

AS I KNEW ROOSEVELT

By "BILL" SEWALL

[TRAPPER, GUIDE, FOREMAN OF CHIMNEY BUTTE RANCH, AND LIFE-
LONG FRIEND OF ROOSEVELT]

I AM an old Maine guide, now in my seventy-fifth year. All my life I have had a place down in the Maine woods for the hunters and fishermen from the cities, as my father had before me. My father's house was always open, and mine has been, except for the three years I spent with Theodore Roosevelt on his cattle-ranch in the Far West.

Teddy Roosevelt was eighteen years old when I first knew him. The Maine woods was an unknown wild in those days except to a few very enthusiastic city sportsmen among whom were W. Emlen Roosevelt and J. West Roosevelt, both cousins of Theodore. They had been at my place once, and in the summer of 1877 they brought Theodore down. He was run down from overwork at college,—thin, pale, his eyes and his heart were weak. Arthur Cutter, then the head of the Cutter School in New York City, where Theodore prepared for college, was with the party. The night after they came Cutter took me on one side and told me I should have to get another guide to go along with them, that Theodore was not well and that I should have to look after him myself.

"Theodore is not strong," he told me, "but he's all grit. He will never tell you he is tired, or what ails him. He will go as long as he can keep up."

I found him exactly so. Within a week I had made up my mind he was different from anybody that I had ever seen. What I noted especially was his remarkable all-round knowledge. He seemed to have more general information than any young fellow I had ever met. Also he had more correct and fixed ideas of right and wrong—and fair play. As a woodsman brought up to plain, perhaps primitive, ideas, his fairness won my heart at once,—and it started a friendship between us that held strong up to the day of his death.

He was argumentative, even inclined to be combative for his own opinions, even then. He wanted everything done right—out in the open. I remember hearing one of our Aroostook men say one day, that first summer, that he always treated every man as a rascal till he found out he was honest. Theodore Roosevelt took him up at once, and told him that that was a very narrow view,—a very poor encouragement for the other fellow. He said that he went the other way about—and regarded every man as an honest man until he was convinced otherwise. That was his policy all his life. There is an old saying that the boy is father to the man. I never found Theodore Roosevelt's actions all his life, though, to be different from that first summer, and I afterwards lived with him for nearly three years.

IN THE UNTRODDEN WILDS OF MAINE

HE took to the life of the woods as a duck to water. He was curious and eager about everything in nature. He told me a couple of years after that he had made up his mind to follow the career of a naturalist. And his books show that he was one—among many other things. His improvement in health and looks was noticeable within the first couple of weeks. I taught him to fire his first rifle. Big game we could not get—it was in the close season—but duck and partridges were plentiful. Fishing he never cared for, although the lake-fishing in Maine is the finest of its kind in the world.

He came the next year, and the year after, and this time nothing would content him but an expedition into almost untrodden wilds. We made a trip that summer clear to the headwaters of the Aroostook, where the moose were wild and plenty. He came in winter, after that. Right in mid-winter to see the country, get the snowshoeing, and the life of the logging camps. Maine is just as wonderful, just as beautiful in winter as in summer, although no sportsman ever came then; but Theodore Roosevelt was a born naturalist and hunter, and he could not be kept back. In the logging

camps he met men who knew a good deal of the very heart of nature, rough fellows, but truth-tellers, and he spent many an evening with them. I remember after one session he remarked to me that he had heard much that evening that he could have read in books, but that he had gotten it first-hand here, and felt it was truer, because the men had lived their stories. They knew exactly what they were talking about.

Here was one of the open secrets of his great career. A great many people have said to me at different times in my life, knowing I was so intimate with him, that they could not see how he knew so much about everything and everybody—all kinds of people—and I have told them it was simply because he was one of them himself. Wherever he went he got right down among the people, talked with them; found out their ideas, and what they wanted. It was so in the Maine woods. It was so all his life. That spring he came of age—and, after graduation, got married and went to Europe. While in Europe I had letters from him. I've always had letters from him ever since. I have always been able to remember one letter I got that summer, because it was so much like him. He said he was being treated finely; having a very nice time; but that the more he saw of foreign lands the more pleased he was to remember that he was a free-born American citizen, that he acknowledged no man his superior except by merit, or his inferior, except by demerit.

