III

NEW YORK, WASHINGTON, AND CUBA

ROOSEVELT's plain friends on his ranches reminded him that bigger things than cattle-farming awaited him and that he must not linger there too long. Perhaps he needed no reminder. He had never lost touch with things in the East. In the autumn of 1886 he let himself be nominated for the mayoralty of New York, a great administrative post in which recurrent reform movements place remarkable men, who accomplish some lasting good and in a little while fall, defeated through the disappointment of impracticable reformers — combined with the hatred of those whom reform hurts. But Roosevelt had offended, as has been seen, the kind of men who accomplished these reforming triumphs, and (besides that once famous theorist Henry George) there was a highly reputable Democratic candidate, who was almost bound to get in. This foreseen failure, however, was quickly followed by great changes in his life.

On December 2, 1886, he married Edith Kermit Carow of New York. Oddly enough he was fulfilling an intention which he had once declared when he was a very little boy. Curiously, too, he

was married in London, at St. George's, Hanover Square, feeling, as he said, like a character in Thackeray; and his "best man" was Cecil Spring-Rice, whom, it is to be hoped, Washington remembers and England has not forgotten. Of the happiness that then began no more need be said.

In the next two years some of the best of his books began to appear, and though he more than once visited the ranches, his life, doubtless for his good, was for a while quiet enough. Then, in May 1889, his twenty years of service in responsible public offices began. President Harrison appointed him a member of the United States Civil Service Commission, in which post President Cleveland continued him. In May 1895, he resigned it upon his appointment as Police Commissioner of New York City by Mayor Strong, one of the reforming mayors already alluded to. In April 1897, at the instance of Senator Lodge, the very estimable new President McKinley, not without fear of Roosevelt's supposed impulsiveness, made him Assistant-Secretary of the Navy. The Spanish War began in April 1898. With a compelling inspiration that he must serve in it, Roosevelt resigned from his Navy post, raised a regiment of Rough Riders in the West, as his many friendships there enabled him to do, and served with them, at first under General

Leonard Wood, and soon, upon that officer's promotion, as himself their Colonel.

The distinction which he gained was spectacular enough, and the confidence of most reasonable reformers in him was sufficiently restored, to make him the only possible candidate of the Republican party-machine in New York State, then alarmed about its prospects, for the great office of Governor there. This office he filled for two years. He wished to be reëlected to it. But the Republican potentate of New York State wished him elsewhere, and a wide-spread public opinion in the West desired to have his name on the "Presidential ticket" which it was to vote in 1900. Thus, against his expressed will and the wishes of McKinley, he was nominated for the Vice-Presidency, while McKinley was again nominated for the Presidency. He served the cause of McKinley well by a famous tour of campaigning speeches. The two were elected, and he was considering a further study of law, and perhaps finding some comfort in the dignity of a peculiarly impotent office forced upon him because it was impotent, when on September 6, 1901, an anarchist shot one of the best loved of Presidents, and his tranquil passing away on September 14 left Roosevelt President in his stead.

In Roosevelt's successive public offices, up to

1900, he handled affairs of which any adequate study would take us deep into the political and social history of America. He took his line, too, on some great issues to which one must later return. But his good services are obvious, and so is the ripe administrative experience which he gained. Points for controversy arise but they are essentially the same as will arise later on. Thus the brevity of the notes which follow will not hide the distinction of the career with which they deal.

The system under which every employment in the public service was a favor given through the influence of the powerful to their friends, irrespective of merit, grew to goodly proportions in England when Parliament began to oust the power of the King. It is, however, so totally extinct that we hardly recall how long it lingered. It is probably one hundred and sixty years since the gross cruelty of depriving poor working-folk of their living upon a change of Ministry would have been tolerated here; as a system it never had been tolerated; nor has the dismissal of good officials, once appointed, ever since then been a trouble here. But in the higher walks of public work, though modern needs had long created a prejudice in favor of efficiency, it required the battering-power of Mr. Gladstone, at the zenith of his strength, to make

way for a thoroughly sound method of appointment in the Civil and Military Services — and, by the way, the names of Roosevelt's friend, Sir George Trevelyan, and of his father, Sir Charles, must be associated with Mr. Gladstone's in this. One almost pathetic little survival of the old order remained till 1894 and the present writer has had, as the local M.P. of the party in power, to settle that the people of a village should post their letters at the shop of a sound Radical rather than at the rather more conveniently placed shop of an equally estimable Unionist. It was the merest survival of a system practically long extinct.

