

# The Book Table

Edited by EDMUND PEARSON

T. R.

TWO or three years ago, when I went to work for *The Outlook*, some jester asked me if it were true that in the office of this paper whenever the name of Theodore Roosevelt is mentioned every one is expected to rise and make a sign of reverence. I can now say that I have not observed that ceremony, nor have I heard the name Roosevelt mentioned here noticeably oftener than that of two or three other Presidents of the past twenty-five years. As a matter of fact, in this department of *The Outlook* there has been no emphasis upon that name, but, on the contrary, a quite unjustifiable neglect of the books which are steadily accumulating upon the subject of the life and utterances of the former Contributing Editor. When it happens, furthermore, that one of the most interesting of these books was compiled by the present Contributing Editor, there is no explanation to be given except that I have been remiss in work which should have been done as part of the ordinary course of things. Perhaps my friend's jeer made me timidly avoid the subject.

Despite the hundreds of books and magazine articles which have been written about Colonel Roosevelt, and despite the languid manner of distaste which a few writers still adopt toward a man whose life and political theories always annoyed them (for reasons easy to understand), he remains a fascinating subject; always fresh, interesting, and new. Looking over this long shelf of books last evening, from the admirable and convenient National Edition of his works to the entertaining book by Mr. O. K. Davis, this idea again occurred to me. There is something typical about Mr. Davis's book, because he was long employed as correspondent for a newspaper in opposition to President Roosevelt, and, like so many men thus employed, he was a warm personal friend and admirer. Editors roared and reporters sneered, but personal contact with T. R. had an amazing effect to make them love the man they were fighting. The two volumes of letters between Roosevelt and Lodge contain provocative material enough to make fifty large conventions of pacifists break up in the almost invariable manner of pacifistic meetings—that is, in a first-class fight. The letters of Archie Butt

have an especial interest to a man who was a Government clerk in Washington in those days—an outsider with little opportunity for looking in—but who almost daily saw the resplendent figure of Major Butt, who was then setting down in his letters his amusing comment about the curious city of Washington and its conspicuous folk.

It is not wholly pleasant to make such reckonings, but it was nearly thirty years ago, on a lowering evening in November, that I went into Boston from Cambridge to hear a lecture at the Lowell Institute. The weather was indeed ominous, for before I had returned to my room, before midnight, a howling blizzard had developed. It was a bad night for many people, and is still remembered in New England as the night the steamship *Portland* was lost. Everything was calm in the lecture-room, however. The subject of the address was some topic connected with the development of the Western States. My recollection is that the excellent custom at the Lowell Institute is not to introduce the speaker. The audience know perfectly well what man they have come to hear, and they gather, in placid Bostonian fashion, a few minutes before eight. No time is wasted in pompous oratory nor useless introductions. At eight o'clock the speaker walks upon the empty platform, possibly greeted by applause so subdued that a nervous mouse could not be alarmed. He begins to speak, and he speaks for an hour, and then he stops, following the excellent advice given by the King in "*Alice in Wonderland*."

On this evening a pleasant-looking gentleman in evening dress delivered the lecture. He was of middle height, blond and blue-eyed. He wore rimless eyeglasses with a cord. Although he was at that moment probably the most conspicuous figure in American public life, although he had just emerged as the most-talked-about man in the war with Spain, and although two or three weeks before he had been elected Governor of the greatest State in the Union, the well-bred Boston audience gave him the usual frosted welcome. There was nothing different in his manner from that of the professors to whom I listened in Cambridge. Now and then he emphasized a sentence in a manner that was amusing

and attractive rather than repellent. His face broke into a smile when he spoke of some of the fighting parsons of the pioneer days who might truly (he observed) be said to belong to the "church militant." The smile was contagious, even in that demure audience.

I looked at him with some astonishment. For three years I had seen pictures of his face extraordinarily and comically distorted by caricaturists. For the past six months he had figured every day on the front page of the newspapers as a roaring cowboy and Rough Rider. Yet he did not ride up the aisle in uniform and on a bucking bronco; he did not fire two guns into the air as he cavorted about; he did not uncoil a lariat and haul up to the stage any of the old gentlemen who sat in the front row. It was one of my first disillusionments with the newspapers. Yet I am convinced there were persons in the audience, and many more in the city round about, who confidently expected him to do exactly these things. They never relinquished these expectations. For the next twenty years they were perfectly sure that he was always about to embark on a similar exploit. The human mind is far from being ready to believe the truth. It believes what it wishes to believe.

