

Unforgettable Americans



J E A N F R I T Z

Bully for You, Teddy Roosevelt!

Illustrations by Mike Wimmer



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WHAT DID Theodore Roosevelt want to do? Everything. And all at once if possible. Plunging headlong into life, he refused to waste a single minute. Among other things, he studied birds, shot lions, roped steer, fought a war, wrote books, and discovered the source of a mystery river in South America. In addition, he became governor of New York, vice-president of the United States, then president. This was a big order for one man, but Theodore Roosevelt was not an everyday kind of man. He was so extraordinary that when people tried to describe him, they gave up on normal man-size words. "A cyclone," that's what Buffalo Bill called him. Mark Twain said he was "an earthquake." He was called "an eruption," "an express locomotive," "a buzz saw," "a dynamo."

But he did not start out this way. Indeed, he was so

puny that his parents worried if he would ever grow up at all. Born in New York City on October 27, 1858, Theodore (or Teddy, as he was called) was the second of the four Roosevelt children, and he was the sickly one, the one with asthma. As a child, he spent much of his time struggling just to get his breath. Often he would have to be propped up with pillows and would sit up in bed all night. If this didn't help, his father would pick him up and walk with him, hour after hour. Sometimes his father would bundle him up and take him out in his carriage, even though it was late at night. Then Mr. Roosevelt would drive his horses pell-mell through the city streets, careening around corners, hoping that the speed would force air into Teddy's lungs. As a last resort, Mr. Roosevelt would light a cigar and make Teddy puff on it. Inhaling the smoke was not pleasant, but it might start Teddy's lungs working again.

Not only sick, Teddy was often scared. As a little boy, he insisted that a werewolf lay at the foot of his bed, waiting to spring at him. For a while he dreaded going to church. Once he heard the preacher talking about "zeal." He didn't know what "zeal" was, but it sounded like something alive and hungry. Something that would like to eat him up. He pictured it crouching in the dark corners of the church, watching for a chance to *get* him. When he was grown up, he admitted that he had been "nervous and timid" as a child.

But he was not nervous when he was with his father. Indeed, Teddy liked nothing better. Theodore Roosevelt, Sr.—a loving and well-beloved man with a high sense of

duty—was the idol of his children. Anna (or Bamie) was four years older than Teddy and considered herself one of the adults of the family, but the three younger children, Teddy, Elliott (a year and a half younger), and Corinne (three years younger), competed for their father's attention. In the morning they would stand at the foot of the stairs, waiting for their father to come down for morning prayers. As soon as he appeared, they would shout, "I speak for you and the cubbyhole too!" The cubbyhole was the space between their father and the arm of the sofa where he sat. Whoever got that seat felt special. In the evening the three would wait for their father's return, follow him to his bedroom, and watch him empty his pockets of trinkets. Some were familiar, some were new, and on lucky days some were surprises for the children. The house revolved around Mr. Roosevelt. So anxious was Teddy to please his father that later he said his father was the only man he had ever feared. Even the thought of disappointing him was more than he could bear.

Yet there was one thing about his father that Teddy could not understand nor perhaps quite forgive. He was only six in the spring of 1865 when the Civil War ended, but Teddy couldn't help hearing a great deal about it. Grown-ups talked of little else. And although Mr. Roosevelt worked hard for the Union cause, he did not fight in the war. He did not wish to upset Mrs. Roosevelt, who was from Georgia and favored the South. But Teddy had been brought up on hero stories and knew how heroes should act. How could a man not fight in a war, if there

was a war right under his nose? Once Teddy was mad at his mother, and that night while saying his prayers, he let God and his mother know what *he* thought of the war. Kneeling by his bed with his mother at his side, Teddy shouted at God. Beating the Southern troops was not enough, he cried; God should "grind them to powder." (He would have been even madder at his mother if he'd known how funny she thought this was.)

Except for his sickness (and he had periods when he was all right), Teddy Roosevelt had a happy childhood. Because his father didn't think he was well enough to go to school, he had tutors come to the house to teach him. This was fine with Teddy. He had more time to read and more time to follow his "career." When he was seven years old, Teddy Roosevelt became a naturalist. It all started one morning at the market where he was sent to buy strawberries. There, laid out on a slab of wood, was a seal. Teddy knew from books what a seal was, but here was a real one that had once been alive, living its own mysterious life. Day after day Teddy went back to study that seal. With his ruler he measured its total length, the length of its tail, its head, its size around the middle. Everything that he could measure, he measured, and wrote it all down in a notebook. It was as if this information were making this wonderful wild thing *his*. In the end he did manage to take the seal's skull home, and then and there he began what he called The Roosevelt Museum of Natural History.

From that time on, there was no telling what one might find in the Roosevelt house. Some people learned to in-

spect the water pitcher for a snake before pouring a drink and to examine a chair for frogs before sitting down. Much to the cook's annoyance, she once found a snapping turtle tied to the leg of the sink, but when Teddy brought home a dead woodchuck and asked her to boil it, she put her foot down. Out! Out! Teddy explained that this was a scientific experiment, but the cook didn't care. Nor did Teddy's mother care when she threw out a litter of dead field mice she found in the icebox. It was a loss to science, Teddy moaned, but he wasn't discouraged. He advertised for living field mice, for which he offered to pay ten cents apiece or thirty-five cents for a family. As it happened, however, the Roosevelts, all but Bamie, left for the Berkshire Hills at about the time the advertisement appeared. And there was Bamie, left with hundreds of field mice to deal with, one way or another.