When he came home he was elected to the New York legislature—and his daughter, Alice, was born. When she was ten days old, and her mother supposed to be out of danger, he went back to Albany, but was immediately summoned home by telegraph. When he arrived home he found both his wife and his mother lying at the point of death. His mother had been an invalid for years—but was not supposed to be in any immediate danger. He lost them both. It was a terrible shock. Professor Cutter told me very shortly after this that they had been really alarmed for his reason, he appeared to be utterly stunned by the sudden blow. A family council was held and it was decided to get him to go out to the Far West. That was a great country in those days—

a new country—entirely new, as God made it. God's Country, they of the West called the cities in the East, but I call the West God's Country, for it undoubtedly saved Theodore Roosevelt's life and reason.

RANCHING IN THE DAKOTA "BAD LANDS"

SO he started for Dakota. Out there in the so-called "Bad Lands" he heard a lot of cattle talk. It was hailed as the coming cattle country. As a matter of fact, the winters are too hard and long, as it proved in our case. But that's another part of my story. He came home and wrote to me, asking if I would go out with him and take my nephew Don along; he knew Don well. He said he thought he would start a ranch. We exchanged letters and then he wrote us to come on at once, promising that if we went we shouldn't lose anything. He knew we had very little money. That was all the trade there was between us. I still have the letter that decided me to go:

"Now, a little plain talk, though I do not think it necessary for I know you too well. If you are afraid of hard work and privation do not come West. If you expect to make a fortune in a year or two, do not come West. If you will give up under temporary discouragements, do not come West. If, on the other hand, you are willing to work hard, especially the first year; if you realize that for a couple of years you cannot expect to make much more than you are now making; and if you also know that at the end of that time you will be in receipt of about a thousand dollars for the third year, with an unlimited rise ahead of you and a future as bright as you yourself choose to make it—then come. Now, I take it for granted you will not hesitate at this time. So fix up your affairs *at once*, and be ready to start before the end of this month."

We reached Dakota, Don and myself, about the last of July that year, Don's wife and mine coming out months later. It was a wild country—just as God made it. All unclaimed land belonged either to the Government or the North-

ern Pacific Railroad. We were simply squatters, as nearly all the other men were in those days. The first thing we had to do was to build a ranch-house of hewn cottonwood logs, the only timber in the country. It was thirty feet wide and sixty feet long. Some size for a city-dweller! Walls seven feet high, flat roof. We had to send to Minneapolis for lumber for the roof. Inside he had a room; my wife and I had a room; Don and his wife had a room; there was a kitchen and dining-room; and one or two small rooms beside.

Theodore Roosevelt got his first taste of real hunting, big-game hunting, the thing he had longed for since his first days in the Maine woods, while we were building that house. He went away up into the Big Horn Mountains after grizzly bear and elk—and got both. He had planned for me to go with him and leave Don on the ranch, but building that house was a big job, and I advised him to get a man who knew something of the country, and he did. He was gone on that first great hunting trip—he had many afterwards in all parts of the world—nearly three months, camping out all the time in about the wildest country the sun ever shone on. The buffalo were fast disappearing when we went out to Montana. Indeed, they were almost gone under the rifles of the hired bands of hunters sent out by the railroads to exterminate them. But there were still a few left in the Bad Lands and one of Theodore's first hunting trips was after buffalo. He told about that hunt in his book, "Hunting Trips of a Ranchman," which he wrote right there in the ranch-house in the spring of 1885. It was good sport.

HE KILLS A BISON

"SO far," I am quoting his book, "the trip had certainly not been a success although sufficiently varied as regards its incidents. We had been confined to moist biscuits for three days as our food; had been wet and cold at night, and sunburned till our faces peeled in the day; were hungry and tired, and had met with bad weather, and all kinds of accidents; in addition I had shot badly. But a man who is

fond of sport and yet not naturally a good hunter, soon learns that if he keeps doggedly on, even though the odds are heavy, in the end the longest lane will prove to have a turning.

