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Theodore Roosevelt and His Four Sons

HOW THEY TRAINED THEMSELVES FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE

By Lawrence F. Abbott

"LET him practise what he preaches!" is a test which the world has always been quick to apply to its moral and political leaders. By this standard, for instance, it has judged Oliver Cromwell and Abraham Lincoln, two of the greatest fighting champions of national morality in the history of the English-speaking peoples.

Among living public men Theodore Roosevelt conspicuously stands the test. Like Lincoln and Cromwell, he believes in national morality backed, when needed, by military power. He has been a vigorous preacher of this doctrine, and an equally vigorous practiser. He has been willing to take his own medicine, and he has combined consideration of the rights of others with a constant readiness to strike hard when necessary. Early in his Presidential career he uttered one of those epigrammatic phrases for which he has become famous.

"Speak softly, but carry a big stick," he said.

The "big stick" half of this phrase caught the public fancy, and many people, forgetting that he put speaking softly first, have pictured him as a sort of glorified Irishman carrying a shillalah in a universal Donnybrook Fair, joyously hitting every head he saw. Those who know him best know that this is a totally false conception of his personality. No man radiates human kindness more than he, although no man is

better prepared to handle the big stick in defense of justice or human rights.

Preparedness might be taken as his life motto, and he has both preached and practised it since he was a boy. He is an athlete, an excellent boxer, a fearless rider, and one of the most distinguished big-game hunters of modern times.

In his explorations in the jungles of Africa and South America his physical vigor and athletic skill enabled him to undergo privations, strains, and even pain and suffering that would certainly have incapacitated, and perhaps killed, many an average man. Were these physical gifts born in him? Not at all. They were the product of careful preparation.

HOW A TIMID BOY CONQUERED FEAR

He has told the story of their development in a chapter of his autobiography entitled "The Vigor of Life"—one of the most entertaining and inspiring essays on physical training that I know of:

Having been a sickly boy, with no natural bodily prowess, and having lived much at home, I was at first quite unable to hold my own when thrown into contact with other boys of rougher antecedents. I was nervous and timid. Yet from reading of the people I admired—ranging from the soldiers of Valley Forge and Morgan's riflemen to the heroes of my favorite stories—and from hearing of the feats performed by my Southern forefathers and kinsfolk, and from knowing my

father, I felt a great admiration for men who were fearless and who could hold their own in the world, and I had a great desire to be like them. Until I was nearly fourteen I let this desire take no more definite shape than day-dreams. Then an incident happened that did me real good. Having an attack of asthma, I was sent off by myself to Moosehead Lake. On the stage-coach ride thither I encountered a couple of other boys who were about my own age, but very much more competent, and also much more mischievous. I have no doubt they were good-hearted boys, but they were boys! They found that I was a foreordained and predestined victim, and industriously proceeded to make life miserable for me. The worst feature was that when I finally tried to fight them, I discovered that either one singly could not only handle me with easy contempt, but handle me so as not to hurt me much and yet to prevent my doing any damage whatever in return.

The experience taught me what probably no amount of good advice could have taught me. I made up my mind that I must try to learn so that I would not again be put in such a helpless position; and having become quickly and bitterly conscious that I did not have the natural prowess to hold my own, I decided that I would try to supply its place by training. Accordingly, with my father's hearty approval, I started to learn to box. I was a painfully slow and awkward pupil, and certainly worked two or three years before I made any perceptible improvement whatever. . . .

There were all kinds of things of which I was afraid at first, ranging from grizzly bears to "mean" horses and gun-fighters; but by acting as if I was not afraid, I gradually ceased to be afraid. Most men can have the same experience if they choose. They will first learn to bear themselves well in trials which they anticipate, and which they school themselves in advance to meet. After a while the habit will grow on them, and they will behave well in sudden and unexpected emergencies which come upon them unawares.

It is, of course, much pleasanter if one is naturally fearless, and I envy and respect the men who are naturally fearless. But it is a good thing to remember that the man who does not enjoy this advantage can nevertheless stand beside the man who does, and can do his duty with the like efficiency, *if he chooses to*. Of course, he must not let his desire take the form merely of a day-dream. Let him dream about being a fearless man, and the more he dreams, the better he will be, always provided he does his best to realize the dream in practise. He can do his part honorably and well, provided only he sets fearlessness before himself as an ideal, schools himself to think of danger merely as something to be faced and overcome, and regards life itself as he should regard it—not as something to be thrown away, but as a pawn to be promptly hazarded

whenever the hazard is warranted by the larger interests of the great game in which we are all engaged.