In America the "spoils system" came into vigor when democracy came fully to its own. The original "turning the rascals out" was perhaps sincerely regarded as a victory over the corruption of the past, but a foul evil immediately struck its roots far and wide and deep; and, since neither the direct injuries to the public nor the sufferings of dispossessed officials were at first so prevalent or so serious as they would have been here, and are in modern cities of America now, generations grew up who accepted it (as equally evil things have been accepted elsewhere) almost as one of the natural beauties of America. Moreover, the genial but slack-minded belief that one's self or almost any

one is fit for almost any task is associated with a better instinct; and American contentment with inefficiency, in many things which countries with far less advantages do better, finds plausible excuse in the many cases of exceptional men, who do magnificent work for which their past might seem not to have prepared them. Thus when Roosevelt, as a Civil Service Commissioner, was called to take part in the gradual and partial warring down of this old abuse, the victory of sound principle was far from assured, though the gallantly sustained fight had achieved a good deal through the help of Presidents Hayes, Arthur, and Cleveland. There was now a Civil Service Commission which could and did apply to the candidates for many appointments the rough but useful test of suitable examinations. But the extent to which its services were used in making appointments depended on rules made by the executive and the good-will with which administrators carried them out. Congress could at any time cut down the money appropriated for examinations. Sheerly base opposition to reform was vigorous. A President of either party could not act squarely up to his principles without genuine resentment from the mass of his regular supporters; and even able men of strong and estimable character believed that the public service could be better

run without the meddlesome reforms of "long-haired cranks."

The cause of the "long-haired cranks" was in this case one to rouse Roosevelt's enthusiasm in its favor. His studies had taught him what efficient government means. His venture in politics had taught him that worse evils than administrative feebleness arose from the spoils system, through the huge advantage given to corrupt manipulators of politics against any real expression of the people's opinion, and through the wide diffusion of a depraved and cynical tone. Then, too, he was a man sensitive to the manner in which the iron of evil government actually enters into the souls of individual sufferers. Cases like that of a widow struggling for years at some salaried post in a Washington department, faithfully earning enough to maintain her children, and then chucked out despite the protests of her superiors to put a little job into a certain senator's gift, were just the sort of thing to enrage him. And the assistance which the cause then needed was that of a fearless hard-hitter in that office. Supported by his colleagues, he came down unsparingly upon lax and treacherous application of the Civil-Service rules in local customs- or post-offices; prosecuted offenders who had never dreamed that the law would be

enforced against them; paid no deference at all to a Cabinet Minister, the then famous Postmaster-General; delighted in confuting before committees the lies which congressmen concocted about the examination system; and, when some great Senator, who had attacked the Commissioners and had been challenged to substantiate his charge, judiciously chose a moment at which Roosevelt was to have been absent for doing so, suddenly returned a thousand miles or so to discomfit him. The system had to be proved a reality by very vigorous enforcement, and the public mind had to be educated to the idea underlying it. For the latter purpose it was as well that Roosevelt, who could act very noiselessly at times, had a great facility, when he chose, for doing things in a way that made a stir.

The work of President of the Police Commission of New York, which after six years tempted Roosevelt away from the Civil Service Department, had a more appealing human interest. The Street-Cleaning Department of the city, though probably giving ample scope for a reformer, had not appealed to him; whereas Mr. Jacob Riis's book, *How the Other Half Lives*, had long before turned his mind to things dreadfully wrong in poor city homes, which good police and sanitation could in some

degree help. His new office gave him a seat also on the Health Board. Whatever may be the case now in a city which the years since have greatly beautified, — incidentally paving it, — New York in the past had no great name for municipal purity. The clumsiness of its institutions went far to ensure evil. The Police Department in particular "represented," as Roosevelt says, "that device of old-school American political thought, the desire to establish checks and balances so elaborate that no man shall have power enough to do anything very bad. In practice this always means that no man has power enough to do anything good, and that what is bad is done anyhow." The constitution of his own Board, and the limitations on its power even when it was united, exposed Roosevelt to being thwarted at every turn by intrigue, though the trouble which he could make when thwarted led to a reform of the system soon after. His problem, which sounds simple, that the police should enforce the law, was in fact one of extreme complexity. Under any system, the police of so strange an aggregate of people as constitutes New York must have a task of stupendous difficulty, much danger, temptation intense and unremitting. With great forces of corruption ever in wait for them, and a feeble system of command above them, their

standard of duty was dragged down by the abundance of laws and ordinances which were merely vexatious, could not be thoroughly enforced, and might so reasonably be left idle to oblige some one — more particularly some one who obliged in return. In any case bribery and blackmail flourished. "A very large revenue," writes Mr. Bishop, "was collected by the force from vice and crime and the unlawful sale of liquor, and this was divided among the higher officials of the force and the political leaders."

