6. So Brilliant and Aggressive a Man

1.

John Hay, Alfred Mahan, Elihu Root, and Henry Cabot Lodge all had strong, even remarkable fathers: Hay's a country doctor who pushed his practice to the territorial frontier of the new nation, Mahan's and Root's revered educators, Lodge's a patrician businessman who counted as friends some of the foremost intellectuals in the country. Theodore Roosevelt's father, in his character and in his contributions to his city, country, and family, was even more impressive than they.

The elder Theodore Roosevelt never had to compete for wealth or social standing. His family had settled in New York City in the seventeenth century, and his father, Cornelius, was one of the city's few millionaires. Cornelius expanded the family hardware business to plate glass imports and, more lucratively, to real estate, exploiting the mid-century construction boom in the city. After the financial panic of 1863 the firm moved to private banking and investment. As the youngest of five brothers Theodore senior would not have been expected to play a major role in Roosevelt and Son. In any case, business seems to have bored him, and he moved steadily toward what was to become his real life's work, philanthropy.

While in his thirties, Roosevelt helped found the Children's Aid Society to provide food, shelter, and moral sustenance to homeless boys, whose population in New York City was as much as twenty thousand by 1869. He regularly visited the Lower West Side, where gangs of boys gathered in the evening. To get them off the streets, he offered them religious instruction and access to a reading room, an industrial school, or a workshop.

Many of the waifs were newsboys, so Roosevelt on his own initiative founded a Newsboys' Lodging House with beds for a nickel. Every Sunday he taught a mission class in the morning and visited the Newsboys' Lodging House in the evening. The ultimate purpose of this welfare program was to return the boys to their parents or to resettle them in the West. More than one hundred thousand were resettled; years later, when the younger Roosevelt was president, the governor of Alaska told him that he had been one of those newsboys given a second chance. Roosevelt senior was also a cofounder of the New York Orthopedic Dispensary and Hospital, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the American Museum of Natural History. He had, as his friend John Hay put it, "maniacal benevolence."

The elder Roosevelt was a large, powerful man, with many of the attributes and experiences typical of his rarefied upbringing. He was educated privately. At nineteen he made the standard grand tour of Europe, where he was particularly sympathetic to the plight of Russian prisoners he saw embarking for Siberia. He was fastidious about clothes, a trait his famous son inherited, and always dressed for dinner. He belonged to the Union League and the Century clubs, as would young Theodore. His portrait shows a handsome but severe face; his son called it "leonine." He was a hands-on father with a strong sense of justice who refused to tolerate selfishness, cruelty, idleness, cowardice, or untruthfulness in his four children. "He was the only man," the younger Theodore wrote, "of whom I was ever really afraid."

But he leavened his sternness with a love of fun and sport. He liked dancing, riding in Central Park, and driving a four-in-hand too fast. He was also devoted to his children—Anna, Theodore, Elliott, and Corinne—and they loved him back. In the family he was known as Greatheart, after the guide in *The Pilgrim's Progress* who slew four giants and a monster to enable the pilgrims to reach the Celestial Country. Among his many kindnesses was his habit of taking each child for a day in the country on her or his birthday.

Theodore senior was heroically attentive to his eldest child, his daughter Anna (nicknamed Bamie), whose back was hunched from a spinal disease that caused constant pain and required an uncomfortable brace. He cared for her, entertained her, even took her on business trips to Washington. He was inspired by her plight to start the New York Orthopedic Hospital for the treatment of similar diseases.

On one occasion he demonstrated his brilliance as a fund-raiser by inviting to his house a large number of his affluent friends. When they arrived, they found arrayed on the dining table several indigent children who suffered, like Bamie, from spinal ailments. Next to them had been placed the steel braces that would be used in the new hospital. His small daughter Corinne, coached by her father, explained the value of the devices to the guests, who had thought they were attending a purely social reception. Thanks in part to Mrs. John Jacob Astor's highly vocal exclamations of sympathy and support, Roosevelt raised enough money on that one day to start the first hospital.

With his son Theodore, called Teedie, the elder Roosevelt was as solicitous as he was with Bamie. But his approach was different. The boy suffered from a debilitating asthma of the most serious and frightening kind. Without modern drugs to dilate his bronchial tubes Teedie was in danger of asphyxiation from the suffocating attacks, which usually struck in the middle of the night. They were often preceded by depression and always accompanied by panic. His parents treated the child with emetics and black coffee and made him smoke cigars in an effort to induce nicotine poisoning, which led to vomiting. They expended enormous loving energy on him. "One of my memories," he wrote, "is of my father walking up and down the room with me in his arms at night when I was a very small person, and of sitting up in bed gasping, with my father and mother trying to help me." The gruesome illness, and nearly as gruesome treatment, made Teedie weak and sickly, highly dependent on his mother and especially on his father.

Theodore senior somehow understood that the best treatment for Teedie's asthma was to make the boy self-reliant, responsible for his own future. He took him on hikes and climbs, pushing him to his limits. Teedie responded well. When he was eleven and suffering particularly acute asthma attacks, his father told him that he had a good mind but not a good body. To make the mind go as far as it should, "you must *make* your body." Theodore senior arranged for daily workouts at a gymnasium and set up a private gym in the Roosevelts' house. It took Teedie years to fill out and toughen his skinny body and pipestem legs, but he did it. His father's role was critical. The dreaded asthma had challenged Teedie at a young age; his father's compassion

and determination helped him meet that challenge. In his autobiography Roosevelt called his father simply "the best man I ever knew."

Theodore and Corinne both noticed contradictions in their father's character. To Theodore he combined insistence on discipline "with great love and patience, and the most understanding sympathy and consideration." He was a beneficiary of wealth and privilege whose "heart filled with gentleness for those who needed help or protection, and with the possibility of much wrath against a bully or an oppressor." Corinne found it extraordinary that a man so full of tolerance and the milk of human kindness could be so single-minded and ruthless in the pursuit of his philanthropic objectives.

Teedie's mother, Martha Bulloch Roosevelt, known as Mittie, had less influence on him than his father, though she was every bit as solicitous about his asthma. A southern woman from Atlanta and noted for her beauty and hospitality, Mittie became one of the social leaders of New York. She was devoted to her children and affectionate to her husband, despite her lack of interest in his philanthropic endeavors. But she was also an odd woman and erratic in her behavior. She was habitually late for appointments, in fact could not be counted on to show up at all. She had an obsession about cleanliness, instructing her maid to run two successive baths, one for soaping and one for rinsing. When she said her prayers, a sheet was put on the floor so her knees would not touch the rug. From time to time she would go into a frenzy of housekeeping, driving herself to bed with exhaustion.

It was Mittie's Georgia family, rather than her character, that had the greatest effect on her husband and her son Theodore. The Civil War broke out when Theodore senior was twenty-nine and Teedie was two. As in the Vietnam War a century later, few members of the northern upper classes actually fought. It was accepted practice—especially in New York City, where businessmen were ambivalent about the war—for well-to-do men of fighting age to hire substitutes to join the Union army. Grover Cleveland, later to become president, did so without stigma; so did James G. Blaine.

None of the elder Theodore's four brothers went to war. But running from battle was not his style. There seems little doubt that being the man he was, he would have enlisted had he not had two brothers-in-law who were fighting for the Confederacy. James Bulloch, Mittie's

half brother, became an admiral and built the Confederate warship *Alabama* in England; Mittie's younger brother Irvine served on it. The ship became a famous Confederate raider that sank fifty-eight merchant ships trading with the Union.

Before the firing on Fort Sumter, Theodore senior tried desperately to stave off a conflict that would divide his family. He joined other New York businessmen in antiwar petitions and demonstrations. After war broke out, he was wracked with conflicting responsibilities. He had to weigh his strong antislavery convictions against the damage his enlistment would do to his wife, all of whose sympathies were with the South. He decided to hire a substitute. Far from cowardice, it was an act of moral courage, made even more admirable by his activities during the war.

He devised a plan by which Union soldiers could send part of their pay home, instead of squandering it on drink, gambling, or the extortions of sutlers. His focus was on the soldiers' families, many of which were impoverished by the loss of income caused by the absence of their menfolk. He set out to win government support for the establishment of an allotment commission. Displaying a combination of compassion and brazenness that his son later emulated, he went right to the president of the United States. Lincoln's doorkeeper, young John Hay, was so impressed with Roosevelt's idea that he took him right to the president, who endorsed the plan on the spot.

The harder part was selling the scheme to the troops. He traveled on horseback, by train, and by boat from regiment to regiment. For two years he shuttled between Washington and the field, braving bad weather, train derailments, and illness to make a success of his initiative, now routine in the American armed forces. Magnificent as his achievement was, his conscience never let him rest. Bamie wrote much later that he "always afterward felt that he had done a very wrong thing in not having put every other feeling aside and joined the absolute fighting forces."

Another family member apparently felt the same way: Theodore's son. Teedie was a small child during the Civil War, but as an adult he never defended his father's decision not to fight. The passages in his autobiography that praise his father are blank on this episode. Corinne, who read her brother through the eyes of an adoring devotee, was convinced that all his life he felt the need to compensate for this single flaw in the life of a venerated father.

The younger Roosevelt lived most of his life in a period that knew no wars of significant duration between the American Civil War and World War I. It may have been understandable that ignorant of its horrors, he looked on war as romantic, ennobling, and purifying. Yet his constant exaltation of war was extreme even for a generation spared its experience. So also was his compulsion to participate. His eventual resolution to leave the Navy Department in 1898 to fight in Cuba, a decision considered mad by his family, friends, and superiors, was part of a lifelong obsession. When he was in his late twenties, he spoke of becoming personally involved in war against Mexico. Three decades later, during World War I, he was still at it, importuning President Wilson to give him, at nearly sixty, command of a division to fight in France. It is unlikely that Roosevelt would have been so perfervid in pursuit of war, and his participation in it, had he not felt the need to absolve his father of cowardice. His near-hysterical warmongering over Cuba in the 1890s probably owed as much to filial guilt as to his views on American military strategy or political destiny.