This is a long quotation, but I make it because it states fairly completely Mr. Roosevelt's creed regarding physical force and its place in a well-rounded scheme of existence. In other words, it means that the military spirit is not the greatest thing, but is the indispensable support and defense of the greatest thing in life; that the greatest thing is to live in right social relations with one's fellow beings.

THE BEST OF LIFE'S ACHIEVEMENTS

Now a man's general attitude toward his fellow beings can be pretty well determined if we can find out what he thinks of children and how he treats them. What Mr. Roosevelt thinks of children is expressed in another passage in his autobiography:

There are many kinds of success in life worth having. It is exceedingly interesting and attractive to be a successful business man, or railroad man, or farmer, or a successful lawyer or doctor, or a writer, or a President, or a ranchman, or the colonel of a fighting regiment, or to kill grizzly bears and lions. But for unflagging interest and enjoyment, a household of children, if things go reasonably well, certainly makes all other forms of success and achievement lose their importance by comparison.

Mr. Roosevelt is generally thought of as preeminently a man's man. He has been so much in the public mind as a bear-killer, a lion-hunter, a jungle-explorer, a Rough Rider, a "trust-buster," and a fighter of malefactors that it will astonish many people to be told that he is also a children's man. He neither pets them nor patronizes them, but he understands them, enjoys them, and when entering into their life treats them as equals, which many people fail to do.

Nobody can detect a counterfeit child-lover as quickly as a child itself. Normal children look up to, respect, and admire their superiors, especially in physical prowess, without regard to age; but they despise and resent patronage. A man who assumes a patronizing air toward children is very soon avoided by them; but with

magnetic rapidity they cluster around a man who understands them, who sympathizes with them—a very different thing, by the way, from sentimentalizing over them—and who can do things with them. This is exactly the way Mr. Roosevelt treats children, and the result is that they often follow him like a modern Pied Piper of Hamelin.

When he was Assistant Secretary of the Navy he and General Leonard Wood—not then a general, of course—used frequently to take their combined children, sometimes joined by a group of playmates, out to walk, scramble, and climb through the ravines and over the cliffs of Rock Creek on the outskirts of Washington. Once, when conveying these children over the creek on the trunk of a tree which had fallen across it, Mr. Roosevelt himself made a misstep and fell into the water. When he came to the surface he heard the small Wood boy exclaim: “Oh, oh! The father of all the children fell into the creek!”—thus assigning to the champion of race-conservation family proprietorship not only in his own children but in all their playmates.

MR. ROOSEVELT AND A WAIF OF THE CITY

One of my pleasantest recollections of Mr. Roosevelt is connected with a small boy. Just preceding and during the Progressive campaign of 1912 he used to lunch weekly with his colleagues of the *Outlook*—at that time he was contributing editor of that journal—at the National Arts Club in Gramercy Park. There were usually from one to half a dozen guests. On a certain one of these luncheon days there were to be two distinguished foreign diplomats at the table, and I had gone around from our office, a few blocks away, to the club just ahead of Mr. Roosevelt to make sure all the arrangements were complete.

As I approached the club I saw a lady standing on the sidewalk stooping over to talk to a small boy about ten years old, who was crying bitterly. The boy was sobbing so convulsively that it was impossible to understand what he was saying; but on stopping to see if I could be of any assistance, I managed to extract from the

little, quivering figure the information that he was lost. His father was a Hungarian miner from Pennsylvania; the family had arrived that morning in New York on their way back to Hungary; the ship was to sail the next day; he had just stepped out of the house where they were stopping to see the street sights of the great, strange city—further details blotted out by another burst of weeping.

Just then Mr. Roosevelt came sailing around the corner of the iron palings of Gramercy Park, busily talking with his companion, General F. V. Greene. He stopped and asked what was the matter. I told him what I had learned, and he said, half to the boy and half to General Greene:

“We’ll soon fix this. We’ll take him around to the police station in Twenty-Second Street, and they will send out a general alarm for his father and mother.”