Not to multiply instances — Roosevelt's decisive (or partly decisive) battle was fought to enforce the Sunday-Closing Law. Nearly every saloon was kept open in violation of the law, a price of course being duly paid for the privilege. It was held impossible to enforce the law. Of course it was possible for a resolute head of police who gave his mind to it — provided, that is, that he struck before intrigue to thwart him could collect its strength, and provided, further, that he had steeled himself to face the sustained malignity with which every interest in evil would thenceforth pursue him. So Roosevelt announced that he should enforce the law, and he did it. He continued, with a notable effect upon crime, till his success was partly reversed by magistrates who held that one sandwich

plus innumerable drinks was equal not to a drink but to a meal. If the liquor law was thus again evaded, a heavy blow had still been struck at the system of blackmail, and the dormant morale of the force had been aroused.

All along the line Roosevelt was able during his two years in this office to give to the law something of that meaning which it possesses alike in London and in a thousand of the smaller American towns. Statistics and the testimony of severe and knowing critics show this. We need notice here only that this success was due to something more than energetic and astute administration. He was keenly aware that the demoralized force put under him consisted in very large part of splendid human material; including indeed men who were only physically fit, but including far more who were dishonest not from preference but from the continual pressure of none but a dishonest standard set before them; including many, too, who were anything but dishonest, and an astonishingly numerous few who would, upon any call, do deeds of heroism. One cannot, I think, read Roosevelt's own account of his men without seeing something of the heart of the man and, perhaps, revising one's sense of the real problem of goodness in this world.

It is difficult not to regret that Roosevelt passed so soon from work so closely related to those philanthropic and religious labors which, though obviously not his own appointed task, received much of his inspiring sympathy, back into the narrower world of a Government department in a capital. But the Navy Department was not a narrow world to him, and its work, unlike that of municipal and social reform, was one for which, if he could have held it for long in a period of peaceful preparation, his qualifications would have been unique. Very few Americans can have learned what his keen reading of history had taught him — why a great nation generally wants a fleet, and what manner and size of fleet it wants; though oddly enough it is to an American — Mahan, author also of one of the few great biographies of great Englishmen — that Englishmen, with their proud naval tradition, themselves owe any clear ideas in this matter. His actual services to naval efficiency need not detain us; he was little more than a year in that office; he had already done much to encourage interest in the sea power, in the course of that ceaseless writing which must be understood as generally going along side by side with what is here recorded; but it was later, as President, that in the matter of marksmanship and in other ways, he

was able to do most for the Navy. But the war with Spain was looming up, and he did one brilliant stroke when he contrived that the command of the Pacific squadron should go to Dewey, a commander whose action at Manila was like certain feats of Blake and Nelson, and quite unlike what an average, prudent, senior officer would have done. All the while Roosevelt wanted that war to begin; but his views as a statesman in regard to the Spanish War and kindred matters form a subject which will engage us further on — a great and a controversial subject.

The part which he played in the war need not be matter of controversy. He had English and American friends who regretted that he left a post where he had great work to do, to go soldiering, to which he had no call. This is really to overlook his own conviction of his own calling. Most of his utterances display his simple conviction that he had something to teach, a mark which he believed he might make upon the ideas of growing America, indeed of young men anywhere. He had said loudly and often that men should be prepared to fight and die for their country. He was not forty; he was extraordinarily strong; it was in peace time chiefly, we may add, that his driving-power was badly needed in his department, whereas there was

FILIPINIANA COL. Eugenio López A duplicate for exchange from the LOPEZ MEMORIAL MUSEUM

in fact a particular service which he could render in Cuba. He reflected, as he tells us, that after what he had preached he could not rightly stay at home. When we consider his real situation, it is evident that no man with a soundly sensitive conscience could have felt otherwise. Nor is there any sense in suggesting that he went into it for the fun, which, being in it, he doubtless got out of it, or for the useful popularity which it would bring him. Mature men, who have had real occasion to know that shots do sometimes kill one, do not act on those motives. Roosevelt loved life, and supremely loved his home, nor can anyone doubt his avowal that the thought of the great separation which might happen was awful to him then. And whatever his ambition was, and whatever a man may mean by glory, the idea (which has actually been conceived) of his going into battle in hopes of electioneering réclame, is senseless.