"Such was the case on this occasion. Shortly after midday we left the creek bottom and skirted a ridge of broken buttes cut up by gullies and winding ravines in whose bottoms grew bunch grass. While passing the mouth of one of these ravines both ponies threw up their heads, and sniffed the air. Feeling sure they had smelt some wild beast, either a bear or a buffalo, I slipped off my pony and ran quickly but cautiously up along the valley. Before I had gone a hundred yards I noticed in the soft soil at the bottom the round prints of a bison's hoofs; and immediately afterwards got a glimpse of the animal himself as he fed slowly up the ravine some distance ahead. The wind was just right and no ground could have been better for stalking. Hardly needing to bend down, I walked up behind a small sharp-crested bullock, and, peeping over there below me, not fifty yards off, was a great bison bull. He was walking along grazing as he walked. His glossy fall coat was in fine trim, and shone in the rays of the sun; while his pride of bearing showed him to be in the lusty vigor of his prime.

"As I rose above the crest of the hill, he held up his head and cocked his tail in the air. Before he could go off I put the bullet in behind his shoulder. The wound was an almost immediately fatal one, yet with surprising agility for so large and heavy an animal, he bounded up the opposite side of the ravine heedless of two more balls, both of which went into his flank and ranged forward; and disappeared over the ridge at a lumbering gallop, the blood pouring from his mouth and nostrils. We knew he could not go far, and trotted leisurely along on his bloody trail; and in the next gully we found him stark dead, lying almost on his back, having pitched over the side when he tried to go down it. His head was a remarkably fine one even for a fall buffalo."

Elk were also becoming scarce, but on a trip to the Big Horn Mountains in northern Wyoming one year we secured

some fine heads—of one of these Theodore afterwards said, “The finest bull with the best head that I got was killed in the midst of very beautiful and grand surroundings. We had been hunting through a great pine wood which ran up to the edge of a broad canyon-like valley, bounded by sheer walls of rock. There were fresh tracks of elk about, and we had been advancing upward with even more than our usual caution when on stepping out into a patch of open ground near the edge of the cliff we came upon a great bull, beating and thrashing his antlers against a young tree eighty yards off. He stopped and faced us for a second, his mighty antlers thrown into the air as he held his head aloft. Behind him towered the tall and sombre pines, while at his feet the jutting crags overhung the deep chasm below, that stretched off between high walls of barren and snow-streaked rocks, the evergreen clinging to their sides, while along the bottom the rapid torrent gathered in places into black and sullen mountain lakes. As the bull turned to run, I struck him just behind the shoulder; he reeled to the death-blow, but staggered gamely on a few rods into the forest before sinking to the ground with my second bullet through his lungs.”

LEADS A REGULAR COWBOY LIFE

WHAT may not be generally known to the people at large is that Theodore not only shared every danger of the hunt, but in every way entered into that Western life without any reserve whatever. Often he actually rode the range with the hands, a regular cowboy sharing the camp life. This is one story he tells of one of his early round-ups:

“Early in June, just after the close of the regular spring round-up, a couple of supply wagons with a score of riders between them were sent to work some hitherto untouched country between the Little Missouri and the Yellowstone. I was going as the representative of our own and one or two other neighboring hands, but as the round-up had halted near my ranch, I determined to spend a day there and then to join the wagons; the appointed meeting place being a

cluster of red scovia buttes some forty miles distant where there was a spring of good water. Most of my day at the ranch was spent in slumber, for I had been several weeks on the round-up where nobody ever gets quite enough sleep. . . . The men are in the saddle from dawn until dusk, at the time when the days are longest, and in addition there is the regular night guarding and now and then a furious storm or a stampede, when for twenty-four hours at a stretch the riders only dismount to change horses or snatch a mouthful of food. . . .