Instantly and instinctively the little dervish put his small hand into Mr. Roosevelt’s big one, and they started off to the police station half a mile away. Interested in the result, I followed to see what would happen. Mr. Roosevelt hardly spoke to the boy, who trotted along contentedly beside him, while he continued his discussion with General Greene on, I think, some military subject.

When we got to the precinct station the lieutenant or sergeant in charge recognized the two former police commissioners. Mr. Roosevelt told him the facts, gave the boy a piece of silver to get some luncheon and, telling the little fellow that the police would find his mother and father before long, left him perfectly comfortable and contented. We returned to the club half an hour late, but the diplomatic guests were repaid for their delay by their interest in the story of the incident which I related as our excuse. Late in the afternoon I called up the police station and found that through the medium of a general alarm, or some such police procedure, the frightened boy and the terrified parents had been happily brought together.

THE BOYS OF SAGAMORE HILL

If I have succeeded in conveying any impression of Mr. Roosevelt’s attitude

toward child life it will be easy for the reader to understand in what spirit and circumstances and surroundings his own children were brought up in the family homestead, Sagamore Hill, at Oyster Bay. They swam, rowed, went barefoot, or camped in the woods or on the beach of Long Island Sound. They learned to shoot—for there is a rifle-range at Sagamore Hill. They made pets of the various animals on the home farm in the summer, and they coasted and skated in the winter. In this bringing up of the children in the vigor of outdoor life Mrs. Roosevelt was an active partner, as will be seen by referring to another passage in the colonel's autobiography:

When their mother and I returned from a row, we would often see the children waiting for us, running like sand-spiders along the beach. They always liked to swim in company with a grown-up of buoyant temperament and inventive mind, and the float offered limitless opportunities for enjoyment while bathing.

All dutiful parents know the game of stage-coach. Each child is given a name, such as the whip, the nigh-leader, the off-wheeler, the old-lady passenger, and, under penalty of paying a forfeit, must get up and turn round when the grown-up, who is improvising a thrilling story, mentions that particular object; and when the word "stage-coach" is mentioned, everybody has to get up and turn round. Well, we used to play stage-coach on the float while in swimming, and instead of tamely getting up and turning round, the child whose turn it was had to plunge overboard. When I mentioned "stage-coach," the water fairly foamed with vigorously kicking little legs; and then there was always a moment of interest while I counted, so as to be sure that the number of heads that came up corresponded with the number of children who had gone down.

There are four boys—Theodore, Kermit, Archie, and Quentin. The boys carried this love of outdoor life with them to Washington when Mr. Roosevelt became President. Quentin, the youngest, who is now an aviator with the American troops in France, inherited his father's love for natural history. He made the acquaintance of a dealer in birds and animals and used to frequent his shop. The friendly proprietor would occasionally let him take some live specimen home to the White House for a day or two. Mr. Roosevelt himself tells the story of how one of

these temporary pets startled a distinguished member of Congress.

THE CONGRESSMAN AND THE KING-SNAKE

It was the rule, generally well observed, that the children were to keep out of the official end of the White House; but one day, while Mr. Roosevelt was holding a conference with Congressman Hepburn, the author of the well-known railroad bill that bears his name, Quentin could not resist the temptation of bursting into the room to show his father, of whose sympathy he was sure, a king-snake which the animal-dealer had let him have temporarily. The king-snake is harmless and amiable, but Congressmen do not generally know that fact; and when the reptile, which Quentin was concealing under his jacket, crawled down inside the sleeve and the boy started to take off his coat to capture it, Congressman Hepburn, with the kindest intentions, got up to help him struggle out of the garment. To his horror a snake dropped out of the sleeve onto the floor. Doubtless, for the moment, the Congressman felt that snake regulation was much more important than railway regulation in the Roosevelt family.

But it must not be supposed that Mr. Roosevelt did not exercise a disciplinary influence upon his children. He did. Sometimes, however, his discipline took an odd form.

"When we were in Washington," he says, "the children usually went with their mother to the Episcopal church, while I went to the Dutch Reformed. But if any child misbehaved itself, it was sometimes sent next Sunday to church with me, on the theory that my companionship would have a sedative effect—which it did, as I and the child walked along with rather constrained politeness, each eying the other with watchful readiness for the unexpected."