Teddy not only collected insects and animals but also observed them, and filled his notebook with his discoveries. The tree spider, he wrote, was "grey spotted with black" living in "communitys of about 20" under patches of loosened bark. The living animals—the squirrels, the guinea pigs, the mice—he named. Lordy and Rosa were two white mice he kept in separate cages, but it was Brownie, a common brown mouse who got crushed, whom Teddy mourned. Brownie was his favorite.

Summers, when they went to the country, were the best time for Teddy's explorations. All year the children looked forward to the summer, when they were free to run barefoot, to ride their Shetland pony, Pony Grant (named for Ulysses Grant, the Civil War general), to build

wigwams, to play cowboys and Indians and all sorts of make-believe games that Teddy invented. As for Teddy, one of his greatest joys was to wander through the woods, identifying the birds and learning their calls. One wonderful day in 1868 he didn't need to go to the woods. The birds came to him. Seventy-five migrating swallows flew into the house, fluttering from room to room, zooming in to land on curtains, on the wall, on the floor. One landed right on Teddy's pants, which of course made him a special friend. All his life Teddy loved birds and no matter where he was or how busy, he gossiped about their coming and going as if they were neighbors. The arrival of a thrush in spring was news to be reported in a letter. The song of a chirpy sparrow was dinner-table conversation. But in May 1869, just as the children were planning their summer in the country, they were told that this year they wouldn't be going. Instead, they were all going to Europe. They would spend a year there, traveling about, seeing historic sites, visiting museums.

The children were not pleased. A whole year! Dragged from country to country with no barefoot time, no Pony Grant. It turned out just as they feared. Once they started, they kept on the go, climbing on and off trains, steamers, carriages, stagecoaches, horses, donkeys, and mules. And they walked. Teddy walked nineteen miles at one stretch, twenty at another, and climbed an 8,000-foot mountain. Before they were through, they had visited eight countries and stayed in sixty-six hotels. Although Teddy said that he "cordially hated" that year, he also had fun. Indeed, his diary shows that the younger children rough-

housed whenever they could—jumping on hotel beds, having pillow fights, making war with towels, holding tickling matches when their train went through a tunnel. Once in a hotel they ganged up on a waiter and a chambermaid, throwing paper balls at them and chasing them up and down stairs. Once Elliott shut Teddy in a closet and it took their father three-quarters of an hour to get him out. Climbing Mount Vesuvius, they threw snowballs at each other; in Rome they ran around scaring stray dogs with their cap guns.

And Teddy saw sights that impressed him: some rare black Australian swans, the Prince of Wales, two boars and a wildcat fighting in a zoo, a tree that was over fourteen hundred years old, and a gold chain that was supposed to ward off the evil eye. (He bought the chain.) When crossing from one country to another, he made a point of standing with one leg in one country and the other leg in the other. When he had one leg in France and one in Switzerland, he reported it. Also when he straddled Italy and Switzerland. All the time, however, what he really wanted was to get both legs back in America. On May 25, 1870, he finally made it. At the first glimpse of New York, he exploded with joy. "New York!!!" he wrote. "Hip, Hurrah!"

As usual, Teddy had been sick during the trip, but he was used to this so he didn't talk much about it. All over Europe Mr. Roosevelt watched Teddy gasping for breath, and although he took him to doctors, they couldn't cure him. Of course Mr. Roosevelt was pleased at how well Teddy managed between bouts, but still he worried. He