Nearly ten years later I was coming back into Washington from a walk in Rock Creek Park. It was a little after six in the evening and already deep twilight. Down one of the avenues came an open carriage, a carriage with basket-work around the body. It was drawn by one horse; there was a driver and no other man on the box. In the carriage sat a rather stout gentleman with a black soft hat and dark-blue cloak—a little like a comfortable Dutch farmer returning to his estate. As he came near there was some movement in the top of a tree at the side of the street. Some belated bird, one of the proud grackles of Jackson Square perhaps, was changing his roost. Dim as was the light, and near-sighted as the gentleman in the carriage seemed to be—for I caught the shine of his spectacles—the bird instantly attracted his attention, and I saw him glance upward and turn his head to watch it. As the carriage went to his home on the other side of Jackson Square (for he had been riding horseback in Rock Creek Park) the girl with whom I was walking told me of an

incident which she had seen a few months before, and near the same place. It was in front of the house of the Secretary of State. The same gentleman in the blue cloak had been calling on the Secretary, and as she passed the house he came down the steps and seated himself on the back seat of a two-seated carriage. Then he seemed to change his mind, and decide that he wished to ride on the seat with the driver. Instead of getting out and climbing in again, he put one hand on the back of the seat and neatly vaulted over. She laughed as she told it, and remarked:

"I doubted if there had ever before been a President of the United States who would have done that—or who *could* have done it."

Ten years later still, in a room in a club-house in New York, I happened to see him again. It chanced to be war time, and that I was wearing a military uniform in which I was little use to any one. A pettifogging Government had kept him from being in uniform, in which, as everybody knows now, he would have been worth three or four regiments of ordinary soldiers and two or three thousand second lieutenants of my experience and accomplishments. Presuming on the fact that we were members of the same club, I ventured to bow, and he cordially returned it. He had no strong prejudices against a uniform.

"What is your regiment, sir?"

I told him that it was an organization that seemed to be permanently stuck within a hundred miles of New York, and that except for the fact that I didn't get such good food, I had as well be an interned German prisoner. He smiled the characteristic smile.

"Never you mind that! You're in it, and that's the chief thing."

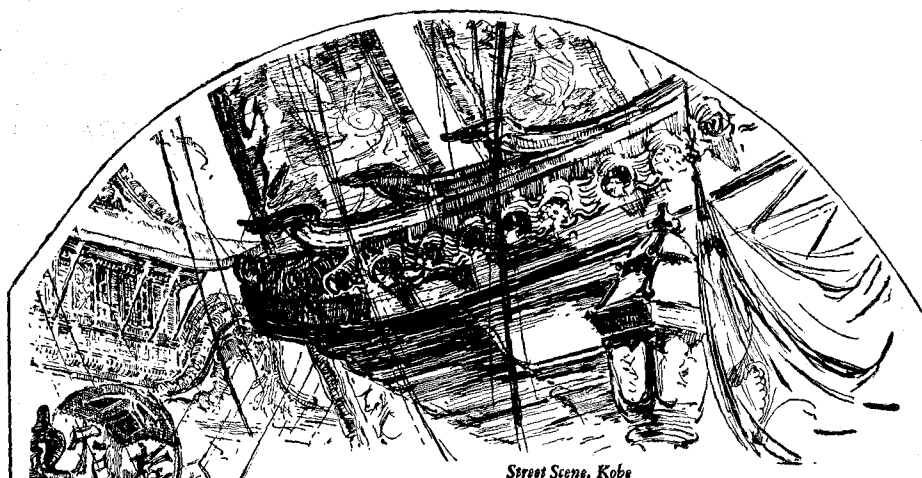
Then I spoke of some of the amusing expressions of discontent from my fellow-officers who were stuck with silly jobs in a camp in this country.

"I can understand that. I remember that in my regiment"—

(And his voice went up to the familiar and amusing falsetto which seemed to mean that he knew how many satirical allusions had been made to his references to his beloved regiment.)