2.

Much of Theodore's childhood was dominated by his asthma. In search of places he could breathe, his parents took him on frequent trips, including two summer visits to Europe. Except for a few months, his entire education before college was private. This was due more to his illness than to the mores of the upper class, but in any case, with no regular playmates, he was thrown on the considerable resources of a very close family. Bamie, though only three years older, was so matured by her spinal affliction that the younger children considered her a grown-up. Theodore, Elliott, and Corinne formed a tight trio, with Teedie clearly the ringleader.

Naturally inquisitive, Teedie had protean interests. Eclectically he read books that the young Cabot Lodge enjoyed too: Marryat's novels about the British Navy, Cooper's books about the sea and the frontier, Lewis Carroll, the Br'er Rabbit stories (recited and set down by Mittie long before Joel Chandler Harris made them famous), *The Swiss*

Family Robinson (which he disliked for getting its animals wrong), the second part of *Robinson Crusoe* (which he liked for the wolves), and girls' books like *Little Women*. In his autobiography Roosevelt noted several writings that had made an impression on him. One was a magazine titled *Our Young Folks*, which preached manliness, decency, and good conduct. The western stories of Mayne Reid gave him his first taste of the American West as well as a love of natural history. He also loved epics: Roland, Siegfried, and Longfellow's poem *The Saga of King Olaf*. It was the heroic he most treasured in all this reading: "From reading of the people I admired—ranging from the soldiers of Valley Forge, and Morgan's riflemen, to the heroes of my favorite stories—and from hearing of the feats performed by my Southern forefathers and kinsfolk, and from knowing my father, I felt a great admiration for men who were fearless and who could hold their own in the world, and I had a great desire to be like them."

He read widely in natural history, devouring Darwin, Audubon, and the American naturalist Spencer Fullerton Reid. He collected live animals and stuffed dead ones, taking lessons in taxidermy from a man who had explored the West with Audubon. He was given his first shotgun at thirteen and, when he failed to hit anything, a pair of spectacles. It turned out that his eyes were so weak that he could not see beyond ten yards. With a new gun and corrective lenses, he became the fearsome hunter he was to remain all his life. He began on the next family vacation by decimating the bird life of Upper Egypt. His approach to natural history—reading, shooting, skinning, stuffing—was typical of his approach to everything. It was enthusiastic, dogged, and heedless of what others might think. Most of all, it was marked by an obsessive effort, encouraged by his father, at self-improvement.

In his memoirs Roosevelt told a revealing story about character building. After an attack of asthma, he was sent by stagecoach to Moosehead Lake in the wilderness of northern Maine. On the coach he was taunted by two boys his own age. Looking at his weak physique, "they found that I was a foreordained and predestined victim, and industriously proceeded to make life miserable for me." He tried to fight but discovered that either adversary could handle him singly, toying with him without hurting him much, yet preventing him from striking back. Typically he learned from the experience. "I made up my mind that I must try to learn so that I would not again be put

in such a helpless position; and having become quickly and bitterly conscious that I did not have the natural prowess to hold my own, I decided that I would try to supply its place by training." Again with his father's help, he learned to box, taking lessons from an ex-prizefighter in a sweaty New York gym.

The young man took his mental toughness to Harvard, a college for which he was equipped intellectually but not socially. Private tutoring had deprived him of learning how to get along with people outside the circle of his adoring family. He was, as an affectionate classmate recalled, "a bundle of eccentricities," with a weird appearance in dandified clothes and powder puff side whiskers, a high-pitched falsetto voice that clipped off words like a paper cutter, a nervous laugh (or "sharp, ungreased squeak," as his mother uncharitably described it), and a habit of oscillating between arrogance and extreme lack of confidence. His speech betrayed his lack of assurance. He spluttered; either the words would not come or he would rush them too fast.

Too supercilious to make many friends, he found refuge in intellectual achievement and the company of the very rich. He was vice-president of the Natural History Society, editor of the undergraduate magazine, and an officer in various social clubs. His grades were good enough to put him in the top 10 percent of his class and win him a Phi Beta Kappa key. Like Cabot Lodge eight years before, he was elected to the Hasty Pudding and Porcellian. Despite his bizarre attitudes, he was in his way a big man on campus.

At Harvard Roosevelt lived a life of conspicuous wealth, consorted only with "gentlemen," and wrote snobbish letters to Corinne putting down his social unequals. His annual income of eight thousand dollars was much more than any professor's stipend and nearly twice President Eliot's. His senior year he kept his own horse and buggy. Still, he did not fit the stereotype of the indolent aristocrat. He boxed and wrestled as a lightweight (five feet eight inches and 130 pounds), once winning admiration for allegedly forgiving a boxing opponent who had hit him after the bell.

He also rowed, skated, shot, and rode, though by his own admission his athletic prowess never caught up to his enthusiasm. Following his father's lead, he taught Sunday school class. He was respected for his tenacity and sense of fairness. Nevertheless, most of his classmates simply did not like him, according to the wife of one of them.

At this stage of life he showed no concern for the working class; the coal and rail strikes in Pennsylvania in 1877, which terrified John Hay into writing *The Breadwinners*, left no imprint on the Harvard undergraduate.

President Eliot's reforms in Harvard's curriculum allowed Roosevelt to choose from the large menu of elective courses. He plunged into natural sciences, at which he excelled, political economy, German, rhetoric, and English. He avoided Lodge's course in American history but enjoyed William James's class in vertebrate biology. Ironically, Lodge was to become his partner in imperialism, and James a political enemy. Looking back at Harvard from a vantage of three decades, Roosevelt wrote guardedly: "I thoroughly enjoyed Harvard, and I am sure it did me good."

His shaded assessment of Harvard's value may be connected with the death of his dream of being a scientist. He had arrived at Harvard intending to be a naturalist. He kept snakes and a live turtle in his rooms and got the highest grade in his class in zoology. But he found in the science faculty a contempt for the outdoors and a concentration on biology as "purely a science of the laboratory and the microscope." Since he "had no more desire or ability to be a microscopist and section-cutter than to be a mathematician," he abandoned science. His thoughts were in any case moving in other directions. He began at Harvard a naval history of the War of 1812, and he told a classmate that after graduation he wanted to help the cause of better government in New York City.

Roosevelt's time at Harvard saw two important changes in his personal life. During his sophomore year his father died at forty-six of stomach cancer, two months after the U.S. Senate had blocked his appointment as President Hayes's reform nominee for New York collector of customs. Theodore's grief was deep and long-lasting; the bond between the two had truly been strong. The young man reacted characteristically, first with guilt ("I realize more and more every day that I am as much inferior to Father morally and mentally as physically"), then with determination ("How I wish I could ever do something to keep up his name"). The loss energized him to study harder; his grades shot up.

The second event took place in the fall of his junior year. He met Alice Lee of Boston, a pretty blue-eyed blond girl with a sense of

humor and a radiant disposition. Through the Cabot line she was related to Henry Cabot Lodge. She seemed a younger version of Theodore's mother and may have resembled Mittie Roosevelt in lightheadedness as well. Theodore and Alice were married in October 1880, the autumn after his graduation from Harvard.

Roosevelt lost much of his asthma problem while at Harvard but was given a new concern his senior year. The college doctor told him that he had a weak heart and ought to live a quiet life without strenuous exertion. His reaction was defiant. To make his point, he went off with Elliott on his first trip to the West, where the two managed to kill more than four hundred birds. The next year, on his honeymoon with Alice in Europe, he climbed the Matterhorn—no easy feat, although there were fixed ropes at dangerous places after the loss of four lives during the first ascent sixteen years before. Roosevelt's muscular approach to life, the direct result of his father's injunction to build his body, was by now irreversible. It affected everything he did.

The newly graduated, newly wed young man spent his first year after Harvard toying with career options. He attended Columbia Law School but disliked the fashionable emphasis on corporation law, Root's specialty, and soon abandoned his studies. He and Alice cut a social swath in New York, making the scene at the theater and the balls that followed and joining social and literary clubs. Theodore went fox hunting and played polo on Long Island. But he also had a serious project under way. At Harvard he had written two chapters of his history of the Naval War of 1812, then lugged the manuscript to Europe on his honeymoon. Now he spent afternoons at the Astor Library and snatches of time at home to finish it. Alice was bemused. Once she observed, "We're dining out in twenty minutes, and Teddy's drawing little ships."

The Naval War of 1812 came out in 1882, and its twenty-three-year-old author found himself praised by both scholars and popular reviewers. Four years after publication the book was placed, by regulation, on board every American naval vessel; this was four years before Mahan's great work on sea power was published. At this early stage in the symbiotic relationship of the two men, it was Roosevelt who had the greater effect on Mahan, rather than the other way around.

Roosevelt's precocious history was all the more remarkable, given

his lack of experience with boats. His childhood reading of Marryat and Cooper had been supplemented by his mother's sea stories, based on the experiences of her naval officer brother. Also, as a boy Roosevelt had sailed off Long Island, though he preferred rowing. But this was skimpy background for an authoritative history of America's greatest naval success. So, characteristically, he plunged into a campaign of research of such depth that he was able to refute the chief British authorities on the war. He taught himself the full sailors' lexicon and used it with the ease of an old salt, as shown in his jargonistic description of the beginning of the famous battle between the *Shannon* and the *Chesapeake*, the only British naval victory in the war:

> At midday of June 1, 1812, the *Chesapeake* weighed anchor, stood out of Boston Harbor, and at 1 P.M. rounded the Light-house. The *Shannon* stood off under easy sail, and at 3:40 hauled up and reefed top-sails. At 4 P.M. she again bore away with her foresail brailed up, and her main top-sail braced flat and shivering, that the *Chesapeake* might overtake her. An hour later, Boston Light-house bearing west distant about six leagues, she again hauled up, with her head to the southeast, and lay to under top-sails, top-gallant sails, jib, and spanker. Meanwhile, as the breeze freshened the *Chesapeake* took in her studding-sails, top-gallant sails, and royals, got her royal yards on deck, and came down very fast under top-sails and jib.