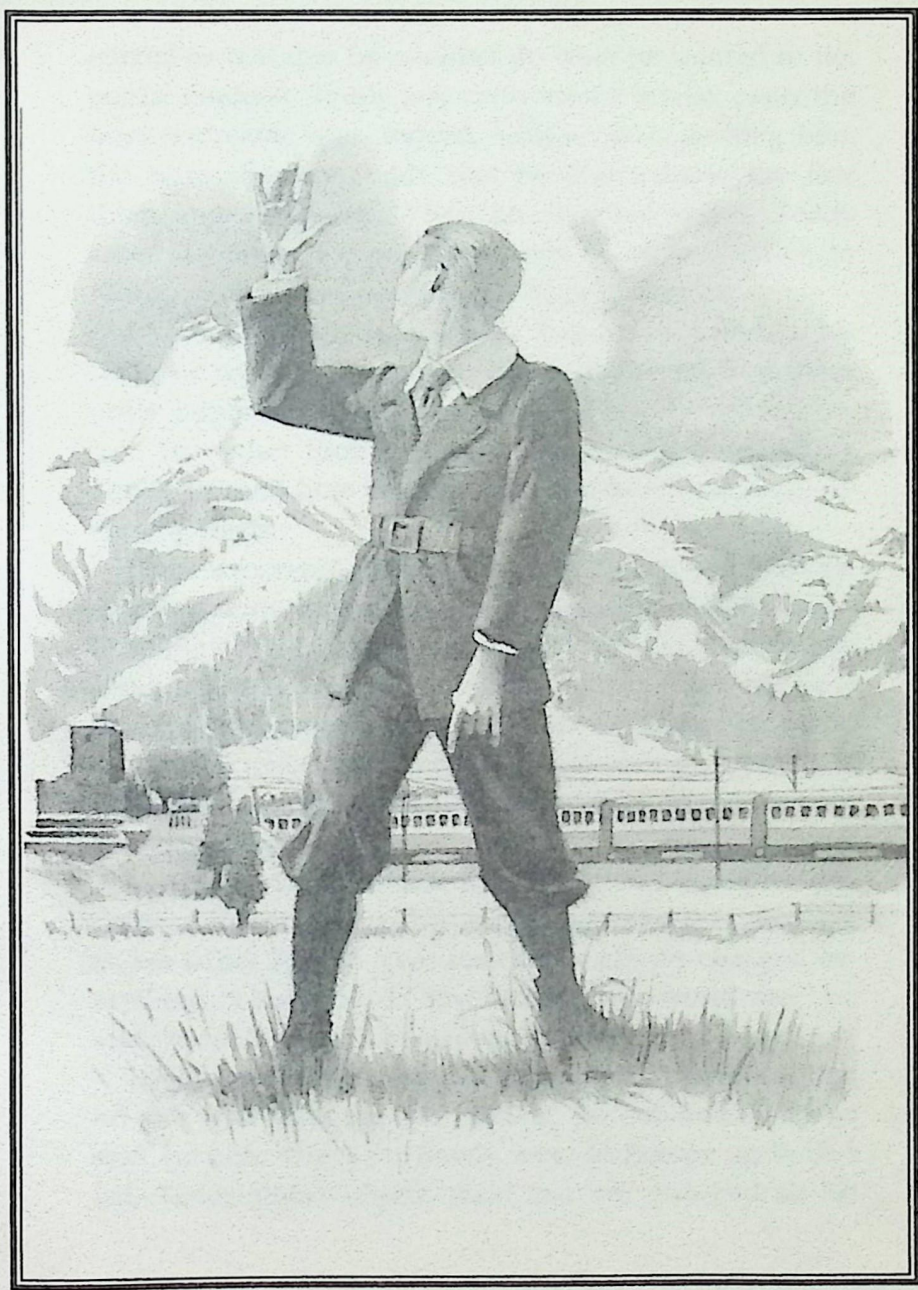
believed in an active life. "Man was not intended to be an oyster," he said, and he didn't want Teddy turning into an invalid. Shortly after their return home, he called Teddy aside.

"Theodore," his father said, "you have the mind but you have not the body, and without the help of the body, the mind cannot go as far as it should. You must *make* your body. It is hard . . . but I know you will do it."

Teddy had a way of throwing back his head when he was determined, tightening his jaw, and clamping down on his words as if he meant to force them to obey him. "I'll make my body," he promised, clamping down hard.

Mr. Roosevelt made the second-floor porch into a gymnasium with weights to lift, rings to pull, horizontal bars to cross. Hour after hour, Teddy lifted, pulled, and pushed. Of course it was drudgery, but in time Teddy came to relish the very hardness of it. He liked knowing his muscles were straining to do their best work. He enjoyed pushing his body as far as it would go. He delighted in feeling every part of himself come to life.

Slowly he did grow stronger, but he was not as tough as he thought. Once, after a bad asthma attack, his father sent him for a change of air to friends in Maine. Teddy traveled alone by stagecoach with two boys about his age who were strangers to him. He had never had much contact with other children except for those in his own family, cousins, and children of his parents' friends, so he didn't know what to do about boys who were unfriendly. But when these two boys started to make fun of him, Teddy decided that this was a time to fight. It never oc-



curred to him that he couldn't do what he wanted to do, but he couldn't. Teddy was embarrassed at how easily the boys overcame him. Indeed, without even hurting him, the boys showed Teddy that he didn't know the first thing about fighting. When he returned home, Teddy asked his father for boxing lessons. Now, in addition to lifting, pulling, and pushing, he began punching.

A young teenager now, Teddy was not only making his body, he was also shaping his life. At about this time three other important things happened to him.

1. His father took him to a taxidermist's shop, where Teddy learned how to skin, stuff, and mount animals, including birds.

2. His father gave him his first gun. Teddy was fourteen and the family was spending the summer in Dobbs Ferry, New York. Teddy took his gun into the woods and began shooting birds. He loved birds as much as ever, but now that he had learned to skin and mount them, he could practice science seriously. He could also *own* some of the wildness of nature, just as he had once longed to own that dead seal.

3. He acquired his first pair of glasses. When he discovered that it was hard to see the birds he was shooting at, his father had his eyes tested. His glasses changed everything. "I had no idea how beautiful the world was," he said, "until I got those spectacles."

Teddy Roosevelt never did anything halfway. Now that he was into skinning and stuffing, he couldn't skin and stuff enough. When the family went to Europe again that fall, Teddy didn't object. He'd take his gun and all his

skinning and stuffing equipment. They were going to Egypt this time, to live on a houseboat. Egypt! Just imagine the birds! From his books he knew that there would be exotic new ones, and indeed they were there waiting for him—so many and so glorious, it was as if he'd walked in on the very Creation of birds. Sardinian warblers, storks, ibises, egrets, kestrels, bulbuls, hoopoes, cranes, dunlins, and among his favorites, ziczacs who had such a crazy scream. Enraptured, Teddy went about, his head back, his eyes fixed on the sky. Still, he wasn't just admiring, he was noticing and making notes, using scientific terms to describe what the birds looked like, what their habits were, what songs they sang. (He decided that the vulture spotted its prey by seeing it, not smelling it.) When Teddy wasn't writing, he was on donkey back with his father, shooting. At the boat, he would skin and clean and stuff, but all the time he was learning, finding out what the bird ate, its coloration, the shape and size of its bill, the length of its legs. A scientist killed, he would say later, so he could create before his eyes "the life that was," not just list pieces of "the death that is."

