

"The Imperial Theodore"

By D.K.L. in The Public, Chicago

ROOSEVELT idolaters, who seem at present to include a majority of the voting population of the United States, can see no flaw in their idol. They do not presume to question his acts, much less his motives. No strain is too severe for his popularity to withstand. Professor W. G. Sumner in his interesting if somewhat prejudiced biography of Andrew Jackson recorded that the only reply that a Jacksonian would make to any aspersion upon Old Hickory was, "Hurrah for Jackson." So the politicians of Oyster Bay can do nothing apparently that will not elicit from his admirers the cry, "Hurrah for Teddy."

If it were possible for Mr. Roosevelt, by his own acts to discredit himself, his course since his return from Europe would have accomplished it. No politician has ever made a more conspicuous effort to carry water on both shoulders, but his ability to get away with it has proved truly marvellous. Several times he has had each of the two irreconcilable elements within his party alternating between hope and fear that he was about to commit himself definitely to one side or the other but as yet both are kept guessing about his ultimate political destination.

It is evident from press dispatches that Mr. Roosevelt came perilously near to a break with President Taft. It is equally evident and very noteworthy that the near break was due, not to Mr. Roosevelt's disapproval of Mr. Taft's reactionary policies and stand pat alliances, but to Mr. Roosevelt's temporary belief that his successor, the man he made president, had been party to a personal snub administered to Mr. Roosevelt by the machine Republicans of New York State. The vanity of the "World's Foremost Citizen" was deeply wounded and he breathed out fierce threats of the havoc he would work if proper amends were not forthcoming from the vacillating and distracted president at Beverly. Mr. Taft hastened to make the demanded apology; and we witnessed the humiliating spectacle of the President of the Republic crawling on his belly to appease the fierce Rooseveltian wrath. It was truly a comfort to read that Mr. Roosevelt had accepted the apology and to learn that on his Western trip he "would make no attack on the Taft administration." This degrading incident, it would seem, ought to open the eyes of the intelligent admirers of Mr. Roosevelt to the monumental selfishness which explains his entire public career. He has no criticism for the president who broke faith with the American people. He has uttered no condemnation for Mr. Taft's alliance with the most reactionary and selfish elements in American political and business life. He has voiced no disapproval in the tariff revision betrayal nor of the attempt—foiled so far by Pinchot and Glavis—to give over to the Guggenheims the rich Alaska coal fields. All these things he has passed over in a silence that gives assent.

Progressive leaders in many States have waited in vain for the word of encouragement from Oyster Bay that would have made their battle easier of winning. La Follette, fighting a desperate fight in Wisconsin, has heard no outgiving calculated to help him. The progressives of Iowa and Kansas won without any aid from the man who claims to be the embodiment of progressivism. When the claim was made that Mr. Roosevelt sympathized with the insurgent cause in California, he promptly denied it over his own signature.

In company with Senator H. C. Lodge, one of the most pronounced reactionaries of the Washington oligarchy, Mr. Roosevelt visited President Taft at Beverly and greeted him as his friend, at a time when all the influence of the administration was being brought to bear against the progressives in half a dozen States. But if Mr. Roosevelt was not willing to break with the Taft administration on any question that involved political principle or common political honesty, he was willing enough to break with it when his own egotism was dealt a painful blow by the untimely standpatters of the New York machine. Some mischief maker led him to believe that the President

had prior knowledge of the plot to defeat him for the temporary chairmanship of a petty State convention. Then, indeed, was there a fierce Rooseveltian eruption that threatened to submerge the administration. Politicians great and small were kept on the anxious seat while the tingling wires from Sagamore Hill for days carried rumors of the bloodthirsty disposition of the Rough Rider. Happily all danger of immediate conflict seems to be over. Peace reigns and the government at Washington still lives. But peace will not long prevail. Mr. Roosevelt is plotting to succeed Mr. Taft in the White House. That is the motive for the present barn-storming tour of the West. And he hopes to attain his goal if possible, without being forced to a definite alignment with either standpatters or progressives. In sympathy Mr. Roosevelt is a Tory and Imperialist; but he appears to be as lacking in real convictions as is President Taft himself. A remarkably keen politician, his instincts tell him that he must capitalize the progressive sentiment if he would again mount the throne; but he shows no disposition to define his progressiveness with an exactness that could cost him any reactionary support.

THUNDERSTORM ON THE PRAIRIE

Upon the ravine's edge, where sage-brush grows,

Rampant 'neath the torrid sun's fierce glare,

And vivid blossoms with gay furbelow,

Hide frogs which croak upon the August air.

Here Nature holds her glowing court supreme,

With splendor of a poet's dream.

'Tis strange that birds have ceased to call,

And that the frog's harsh chant is louder heard;

The copper clouds hang low, obscuring all,

No sound now from a solitary bird.

The once-while busy blackbird, wings agleam,

Rests motionless beside the silent stream.

The silence speaks of momentary death.

The noisy frogs are awed and stay their note;

They seem to wait with bated breath.

And on the stream the languid lilies float.

While on the prairie, parched and brown,

The gasping flowers to earth lean down.

A distant rumble from the darkened west,

A sudden flash—and then the tempest's breaking;

The flooding rain, despoiling many a nest,

But in the farmer hope and joy awaking.

And holted Heaven reads the shivering tree,

In pent up efforts to be free.

The far-off thunder tells the storm has passed,

And Nature, in her rain-washed beauty, smiles.

Victorious Sol has gained his power at last

And frightened birds with warmth again beguiles.

Whilst from the bold attack and busy strife

There springs a fresher, radiant, prairie life.

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M.H.S.

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