Already bumptious, Roosevelt shredded the account of the most eminent British historian of the war, William James, whom he later accused of systematic and malicious misstatement, of direct lying, and of explaining away the British defeat. His own view, which has been accepted for the most part ever since, was that courage and resolution were shared equally by both sides, that the Americans usually possessed a material advantage, and that they won primarily because of their superior fighting skills.

Roosevelt's history was filled with themes that returned in his writings and his life: efficiency, courage, self-reliance, hard work, discipline, determination, and preparedness. In his description of the Battle of New Orleans, added to the third edition in 1883, he gave hints of the heroic backwoodsmen who were to star in his future epic *The Winning of the West*. He described the Tennesseeans marching

into the city as "gaunt of form and grim of face, with their powder-horns slung over their buckskin shirts; carrying their long rifles on their shoulders and their heavy hunting-knives stuck in their belts; with their coon-skin caps and fringed leggings."

The Naval War of 1812 was not the work of an American jingo. Roosevelt's scholarship was exact and fair, sometimes to the point of being stultifying. He himself wrote that the initial chapters were so dry that "they would have made a dictionary seem light reading by comparison." Moreover, he was not full of praise for the American naval tradition. Quite the reverse. He used the victories of 1812–14 as a stick with which to beat contemporary naval policy. "It is folly," he wrote in a passage that anticipated Mahan, "for the great English-speaking Republic to rely for defence upon a navy composed partly of antiquated hulks, and partly of new vessels rather more worthless than the old. It is worth while to study with some care that period of our history during which our navy stood at the highest pitch of its fame." The "highest pitch" of fame was certainly not the situation in 1882, when Roosevelt's book was published. In fact American naval preparedness was at its nadir, just before the first reforms.

Roosevelt distinguished himself from his dilettante acquaintances not only by his writing but by his plunge into Republican politics at the grass roots in 1881. In both vocations he was running a parallel course with Lodge, whom he knew only slightly. Unlike Lodge, already in the Massachusetts legislature, Roosevelt did not have full family support for his move into politics. His adoring sisters cheered him on, but his uncle and two cousins urged him not to soil his hands. Moreover, many of his acquaintances—"the men in the clubs of social pretension and the men of cultivated taste and easy life"—tried to talk him out of a "low" profession not controlled by gentlemen.

Roosevelt's reaction was typically contrary. He countered that he would not accept the political dominance of the "saloon-keepers" and "horse-car conducters" but would contest it personally. This first tangle with New York's patrician lawyers and businessmen shaped his combative relations with them (except for Root) for the rest of his life. His instincts, like Lodge's, told him that the way to succeed in politics was to experience it from the bottom up. He may also have been looking for a way to get back at the Conkling machine, which had de-

feated and perhaps destroyed his father. From the moment he stuck his toe in the sewer water of New York politics, he was a reformer.

The Twenty-first District in New York City, studded with the brownstones of bankers, businessmen, and lawyers, was safely Republican. Some, like the superlawyers Elihu Root and Joseph Choate, were politically active, though none deigned to run for office. The ward boss, Jake Hess, was a German Jew who acted as agent for the Albany Republican machine. His lieutenant and secret rival, Joe Murray, was an Irishman who could use his brains as well as his fists. In 1881 Murray successfully ran Roosevelt against Hess's candidate for Republican nominee for the state assembly. Amassing the support of well-heeled reformists like Root, who signed a letter for him, Roosevelt won easily.

At this point in his young life Roosevelt had no thought of making a career out of politics. If he had, he might not have shown such disregard for what people thought of him. His debut in the Albany legislature was described unforgettably by a fellow member:

> His hair was parted in the center, and he had sideburns. He wore a single eye-glass, with a gold chain over his ear. He had on a cutaway coat with one button at the top, and the ends of its tails almost reached the tops of his shoes. He carried a gold-headed cane in one hand, a silk hat in the other, and he walked in the bent-over fashion that was the style with the young men of the day. His trousers were as tight as a tailor could make them, and had a bell-shaped bottom to cover his shoes. "Who's the dude?" I asked another member.

Just as his dress was designed to call attention to himself, so was his parliamentary behavior. He was constantly importuning the speaker for the floor and ridiculing veteran members. He had, as even a worshipful biographer admitted, a swelled head.

Roosevelt's vanity and ostentation made him a laughingstock, but not for long. On legislative issues he did his homework and came up with explosive proposals that shattered the assembly's comfortable toleration of corruption and sleazy government. He had not been in the assembly three months when he was calling for the impeachment of a corrupt judge for collusion with the crooked financier Jay Gould. The judge was involved in a scam by Gould designed to take over one

of New York City's elevated railroads. Roosevelt went after Gould as well, calling him a shark, swindler, archthief, kleptomaniac, and member of "the wealthy criminal class." He defeated an effort, backed by Gould's supporters, to rebate taxes owed by the financier.

Roosevelt was not always an authentic reformer—he opposed legislation setting minimum wages and working hours for laborers—but overall, in his three terms in the assembly, he inspired and achieved several victories for reform. He led the drive to make the civil service more professional. He pressed for a bill to outlaw the manufacture of cigars in tenements, where working conditions were deplorable. Taking aim at both the Democratic and the Republican machines in New York City, he sponsored legislation to strengthen the mayor at the expense of the corruption-prone aldermen, to set a debt limit, and to raise the fee for liquor licenses. His effectiveness in the assembly changed the members' view of Roosevelt from harmless fop to formidable eccentric.

In his second term, while he was still the youngest member of the assembly, his Republican colleagues elected him their candidate for speaker, an ambiguous gesture, since he was foreordained to lose to the Democratic majority. Still, it was no small thing to be the leader of his state's legislative party at the age of twenty-four. Ironically, the next year, when the Republicans held a majority, he lost the nomination to a machine man, an indication that the Republican bosses were content to promote the young maverick as a sure loser but not as a sure winner.

Because of long recesses, Roosevelt's three sessions in the New York Assembly totaled only a little more than a year. But they exposed some important existing character traits and developed new ones. The qualities he brought to Albany and displayed there included enormous capacity for work, genuine commitment to reform, driving ambition, fearlessness, tenacity, and indifference to being popular. His first experience in politics also brought out two latent qualities: an ability to get along with others and a sympathy for how the other half really lived.

For all his traveling to Europe and the West, Roosevelt had actually led a sheltered life. His schooling had given him no social breadth; education at home and four years at Harvard were hardly an exercise in diversity. On trips to the Maine woods while in college, he had

made a lifelong friendship with a Maine guide, Bill Sewall, who became a sort of mentor to him. But it was not until he reached Albany that he had to work regularly with people of all stations—from farmers and mechanics to liquor dealers and pawnbrokers. He discovered that he enjoyed it and was good at it.

He particularly relished dealing with New York machine politicians, something he would have to do, with diminishing pleasure, through most of his political career. At Morton Hall, Republican headquarters of the Twenty-first District, he sat in on the political discussions. "Some of them sneered at my black coat and tall hat," he recalled. "But I made them understand that I should come dressed as I chose. . . . Then after the discussions I used to play poker and smoke with them." In his autobiography he devoted no fewer than seven pages to Joe Murray, the ward heeler who gave him his start in politics. Roosevelt endowed this Irish immigrant with all the virtues of a saint, "a man to be trusted in any position demanding courage, integrity, and good faith." He was only slightly less lavish about such fellow members of the assembly as Billy O'Neill, a storekeeper from the Adirondacks who was his closest friend in Albany, and Mike Costello, a Tammany Irishman whom he considered "as fearless as he was honest."

Roosevelt was undoubtedly showing off in describing these patrician-plebeian friendships, but his enthusiasm was real. The lesson he learned from Murray seemed equally authentic: "I do not think that a man is fit to do good work in our American democracy unless he is able to have a genuine fellow-feeling for, understanding of, and sympathy with his fellow-Americans, whatever their creed or their birthplace, the section in which they live, or the work which they do."

Much as he admired his father, Roosevelt had so far shown little interest in pursuing the charitable work that ennobled the elder Roosevelt's life. But he did inherit from his father a strong sense of social justice, which his time in Albany gave him the opportunity to exercise. The most famous example was his visit to the tenements where cigars were made. This was at the persuasion of Samuel Gompers, an official of the cigar makers' union and an unlikely man to consort with the effete young legislator. Gompers was a Jewish immigrant from London and himself the son of a cigar maker.

Roosevelt had opposed the bill to ban cigar making at home for a classical Republican reason: It injected the long arm of government into the sanctity of the home. But he agreed to an inspection tour with Gompers and made two others afterward. In his memoirs he described the scene:

> In the overwhelming majority of cases . . . there were one, two, or three room apartments, and the work of manufacturing the tobacco by men, women, and children went on day and night in the eating, living, and sleeping rooms—sometimes in one room. . . . The tobacco was stowed about everywhere, alongside the foul bedding, and in a corner where there were scraps of food. The men, women and children in this room worked by day and far on into the evening, and they slept and ate there. They were Bohemians, unable to speak English, except that one of the children knew enough to act as interpreter.

The visits turned Roosevelt into a champion of the cigar bill. Passed by the assembly, it was voided by the courts for the same classical Republican reason and, Roosevelt believed, because cigar manufacturers had greased the right palms. But the effect on him was permanent. He had discovered on-site inspection as the surest path to just decisions, surer than political beliefs, moral convictions, or theological dogmas. He was to employ the technique again and again, in visiting slum housing as New York City police commissioner; in throwing over a desk job under McKinley for the experience of fighting in Cuba; and, as president, in personally inspecting his beloved creation, the great canal across Panama. With his visit to the tenements, Roosevelt also redeemed the legacy of his father. The vision of the two Roosevelts was the same: to make the lives of the poor better. His father had chosen the way of charity; the son would choose the way of politics.