Teddy's days were so full, so splendid, he didn't care how grubby he looked or how disgusting he smelled. Elliott, who shared a room with him, complained that not only Teddy but their room smelled of chemicals and the insides of dead birds. Corinne said she was sick and tired of the whole bird business, but Teddy went right on. At the end of their trip, he had between one hundred and two hundred specimens, many neatly mounted, each with its Latin name written in pink ink on a museum card.

Back in New York, the Roosevelts moved into a new house and Teddy was given the attic for his Museum of Natural History.

Teddy's family all supposed that when he finished college he would become a naturalist. Teddy supposed so too, but first he had to get into college. He had two years to get ready—from November 1873, when he returned from Europe, to the summer of 1875, when he would take his examinations for entering Harvard in the fall of 1876. Teddy had always been a fervent reader, never without a book to settle down with or pick up in a spare minute. He even read standing up. The other children laughed at the way he'd stand on one foot and read, the other foot raised, like a stork. But now that Teddy had a new tutor and a goal to meet, he seemed not just to read books but to devour them, gulping them down as fast as he could, one after another. Even at the Roosevelts' new summer home at Oyster Bay, Long Island, he put in long hours studying and long hours building up his body. Some might call the schedule he kept hard work. Not Teddy. Being busy was fun.

In July 1875, he took his college entrance examinations in eight subjects and passed them all. "Is it not splendid!" he wrote. (He might have said it was "bully.") Anything especially splendid he liked to call "bully.") When he arrived at Harvard the next fall, he was seventeen years old, 5 feet, 8 inches tall, and he weighed 124 pounds. Actually, he had measured himself as thoroughly as if he were one of his own scientific specimens. Chest, 34 inches; waist 26½; thigh, 20; calf, 12½; neck, 14½;

shoulders, 41. He could run a hundred-yard dash in 12.25 seconds, broad-jump 13 feet, and pole-vault 5 feet, 8½ inches. Obviously, he was not a big fellow nor was he puny; still, his classmates did not know what to make of him. At first glance all anyone noticed were Teddy's glasses, which seemed too big for his face, and his teeth, which seemed too large for his mouth. And he was always in a hurry. He didn't walk if he could run. And talk! His words tumbled out so fast they tripped over each other, and once started they didn't seem to know how to stop. In one class he talked so much that the professor had to remind him who was in charge of the class. Having studied only with tutors, Teddy had never been in a class with others before, so if Harvard had to get used to Teddy Roosevelt, he also had to get used to Harvard.

And they did get used to each other. Teddy was too happy and enthusiastic a person not to make friends, and he soon felt at home in college life. What was more, although he had occasional attacks of asthma, his health was better than it had ever been. Only one thing disappointed him. His science courses. They weren't what he expected. So much laboratory work, so much looking through a microscope! Although Teddy enjoyed measuring and observing, science at Harvard seemed unconnected to the world of outdoors. To make up for this, Teddy took trips to the woods and brought back his own specimens. The summer after his freshman year, he and a college friend went to the Adirondack Mountains to catalogue the birds there. Teddy had started his own observations several years before, but now he and his friend

completed the work together and published a book, *The Summer Birds of the Adirondacks*. Ninety-seven different varieties (some rare, almost unknown in the area) were listed along with a description of each.

All went well for Teddy, but anyone looking at his college career would see that it had to be cut into two parts—Before and After. The date that divided one part from the other was February 9, 1877. On that day Teddy's father died of cancer. "I felt as if I had been stunned," Teddy wrote, "or as if part of my life had been taken away. . . . He was everything to me." In his distress, Teddy may have felt that with his father's death his boyhood was gone. If so, he would have been wrong. Teddy Roosevelt would always be a boy. And living or dead, his father would always be looking over his shoulder. Teddy no more wanted to disappoint his father now than he ever had.

2

TEDDY READ something in a book once that helped him when he was afraid. If you act as if you're not afraid, the book said, you will stop feeling afraid. Why wouldn't the same idea work with unhappiness? If a person acted happy, perhaps he'd begin to feel happy again. For Teddy, being happy meant being on the go, doing things, following his many interests, using up his energy. The summer after his father died, Teddy drove himself harder at Oyster Bay than he ever had—swimming, hiking, boxing, galloping across country on his horse, Lightfoot (not too far or fast for Teddy but sometimes almost too much for Lightfoot). When he and Elliott went out on the water, he let Elliott take the sailboat. Teddy didn't like just leaning back and letting the wind push him along. He wanted to go under his own strength, so he

took the rowboat. He loved feeling the power in his arms and watching the oars at work.

By the time he entered his junior year at Harvard, Teddy had partially recovered from his grief, but still in a "driving" mood, he went all-out for college activities. He joined the rifle club, the art club, the glee club, the finance club, worked on the college magazine, was elected vice-president of the Natural History Society, and was invited to join the college's most distinguished social club. In addition, he took nine courses and did well in all of them.

