union is eternal - that their separation is for a time only. But she has in addition to that the consolation which must be the highest to any woman who has lived the life she has, and that is that her great husband did his life's work well, that he died like a brave man, and that he has left behind him a memory beloved amongst his own countrymen and respected amongst the people of the world. I purpose following this motion with a motion for the presentation of an address to the Governor-General requesting His Excellency to convey the resolution of the Senate to His Majesty the King, with a view to its being transmitted to the President of the United States.

<page>4919</page>

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- Mr. President, I rise, oppressed as we all are by a deep sense of the terrible calamity which has overtaken our kinsmen in the United States of America, to second the motion submitted with so much feeling, and couched in language that must command the assent of all of us, by the Vice-President of the Executive Council. Ordinarily the highest tribute which survivors and friends can pay to a man stricken down at his post is that they should, without flinching and without interruption, pursue the path of their own duty. But there is a special significance and a special appropriateness in this sad act of homage - the homage of sympathy in a people's grief - which the first Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, the youngest of the nations, should offer to the great American Commonwealth, linked with us by ties of blood and language and, what is perhaps of as great significance, by the genius of their glorious Constitution which has been in so many respects the prototype and the pattern of our own. "We know, Mr. President, that they are proud that the language of Shakespeare and of Milton is their mother tongue. We know that when they recall the deeds of Wellington, and Drake, and Nelson, they thank God that they are "of the race." And surely we, on our part, may well feel our pulses beat faster when we remember that Franklin, and Washington, and Maddison, and Hamilton, and Lincoln, and Garfield, and McKinley were men of our own blood. We remember also that the first time, it is said, in the history of that great Republic that the American flag floated at half-mast on the occasion of the death of any foreign potentate was when Queen Victoria died. Acts such as these are as when we lay our hand in the grasp of a bereaved or an afflicted friend. It is the unspoken expression of the deepest human sympathy. It is because of that we must all realize that this resolution - the act even of adjourning the Senate for this day - will bring home to the minds and hearts of the American people the deep sympathy which we all feel in the great loss they have sustained, and our detestation of the crime which has bereft them of their President. Life we know " is but a walking shadow." It is within my memory, and in the memory, I am sure, of most of those who are present, that the United States has lost three Presidents by the senseless hand of assassins. Abraham Lincoln, who proved himself a bold pilot in extremity ; Garfield the beloved : and now McKinley, in the very act of celebrating the arts of peace and progress, and exhibiting the scientific enterprise of the age. Within the last twelve months we have witnessed a Royal fellowship of death : King Humbert of Italy, who also fell a victim to an assassin ; Queen Victoria ; the Empress Frederick ; and now President McKinley. A Royal fellowship of death, indeed ! And surely it is meet for us to do honour to President McKinley in his grave. Of the crime itself the Vice-President of the Executive Council has conveyed in language of the most perfect feeling the detestation which we all feel. It is, as he said, a detestation which is only intensified by its foolishness, its purposelessness. It is strange that those who are tempted into such a course of action as that seem never to reflect that the ranks only close up after the terrible incident is over. And, Mr. President, of the victim we can say nothing but good. He won golden opinions from all sorts and conditions of men. The eminence of his rule suffers by no comparison. He was the friend of peace and progress He was ever on the side of humanity and justice. Faithful and just to his own people, he desired to knit together more strongly the hearts of the great peoples who speak the English tongue, and whose destiny is to carry forward the banner of the highest civilization into all the places of the earth. That was his great design. There was no blot upon his name. "He looks proudly to Heaven from the death-bed of his fame." He should indeed " have died hereafter." The Cabinet, we read in the papers, burst into tears, when the announcement of his death was made to them.

He had kept

The whiteness of his soul, and thus men o'er him wept.

What a touching tribute that was to the greatness and goodness of the lost President. To him the " undiscovered country " is in the words of his own favorite hymn - "Nearer, my God, to Thee." He has reached his haven of rest - "after life's fitful fever " - and he has found the tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations -

Two hands upon the breast,

His labour's done.

Two pale feet cross'd in rest,

The race is won.

I join with my honorable and learned friend in praying that his memory may be a perpetual benediction to the sorrowing American people and a guide to us all. I second the motion.

<page>4920</page>

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Senator MCGREGOR

- Feeling oppressed by the sympathetic eloquence that has already been given expression to, I rise not only to express my own personal feelings, but also to echo the feelings of the party to which I belong. We, I am sure, though always endeavouring to bring about the reforms that we consider necessary for the elevation of the people, have never recognised and I hope never will recognise any such dastardly conduct as has been referred to to-day. We know that such actions only retard progress, and can possibly have no other effect. We also feel that it is our duty at a time like this to mourn with those who have been deprived of a great leader. It is still more our duty to condole with her who has suffered the greatest loss that any woman can endure in this world. And when we feel that, we know that it does not matter what the divine destiny may be - whether death occurs through assassination, through an accident, or through natural causes - it has a levelling effect, and that an incident of this character may bring to the minds of those in high places who have suffered the fact that the same suffering afflicts the breast of the very humblest woman in the universe who is deprived of her helpmate in the same manner. Feeling this, we cannot but re-echo the sentiments that have been expressed, and we hope that the people of America will, in the near future, recover from the calamity which has been brought upon them, and that the widowed lady may also receive that consolation which may lift her spirit above her affliction. We feel that it is our duty to give expression to these sentiments. We do it heartily, and therefore I earnestly support the motion that has been moved.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Senator O'CONNOR

With the concurrence of the Senate, also, I move -

That the Senate do agree to the following address to His Excellency the Governor-General : -

May it please your excellency : -

We, the members of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia, in Parliament assembled, respectfully request that Your Excellency will be pleased to forward by cable to the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for the Colonies the accompanying resolution for presentation to the King, with an expression of a respectful hope that His Majesty will be pleased to give instructions for its communication to the President of the United States.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Senator O'CONNOR

- Following the resolutions which have just been carried unanimously by the Senate, I propose to show the only mark of practical respect to the memory of the late President of the United States which it is in our power to bestow, by the suspension of our business until to-morrow. I therefore move -

That the Senate do now adjourn.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

<page>4921</page>

14:53:00

Senate adjourned at 2.53 p.m.