Roosevelt's third and final year in the New York Assembly was marked by an unimaginable tragedy. His mother and his wife died in the same house on the same day, February 14, 1884, St. Valentine's Day. Mittie died of typhoid fever at the age of forty-eight, and Alice of Bright's disease two days after childbirth at only twenty-two. Summoned from Albany, Roosevelt arrived at the family house in New York in time for the deaths of both women, who were so like each other in beauty, charm, and lightness of personality.

Now an orphan, a widower, and a father at the age of twenty-five, Roosevelt reacted oddly but typically. Later that year he wrote a touching remembrance of Alice: "She was beautiful in face and form, and lovelier still in spirit; as a flower she grew, and as a fair young flower she died. . . . And when my heart's dearest died, the light went from my life forever." Then he struck her out of his mind and drew a black line under his star-crossed marriage. With only rare exceptions, he never mentioned her again. He turned their newborn baby, Alice, over to the ever-faithful Bamie, who acted as mother and father to the child during her first years. Together with his siblings, he sold the house they had grown up in and Mittie and Alice had died in. He also sold the house he had lived in with Alice. However, he kept his property in Oyster Bay, Long Island, which he had bought for weekends with Alice, changing the name from Leeholm, after her family, to Sagamore Hill, in memory of indigenous Indian chieftains.

Manically Roosevelt threw himself into work. Three days after the double funeral he was back in the assembly, in a paroxysm of activity that lasted for the rest of the session. But he decided not to stand for a fourth term. It was during this period of grief that he consolidated his friendship with Lodge. Less than four months after the deaths the two men traveled to Chicago to engineer the selection of a reform candidate at the 1884 Republican National Convention. After their failure Roosevelt entrained alone for the Dakota Badlands to stake his claim as a ranchman and cowboy. In the fall he was back east to campaign for Lodge and the Republican ticket. He still had no focus, no commitment to politics, writing, or ranching. Nevertheless, with the double tragedy his life had reached an important turning point.

Looking back on Roosevelt's first twenty-five years, one is struck by the amount of adversity he was able to overcome. His childhood asthma inflicted on him enormous pain, mental stress, and depression. His eyesight was horrible, and he was so dependent on spectacles that he sewed multiple pairs into his clothes when he went soldiering in Cuba or hunting in Africa. He lost his revered father while still in college. Moreover, his reaction to the simultaneous deaths of Alice and Mittie should not be underestimated just because he suppressed most of it. He overcame all these trials by extraordinary mental and physical toughness. Hardly a promising Darwinian specimen—in fact a four-eyed weakling—he built up both his body and his confidence in himself.

It is no surprise, then, that it was effort, not talent, that counted. He would have agreed with an admiring biographer that he had "not a particle of genius." He himself wrote: "I never won anything without hard labor and the exercise of my best judgment and careful planning and working long in advance." Though constantly beset by self-doubt, endlessly poured out to Lodge, Roosevelt turned himself into a matchless engine of self-reliance, determination, and accomplishment.

Before he reached his twenty-sixth birthday, he had written a naval history that was recognized as the best survey of its subject, had become a Republican leader in the legislature of his state, and had challenged the national Republican leadership at its presidential nominating convention. The qualities of character he had achieved through misfortune combined with his precocious record of achievement to make people talk—already—of the highest office for him. While he was still in the state assembly, one of America's most distinguished educators and diplomats, Andrew D. White, first president of Cornell University and later ambassador to Germany, told his history students: "Young gentlemen, some of you will enter public life. I call your attention to Theodore Roosevelt, now in our Legislature. He is on the right road to success. . . . If any man of his age was ever pointed straight at the Presidency, that man is Theodore Roosevelt." Wherever he was headed, Roosevelt was moving fast, propelled by adversity as much as success. As he wrote later, "Black care rarely sits behind a rider whose pace is fast enough."

3.

To hear him tell it later, Theodore Roosevelt spent a considerable part of his life in the West, running his two ranches, roping and branding cattle, chopping cottonwood, shooting buffalo and grizzlies, punching out bullies, arresting desperadoes, and swapping yarns with the locals on long winter evenings. He devoted three substantial books, numerous magazine articles, and a long chapter in his autobiography to his western adventures. On the strength of his first writings about his ex-

ploits, Roosevelt became the first of the three major late-nineteenth-century popularizers of the American West. The other two were also easterners and friends of his, Owen Wister of Philadelphia and Harvard, whose best-seller *The Virginian* was published in 1902, and Frederic Remington of Canton, New York, and Yale, the great sketcher and sculptor of cowboys and Indians.

Actually, Roosevelt spent a total of less than two years in the West, mostly spread over the four years from 1883 to 1887. He never owned any land there but was a squatter on his two ranches in the Badlands, named the Elkhorn and the Maltese Cross. His financial stake was divided between a house in the Little Missouri Valley, which his Maine friend Bill Sewall built for him, and the purchase of cattle. In all, he spent about eighty thousand dollars in the Dakota Territory, a large sum for those days, and lost about seventy thousand of it. His cowboy skills were, by his own admission, meager. He was a poor roper, an average rider, and a bad shot. Nor was he much of a trailblazer. A deranged French nobleman was already ensconced in the cattle town of Medora, which he had named after his wife. Several of Roosevelt's Harvard friends and even his father-in-law had preceded him with investments in railroads, land, or cattle in the Dakota and Wyoming territories.

Despite the narrowness of his experiences on the frontier, Roosevelt was as profoundly affected by the West as he pretended. Wister and Remington went west for their health. So, in a way, did Roosevelt. Before Alice's death he had spent a few weeks on the Little Missouri, in what is now North Dakota, in September 1883. After she died in February 1884, his visits became frequent, a kind of therapy for him. He squeezed in three trips in the year of her death, fitting them around the Republican National Convention in June and the presidential election in November. "I owe more than I can ever express to the West," he wrote in his memoirs, without breaking his silence about his lost love to explain why.

The Dakota Territory was for him a gigantic arena for the discharge of the explosive energy he always amassed in times of crisis. He did everything to excess. He outlasted everybody on hunts. He killed a nine-foot grizzly. He exulted in icy downpours that chilled his cowboy partners into querulous bad temper. He worked the roundup with a broken rib and a chipped shoulder. He rode great distances, sometimes a hundred miles in a day, once going through five horses by riding forty hours straight. Giving way to his natural combativeness, he decked an armed barroom tough who teased him about his glasses.

He also nearly provoked a duel with his French neighbor, the lunatic Marquis de Mores, a crack shot who had already put two rivals underground. Had he not drawn back, Mores probably would have killed him. He and two pals chased three boat thieves a hundred miles down the Little Missouri, caught them, and brought them ashore after floating downriver another six days. Roosevelt, by himself now, then walked them under his guard for forty-five miles in two days to deliver them to prison. During the episode he managed to read all of *Anna Karenina.*

By valiant exertion, Roosevelt sublimated most of his grief over Alice's death. But not all. Sewall, whom he had lured to the Badlands from Maine, described his bouts of melancholy, in which he despaired of having anything left to live for. In his descriptions of western landscapes, he returned again and again to the themes of loneliness, separation, and solitude. Some of his best writing embodied his feelings, as in this evocative passage from one of his books on the West, every sentence sounding a note of doom:

> When the days have dwindled to their shortest, and the nights seem never-ending, then all the great northern plains are changed into an abode of iron desolation. Sometimes furious gales blow down from the north, driving before them the clouds of blinding snow-dust, wrapping the mantle of death round every unsheltered being that faces their unshackled anger. They roar in a thunderous bass as they sweep across the prairie or whirl through the naked canyons; they shiver the great brittle cottonwoods, and beneath their rough touch the icy limbs of the pines that cluster in the gorges sing like the chords of an aeolian harp. Again, in the coldest midwinter weather, not a breath of wind may stir; and then the still, merciless, terrible cold that broods over the earth like the shadow of silent death seems even more dreadful in its gloomy rigor than is the lawless madness of the storms.

Roosevelt's grief, compounded by the political setbacks at the Republican convention and in the presidential election, was human enough. What was almost superhuman was the strength of his refusal

to be defeated by it. It was not the barren beauty of the Badlands that sustained him—Sewall said that anyone who preferred them to the East must be depraved—but their hardship and challenge, the naturalist's thrill in new birds and animals, the physical excitement of riding and hunting, and, perhaps most of all, the people.

As usual, Roosevelt made no sartorial efforts to blend in. His clothing and equipment were gaudy and top of the line; to the locals he was a "dude" to be made fun of. He wore a hundred-dollar buckskin suit, carried a custom-made Winchester rifle, and sported a steel hunting knife with a sterling silver sheath and handle from Tiffany's. His overall appearance—"all teeth and eyes," as a village doctor described him—and his reedy New York accent did not help make him invisible. He did learn to keep quiet and put up with the ridicule—up to a point. He finally made himself popular with the cowboys because he admired what they did, learned how to do it himself, and displayed toughness and courage.

His descriptions of cowpunchers and ranch hands had an idyllic quality. He enjoyed, ignored, or denied the low sides of their characters—"meanness, cowardice, and dishonesty are not tolerated"—and extolled their virtues. To him they were honest, hardworking, humorous, faithful, resourceful, heroic. Even more than his friends in New York politics, the westerners became prototypes of average Americans endowed with the simple virtues. This highly romantic view that Roosevelt the aristocrat held for these men of commoner clay became a permanent fixture in his philosophy of life. It was to emerge in his historical picture of Daniel Boone and the Kentucky frontiersmen in *The Winning of the West*, earlier prototypes of his beloved cowboys. It was also to surface in real life in his assembling of the Rough Riders, a fighting force that mixed cowboys and dudes and exemplified heroism and comradeship.