KERMIT ROOSEVELT IN AFRICA

The education of the four boys in vigorous outdoor life has been carried on from their earliest childhood up to the present time. It was rather notable, however, in the case of the second son, Kermit. When

Mr. Roosevelt went to Africa in March, 1909, Kermit had not quite completed his Harvard course, but left it to accompany his father. He traveled with the latter all through the wilds of Africa, and stood the hardships of the journey like a veteran, although only twenty years old. Indeed, his father says that Kermit was a much better hunter than he was himself. How far this statement is based on scientific statistics of marksmanship and how far on justifiable paternal pride I do not know, but I do know that Kermit made a remarkable reputation for himself among the English big-game hunters and explorers who saw his work in Africa.

As they were coming down one of the branches of the Nile, on their way to Khartum, with their *safari*, or troop of native blacks, their boat was laid up for the night at Gondokoro. At this point the stream runs swiftly, and the water is infested with man-eating crocodiles. Two of the natives, as evening approached, were scuffling in play on deck, when one of them was accidentally pushed overboard and was swept away by the current. Kermit Roosevelt, who happened to be near by, immediately plunged after him, and was also swept down-stream before any aid could be given.

He did not succeed in getting the black man, but he did succeed in swimming to the shore and scrambling out a little farther down. The native was undoubtedly snapped up by a crocodile. Why Kermit was not also a similar victim those who are familiar with the river at this point never quite understood. Kermit, who is very quiet and self-contained by temperament, came back to the *dahabiyeh* and treated the affair as a part of the day's work, simply expressing his regret that he had not succeeded in saving the unfortunate African.

I met Mr. Roosevelt and his son at Khartum a few days after the incident happened, but neither of them mentioned it to me or to any one else that I know of. I was told about it by a British officer, he having learned of it from one of the other white men in Mr. Roosevelt's party, who happened to be on deck at the time and

saw the whole affair. The British officer expressed the greatest admiration for the skill and self-sacrificing bravery manifested by such instant action in the face of great personal danger.

In the present war the British officers have sometimes been criticised because they lead their men "over the top" instead of following or sending them over as the German officers do. The result is that the percentage of fatalities among the British officers has been very large. The Germans say that from a military point of view it is foolhardy for the British to pursue this course, for it is better that a score of privates should die rather than that one officer should lose his life.

In the strict sense of military science this is perhaps true, but in another sense it is not. The personal bravery of the British is an inspiration not only to their own men but to the rest of the world. If the world loves a lover, it certainly loves a fighting officer. And it is no wonder that the boy of twenty who would jump into a river full of crocodiles to save a black savage commanded not only the respect but the touching personal attachment of these savages.

KERMIT AND HIS TROOP OF BLACKS

The Roosevelt *safari* was to be disbanded at Khartum, and its members were to go back to their homes in the jungle; but Kermit picked out about ten or fifteen, one of whom was a file-toothed cannibal, to take with him down the Nile to Cairo, in order to show them the sights of civilization. I used to see Kermit striding about Khartum with this band of blacks, who had never seen a civilized community before in their lives, following at his heels like a bunch of faithful setter dogs.

How he got them down the river to Cairo I never knew. We made the journey of some fifteen hundred miles partly by steamer and partly by rail across the Nubian desert. Kermit always seemed care-free, and entered into the life about him as if he had no responsibility at all. Where he kept his troop of blacks I do not know; but the fact is that a week or ten days later, when we got to Cairo, there

I saw again the Khartum scenes repeated, and Kermit striding about the streets and among the wonderful bazaars of that cosmopolitan city with his bevy of faithful blacks at his heels. The fact that the passers-by, accustomed as they were to all sorts of strange sights in the kaleidoscopic metropolis of Egypt, stopped and stared at him in amazement, appeared to make not the slightest impression. When he was finished with his self-imposed task he sent his faithful attendants back again into the heart of Africa in some way.