When the "First United States Volunteer Cavalry," one of three such regiments authorized by Congress, was raised, it was a relief to Roosevelt that the nickname "Rough Riders" got attached to it; he had trembled to think that it might be "Teddy's Terrors." The average of them would probably have been rather gratified by this last title, but there is no doubt at all of their devotion

to Roosevelt. He and they played a creditable part in the fighting which caused the surrender of Santiago, and was thus decisive of this short war. Whether reports which belittled their services sprang from political jealousy or from the jealousy which sometimes invades even military breasts, they are in either case untrue. Roosevelt's happiness about their achievements was expansive and resounding enough to justify a smile, provided it is a kindly smile. But anyone, who has ever had even the slightest acquaintance with bush fighting and has heard different men tell of their doings in it, will recognize his account of his fighting experiences as a transparently truthful and modest story.

With his martial glories enhanced by duly insubordinate but effective intervention to get his own troops and others brought home again before they died of fever, he returned to become Governor of New York State. English readers know or should know that a State is independent and supreme in most domestic affairs (though the exact line between its authority and that of the National Government has become unintelligible now), and that the functions of a Governor in his State are closely similar to those of the President in the Union. The great achievement of Roosevelt's Governorship was suggested by his experiences in the Legislature

long before. He procured the passing of an Act to require the taxation, as real estate, of all rights over land granted by the Legislature to any Corporation (or, as we say, Company). He procured it by the most strenuous use of that driving-power over the Legislature which a Governor can exercise if he can arouse public opinion to support him, and against the fiercest opposition from powerful interests and his own party-machine. It was a heavy blow dealt to the standing alliance between business interests and party wire-pullers.

Let it be added that the principal other achievements of his contentious Governorship were concerned with the appointment of capable public officers instead of corrupt partisan officers, and that he won his fights over them. It is amazing that, nevertheless, from the commencement of his candidature to the expiry of his office, a noteworthy band of reforming zealots opposed and denounced him, on the ground that he was subservient to the party-machine. The main facts are simple and instructive. Mr. Platt, a strange character, not fond of money, fond of arid theology, and passionately devoted to power, ruled the Republican machine and conceived himself as the *de jure* ruler of the State. When hard fortune drove him to run Roosevelt as a candidate, he tried to make his

bargain. Would Roosevelt duly consult him about all appointments and all policies? The answer, given politely but with quite astonishing directness, was that Roosevelt would always consult him, and always, after consulting him, do exactly what he, Roosevelt, thought right. The promise to consult him was fulfilled. The promise to act independently of his advice, and for public interests not those of party, was fulfilled also — there is no question about this — to the letter, though Mr. Platt was pretty constantly using the fiercest threats of political ruin to him. What especially enraged the reforming zealots was this: Platt was an old man and ailing, Roosevelt was young and very well; so, for the purposes of the promised consultations, the Governor went to the Boss's house in New York instead of dragging the old man to Albany to visit him. This merely shows that Governor Roosevelt was a gentleman.

Looking forward to his later conduct we should take note of two lasting but conflicting impressions now made upon him, or rather reinforced; one was of deep public resentment against the rich corporations and their political influence; the other of more superficial but still acute irritation against a certain breed of theoretical reformers, who dream that one can influence the world for good while

dwelling afar from that inelegant place. And we should no less note that from the beginning to the end of this very pure early career, every good thing that it had been given to Roosevelt to do had — so it happened — been a matter of sheer hard fighting.

Roosevelt had thus, before he was forty-three, already lived one of the lives that are worth recording. At that point a tragic event placed him in one of the most eminent positions in the world, at a time when a powerful man set there had to do with things of no common importance. Thenceforward he was to live — not that he had any reluctance so to live — under "that fierce light which beats upon a throne" and continues to follow, though with diminishing brightness, kings and such when they have lost their place. His vehement deeds while in place and his no less vehement protests amid events of graver moment afterward present a series of controverted matters, worth controversy and to be fairly faced. It may be well to pause here and note some things which help to show by what standards, thenceforth, he should be judged — what could fairly be demanded of him and what not.

He was not a man of genius, however we may define that mysterious quality which, among statesmen of recent times, we see clearly in Lincoln, and

which at least those who remember his living presence must ascribe to Gladstone. Self-centred as he was, in the sense that among other natural phenomena his own individual self rather fascinated and on the whole pleased him, he had a paradoxical but very true kind of modesty, and repeatedly called attention to the fact that he was not a man of genius. This was worth calling attention to, because plenty of people around him rated him extravagantly. It is still worth calling attention to, because nature and accident combined to make him a spectacular figure, and critics have become pettily carping about him on not finding what they never need have looked for.

