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THE LETTERS OF
Theodore Roosevelt

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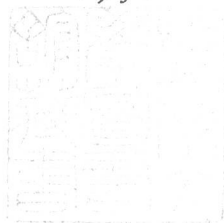
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THE LETTERS OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT

VOLUME III

The Square Deal

1901—1903

Preface

These two volumes, since they contain letters written, for the most part, in the first administration of Theodore Roosevelt, have a kind of independent unity. For this reason they may be used by historians and others who have had no occasion to consult the preceding books in this series. A word or two about methods of selection and editorial procedure, lifted in large part from the introduction to the first volume, may therefore not be out of place here. Nor, perhaps, will a few observations about the letters that follow be found inappropriate.

As for questions of editorial purpose and procedure: The intent behind the venture is to make easily accessible all the available letters of Theodore Roosevelt that seem necessary to reveal, in so far as letters can, his thought and action in all the major and many of the minor undertakings of his public and private life. The letters have been selected with this intent in mind and without regard to the question of previous publication; they have been arranged in chronological order; and they have been printed in their entirety. The primary source of material has been the Theodore Roosevelt Collection in the Library of Congress. Of the 100,000 letters in this collection, to give approximate figures, perhaps ninety per cent are exact copies of dictated letters. This primary source has been supplemented by material drawn from over 150 letter collections in this country and abroad. Many of the letters discovered in these collections, over four thousand in all, are simply the typed originals of carbon or letter-press copies now in the Roosevelt Collection. A great many such letters, of which two precisely similar versions exist in different places, are printed in these volumes. They are cited, for purposes of convenience, to the Roosevelt Manuscripts. Only when no copy of a letter can be found in the Roosevelt Collection is citation made to the collection where the original lies.

There are about two thousand letters on the pages that follow; they have been selected from an available supply, for the four years in question, of about twenty thousand. This reduction has been achieved in the following way. All trivia, of which there are many, and most duplicating material, of which there is more, have been, save in rare instances, cut away. In many fields of continuing but secondary interest for Roosevelt — literature, explo-

ration, history, or the hunt — only suggestive examples, save again in rare instances, have been included. In the field of primary interest, politics, other criteria have governed. For all the significant events — like the anthracite strike — and for all suggestive minor episodes — like the disposition of the church lands in the Philippines — all letters not absolutely repetitive are included. With issues that continue — like the tariff — letters indicating development or shift in general policy have been taken; but, save in unusual circumstances, letters that simply reiterate previously prepared positions are ordinarily avoided. The application of policy is demonstrated by letters dealing with specific case histories that have been chosen either as representative of many, as in the administration of the Five Civilized Tribes, or as possessing unusual intrinsic interest, as in the case of the Warren Live Stock Company.

The letters thus selected have been reproduced in accordance with the following procedures: Handwritten letters, designated as such by the symbol “o” attached to the cited manuscript collection, are printed as written without further indication of Roosevelt’s frequent and startling departures from the norm of accepted usage in spelling. The zero symbol, designed originally to fit as gracefully as possible into a necessarily cluttered page, is perhaps too unobtrusive; experience with the first two volumes has demonstrated that it has eluded the eyes of at least some readers. Therefore, a word of caution, as well as of self-defense. When surprising aberrations of spelling appear in the letter text, look first for the symbol of the superior zero before assuming that the fault lies in ourselves and not in our star. For the rest, typed letters are printed exactly as written, save that obvious spelling errors have been corrected in accordance with the requirements of *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* and *Webster’s Geographical Dictionary*. Letters reprinted from books, newspapers, and periodicals are printed, in spite of occasional quite obvious or surprising printer’s errors, precisely as originally published.

* * *

Since the introduction to the first two volumes was written, several changes in the personnel of the group preparing this series have taken place. The first change to be recorded here is one that brought sadness to everyone who has had a hand in this work. Miss Nora Cordingley’s death in March 1951 deprived the Roosevelt Memorial Association of a devoted and discerning librarian who had served as custodian of the Association’s Roosevelt Collection — first in New York and then in the Harvard College Library — for over twenty-five years; it took from this editorial group a skillful member and a warm and friendly supporter.

There have been other changes in the past year. In September 1950 Alfred D. Chandler became an assistant editor of the letters. On October 1, 1950, Margaret Hinchman left shortly before her marriage, and on March 1, 1951, John J. Buckley, the copy editor, departed to enter government service. Miss

Sylvia Rice and Mrs. Nell Krusemeyer have assumed the editorial duties that had been performed by Mr. Buckley and Miss Hinchman.

The index for these two volumes was prepared by E. Gordon Bassett, whose death, just as the work was finished, has deprived many grateful authors of a deft, witty, and understanding colleague.