And he fell in love. Being Teddy, he didn't fall a little in love; he fell head over heels. Her name was Alice Lee. She was seventeen years old when Teddy met her, and according to him, she was perfect—"sweet," "enchancing," "bright," "endearing," "a rare and radiant maiden." But she was not easy to win. Indeed, she may have found Teddy hard to get used to, so he made sure she saw him a lot. He had Lightfoot shipped up to Harvard in the spring, and the poor horse was kept busy, rain or shine, galloping the six miles back and forth to Chestnut Hill, the Boston suburb where Alice lived. On days when Alice seemed to encourage him, Teddy's happiness gushed up in his diary like a geyser gone wild. *Alice, Alice, Alice*, her name was all over the pages—and then one day her name disappeared. All we read about now is that Teddy couldn't sleep. One night he didn't even go to bed. Also, he was starting to write a book about the War of 1812. As usual, he wasn't talking about his troubles; he was simply keeping busy.

Much later Teddy admitted that when he first proposed to Alice she turned him down and he went "nearly crazy." But on January 12, 1880, he reported that Alice Lee had changed her mind. She would marry him. They announced their engagement on February 14 and planned to be married on Teddy's twenty-second birthday, October 27.

Meanwhile Teddy had to decide what he would do after he had finished at Harvard. By the time he graduated, on June 30, 1880, he had given up the idea of becoming a naturalist. If Teddy wanted a scientific career, he would have to go abroad for three years of study. But he was getting married. He didn't want to hang around, waiting three more years for life to begin. He would go to Columbia University's law school. He wasn't dead sure that he wanted to be a lawyer, but lawyers often became politicians and Teddy did like to run things. Besides, Teddy would be with Alice in New York, which was where things happened.

Everything went as planned. When it came time for Teddy to say "I do," he threw back his head as he said it, and clamped his teeth down hard. No one knew that not too long before, he had said "I won't" in just that determined a way. He didn't tell Alice or his family or his diary that his doctor had told him he had a bad heart, weakened by years of asthma. The doctor told Teddy that he should plan on a quiet life in which he'd be sitting down as much as possible. This meant that he shouldn't play tennis, hike, box, swim, or ride. He should even avoid running up stairs. What the doctor described sounded ex-

actly like the life of an oyster. Teddy told the doctor that he wasn't going to follow a single one of those instructions. He had been making his body himself for years and he would go on making it. He promised himself that he would live full-tilt until he was sixty years old and then whatever happened would be all right. Sixty seemed a long time away.

Geared as he was to a vigorous, whirling kind of life, Teddy Roosevelt probably couldn't have obeyed his doctor's orders even if he'd wanted to. Indeed, settled in New York with Alice and going to law school, Teddy soon became restless. The law in his textbooks had less to do with justice than he thought it should. He wanted to get into the "governing class," where he could go to work establishing justice in a practical way. Why not get into politics at the lowest level and see how it worked? he asked himself. But Teddy was a "gentleman," which in those days meant that he came from a long-standing aristocratic family. And high-class gentlemen did not mix with common politicians. Like Teddy's father, a gentleman worked hard on the sidelines of government, supporting good causes. Sometimes he might be invited to take a political role, perhaps be nominated as a senator, but all in a dignified way.

So far Teddy had behaved as a gentleman. He was working on the book he had started at Harvard (*The Naval War of 1812*); he was studying law; he was going to the opera and to balls. Still, he was impatient. So he began dropping in at his district's Republican headquarters—a bare, seedy-looking room above a saloon. Teddy,

often appearing in evening dress on his way to the opera, must have been a shock to the local politicians—small-time landlords, saloonkeepers, horse-car conductors—who had not much use for “gentlemen.” Teddy, however, decided that whether it was gentlemanly or not, he wanted to win over this group of rough, tobacco-chewing men whose English was anything but pure. Although his family told him his behavior was decidedly ungentlemanly, Teddy continued his visits. “I went around there often enough,” he said, “to have the men get accustomed to me and to have me get accustomed to them, so that we began to speak the same language.” By the spring of 1881 he did feel that they were speaking the same language. More or less.

Then, on May 2, 1881, with law school over for the summer, Teddy and Alice left for Europe on their long-delayed honeymoon. “Hurrah!” he wrote, “for a summer abroad with the darling little wife.” (Generally he spoke of Alice as his “little wife” or his “little pink wife,” just as he referred to his mother as his “little mother.”) After a month in Ireland, Teddy and Alice went on to London, Paris, Venice, and the Alps. In his free time Teddy worked on his book, and whenever he saw a mountain, he climbed it. Even the Matterhorn. Almost fifteen thousand feet high, the Matterhorn had been conquered less than twenty years before and was still luring so many men to death that it was considered the ultimate challenge. Of course Teddy had to try it. Accompanied by two guides and with the help of a forty-foot rope, he did get up and he did get down again. “It was like going up and down

enormous stairs on your hands and knees for nine hours," he said.

As soon as Teddy and Alice returned to New York in the fall, Teddy went back to studying, partying, and writing. (He finished his book in December.) And when he began visiting his political friends, he discovered that they had become more used to him even than he had supposed. One of the most influential men in the group decided that Teddy would have a good chance to be elected as an assemblyman to the state legislature in Albany. So he was nominated and he was not only elected, he won with almost twice as many votes as his opponent. Teddy Roosevelt, the youngest assemblyman in New York, was in "the governing class." And there was no need, he decided, to finish law school.