Roosevelt's stint in the Dakota Territory got him over his depression, gave him a muscular physique, brought him some income from his western writings, and restored his confidence in himself. In the words of a friend, it also "taught him the immense diversity of the people, and consequently of the interests, of the United States. It gave him a national point of view." He was lucky to leave the Badlands when the leaving was good. He sold much of his cattle business

at a substantial loss just before the blizzard of 1886–87 took care of the rest and turned Medora into a ghost town.

He left behind some clairvoyant admirers. The local doctor, describing their first meeting, wrote: "I told my wife that I had met the most peculiar and at the same time the most wonderful man I had ever come to know. I could see that he was a man of brilliant ability and I could not understand why he was out there on the frontier." The publisher of *The Bad Lands Cow Boy*, who knew him better, told him flatly: "You will become President of the United States."

Back in New York City in 1886 and still unsure about a commitment to politics, Roosevelt let the Republican bosses talk him into running for mayor in a three-way race. His opponents were Abram Hewitt, a centrist Democratic businessman, and Henry George, a left-wing proponent of the single tax. He was the youngest candidate for mayor in the city's history. Supported by Elihu Root and other prominent reform Republicans, Roosevelt ran on an anticorruption platform distinguished by an effort to win the black and immigrant vote and spiced by his self-depiction as the "cowboy candidate." He confided to Lodge that he knew he had no chance of winning: "In all probability this campaign means my final and definite retirement [at twenty-eight!] as an available candidate." He did hope to finish second.

On election day, when it became clear that George was cutting into Roosevelt's vote, the Republican leaders began to urge their party faithful to vote for Hewitt in order to stop the socialist. Roosevelt finished a poor third. Disappointed and bitter about this act of political cynicism, he cabled Lodge, who had just won his first seat in Congress: "Am badly defeated, Worse even than I feared." His six-hundred-page autobiography contains not a word about the mayoralty race.

Some two years after Alice's death, Roosevelt had begun seeing Edith Carow, a close friend of his sisters'. He had courted her at Harvard before meeting Alice but had not seen her for seven years. Edith was good-looking (though not as pretty as Alice), wellborn, but impecunious, intelligent, strong-willed, sensible, and, especially in her later years, intimidating. She loved Theodore deeply and probably always had. The two disguised their engagement for reasons of propriety and because he considered the relationship a political liability

during his run for mayor. Their wedding was also semiclandestine. A month after his election defeat in November, they were married in London instead of New York; the best man was a young English diplomat whom Roosevelt had just met on the boat.

Theodore's marriage to Edith, though conceived in shadow, began for both of them a luminous, happy, and successful relationship. She was a calming, supportive, and loyal wife, whose strengths often compensated for his weaknesses, such as his recklessness about money. More perceptive and less flighty than Alice, she was also politically astute and a keen judge of people, a genuine asset to her husband in his multiple careers. When Cabot Lodge wanted to press a course of action on Roosevelt, he often had the good sense to check it out with her first. Theodore and Edith spent a modest honeymoon of only fifteen weeks in Europe. While the social pace wore Edith down, Roosevelt had "a roaring good time." Pursuing his version of relaxation in Rome, he wrote six articles there on ranch life for the *Century*. In Sorrento, he wrote to Corinne, "I generally take a moderate walk with Edith every morning, and then a brisk rush by myself."

On his return he resumed his pattern of zigzagging between politics and writing, following his bid for mayor with the biography of Gouverneur Morris. He had tossed off the biography of Thomas Hart Benton in four months; Morris took him only three. By the beginning of 1888 his restless energy was again craving new activity. In January he founded the first environmental organization in the United States, the Boone and Crockett Club, dedicated to the preservation of game and forests. But that was clearly not enough.

Roosevelt kept resisting a choice between history and politics. He was prepared to embrace whichever career might bring him greatness. He did not think it would be politics. He saw himself as too controversial, even hated. In 1884 he had written to a New York state editor: "I have very little expectation of being able to keep on in politics. . . . I will not stay in public life unless I can do so on my own terms; and my ideal, whether lived up to or not, is rather a high one." The New York mayoral experience can only have reinforced his pessimism. In 1888 he wrote a friend: "I shall probably never be in politics again. My literary work occupies a good deal of my time; and I have on the whole done fairly well at it; I should like to write some book that would really take rank in the very first class, but I suppose this is a

mere dream." That year he started on just such a book, *The Winning of the West*. It expanded to four volumes and took him nine years to complete.

When Benjamin Harrison defeated President Cleveland in 1888 and the presidency returned to the Republicans, Roosevelt, true to form, looked for a political office that could be combined with his writing. Predictably, Secretary of State-designate Blaine was not keen to follow Lodge's advice that he take as his deputy a sworn enemy of his presidential ambitions. Interestingly, the explanation that Blaine gave Nannie Lodge went beyond the painful memory of the 1884 convention. It would be heard again as Roosevelt moved into national politics: "My real trouble in regard to Mr. Roosevelt is that I feel he lacks the repose and the patient endurance required in an Assistant Secretary. Mr. Roosevelt is amazingly quick in apprehension. Is there not danger that he might be too quick in execution? I do somehow fear that my sleep at Augusta or Bar Harbor would not be quite so easy and refreshing if so brilliant and aggressive a man had hold of the helm."

Even though Roosevelt was about to enter the only relatively fallow period in his entire political life, his absence of "repose and patient endurance" disturbed the sleep of other prominent politicians, including the president himself. Still, Harrison did offer Roosevelt, again through Lodge's mediation, the post of civil service commissioner. Roosevelt was already known as a committed advocate of a merit system for federal appointments, but the job had none of the power or glamour for which the brilliant and aggressive man of Blaine's description must have yearned. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that Roosevelt's germinating work of western history was on his mind, and he was glad to have a sinecure that would give him the leisure to write it.

His days were less hectic than normal. He left the office at four or five in the afternoon, often to play tennis at the British legation with his friend Cecil Spring Rice, the junior diplomat who had been best man at his London wedding. He spent long summers in Oyster Bay, out of the Washington heat. From time to time he dashed to the Elkhorn ranch for a week or two in pursuit of bear and elk. Nevertheless, being Theodore Roosevelt, at the Civil Service Commission, he mounted crusades against the spoils system, catapulting himself into controversies that more prudent men would have avoided.

One of his first acts was to force the dismissal of a personal friend of Harrison's, a corrupt postmaster in the president's hometown of Indianapolis. Having elbowed himself to the leadership of the commission, he incurred the wrath of Harrison's postmaster general and financial backer, John Wanamaker, the Philadelphia department store tycoon and a spoilsman of traditional stripe. When Wanamaker stalled on the commission's recommendation to dismiss twenty-five Baltimore postal employees for electoral fraud, Roosevelt called him a "hypocritical haberdasher" and engineered a congressional investigation. Wanamaker was disgraced, and the young reformer vindicated. Harrison did not seem amused at these assaults on the ramparts of patronage. Roosevelt wrote wistfully to Lodge, "I do wish the President would give me a little active, even if only verbal encouragement." In part because of Roosevelt's zeal, corruption became an issue in Harrison's losing race against Cleveland in 1892.

In his six years with the Civil Service Commission, Roosevelt could take legitimate pride in what he called his "applied idealism." He extended the merit system to many new offices and brought genuine enforcement to civil service regulations. "I have been a real force," he boasted to Lodge early in his tenure. He never abandoned that enthusiasm. In his memoirs, published nearly two decades later, he saw fit to devote thirty self-congratulatory pages to these achievements. As commissioner he earned favorable press copy from the *New York Times* and the once-hostile *Washington Post*. He was portrayed in a cartoon as David the giant-killer, slaying the spoils system.

Still, he was restless in what he must have considered a second-rate position. He complained to Corinne that his life was growing more sedentary and that he was beating his head against the wall. Two years into his job he was singing his usual threnody to Lodge: His career was over; he had "spent and exhausted" his influence with the party and country. After four years, he wrote Bamie: "I do not see any element of permanence or chance of permanent work for me in the kind of life where I really think I could do most." After completing six successful years on the commission, he still saw only a dead end. He wrote Lodge: "My victory here does not leave me with any opening. It leads nowhere."

He also made some unwise political decisions. In the contest for speaker of the House in 1889, he campaigned for Tom Reed against

William McKinley, even though he believed McKinley would become president and told him so. In 1894 he let Edith talk him out of running for mayor of New York; the Republican candidate won. Yet his ambition never flagged. On the way to the commission, he wrote years later, "I used to walk by the White House, and my heart would beat a little faster as the thought came to me that possibly—*possibly*—I would some day occupy it as President."

During their six years in Washington, the Roosevelts, young as they were—on arrival he was thirty, she twenty-eight—made their mark socially. Thanks to their family backgrounds and the indulgent patronage of the Lodges, the young couple moved easily into the social circle around Henry Adams. Their friends and contacts included senators, cabinet officers, foreign ambassadors, and others of ranks exceeding Roosevelt's. Roosevelt throve on power dinners. As he wrote Bamie, "I always eat and drink too much. Still, I have enjoyed them greatly, for here I meet just the people I care to. It is so pleasant to deal with big interests, and big men." He won an admirer in Adams, who was fascinated by his dynamism. He was "pure act," said Adams, who himself was no act.

It was at this time that Roosevelt got to know John Hay well. Roosevelt appreciated Hay's friendship with his father and his support for the senior Roosevelt's allotment plan for Union soldiers. As a small boy Theodore had first met Hay, who was twenty years older, when his father brought him to their country house in a rainstorm. Hay's umbrella blew out in the wind, and Teedie and Corinne enjoyed his comic struggle to fix it. Theodore's father introduced Hay to the children as a young man who would "make his name well known in the United States."

Now, in Washington, Roosevelt could enjoy Hay's humor and friendship. Despite their mutual admiration, however, there was always a shadow between the two men. Like Adams, Hay found Roosevelt too ambitious and pushy, while for Roosevelt Hay was something of a wimp. He was unwilling, Roosevelt once said, to "face the rather intimate association which is implied in a fight." Hay was charming, but Roosevelt's aggressiveness and pugnacity found their true echo not in him but in Lodge.