* * *

Permission obtained from the following publishers to quote from the indicated books is most gratefully acknowledged: Doubleday and Co., New York, for Tyler Dennett, *Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War*, 1925; Dodd, Mead, and Co., New York, for Tyler Dennett, *John Hay*, 1933, and Philip C. Jessup, *Elihu Root*, 1938; E. P. Dutton and Co., New York, for Alfred L. P. Dennis, *Adventures in American Diplomacy*, 1928; Miss Dorothy Foster Gilman for Bradley Gilman, *Roosevelt: The Happy Warrior*, published by Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1921; Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, for Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*, 1947, and Joseph Lincoln Steffens, *The Autobiography of Joseph Lincoln Steffens*, 1931; Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, for Claude G. Bowers, *Beveridge and the Progressive Era*, 1932, Elting E. Morison, *Admiral Sims and the Modern American Navy*, 1942, Edward Stanwood, *A History of the Presidency from 1897 to 1909*, 1912, and William Roscoe Thayer, *The Life and Letters of John Hay*, 1915; Alfred A. Knopf, New York, for Samuel F. Bemis, ed., *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, 1929; The Macmillan Co., New York, for William Allen White, *The Autobiography of William Allen White*, 1946; The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, for Everett Walters, *Joseph Benson Foraker, An Uncompromising Republican*, 1948; Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, for Ray Stannard Baker, *American Chronicle, The Autobiography of Ray Stannard Baker*, 1945, *Dictionary of American Biography, The Works of Theodore Roosevelt*, National Edition, Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, *Nelson W. Aldrich, a Leader in American Politics*, 1930, Mark Sullivan, *Our Times*, 1930, and *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1918*, 1925.

Introduction

*T*here is a story that Benjamin Franklin was not asked to write the Declaration of Independence because, it was feared, he would plant some obscure and dreadful joke in the text. It is true that the birth of a nation, as D. W. Griffith has revealed, is no laughing matter; and the wisdom of the revolutionary fathers remains, in most things, undoubted. But it can be argued that in this particular instance these fathers have rendered a disservice; they appear to have been at least partially responsible for setting an unfortunate tone that has persisted in our history.

It must be obvious to even the casual observer that there is a forbidding solemnity in our record of the past. For a country that has been, on the whole, prosperous and expanding, that has exhibited so vivid a sense of well-being, very little laughter comes down to us from preceding generations. It may be that democracies, like Franklin's colleagues — some of whom indeed were democrats — distrust humor. Disraeli thought so and one of our own Presidents warned a friend that in a candidate on a platform wit was a disqualifying defect. Whatever the cause, we have arranged for ourselves a rather solemn heritage which, not unexpectedly, has attracted to its study and exposition men who are all too frequently themselves solemn.

Some distortion in our published history has been the natural result. Though there has been much thoughtful, useful, and painstaking work done, there has been a preoccupation with matters like the sale of public lands and reconstruction; there has also been an observable reluctance to let a little cheerfulness in. For example, no one can be unaware of the tendency to walk in gingerly fashion around the years from 1890 to 1912. At times, indeed, it almost seems that just as the closing of the frontier in 1890 eliminated the influence of the pioneer, so the discovery of that closing, in 1893, shut off the possibility of all scholarly expeditions beyond this great historical watershed. But it appears more likely that we have all been put off by the fact that the period in question began with ten years of supposed gaiety. What, one might ask, could possibly be found in those nineties and the subsequent decade so influenced by the nineties, that could appropriately be incorporated into an earnest heritage. A few things to be sure have turned up — the unhappy years that followed the depression of 1893 have for the moment

captured the sympathetic attention of men who lived through the 1930's, and Brooks Adams and Thorstein Veblen among others have been singled out for special attention. Perhaps a handful of episodes and personalities have been found to contain sufficient specific gravity to warrant consideration for inclusion in the legacy. But, showing somberly as they do against the highly colored background, they have been taken as exotic in a time of unbecoming levity. The reconstruction of these years has therefore been left by the professional historian, on the whole, to others — men with nimble imaginations and selective memories like Lincoln Steffens or really incredible fellows like Thomas Beer.

The product of these investigations has been entertaining beyond all reasonable expectation — a military charade on a small island, the adulteration of patent medicines, the Floradora girls, the intrepid search for sin on the streets of Boston and in the stockyards of Chicago, a murder on the roof of Madison Square Garden, the coarse fabrication of a revolution in Central America, the *Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, the quadrennial demonetization of the silver tongue and the cross of gold, Victor Herbert, the controlled explosion of trusts, and all the rest of it.

It is, beyond doubt, a highly entertaining record, and one that has lost nothing in the telling. Yet it is a pity that the mauve surfaces should have proved so distracting to those who have chosen to write about the period, and so discouraging to those who have not. For there was beneath these selected surfaces serious business going forth between 1890 and 1912. There was in fact a developing conflict in our society at least as dangerous to the country's welfare as the conflict that rattled the nation from 1840 to 1860. It is of course true enough and altogether creditable that Brooks Adams understood this in his fashion, perversely; just as Thorstein Veblen did, savagely; and Henry George did, eccentrically. But there were likewise many others, less gifted perhaps with tongues or irony, who also knew what they were up against. Fortunately many of these were in public life. Elihu Root for one, George Walbridge Perkins for another, and William Henry Moody, and Joseph Wingate Folk, and that strange man, Marcus Alonzo Hanna.