"I started in the bright sunrise, riding one horse, and driving loose before me eight others, one carrying my bedding. They traveled strung out in single file. . . . In mid-afternoon I reached the wagons. . . . Our wagon was to furnish the night guards for the cattle; and each of us had his gentlest horse tied ready to hand. The night guards went on duty two at a time for two-hour watches. By good luck my watch came last. My comrade was a happy-go-lucky young Texan who for some inscrutable reason was known as 'Latigo Strap'; he had just come from the South with a big drove of trail cattle. A few minutes before two one of the guards who had gone on duty at midnight rode into camp and wakened us by shaking our shoulders. . . . one of the annoyances of guarding, at least in thick weather, is the occasional difficulty of finding the herd after leaving camp, or in returning to camp after the watch is over; there are few things more exasperating than to be helplessly wandering about in the dark under such circumstances. However, on this occasion, there was no such trouble, for it was a brilliant starlit night and the herd had been bedded down by a sugar loaf butte which made a good landmark.

"As we reached the spot we could make out the form of the cattle lying close together on the level plain; and then the dim figure of a horseman rose vaguely from the darkness and moved by in silence; it was the other of the two midnight guards on his way back to his broken slumber. At once we began to ride slowly round the cattle in opposite direction. We were silent, for the night was clear and the herd quiet.

In wild weather, when the cattle are restless, the cowboys never cease calling and singing as they circle them, for the sounds seem to quiet the beasts. For over an hour we steadily paced the endless round. Then faint streaks of gray appeared in the East. Latigo Strap began to call merrily to the cattle. A coyote came sneaking over the butte, and halted to yell and wail. As it grew lighter the cattle became restless, rising and stretching themselves while we continued to ride around them.

‘ Then the bronc’ began to pitch
And I began to ride;
He bucked me off a cut bank
Hell! I nearly died!’

sang Latigo from the other side of the herd. A yell from the wagons afar off told that the cook was summoning the sleeping cow-punchers to breakfast all the cattle got on their feet and started feeding.”

REGAINS HIS HEALTH AT HEAVY COST

I DON’T know whether the plain story of that ranch has ever been told. Theodore invested about \$125,000 to stock our claim—in cattle and horses—about a hundred head of the latter, and he lost most of it, but he came back physically strong enough to be a future President of the United States! Our whole trouble from a financial standpoint was that cattle had already begun to fall in price before we started, and they continued to fall. When we left the country, two years and four months after, we had to sell for about \$10 a head less than cost, figuring in moving expenses. But Roosevelt enjoyed the life, all the time.

Shortly after we got there he told me, looking out over that burned-up country, that he had nothing to live for; all his hopes lay buried in the East. I told him that no man living, with the strength of life in his veins, ought to even allow himself to feel that way. I told him he would get all

over it in a short time, that his whole feeling would change; and then he wouldn't be content to stay out there and drive cattle. Within two years he got pretty well over it all. He went East quite often. They would send for him. He used to complain to me that the telegraph station was too near—thirty miles away on the railroad at Medora, a small town on the railway line. He was what might be called a youngster in his early twenties, but he was the boss of the ranch and a cattle man through and through. Whatever his part through life, he always played it to perfection.

HE FLATTENS OUT A "BAD MAN"

I REMEMBER a "bad man" he met once in Medora. It was in a public place. The fellow had been drinking and he had heard of Roosevelt, the newcomer to the Bad Lands. Theodore was not a big man—he was only of medium height, weighing about 145 pounds, and he wore glasses. But grit to the heel! The fellow called him a "four-eyed tenderfoot" and tried to take his measure in abusive language. Theodore paid no attention to all this and the tough naturally concluded that he was afraid of him. Suddenly, Roosevelt let out and caught him on the butt of the jaw—and he flattened out. This gained him some reputation.