During his Washington period Roosevelt consolidated his alliance and friendship with Alfred Mahan, who had invited him as guest lec-

turer at the Naval War College in Newport in 1887. While Roosevelt was at the Civil Service Commission, Mahan was often either at Newport or at sea, but the two kept in touch. Roosevelt acted as self-appointed press agent for *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, published in 1890, and intervened several times against the navy's efforts to derail Mahan's career. He was such a Mahan booster that John Hay told Bamie Roosevelt of his delight that Mahan had finally made his name, "as Theodore would now no longer feel obliged to make [his friends] all go to Annapolis to hear his lectures."

By 1895 Roosevelt's frustrations were keeping pace with his bellicosity. He had been six years in Washington on the Civil Service Commission, the last two under the Democratic president Grover Cleveland, who had unexpectedly kept him on. There was now a reform Republican administration in New York City under Mayor William L. Strong, whose new office Roosevelt had decided not to compete for. Strong offered him street cleaning commissioner, probably less of an insult than it appears, but Roosevelt allowed Lodge to talk him into a more visible job, one of the four police commissioners.

Roosevelt's sidestep back into New York politics left him no tribune for national pronouncements, but it did increase his national reputation. The state and the city were perennially ripe for the reformer's ax. As Roosevelt had written in his Benton biography, "New York has always had a low political standard, one or the other of its great party and factional organizations, and often both or all of them, being at all times most unlovely bodies of excessively unwholesome moral tone."

Roosevelt threw himself into the work of police commissioner with his usual energy. He put his civil service convictions into practice by rewarding merit and punishing corruption and graft. In enforcement of the blue laws, he took a political risk by closing down saloons on Sundays, then discomfited the organizers of a German-American meeting protesting the closures by unexpectedly accepting their invitation to attend it. In the company of the celebrated muckraking journalist Jacob Riis, he visited the poorer districts of the city. When the Jewish community complained about the forthcoming address of an anti-Semitic demagogue from Germany, Roosevelt assigned forty Jewish policemen to protect the visitor's right of free speech.

All this was done with a keen eye to populist publicity: the sleeping patrolman finding the commissioner staring down on him, the tenement dweller meeting a sympathetic city official for the first time, the criminal catching a glimpse of the commissioner himself on one of his famous night prowls, the crowds watching him ride his bicycle to work. He invited reporters along on some of these escapades. To the press he was Haroun-al-Roosevelt, emulating the caliph of Baghdad in protecting his flock and rooting out evil. The portrait of the fighting police commissioner fitted nicely alongside the picture of the courageous cowboy.

The political infighting in New York City, generated partly within the four-man board itself, caused Roosevelt great frustration. Still, in correspondence with Bamie, his most trusted confidante, he expressed satisfaction. He loved the "glimpse of the real life of the swarming millions." He also believed he was doing some good. "I am more than glad that I went into it; and it will be a year that I shall always consider as perhaps the best spent of my life, in point of actual, hard, useful, disagreeable and yet intensely interesting and exciting labor." But, as he put it, it was "not work that can be done on a rose-water basis," and by the 1896 presidential election he thought he had done all he could with the police. McKinley's election offered him the possibility of another career move.

4.

By this time Roosevelt had developed a strong and consistent opinion of what the United States stood for and what it could become. He outlined this view of his own country in two works of history. The first was his biography of Thomas Hart Benton, published in 1886. Benton had become Missouri's first senator when the territory was admitted to the Union in 1821 as the westernmost state; he served thirty years in the Senate. Roosevelt admired him for his fidelity to two goals: preservation of the Union (even though Benton was a slave-owner) and westward expansion.

Roosevelt's second and far more ambitious work, *The Winning of the West*, was published in four volumes between 1889 and 1897. The primary subject of the work was not the conquest of what was then called the Far West or the Wild West beyond the Mississippi River, but the settlement between 1769 and 1807 of lands west of the original thirteen states and east of the Mississippi, the current states of

Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Roosevelt's narrative account of their acquisition and settlement contains serious blemishes, among them an often insensitive approach to Native Americans. But it has great strengths as well, which make it his finest piece of writing, a still-underrated American classic. It is broad in scope, impressive in research, incisive in interpretation, and gripping in style. The vivid accounts of frontier adventures and intrigues, the skirmishes between settlers and Indians, the long-running duel with the British, and the competing strategies of the grand adversaries make absorbing reading. One would like to believe that if he had done nothing else in life, Roosevelt would still be remembered for *The Winning of the West.*

His epic theme was that the conquest of the lands between the Allegheny Mountains and the Mississippi made possible all the westward expansion beyond the great river. Indeed, without the wresting of those lands from the British, the Spanish, and the Indians, Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase would not have led, in Roosevelt's view, to the populating of the trans-Mississippi West. A belt of hostile territory would have lain between the United States and the vast domain it had purchased. Between the Alleghenies and the Mississippi, Roosevelt wrote, the American Revolution "was fundamentally a struggle between England . . . and the Americans, triumphantly determined to acquire the right to conquer the continent." If the Americans had failed, "we would certainly have been cooped up between the sea and the mountains; . . . the Alleghanies [*sic*] would have become our western frontier." But they succeeded, and their success, for Roosevelt, confirmed the success of the American Revolution.

How were the lands pacified and settled? Roosevelt gave due credit to the American military victory in the Revolution and to the negotiating skill of John Jay and John Adams in gaining British recognition of the Ohio River valley as American territory. But there was a more important factor. Fortunately the American negotiators of the Treaty of Paris "represented a people already holding the whole Ohio Valley, as well as the Illinois." It was those people who were the real heroes of Roosevelt's epic, the backwoodsmen, handy with ax, rifle, or knife, who seized or occupied the land and made it safe for settlement.

Roosevelt's icons among these frontier types were Daniel Boone, George Rogers Clark, John Sevier, and James Robertson. Roosevelt

was too good a historian to ignore major defects in these figures: Sevier, Clark, and Boone, for example, all conspired with the Spanish enemy. But their accomplishments made them "emphatically American worthies . . . men of might in their day, born to sway the minds of others, helpful in shaping the destiny of the continent." Roosevelt also saw them as representing an even larger collective force: "the movement of a whole, free people, not of a single master-mind." The members of this collective force—the explorers and settlers—were simple, rough, commonsensical, warlike, daring, truculent, ruthless, and industrious. Though ranging over hundreds of thousands of square miles, they merged for Roosevelt into a single American type, "one in speech, thought, and character." He saw them as quintessential Americans: "Nowhere else on the continent has so sharply defined and distinctively American a type been produced as on the frontier."

Roosevelt portrayed the frontiersmen as unique. In fact, however, they were familiar characters in a romantic epic that he had been staging all his life. They were the embodiment of Bill Sewall, the Maine guide who had taught him woodcraft, and of Billy O'Neill, the small-town storekeeper from rural New York whom he had known in the New York Assembly. They resembled the gaunt Tennesseeans with their powder horns and rifles, who marched on New Orleans in *The Naval War of 1812*, and the Badlands cowboys with whom he had hunted, rode, and roped. They were like the characters in his and Lodge's *Hero Tales from American History*, which contained chapters on Daniel Boone and George Rogers Clark. Moreover, they were to appear again as the Rough Riders, whose very name conveyed the human attributes that Roosevelt found so appealing.

The backwoodsmen who won the West were, for Roosevelt, part of a historical continuum that stretched from the American Revolution to his own time. Like Frederick Jackson Turner, whose great thesis on the American frontier was published while Roosevelt was writing *The Winning of the West* and from whom he derived inspiration, he saw American history as the history of expansion: expansion from the Old World to the New, then expansion overland to the Mississippi, finally expansion to the western continental limits. Roosevelt actually planned to write a sequel to *The Winning of the West* to cover the seizure of Florida and Oregon, the incorporation of Texas, and the acquisition of New Mexico and California.

At times Roosevelt implied that expansion was just a question of showing up. He simply brushed the Indian inhabitants out of existence, assuming fatuously that all that was needed was to fill in empty spaces: "We . . . have seized the waste solitudes that lay near us, the limitless forests and never ending plains, and the valleys of the great, lonely rivers; and have thrust our own sons into them to take possession; and a score of years after each conquest we see the conquered land teeming with a people that is one with ourselves." In more realistic moments, he understood that the "waste solitudes" were occupied by British, Spanish, and Indians. These adversaries had to be pushed aside. War was irrevocably, if regrettably, necessary for expansion. The military victory of the Virginia governor Lord Dunmore over Chief Cornstalk and his Shawnee nation in 1774 opened the way for Boone to settle Kentucky, for Robertson to control Middle Tennessee, and for Clark to conquer Illinois. Roosevelt was not squeamish about the fate of the Indians in this process: "Unless we were willing that the whole continent west of the Alleghanies [*sic*] should remain an unpeopled waste, the hunting-ground of savages, war was inevitable; and even had we been willing, and had we refrained from encroaching on the Indians' lands, the war would have come nevertheless, for then the Indians themselves would have encroached on ours."

In speaking and letters, Roosevelt often used racial expressions. Latin Americans were Dagoes, Chinese Chinks, Spanish Dons, British Jacks, Japanese Japs, and American Indians savages. The late nineteenth century was a time of credence in racial theories that have no intellectual standing today. Like most graduates of major American universities, Roosevelt believed that some races were dominant and some inferior. As a Lincoln Republican he was a strong opponent of slavery and a nominal backer of rights for black Americans, but he considered them members of a stupid and backward race whose presence in the United States was a tragic but irreversible error. For him racial superiority dictated that the inferior races be displaced, rather than assimilated. It was thus "of incalculable importance that America, Australia, and Siberia should pass out of the hands of their red, black, and yellow aboriginal owners, and become the heritage of the dominant world races."