Although Teddy knew he was perceived as "different," he never tried to make himself over to fit anyone's pattern. So he must have known that on his first appearance in the Assembly he would cause a sensation. Perhaps he even enjoyed it. Instead of regular glasses, he wore a pair of fancy pince-nez on his nose. His formal jacket was cut away in the front to display his vest with a gold watch chain stretched across it. The tails of his jacket reached down almost to his shoes, and his bell-bottomed trousers were so tight he looked as if he'd been poured into them. In one hand Teddy carried a gold-knobbed cane; in the other he carried his high silk hat.

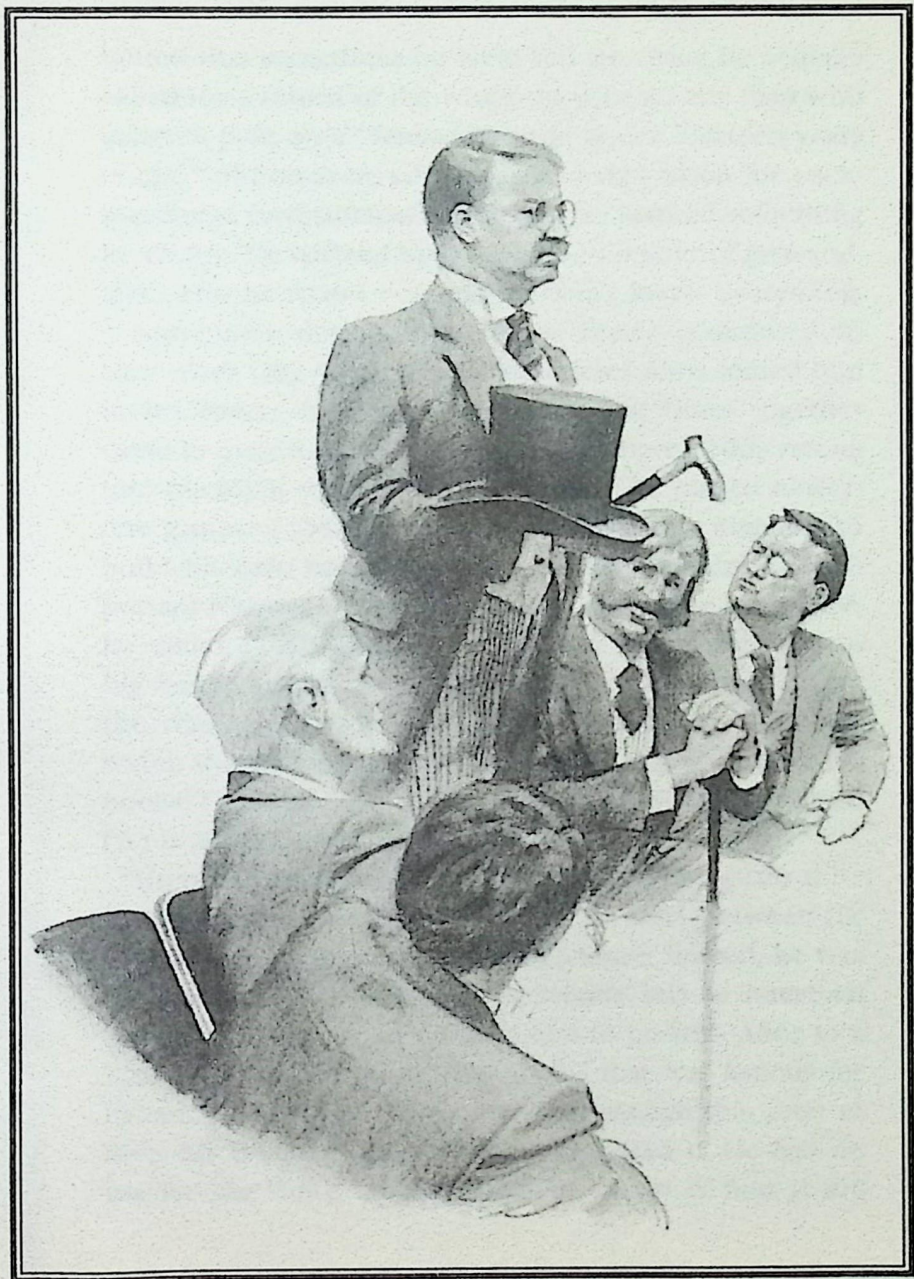
The men in the room stared in disbelief and whispered. "Who's the dude?" they asked each other. Later, when Teddy began to talk, the men found him hilarious. His

voice was squeaky, as if after years of asthma his vocal cords needed oiling. Moreover, he spoke with a high-society Harvard drawl. "Mis-tah Speak-ah!" he would say.

The assemblymen had all kinds of names for Teddy. "Young Squirt," they called him, "His Lordship," "Jane Dandy," "the exquisite Mr. Roosevelt." Eventually Teddy would make friends with some of these men but at the moment he considered them a "stupid, sodden, vicious lot." Still, he put up with them until one cold day in a tavern when an assemblyman, noticing that Teddy wore only a short pea jacket, walked up to him. "Won't Mamma's boy catch cold?" he sneered. At least, this was the general drift of his words. It was too much for Teddy. He took off his glasses, stood up, and knocked the man down. Not once but three times. Then he said, "Now you go over there and wash yourself."