"I remember that I had a great sight more trouble with the fellows I had to leave behind at Tampa than with the ones we took to Cuba."

Which is the correct view of him? Is it in the almost forgotten bitterness and hatred of 1912 and again of 1916? Is it in the jeering allusions which occasionally are made by some of the smart



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The Works of Theodore Roosevelt. National Edition. 20 vols. (Containing all that Roosevelt wrote, and all that was in the limited and expensive Memorial Edition.) Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. \$31.

James Bryce. By the Rt. Hon. H. A. L. Fisher. 2 vols. The Macmillan Company, New York. \$8.

### Fiction

THE DELECTABLE MOUNTAINS. By Struthers Burt. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. \$2.

Those great open spaces out where the West begins and men are men, et cetera, have lately been the subject of much humor and many jests, but the Wyoming mountains which are the main setting for this novel are solemn mountains. The author's description of this country and of the ever-changing ranch life is finer and far more romantic than the practiced erotics of his characters.

Stephen Londreth, scion of an old Philadelphia family, has thrown aside the conventional family shackles, and is a successful rancher when the story opens. In New York, on a visit to his friend Vizately, he meets, loves, and marries Mercedes Garcia, of the "Escapades" theatrical production. Mercedes is not the kind of chorus girl who engages in nude orgies. She loves Joseph Conrad, and animals, and is seldom happier than when spending an afternoon at the Bronx Zoo.

The struggle for adjustment in marriage between these two people so different in temperament, birth, and training, carries them far apart. Stephen goes to Europe and Mercedes back to Broadway. In the end they patch things up and return to the healing of their truly delectable mountains. The characters are minutely analyzed. Written with studied care, this book, though not a great novel, is a good one.

AND THE GARDEN WAITED. By Jacques Rutherford and Jeanne de Lavigne. Harold Vinall, New York. \$2.

Romance, sweet and a bit cloying, with interspersed liveliness as antidote. A girl novelist, a wounded hero, and "the mellowing influence of a Southern moon and the fragrance of jasmine and magnolia" are among the attractions. The publisher has clothed the book charmingly.

THE GIANT OF OLDBORNE. By John Owen. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. \$2.

A genuinely moving presentation of the pathetic situation of a young giant—a lumbering, shambling, weakly specimen of humanity, yet sensitive, kind-hearted, and faithful. Hooted by boys and tricked by a heartless girl, he enters circus life with aversion, to help his mother and later to help the woman who had deceived him when she was left a widow with a little child. The author has carried out this novel theme with delicate literary art and inci-

dentally gives us pictures of English country life and people.

THE HAPPY TREE. By Rosalind Murray. Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York. \$2.50.

There are charm, distinction, and strong emotional appeal in this quiet but moving story, reminiscently related by the woman most concerned as she attains her fortieth year. The characters are few, but one lives with them as friends. The events are simple, but the book is never dull, never drags. It is sad, often, but it leaves behind it more nearly the feeling of grave satisfaction with which one concludes a serious poem than that depressing sense of futility which follows the reading of much of the tragic fiction of the day.

HARANGUE. By Garett Garrett. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York. \$2.

Mr. Garett Garrett has given to his brilliantly executed study of a group of radicals, differing widely in their moral and intellectual caliber, a title which both plays fair with the reader in its suggestion of abundant theory and discussion, and indicates ironically the thing which so often plays the mischief with perfectly good minds belonging to too responsive listeners. But this is no long-winded book of talk and puppets; its unusual characters live and grow and behave characteristically in unusual situations.

### Sociology

THE AMERICAN RACE PROBLEM: A Study of the Negro. By Edward Byron Reuter. The Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York. \$2.75.

The writer is a Southerner by birth, Professor of Sociology in Iowa University, and tries his best to infuse some interest into a lot of statistics concerning the colored people of our country. He is fair to whites and blacks in stating things as they appear on the surface and as they change their places under pitiless figures. The flocking of Negroes to the great cities, the birth and mortality rates in towns and on the land, miscegenation and cross-breeds, crimes of the Negroes and crimes against them, racial prejudice and antipathy—these are some of the topics the painstaking professor discusses. If the Negro suggests the anthropoids by cranial massiveness, prognathism, receding forehead, arm length, and slight development of the lower body, the white man is apellike in his hair-

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