The only other thing that ever looked like trouble was when the Marquis de Mores, who had come into the country several years before, and acted as though he wanted to own it (he had a strong body of henchmen including some of the worst characters in that section), wrote him an insulting letter, intimating a personal meeting. Roosevelt promptly answered offering to meet him with Winchester rifles at ten paces—he was always a bit near-sighted and he wanted to be sure of his man. The answer was an apology and an invitation to dine with the Marquis. He showed me that letter with the remark, "I want you for my second, Bill, if there's any trouble."

Medora was a typical frontier town and had its full share of excitement. Theodore saw a good deal of it. Here is one story he tells:

“One curious shooting scrape that took place in Medora was worthy of being chronicled by Bret Harte—I did not see the actual occurrence but I saw both men immediately afterwards; and I heard the shooting, which took place in a saloon on the bank while I was swimming my horse across the river, holding my rifle up so as not to wet it. One of them was a saloon-keeper familiarly called Welshy; the other man, Hay, had been bickering with him for some time. That day, Hay, who had been defeated in a wrestling-match by one of my own boys, and was out of temper, entered the saloon and became abusive. The quarrel grew and suddenly Welshy whipped out a revolver and blazed away at Hay. The latter staggered slightly, shook himself, stretched out his hand, and *gave back to his would-be slayer, the ball*, saying, ‘Here, man, here’s the bullet.’ It had glanced along his breast-bone, gone into the body and come out at the point of the shoulder, when, being spent, it dropped down the sleeve into his hand. Next day the local paper which rejoiced in the title of *The Bad-Lands Cowboy*, chronicled the event in the usual vague way as an ‘unfortunate occurrence’ between ‘two of our most esteemed fellow-citizens’

A COMIC ROW

“SOMETIMES we had a comic row. There was one huge man from Missouri called ‘The Pike’ who had been the keeper of a woodyard for steamboats on the Upper Missouri. Like most of his class he was a hard case, and, though pleasant enough when sober, always insisted on fighting when he was drunk. One day, when on a spree, he announced his intention of thrashing the entire population of Medora and began to make his promise good with great vigor and praiseworthy impartiality. He was victorious over the first two or three eminent citizens whom he encountered and then tackled a gentleman known as ‘Cold

Turkey Bill.' Under ordinary circumstances Cold Turkey though an able-bodied man was no match for The Pike, but the latter was still rather drunk, and, moreover, was wearied by his former combats. So Cold Turkey got him down, lay on him, choked him by the throat with one hand and began pounding his face with a triangular rock held in the other. To the onlookers the fate of the battle seemed decided; but Cold Turkey better appreciated the endurance of his adversary, and it soon appeared that he sympathized with the traditional hunter who, having caught a wild-cat, earnestly besought a comrade to help him let it go. While still pounding vigorously he raised an agonized wail: 'Help me off, fellows, for the Lord's sake, he's tiring me out!' There was no resisting so plaintive an appeal, and the bystanders at once abandoned their attitude of neutrality for one of armed intervention. . . .

"The first deadly affray that took place in our town after regular settlement began was between a Scotchman and a Minnesota man, one of the small stockmen. Both had 'shooting' records and each was a man with a varied past. The Scotchman, a noted bully, was the more daring of the two. After a furious quarrel and threats of violence the Scotchman mounted his horse and rifle in hand rode to the door of the mud ranch perched on the brink of the river bluff where the American lived, and was instantly shot down by the latter from behind a corner of the building. Later on I once opened a cowboy ball with the wife of the victor—the husband himself dancing opposite. It was the lancers and he knew all the steps far better than I did. He could have danced a minuet very well with a little practice. The scene reminded one of the ball where Bret Harte's heroine 'danced down the middle with the man who shot Sandy McGee.'"

He had many and great hunting trips here of which he has told the story in "Hunting Trips of a Ranchman." The last fall he went into the Coeur-d'Alene Mountains after white goats, a particularly shy species of game, and about all there was left for him to find. Don and I stayed on the round-up. We gathered up what cattle were fit for market—

the previous winter had been a terrible one—and took them down to Chicago. When we all got back we figured up and found we were set back \$10 a head on the whole investment. So we decided to quit. Roosevelt had always been afraid he'd have to, he didn't want to be beaten, but it was the only really sensible thing to do. We let the balance of the stock go to the Western men on a fifty-fifty basis, and came East.