After his return from Africa Kermit went to South America and engaged in railroad-building on the frontier of Brazil. There he lived some of the time in a box car, superintending construction work and having charge of Indians and half-breeds. This life, too, was somewhat adventurous. In an accident, which occurred, I believe, by the breaking of some kind of a steel girder, two of his ribs were broken and a tooth or two knocked out. But he learned how to handle Orientals and the natives of the tropics, and it is not surprising that he has now gone, as a captain in the Canadian contingent, to have charge of work among the Oriental forces of Great Britain in Mesopotamia.

It has been rumored in the newspapers that to do so he had to give up his American citizenship. This is incorrect. He still retains his citizenship. He has simply sworn to support Great Britain for the duration of the war, and when peace is declared he will return to take up his work in this country.

QUENTIN ROOSEVELT IN THE FLYING CORPS

Quentin, the youngest son, nineteen years old, was just completing his sophomore year at Harvard when this country declared war on Germany. He telegraphed his mother that he was leaving college to come to New York to enlist. He came on from Boston and enlisted as a private in the Signal Corps, was later transferred to the aviation service at Mineola, and proved so efficient that he was selected as one of the first twelve American aviators to go to the front in France. He has what is known as "air sense"—for the aviator,

like the poet, is born, not made, and the work of the aviation schools is to train and cultivate the born flier.

During a recent visit at Sagamore Hill I asked Quentin's father and mother if they did not feel it to be a special hardship in his case that at so early an age he should have to give up his education and many of his associations at Harvard, which he could never renew, even if the war leaves him unscathed. They both replied that they were particularly glad that on his own initiative he had taken exactly the course which has put him in one of the most exacting and dangerous branches of the service.

"I would not have stopped him if I could," added Mr. Roosevelt, "and I could not have stopped him if I would. Moreover, the more American boys of from nineteen to twenty-one join the army, the better it is for the country. To take them out of our civil life entails the smallest economic loss upon the country, and because of their elasticity and great powers of recuperation they are its greatest military asset."

Mr. Roosevelt's theory is that we should have made our first selective draft of men from nineteen to twenty-one inclusive, and should have supplemented that with a call for a million volunteers without a hard and fast age limit.

TWO ROOSEVELTS WITH PERSHING

The oldest son, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., who is twenty-eight, is a major of infantry with General Pershing's expeditionary force in France. Archie, the third son, who is twenty-three, is in the same branch of the service as a second lieutenant. He had the satisfaction of marching with his company in Paris when the troops of the expeditionary force took part in the celebration of Fourth of July in the French capital. A recent graduate of Harvard, he had just begun to establish himself in business when the call to war came. He was working in one of the large carpet-mills of New England, beginning on an overall-and-dinner-pail basis, exactly as his brother Theodore began when he graduated from college.

All four of the Roosevelt boys are Plattsburgers. Theodore and Archie served in two Plattsburg camps in 1915, in three camps in 1916, and in one in 1917. Quentin was at Plattsburg in 1915 and in 1916, serving in one encampment each year.

The Roosevelt family's active interest in the war is not confined to the four boys. Their sister Ethel spent some months with her husband, Dr. Richard Derby, doing hospital work in France with the American Ambulance during the first year of the war. Dr. Derby is another Harvard man, a graduate of 1903. He is also a Plattsburger, having gone through the training course there in 1915 and 1916. He is now a major in the Medical Reserve Corps, stationed at Camp Upton, Yaphank, Long Island, and before long he will doubtless be sent back to France for active duty with the American forces.

The record would not be complete if I did not add that Theodore, Jr., has three young children; the Derbys two children, one of them a baby a few months old; and Kermit one child.

ONE HUNDRED PER CENT FIT FOR SERVICE

Major Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., Major Richard Derby, Captain Kermit, Second Lieutenant Archie, and Aviator Quentin have obtained their positions on their own merits—not because of their family connections, but rather in spite of them. There are undoubtedly many other households in this country which can show a record of equal patriotism, but it is doubtful if there is a single family in which the doctrine of preparedness has been more systematically and persistently carried out for the last thirty years than in the family whose home is at Sagamore Hill.

It is not surprising that the New York *Sun* should have recently printed the following news paragraph:

The town that gets its inspiration and its hope—to say nothing of much of its material revenue—from Sagamore Hill shows manfully in the selective draft the powerful influence of living next door to a big-game hunter.