These racial beliefs translated directly to Roosevelt's treatment of the American continent and the American Indian: "The conquest and

settlement by the whites of the Indian lands was necessary to the greatness of the race and to the well-being of civilized mankind. . . . Such conquests . . . are sure to come when a masterful people, still in its raw barbarian prime, finds itself face to face with a weaker and wholly alien race which holds a coveted prize in its feeble grasp." The necessary victory of the "dominant world races" swept away appeals to morality: "Whether the whites won the land by treaty, by armed conquest, or, as was actually the case, by a mixture of both, mattered comparatively little so long as the land was won. It was all-important that it should be won, for the benefit of civilization and in the interests of mankind."

Roosevelt's picture of Indians was a stereotype of inferiority. They were "filthy, cruel, lecherous, and faithless," and their life was "but a few degrees less meaningless, squalid, and ferocious than that of the wild beasts with whom they held joint ownership." In describing them, Roosevelt habitually used words like ferocious, treacherous, bloodthirsty, duplicitous, and skulking.

In defending warfare against the Indians, Roosevelt was not reflecting a particularly extreme view. Nor was his thinking out of line with the expansionist policies of most United States administrations throughout the nineteenth century. Not even in the twentieth century was there any widespread movement to return the West to the native tribes that once roamed it. However, Roosevelt crossed the line into racism when he elevated the Indian wars to a high plateau of virtue: "The most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages, though it is apt to be also the most terrible and inhuman. The rude, fierce settler who drives the savage from the land lays all civilized mankind under a debt to him."

Yet Roosevelt was not completely comfortable with this racist baggage. In *The Winning of the West*, he returned repeatedly to the paradox of how a people could claim to be civilized if it behaved as barbarously as its barbarous foes. He tried to resolve the dilemma by asserting that justifiable conquest is inseparable from regrettable costs:

> Every such submersion or displacement of an inferior race, every such armed settlement or conquest by a superior race, means the infliction and suffering of hideous woe and misery. It is a sad and

> dreadful thing that there should of necessity be such throes of agony; and yet they are the birth-pangs of a new and vigorous people. That they are in truth birth-pangs does not lessen the grim and hopeless woe of the race supplanted; of the race outworn or overthrown. The wrongs done and suffered cannot be blinked. Neither can they be allowed to hide the results to mankind of what has been achieved.

In accepting the need for appalling brutality in the warfare against the Indians, Roosevelt was also honest and concerned about the human consequences of his position. For a genuine racist, racial superiority would be justification enough for atrocities against the Indians, but Roosevelt was bothered by the assumption that a superior race could be excused for doing whatever it wanted to fulfill its destiny. At any rate, such an assumption was not his only defense of the seizure of land from Indians who had gotten there first. To supplement it, he resorted to three additional arguments.

The first was the legalistic claim that the Indians did not really own the land: "Every good hunting-ground was claimed by many nations. It was rare, indeed, that any tribe had an uncontested title to a large tract of land; where such title existed, it rested, not on actual occupancy and cultivation, but on the recent butchery of weaker rivals." To this argument Roosevelt added an economic one: that the whites used the land better than the Indians. "As for the whites themselves, . . . they cannot be severely blamed for trespassing upon what was called the Indian's land; for let sentimentalists say what they will, the man who puts the soil to use must of right dispossess the man who does not, or the world will come to a standstill." A third argument was a combination of the law of the strong and manifest destiny: "It was our manifest destiny to swallow up the land of all adjoining nations who were too weak to withstand us."

Roosevelt, uneasy with a purely racist defense of the conquest of Indian-occupied land, treated individual Indians in ways that did not always square with a view of their racial inferiority. He was often, though not always, evenhanded and generous. His description of cease-fires was balanced: "Any peace which did not surrender the land was sure in the end to be broken by the whites; and a peace which did surrender the land would be broken by the Indians." His

writing was replete with unfeigned sympathy for the tribes victimized by American expansionists. He called the brutalities of the Georgians toward the Cherokees a "shameful wrong" and "indelible blots on our fair fame." He also deplored the removal of the Seminoles and the fact that their "great . . . leader" Osceola was captured by American treachery. He acknowledged that "the most cruel wrongs have been perpetrated by whites upon perfectly peaceable and unoffending tribes like those of California, or the Nez Perces."

As a connoisseur of war Roosevelt gave the Indian enemies high marks for their endurance, discipline, use of cover, and mastery of surprise. He called them "the most formidable savage foes ever encountered by colonists of European stock" and rated them, on their own ground, "far more formidable than the best European troops." The Wyandots, in particular, "were the bravest of all the Indian tribes, the most dangerous in battle, and the most merciful in victory, rarely torturing their prisoners." He also gave due credit to the great Indian chiefs. He wrote a moving account of the Shawnee chief Cornstalk's defeat at the Battle of the Great Kanawha in 1774 against Governor Dunmore's superior forces. Cornstalk, "as wary and able as he was brave," was the best general in the field, in Roosevelt's eyes. Cornplanter, an Iroquois chief, was a "valiant and able warrior" who sincerely desired peace with the settlers. Another Iroquois chief, Joseph Brant, was "a mighty warrior, and a man of education, who in his letters to the United States officials showed much polished diplomacy."

In addition, Roosevelt pulled few punches in condemning whites when they cheated or brutalized Indians. He devoted a whole chapter to the massacre in 1782 of ninety-six Moravian Indians by backwoodsmen whose conduct he found "utterly abhorrent, . . . a subject of just reproach and condemnation." He wrote: "More than a hundred years have passed since this deed of revolting brutality; but even now a just man's blood boils in his veins at the remembrance. It is impossible not to regret that fate failed to send some strong war party of savages across the path of these inhuman cowards, to inflict on them the punishment they so richly deserved. We know that a few of them were afterwards killed by the Indians; it is a matter of keen regret that any escaped."

Roosevelt reported as a matter of course that the whites, like the Indians, broke treaties and routinely took scalps. He described many

incidents of American ruthlessness toward Indians, including one by his hero Sevier. He condemned the treachery of the U.S. government in failing to defend a friendly Indian tribe, the Chickasaws, against their enemies the Creeks. But his sympathies did not stretch to Indian tribes that were hostile, like the Sioux or Cheyennes. He defended the massacre of several hundred Cheyennes by the U.S. Army in 1864 at Sand Creek, Colorado, as "on the whole as righteous and beneficial a deed as ever took place on the frontier." He did concede "certain most objectionable details," without specifying that they included the indiscriminate slaughter of men, women, and children, whose chief, Black Kettle, was flying a white flag.

Roosevelt's praise of peaceable Indian tribes and brave chieftains and his implied guilt regarding American conduct toward Indians make him much less than a pure racist. The same inclusive tendencies affected his behavior. On his ranch he claimed to have established a rule that Indians should be treated as fairly as if they were whites: "We neither wrong them nor allow others to wrong them." On the Civil Service Commission he worked with the Indian Rights Association to reduce corruption in the Indian Service. He was to select several Indians for the Rough Riders in 1898 and to praise their bravery after the war. When it came to the basic issue of western expansion, however, Roosevelt blinded himself to the plight of those Indians who found themselves unwittingly in the path of the locomotive of history and who resisted their foreordained defeat.

5.

The fourth volume of *The Winning of the West* was published in 1897, the same year that Roosevelt became assistant secretary of the navy, his first position in foreign policy. The four books had come out to a rising chorus of popular and scholarly praise, which made them best-sellers and established their writer as an authority on expansion. During his intense and prolonged concentration on overland expansion, Roosevelt had developed a related theory of imperialism that he was now to apply, and sometimes to misapply, to his work with the navy.

Like Turner, he saw a direct connection between expansion to the end of the continent and expansion beyond it. He explained this connection in a new foreword to *The Winning of the West*, written a year after the Spanish-American War, while he was governor of New York. "We of this generation," he wrote, "were but carrying to completion the work of our fathers and of our fathers' fathers." He went on to describe the context of his historical concepts:

> The whole western movement of our people was simply the most vital part of that great movement of expansion which has been the central and all-important feature of our history—a feature far more important than any other since we became a nation, save only the preservation of the Union itself. It was expansion which made us a great power. . . .
>
> At bottom the question of expansion in 1898 was but a variant of the problem we had to solve at every stage of the great western movement. Whether the prize of the moment was Louisiana or Florida, Oregon or Alaska, mattered little. The same forces, the same types of men, stood for and against the cause of national growth, of national greatness, at the end of the century as at the beginning.

Roosevelt saw America's expansion to the Pacific coast and then abroad as part of a still-larger movement that had its roots deep in history. In the very first sentence of *The Winning of the West* he wrote: "During the past three centuries the spread of the English-speaking peoples over the world's waste spaces has been not only the most striking feature in the world's history, but also the event of all others most far-reaching in its effects and its importance." Americans were entrusted with a mission on behalf of the "English-speaking peoples" not only to continue this spread but to create a nation covering "a region larger than all Europe." Roosevelt believed that the emergence of an American great power was inevitable. The British might try to stop it, but they were doomed to fail. "The British fought against the stars in their courses, while the Americans battled on behalf of the destiny of the race."

Among colonial rivals, Roosevelt voiced his greatest antipathy toward Spain. He saw it as a weak and corrupt power given to a diplomacy of delay, treachery, and intrigue. It had secretly roused the Indians against the United States and had tried to drive wedges between the western settlers and the seaboard Americans. "Her colonial system," he said in *The Winning of the West*, "was evil in its suspicious

exclusiveness towards strangers; and her religious system was marked by an intolerance still almost as fierce as in the days of Torquemada." Roosevelt showed no such hostility to Britain or France, other rivals on the American continent, though he did favor the annexation of Canada and wrote that (British) Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba should be American states. His feelings toward Spain could only have intensified his desire to make war on it in 1898.