The nature of the conflict within society at this time was best described, perhaps, by an Englishman a few years before the gay nineties began. In an imposing essay Matthew Arnold questioned whether coal, iron, and railways could be taken as a measure of a country's greatness. He asked whether the industrial energy that produced the things of his society would not, if uncontrolled, drive out all value from the community. He wondered if it were even possible to devise an authority sufficient to control the rapidly expanding mechanical energies of his time. In two very disorderly sentences he asked the ultimate question: "How to organize the authority, or to what hands to entrust the wielding of it? How to get your *State* summing up the right reason of the community, and giving effect to it, as circumstances may require, with vigor?" The problem by which Matthew Arnold was appalled

was how to resolve — or limit within safe bounds — the conflict he discerned between the culture men had devised to satisfy their needs as human beings and the anarchy produced by unorganized mechanical power.

In these two volumes the contours, at least, of this conflict may be discovered; for these letters deal in great part with the problem of how to order, successfully, an industrial society. In the years during which the letters were written, as Matthew Arnold would presumably be delighted to know, coal, iron, and railways were much in the news. There were also other events and questions, not enumerated by the essayist, that were forced upon us by our expanding industrial economy — the administration of a new imperial dominion, the conservation of natural resources, the control of large corporations, and our place in the sun and on the Isthmus of Panama. There was also the continuous general question — how to order and limit the flying energies — how to get your state to sum up the right reason of the community and to give effect to it with vigor.

To the problems and questions presented by these occasions the President of the United States, in the letters that follow, addressed himself. And in these letters it may be discovered that he was not unaware of the general implications radiating from the specific things with which he had to deal. He said once, in almost the words Matthew Arnold had used before him, that there was in a society that rested upon industry the constant danger of barbarism. Unhappily prominent in American life, he wrote a friend, was "the spirit of the Birmingham School, the spirit of the banker, the broker, the mere manufacturer, the mere merchant."

But, believing all this, he did not grow lean as he assailed the seasons. Over and over again he said that big business was here to stay. "It behooves us," he therefore concluded, "to look ahead and plan out the right kind of civilization as that which we intend to develop from these wonderful new conditions of vast industrial growth." With such opportunities available, who, with a zest for life and a sense of humor, he once asked, would not like to be in American politics in the years that followed the turn of the century?

On these pages can be found what Theodore Roosevelt took to be the right kind of civilization and how in politics he set about trying to achieve it. For this reason, if for no other, the letters must contain fascinating evidence for the American who finds himself today face to face with the same injunctions. But it must not be equally assumed that they will also always provide fascinating reading. The really beautiful, sustained development of Matthew Arnold's perceptions, the gorgeous reach of speculation in Henry Adams, are nowhere to be found in these letters. It is their defect as literature and philosophy.

For example, Roosevelt like others wondered if railroads can be the true measure of greatness in a society. But his wonder is concealed beneath a score of letters that were written in 1906 in an attempt to obtain the consent of a few congressmen to a compromise amendment involving the extent of the

authority of the federal courts over the fixing of freight rates. He also wondered how to get the state to give effect to the right reason of the community, and again his wonder is lost — or worse, tarnished — through a hundred letters that were designed to eliminate before the Republican Convention of 1904 the influence of Marcus A. Hanna from the party councils in certain unreliable states. All is not right reason before an election in which an administration believes that it ought for the good of the community to be returned to office; nor yet is all sweetness and light.

So these are the dispatches of a man who came down from the white cliffs to reconnoiter the darkling plain with the thought that he might improve the generalship of the ignorant armies a little; the letters of a man who once confided that his whole religious sense was contained in a verse of Saint James that runs: "I will show my faith by my works."

Here these works appear in detail, bald and incomplete transactions that are further evidence of man's poignant incapacity ever completely to fulfill his meaning by his action. From the insufficiency of the works it is common practice to infer the absence of the faith and of the understanding; and these letters, improvised to meet the requirements of a hundred specific occasions, contain few of the reorienting generalizations that may attend the search of a fine, detached intelligence for the final meaning of situations.

But, it is hoped, they may disclose that the letter-writer was profoundly aware, in his own fashion, intuitively, of the conditions, both the gay and the grave, of his time; and that he proposed to do what he could to achieve, with due regard for the conditions, the kind of civilization he took to be both good and possible. It is also hoped that these letters, taken together, may disclose how the work was done.

E. E. M.

*“An Office That Should
Be Abolished”*

January 1901—September 1901

SYMBOLS

- () Single angle brackets indicate material crossed out but decipherable.
- « » French quotation marks indicate editorial interpretations of illegible words.
- [] Square brackets indicate editorial interpolations.
- . . . Three dots indicate a missing word.
- Four dots indicate two or more missing words.
- ⁰ A superior zero placed after the manuscript source indicates that the entire letter is in Roosevelt's handwriting.
- A, B, C, . . . A small capital, A, B, C, etc., placed after a letter number indicates that that letter was acquired and inserted after the original manuscript had gone to press.

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