Things went better after this and as Teddy Roosevelt picked up speed on the floor of the Assembly, it was obvious that he was made for political life. He loved nothing better than a contest and a chance to right wrongs. Perhaps he was really a preacher at heart, as some suggested. If so, he had undoubtedly picked up his strain of righteousness from his father, who not only talked about right and wrong but did something about it. Teddy, however, wanted to change everything at once. He proposed all kinds of legislation, from cleaning up New York City's water supply to cleaning up its election system.

As it turned out, Teddy was elected for three terms to the Assembly and it is no wonder that he earned himself the title "The Young Reformer." Still, even his friends ad-



mitted that sometimes he went too far. Once he actually called for a return of the whipping post for any man who inflicted pain on a "female or male under fourteen years of age." Although he knew he had a reputation for cocksureness, nevertheless Teddy said he learned something in Albany. He learned that politics is a matter of give-and-take. And he found out that he didn't know everything.

Sometimes during these years Teddy commuted to New York City to see Alice. Sometimes Alice joined him in his rooms in Albany, but their best times together came in their summers at Oyster Bay where Teddy swung into his usual vigorous routine. (Once he played ninety-one games of tennis in one day.) He was also planning to build his own home at Oyster Bay. There were five important features that the new house absolutely must have, he said: (1) It should be big enough to accommodate a big family. (2) It should have a large front porch facing the water so Teddy could sit in his rocking chair and watch the sun set. (3) It should have plenty of room for books. (4) It should have a gun room on the top floor. (5) It should have big fireplaces.

He might have come along further with his plans if he had not taken sick in the summer of 1883 between his second and third terms in the legislature. Indeed, he was so sick from a combination of asthma and an intestinal disease that his doctor ordered him to go with Alice to a health spa in the Catskill Mountains that was famous for its sulphur springs. Teddy was sick enough this time to obey his doctor's orders. But he regretted it. He had no use for the "idiot medical man" in charge of him at the

spa and he hated the sulphur water he had to drink. It tasted, he wrote Bamie, as if a box of sulphur matches had been steeped in dishwater and served from an old kerosene oil can. "I am bored out of my life," he said.

Still, he did get better and this was important since he had big plans for the fall. What he needed instead of a health spa was an adventure, and he was going to the right place to find it. He had dreamed about the West ever since he'd been a boy, and now, he figured, he'd better get there while the West was still wild and before all the buffalo were gone. A friend had recommended Dakota country as a good hunting ground for buffalo, and in September Teddy said good-bye to Alice, took his guns, and hurrah! he was off.

As soon as he stepped off the train after five days of travel, Teddy could see that the West was still wild. The town at the station stop had a few ramshackle buildings and a number of equally ramshackle-looking men. It was almost as if the people felt no-account, perched as they were in the middle of nowhere. And of course it was into that "nowhere" that Teddy wished to go. So he hired a guide, twenty-five-year-old Joe Ferris, who after much persuasion agreed to take him buffalo hunting. Perhaps Joe thought that this eastern greenhorn with the big glasses would give up quickly when he discovered how hard it was to find buffalo. Just the week before, a band of Sioux Indians had killed off a herd of 10,000, and every day they were becoming more scarce.

But Joe Ferris did not know Teddy Roosevelt. Teddy fell in love with the land immediately. Known as the Bad

Lands, the country with its multicolored, strange-shaped buttes was so weird and so beautiful it looked as if it had been meant for another planet. And it was big. From the top of a butte the world ran around in a complete circle, gloriously empty of any hint of mankind. And the sky! It seemed to have dropped down just to get a closer look at Earth. How could a man like Teddy Roosevelt not respond to such a place? This was "hero country," he wrote Bamie, and indeed, being here made him feel that he could be a hero or anything else he cared to be.

Yet it was not easy country. The first day Teddy and Joe had to ford the Little Missouri River twenty-one times, go through or around bogs and quicksand, scramble up dangerously steep and slippery riverbanks. They rode forty-five miles and Joe Ferris was tired out. Not Teddy. That night at the hunting lodge he was so full of talk he didn't even want to go to bed.

The next day it rained. Knowing that the ground would turn into molasses-like mud, Joe tried to persuade Teddy to put off hunting until the weather cleared. Teddy said no. He'd come for buffalo and rain wouldn't stop him.

The third day it rained. Still Teddy insisted on going out. And the fourth day. And the fifth. On the sixth day the sun finally appeared and so did a lone buffalo, an old but lively one who took one look at the hunters and high-tailed it out of sight. The men tried following his trail, but without luck.

Now that he'd actually seen a buffalo, Teddy was more determined than ever. Late in the afternoon that same day they had a second chance. This time there were three

buffalo and fortunately they were far enough away so that Teddy and Joe could approach more carefully. They got off their horses, threw themselves onto the ground, and crept forward on their hands and knees. Teddy's eyes were so intent on the buffalo that he didn't see the bed of cactus until he was in it and his hands were covered with cactus prickles. He went on. He didn't stop until he was within three hundred and fifty yards of the buffalo. Then, prickles and all, Teddy aimed his rifle at the nearest animal and pulled the trigger. It was a poor aim, for although the bullet hit, it did not keep the wounded buffalo and the other two from galloping off, leaving Teddy and Joe to scramble for their horses.