Oyster Bay, taking its cue from the Roosevelt family which was one hundred per cent fit, one

hundred per cent willing, and eighty per cent accepted for service, disqualified only seventeen physical defectives, mollycoddles, evil-minded persons, and bad men.

(Business of a stout man saying "Bully!")

Eighty-eight men were examined by the exemption board.

Half of them claimed exemption.

(More business of a set of teeth snapping and a manly voice commenting "Malefactors!")

But as a comparative matter, the town which lies over against Sagamore Hill gave the hill a big boost as an influence for preparedness, and the average, taken in connection with the hill, is certainly "bully." At least forty per cent of the villagers of military age are ticketed for service "somewhere in France."

During his campaign for preparedness preceding our declaration of war upon Germany, Mr. Roosevelt frequently said on the public platform that we ought to be actively engaged in the world conflict for freedom and human rights, and that if war came he and his four sons were ready to go. He has certainly made his promise good. And what is not the least fine thing about it is that Mrs. Roosevelt—than whom there is no more devoted mother in the country—has whole-heartedly aided and abetted him in keeping it.

While I was talking over the war situation with them the other evening in the north room at Sagamore Hill, Mr. Roosevelt said two things which seemed to me worth jotting down. One shows that he understands boy nature, and the other that he is not afraid to recognize the physical basis of race permanence.

The first was a reply which he once made to a boy who expressed the fear that he might be taken for a "goody-goody" if he followed a certain course:

"Be always ready to fight if necessary. If you are ready to fight, you can be as good as you please and nobody is likely to complain."

The second was this succinct statement of Mr. Roosevelt's preparedness and race-suicide doctrines:

"A race must do something else besides work, fight, and breed; but if it does not do these three it will never live to do anything else."

Two good mottoes, it seems to me, for the times we live in.

Our Work for German Prisoners of War

THE UNSELFISH SERVICE UNDERTAKEN BY AMERICAN OFFICIALS ON BEHALF OF SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS HELD IN THE PRISON-CAMPS OF THE ALLIES

By Lee Meriwether

Lately Special Assistant to the American Ambassador to France

THE Prussian autocracy sneers at Uncle Sam as a sordid dollar-chaser, yet of all governments in the world none has better reason than the Kaiser's to know that the charge is unfair and untrue.

When this titanic war began, America at once undertook a great work which involved infinite pains and expense and not a dollar of profit. And this work, done solely for the benefit of the warring nations of Europe, including the Germans, was carried on for two and a half years, down to the day that Germany's repudiation of her solemn promise to stop destroying American ships and American lives forced President Wilson to dismiss Count Bernstorff.

What was that work?

It was the visiting of prisoners of war, reporting on their treatment, and trying to bring some sunshine, some happiness, into their somber lives. For at best a deep shadow, a great sorrow hangs over the heads of men in exile, torn from family and friends, and doomed to remain they know not how long in the prisons of a foreign land. The Prussian autocracy conveniently forgets this humane, this wholly unselfish work, but scores of thousands of German prisoners in English, French, and Russian hands will never forget the visits of America's delegates or the betterment in prison conditions which followed those visits.

With every wish on a government's part to treat prisoners well, it is inevitable that

here and there a prison commandant may be found whose nerves have been shot to pieces, or who by nature is harsh and cruel. When this happens, the lot of the men in his power will be an unhappy one, unless some sort of restraining influence is brought to bear.

The work Uncle Sam's diplomats were doing up to February 3, 1917, provided this restraining influence in a high degree. Even the harshest commandant curbs his temper when he knows that what he does is not to be kept hidden, but will be told to the world, with the result that reprisals may be inflicted upon his own countrymen who are prisoners in the enemy's hands.

When Uncle Sam started to look after the welfare of war prisoners in the fall of 1914, it amounted to a notice of publicity that had a humanizing effect upon even the most callous commandant of the most remote prison-camp. For no camp was so remote but that it was liable to be visited any day by a representative of an American embassy.

For instance, the Russians interned some of their German prisoners in eastern Siberia; but vast as were the distances from Petrograd, up to the time of our rupture with Germany representatives of Ambassador Francis were in the habit of dropping into those Siberian camps at the most unexpected moments, in order to note and report prison conditions. I, myself, have similarly made unannounced visits to the monasteries among the mountains of Cor-