Ill luck still pursued us. The following winter was the hardest ever known in that region. There were two feet of snow, and cattle died by tens of thousands. I don't believe Theodore Roosevelt ever made a dollar out of his cattle. He told me years afterward, however, that it had brought him to his physical prime. He weighed about one hundred and fifty pounds, and was clear bone, muscle and grit. The ranch undoubtedly made his career possible.

PESSIMISTIC AS TO HIS FUTURE)

WE were very close then and he talked over about everything with me. His ideas and mine always seemed to run about the same. He asked me what he had better do for a future; whether politics or the law. I told him frankly enough I thought he would make a good lawyer, but that he'd better go into politics because such men as he were needed in politics, but somehow didn't go in. I told him then, if he did and lived, they would want him for President. He laughed at the notion and said, "Bill, that's a great ways ahead."

"But not so far," I persisted, "as some men that have got there. You've got a far better start than most of them. Wealthy and influential friends; you're not poor yourself, you've got education, and a good head; a better start than most politicians these times."

He used to joke me about the Presidency long afterwards. Before he went into the ranch business he wanted to be a naturalist. He had quite a collection even before he was twenty-one years old. He told me the reason he gave it all up was because he became finally convinced that he could be

of more use to the world. About the time he gave up ranching he was offered the place of Civil Service Commissioner. His friends had already sized him up and wanted him to take it. He told me it was a job with lots of trouble and little pay. "But if I can do some real good I'll go in."

Money never entered into his consideration in anything he ever did in his life. Amusement, health, service, to him—perhaps a fortune to us. He told me, when it was all over, about his early campaign for Mayor of New York City. He said he felt always that he did not stand the slightest show. But his friends were surprised at the strength he developed.

I have known a good many generous men in my life who did not have anything to be generous with. But he was the most generous man I ever knew who had anything. He was generous to everybody. If he saw a man that needed it—through sudden misfortune or from any other cause—his heart and his pocket were open at once. He had the greatest sympathy for the poor and needy. But for the lazy or dishonest he had no use at all. We could agree on that as on most other things. We never, as a matter of fact, had any essential difference about anything. He might have been rich, I feel certain, had he gone after money. It counted only as he wanted enough to use. I never knew a man with such a capacity for finding and holding everything in the world except mere money. His mind was exactly like that fellow's Byron speaks about—I forget where, but I can't forget that line: "Wax to receive, and marble to retain."

I was with him occasionally right along: at Oyster Bay, at the White House. Then there was a period of several years that I didn't see him till he came to Bangor to speak just after he had attained the Presidency. But he always wrote regularly. Friendly letters, a good many in regard to some political policy that I was interested in. I remember one about the time war was declared; he said we were living in the same conditions we should have been in if Buchanan had been President during the Civil War. He was well aware of my own opinion of Buchanan.

I HAD not read as much as many men, but I have read something about many great men and I consider there has never been a man who was his equal—since the days of our Saviour—if not before. It may be that some good people may think I'm sacrilegious but I don't think that any man ever had so many good qualities, and knew how to use them, as well as he did. He was a fighter, but in this he resembled Peter. Peter was always ready to fight. But he was always ready to live by the Golden Rule. And if the nations had been ready to follow him we should not have had this war, and a good deal that may yet come. There have been many great men in the history of the world, but they have always had some very bad defects—especially the Europeans. Theodore Roosevelt's defects were not great—and such as they were Time will only soften them.

STOWAWAYS

By LEONIE DAVIS COLLISTER

WEIRD thoughts,
Illusive stowaways by day,
Sometimes at night

Discover
Rare and unexpected colors
In my soul,
As rain brings out the hue in rocks.
Sometimes on ships of space
They lure me
To a port of unexpressed desires,
Where I, with straining vision, see
The radiance of unconquered peaks.
. . . Always they sink
Into the quicksand of the dawn.