He had none the less such varied and extraordinary powers (powers some or all of which may be lacking in a man of genius) as may perhaps never have been possessed in combination by any other man. He certainly did not let them lie idle; he used them unsparingly — prodigally. We must think later whether on the whole he used them for high aims and with God's blessing. Among his gifts, his great bodily efficiency, along with the forcible bearing which it facilitated, bulks so largely in some people's eyes that they think there was little more of him and imagine that he valued it overmuch. In reality, though his conservation

of bodily vigor and prowess to the verge of old age was rare and admirable, his just estimate, for himself and for his sons (in his letters to them), of the true and subordinate value of that side of life was rarer and more admirable. And while many remarkable men have been his athletic equals, very few, whether physically vigorous or only mentally so, have equaled him in certain mental endowments, or in the exuberant delight with which he used them. In particular the rapidity with which he read, his memory for what he had once thus rapidly read, and the ease with which after bodily fatigue or in the midst of earnest cares he could turn to any kind of study, were all but unexampled. Macaulay, whom he loved, had some of these faculties; Gladstone, whom, for all the contrasts between them, he obviously admired, was perhaps his only equal among famous men in undefeated, all-round vitality. Equipped with these powers, he galloped over vast tracts of historical and biological knowledge, of poetry and of romance, delighting in them as he delighted in his sports — delighting in them far more, if one may judge from the men of whom he sought and won intimacy.

It was an exuberant delight, showing that perennial boyishness on which the best of his biographers have insisted. He was eager to meet the most

learned men in subjects of which his learning amounted to something; when he met them it was with less desire to listen to them than to exercise his own knowledge, sound and unsound. How many of us must have caught ourselves doing the like! So, occasionally, he gave himself away. His books vary very much in quality — and he wrote a good deal for his living. He confessedly scamped the last part of his "Benton," which does not matter, and when he wrote of the history of the West, telling with great vivacity and justice about matters of ever fresh interest, the very learned say that he had not dug in Spanish archives. He could be plausibly accused of platitude; his emphatic way invited it, and so did his simple words. English statesmen of the very first rank may occur to us who have in our time written serious books or given scholarly discourses. It would be rash to maintain that any one of them (with a doubtful exception for some who have been men of letters first) has written stuff of more real value than Roosevelt, or so seldom been entirely shallow. Certainly in this island, where statesmanship has long been associated with scholarly attainments, no statesman for centuries has had his width of intellectual range. And his was vitalized knowledge, illuminating practical life at numberless

points. But this is not to say that he had a deeply reflective mind. We are told that in great practical affairs he would willingly take counsel, but ultimately made up his mind by a flashing sort of intuitive process; sometimes prefaced by repeated self-contradiction; very often obviously right; but in almost all cases without a logic perceptible to other men. Thus neither a gospel nor a philosophy can be made out of his words or example, though they might illustrate at many points an old, old gospel or philosophy. With just views on matters that happened to engage his interest, he could dispose of some, such as the tariff question, which did not, in phrases packed with meaninglessness such as he later attributed to Mr. Wilson. It matters little, if, after all, he more often than most of us did the right thing bravely.

Physically and mentally he showed a phenomenally quick response of act to stimulus, such as a great boxer exhibits. Let us add to this that he spent his life — largely, by no means solely — in fighting, and that quite obviously up to his Presidency it was fighting against evil things. In the far more complex and exacting struggles of his after years, it is not to be supposed that he would never pick the wrong man to assail, never assail him with the first weapon that came handy, never

carry the assault ruthlessly far. It should be enough to find, if we do find it, that a broad generosity pervaded his life; that he still by preference smote the cruel and the foul; that that instant response to stimulus, which would leave him in some ways no more unsoiled than most statesmen, could result also in instant self-sacrifice when most would have faltered.

Finally, of course he was ambitious. But so far it had been a strange course of ambition. Of the seven civil offices which he held, every one had come to him through the unsolicited choice of him by some one else. And in all his career so far, the several bold departures made upon his own initiative, though they turned to his advantage, were all rash acts from which friends would have dissuaded him and which could hardly have suggested themselves to any commonly scheming man's mind. The freely censured courses of his later years should be judged in the light of this. It should be candidly recognized forthwith that he possessed an ambition of a rare sort — the ambition, not particularly for the President's place or any other, or for wealth, or even fame, or even power, but to live to the full the life of a man.

How good is man's life, the mere living!

He wrote these words of Browning's early in one

of his hunting books. Presumably he did not always live — for the best of us do not — quite on the same high level. But, at the end of the story, we may think — though I shall not labor the point with argument — whether upon the whole, as the temptations of high station and middle age multiplied, there was falling off of aspiration, or whether, rather, this love of living mellowed into the love of a larger life than that youthful quotation or this political biography tells of.