Roosevelt understood that expansion would create the constitutional problem of how to deal with settlers to the new lands or, more vexing, with people already there when the lands were taken. As always, he preferred the first case—"The time to have taken the lands was before settlers came into them"—but he was prepared to deal also with the second. In doing so, he developed a theory of colonialism based on his view that the United States had invented a superior kind of colony. It was unique in history since it combined freedom and strong central government. In America, "no State was subject to another, new or old. All paid a common allegiance to a central power which was identical with none." Reminding his readers of the provisions in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, he asserted that all people who entered the Union should have the same rights as those already in it. This equality would apply to settlers and also to conquered peoples (Roosevelt envisaged Canadians): "We want no unwilling citizens to enter our Union." In fact Roosevelt's constitutional solution was not based on equality; Native Americans were not included. It was soon to become clear that the people of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines were not to be included either.

America's territorial expansion turned out to be a flawed model for the imminent expansion overseas. Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines were not areas of sparse habitation waiting to be peopled by Americans. They were densely populated islands with native cultures far more integrated than those of the American Indians. Moreover, their inhabitants fitted neither of Roosevelt's categories for the West. They were neither Indians to be pushed aside nor potential American citizens who would enjoy equal rights. Roosevelt never showed the same passion about Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Filipinos that he had showered on the backwoodsmen and even, at times, the Indians. They simply played no major part in his historical epic.

Nor was there any thought of bringing to the islands the main element that had contributed to the winning of the West, American settlers, the most important characters in Roosevelt's saga. In the last paragraph of *The Winning of the West* he wrote: "Much had been accomplished by the deeds of the Indian-fighters, treaty-makers, and wilderness-wanderers; far more had been accomplished by the steady push of the settler folk themselves, as they thrust ever westward, and carved states out of the forest and the prairie." But settlement by Americans was entirely missing from his future justification of the seizure of the Spanish islands. They were not to be populated by Americans but to be exploited for political, military, or economic reasons. The role of settlers was to be played by the U.S. Army and the American colonial administration.

The experience of 1898 was to shatter the consistency of Roosevelt's view on colonialism. But it did not refute two of his central theses: that it was America's manifest destiny to become a great power and that war was the only way to do it. Roosevelt loved the backwoodsmen because of their fighting skills and because they were ready to fight even without the backing of the government in Washington. He was not loath to use them as a stick with which to beat his pusillanimous contemporaries, "men of the present day who are either so ignorant or of such lukewarm patriotism that they do not wish to see the United States keep prepared for war and show herself willing and able to adopt a vigorous foreign policy whenever there is need of furthering American interests or upholding the honor of the American flag."

This man who had never seen conflict believed that war was an end in itself. Those who had seen it, like McKinley and Hay, were much less enthusiastic about taking on Spain. But he was not to be diverted. The bitter experience of his father's failure to serve in the Civil War contrasted with, probably even created, his passion for heroes who were courageous, manly, and pugnacious. It also merged with his philosophy that war was necessary for expansion and that expansion would fulfill America's destiny to become a great power. The outcome was a fierce desire to have a war and to participate personally in it. In this, as in so many other elements of his approach to foreign affairs, his study of western history was seminal.

6.

During his years as civil service commissioner in Washington and police commissioner in New York, Roosevelt began to take strong and specific policy positions based on his evolving theories of imperialism. In 1891 he was even more of a war hawk than Mahan over the confrontation with Chile. At Henry Adams's table or in the Metropolitan Club dining room, he railed against what he considered the limp-wristed American response. In 1893 he wrote a friend: "I am a bit of a believer in the manifest destiny doctrine. I believe in more ships; I believe in ultimately driving every European power off of this continent, and I don't want to see our flag hauled down where it has been hauled up." Hay, who always found Roosevelt's belligerence comical, wrote to Adams that Roosevelt "goes about hissing through his clenched teeth that we are dishonest. For two nickels he would declare war himself, shut up the Civil Service Commission, and wage it sole."

Hay was right. Roosevelt was annoyed at the softness of the Cleveland administration. He wrote Bamie: "I hope there is no truth in the rumor that Gresham and Bayard [respectively Cleveland's secretary of state and ambassador to Britain] have considered the wisdom of abandoning Samoa. It is a great misfortune that we have not annexed Hawaii, gone on with our navy, and started an interoceanic canal at Nicaragua." During a dispute with Britain over sealing rights, he fumed to Lodge that "Great Britain's conduct about the seals is infamous. We should at once take her action as a proof that she has abrogated the treaty and should ourselves treat it as abrogated, and seize all Canadian sealers as pirates." His red blood boiled when the Venezuelan crisis erupted at the end of 1895. He urged the Cleveland administration not to back down and stressed to an audience at Harvard that the crisis came within "the strictest view" of the Monroe Doctrine. To Bamie's husband Will Cowles he confided: "If there is a muss I shall try to have a hand in it myself!"

Roosevelt's bellicosity made him scornful of all he considered weak, including members of his own social set as well as men like Carl Schurz who had loyally supported him on civil service reform. He vented his disgust to Lodge:

> I see that President Eliot [of Harvard] attacked you and myself as "degenerated sons of Harvard." It is a fine alliance, that between the anglo-maniac mugwumps, the socialist working men, and corrupt politicians . . . to prevent the increase of our Navy and coast defenses. The moneyed and semi-cultivated classes, expecially of the Northeast, are doing their best to bring this country down to the Chinese level. If we ever come to nothing as a nation it will be because the treachery of Carl Schurz, President Eliot, the *Evening Post* and the futile sentimentalists of the international arbitration type, bears its legitimate fruit in producing a flabby, timid type of character, which eats away the great fighting features of our race.

When insurrection broke out in 1895 against Spanish rule in Cuba, Roosevelt was intellectually, psychologically, and emotionally driven to get the United States, and himself, into war. Having shown himself ready to join a fight against the Mexicans over America's southern boundary and against the British over Venezuela, he now wanted to take on an even better target, the weak and decadent Spanish.

He importuned the governor of New York to give him a commission in any state regiment that might be sent to fight Spain. He told Bamie that not only did he desire to drive the Spanish out of Cuba, but he also wanted a policy leading to "the ultimate removal of all European powers from the colonies they hold in the western hemisphere." He wrote: "I am a quietly rampant 'Cuba Libre' man. I doubt whether the Cubans would do very well in the line of self-government; but anything would be better than continuance of Spanish rule. I believe that Cleveland [a lame duck when this letter was written] ought now to recognize Cuba's independence and interfere; sending our fleet promptly to Havana. There would not in my opinion be very serious fighting; and what loss we encountered would be thrice over repaid by the ultimate results of our action."

McKinley's victory over Bryan in 1896 brought the Republicans back to power and gave Roosevelt the chance to turn his imperial theories into activism. He was no crony of McKinley's, but he stumped loyally and effectively for him during the campaign. Still, when Lodge, who was in better odor with the president-elect, went to Canton to plead for Roosevelt's appointment as assistant secretary of the navy, McKinley was dubious. He hoped that Roosevelt had "no pre-

conceived plans which he would wish to drive through the moment he got in." A few days later McKinley told another Roosevelt emissary: "I want peace, and I am told that your friend Theodore—whom I know only slightly—is always getting into rows with everybody. I am afraid he is too pugnacious."

McKinley had Roosevelt's number, but Roosevelt understood McKinley pretty well too. He told Bamie before the election: "McKinley himself is an upright and honorable man, of very considerable ability and good record as a soldier & in Congress; he is not a strong man, however, and unless he is well backed I should feel rather uneasy about him in a serious crisis, whether it took the form of a soft-money craze, a gigantic labor riot, or danger of foreign conflict."

Concerted pressure by a bevy of Roosevelt's supporters, led by Lodge and including Hay, who was greatly amused by the supplicant's naked ambition, finally won him an appointment as assistant secretary of the navy. It was not a particularly auspicious assignment. As the second-ranking position in the Navy Department, it did not carry cabinet status. Nor did Roosevelt's way of achieving it bode well. McKinley was clearly wary of him, and his old rival New York Republican boss Thomas Platt approved the appointment only because Platt decided he would be less dangerous in Washington than in New York.

Still, Roosevelt could count some assets. Since Washington was a small city, he would have plenty of access to McKinley himself. Foreign affairs and defense were in the purview of only three departments, State, War (Army), and Navy. The secretary and assistant secretary in each department constituted the six primary officials in the national security structure. As Roosevelt took the measure of the three secretaries, he could feel even more confident. The secretary of state, John Sherman, a former senator, was senile. The secretary of war, Russell A. Alger, a Michigan politician, was in Roosevelt's view an incompetent. His own boss, John D. Long, was a likable politician with a real fondness for Roosevelt, a propensity to take long vacations, and a tendency to be easily manipulated. McKinley had no White House staff to deal with foreign affairs; his chief adviser, George Cortelyou, handled everything, including politics. In such circumstances a young man with strong ideas and colossal energy could make his mark.

Roosevelt, still only thirty-eight, brought back with him to Washington a reputation for dynamism that both attracted and intimidated. He had elevated the Civil Service Commission from a bureaucratic backwater to a highly visible center of reform, at the cost of some damage to his own party. He had dazzled politically inert intellectuals like Henry Adams with his energy and effectiveness. He had proved himself to be a competent intellectual, holding forth with the nation's scientific elite at the Cosmos Club. He had established a creditable reform record with the New York police in a dauntingly challenging assignment. Yet his battering ram style worried Republican leaders, who mistrusted his judgment and feared his impulsiveness. He was seen as a renegade, not a team player.

Whatever the bosses might think, Roosevelt was developing a nationwide base of support independent of them. His cowboy exploits assured him a never-ending stream of national publicity, which he kept replenishing with his prolific writings. His youth, virility, largeness of spirit, and apparent self-assurance merged with his image as easterner/westerner and intellectual/roughneck to make him a popular, almost a populist figure. He crackled with kinetic energy. As his friend the naturalist John Burroughs said of him, "Roosevelt was a many-sided man and every side was like an electric battery."

He was the political counterpart of Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Morgan, the brash, successful entrepreneur exuding wealth, optimism, and power, and representing a new America ready for greatness. Only his sisters and Lodge knew of his doubts about himself. To a growing number of Americans he was a dynamic young man destined for political stardom.