Again they followed. Even after dark they followed, in the light from a full moon. This time they managed to get within twenty feet of the wounded animal, and still on horseback, Teddy fired. And he missed. Before he could fire again, the buffalo turned and charged. Teddy's horse was so frightened, he reared back his head and hit the raised rifle, slamming it against Teddy's head and sending blood pouring into his eyes. Joe fired twice, missed both times, and again the buffalo got away.

After a long day in the saddle with only a mouthful of water to drink and one hard biscuit to eat, the two men lay down that night in the open, wrapped in blankets. Then, as if they hadn't had enough bad luck, it started to rain again. By morning their blankets were soaked and they were lying in four inches of water. Joe must have thought that now they would give up; surely this would be enough even for Teddy Roosevelt. But when he

looked over, Teddy was grinning. "By Godfrey, but this is fun!" he said.

Still, it was not getting a buffalo. There would be more days of drenching rain and days of blistering sun before the day would come that Teddy was waiting for. His horse alerted him. Holding up his nose, the horse sniffed the air. Teddy dismounted, hoping that the horse was smelling what he wanted him to be smelling. Walking beside his horse, he climbed a hill and looked over the top. And there below was his buffalo. "I put the bullet in his shoulder," Teddy wrote later; and although the buffalo ran off, Teddy knew he could not survive that shot. Teddy followed, and found the buffalo almost immediately "stark dead."

Teddy had been happy on all the unsuccessful days, but now with success he went wild. He pranced around the carcass of his buffalo, whooping and yelling as if he were a boy again, playing Indian. When he recovered from his caper, he reached into his pocket, pulled out a \$100 bill, and gave it to Joe Ferris.

Of course Teddy was pleased that he would have his own buffalo head in New York, perhaps mounted someday on a wall in a home of his own in Oyster Bay. Still, he wasn't through with the West. The country had claimed him and he wanted a stake in it. He didn't mean to buy land but, from all he'd heard, it might be smart to buy cattle. People here were talking about what great cattle country this was, now that the Indians had given up their rights to it and now that a railroad was handy for shipping beef back East. Teddy had seen for himself the great

meadows of thick green grass that grew wherever stones and sagebrush gave way. He may even have read a book telling how to get rich on the Plains. The author said that next to Montana, Dakota had some of the best grazing lands in the country. So why shouldn't Teddy invest in it? Although he received \$8,000 a year from his father's estate and \$1,200 as an assemblyman, it never seemed enough. And now not only would there be a new house at Oyster Bay to plan for, there would be a new member of the family. Alice was expecting a baby, due in February of the next year.

So Teddy made a profit-sharing deal with Joe Ferris's brother, Sylvane, at the Maltese Cross Ranch. He gave Sylvane \$1,200 for the purchase and management of four hundred head of cattle. He would come back from time to time. After all, he had business here now.

3

A FRIEND ONCE said of Teddy: "He would go at a thing as if the world was coming to an end." Back in New York, Teddy sought his reelection to the Assembly in just this do-or-die way, and once he was elected, he threw himself headlong into his reform program. In New York City he began an investigation into the city's corruption. Then, on February 11, he returned to Albany, even though Alice's baby was due soon. But he wasn't worried about leaving. He'd be back home, he said, by February 14, about the time the baby was expected. Besides, Alice was with Teddy's mother and Bamie. Elliott lived only a block away, so everything would be under control even if the baby arrived before Teddy did.

Early on the morning of February 13, Teddy received a telegram with the news that a baby girl had been born

the night before. Alice was doing "fairly well." Of course he was overjoyed, and since Alice seemed to be all right, he decided to finish up the work he'd planned for the day before going home. But several hours later another telegram arrived. Anyone who watched Teddy read that telegram knew something was terribly wrong. He didn't say what it was. He simply took the next train home.

Perhaps Teddy himself didn't know how bad the news was until Elliott met him at the front door. "There is a curse on this house," Elliott said. Their mother lay in bed on one floor, dying of typhoid fever. Alice was on another floor, dying of a kidney disease. The baby, little Alice, was fine, but Teddy had no time now to think of her. For the rest of the night he sat, cradling Alice in his arms, telling her to live, begging her to live, trying somehow to fight her battle for her. At three in the morning on February 14, Teddy's mother died. In the early afternoon Alice died.

Teddy was numb. He went through the motions of saying what he had to say, doing what he had to do, but what he wanted was to run away, to forget. He must have longed for Dakota country now, but the image of his father kept returning to him. The important thing, he told himself, was to live in such a way that would have made his father proud.

So three days later, having left the baby in Bamie's care, Teddy was back in Albany, tight-lipped and steely. At the core of his character was an iron will forged by years of intense work and determination to *make* his body. Now it forced him to work at such a pace that he looked as if



J E A N F R I T Z

Cyclone, earthquake, eruption, dynamo...

Some men might not like nicknames like these, but they didn't bother Teddy Roosevelt. He'd always worked hard for the things he wanted. No challenge was too tough: he'd crawl over a cactus to get close to a buffalo; climb up a sheer cliff to reach the summit; and march past other regiments to get to a battle. From national parks to teddy bears, evidence of Roosevelt's influence on America is all around, making him one tornado we'll never forget.

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