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EDITORIAL

## AT PRESIDENT MCKINLEY'S BIER.

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**T**HAT masterly "anatomy of crime," Dante's *Inferno*, and withal as sublime as it is a profound treatise on morality, places not the malefactors of ostensibly equal crimes in the same circles of hell. Not all the thieves, for instance, nor all the homicides are lumped together. Where theft is aided by "breach of trust," the evil-doer is relegated to a deeper groove; and so where homicide has treachery or hypocrisy for its handmaid, the crime is marked of deeper dye, and its perpetrator consigned to direr tortures.

The assassination of rulers is nothing new. It is no special product of the present system. Throughout the ages it has made its appearance, under all forms of society. This notwithstanding, the deed of Czolgosz, following so close upon that of Santos, the assassin of President Carnot, and accompanied with such close resemblance therewith, takes it from the general head of rulercide, and gives notice to society that it has to deal with a Dantescan variety of intensified crime.

Whether personal resentment, private interest, or personal malice hitherto steeled the arm of the assassins of rulers, their deed ever bore the mark of virile boldness. The deed of the Czolgoszes and Santos lacks this mark; in its stead it carries the brand of hypocrisy and treachery. And it is natural; and herein lies the ominousness of the manifestation.

Former assassinations of rulers were the acts of ORGANIZED forces; the Santos-Czolgosz species is AUTONOMOUS. Organization, however dastardly its purpose, has physical strength in its make-up, is conscious thereof, and demeans itself accordingly: Treachery, therefore, is a mark it need not and does not assume. Otherwise with individualistic autonomy. The single man, whatever his field of operation, is weak as a reed, all the more when his purpose calls for physical effort. Hence what his acts lack in backing of physical fibre, is substituted with perfidy. Santos clears his way to his victim with a bouquet, in which a dagger lies concealed; Czolgosz throws the guards off their watch with the demeanor of a cripple, his hand

that holds the murderous pistol being bandaged with a handkerchief. In the one case as in the other deep-dyed treachery, double-facedness, is the distinguishing feature;—and that is the hellish depth, that, by an inevitable chain of causes and effects, is reached from the premises of individualistic autonomy, or be it the “Manchester School,” or be it the intellectual mother of Capitalist Society.

Not a stricken family merely, mourning the loss of a beloved member; not even millions of partisans merely, mourning the loss of their triumphant standard-bearer; no, not these merely, but the human heart and intellect, standing at President McKinley's bier, is steeped in gloom at the contemplation of the Santos-Czolgosz flowers of the Upas tree of Individualistic Autonomy.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
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