



CHAPTER XXX.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT—CONTINUED.

Succeeds to the Presidency on the Assassination of President McKinley—Adopts Policy of his Predecessor—Pronounces for Purity in Politics.

By A. J. MUNSON.

GOVERNOR ROOSEVELT was nominated for the Vice-Presidency against his wishes.

He did not decline to be a candidate because he considered the position trivial or unworthy, but because he believed he could render the party and the country better service as Governor of New York. When his wishes were disregarded and the nomination thrust upon him, he accepted it gracefully and in terms that were a guarantee that he would bring to the position that earnestness of purpose that had characterized all his public work. In his letter of acceptance he said:

"The people are now to decide whether they shall go forward along the path of prosperity at home and high honor abroad, or whether they will turn their backs upon what has been done during the past three years; whether they will

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plunge their country into an abyss of misery and disaster—or what is even worse than misery and disaster—of shame. I feel that we have a right to appeal, not merely to Republicans, but to all good citizens, no matter what may have been their party affiliations in the past, and ask them on the strength of the record that under President McKinley has been made during the past three years, and on the strength of the threat implied in what was done at Kansas City a few days ago, to stand shoulder to shoulder with us in perpetuating the conditions under which we have reached at home a degree of prosperity never before attained in the history of the nation, and under which abroad we have put the American flag on a level where it never before in the history of the country has been placed."

Roosevelt engaged in the campaign with his usual force and vigor and contributed in no uncertain degree to the success of the party. His campaigning tours extended over the greater part of the country and were marked everywhere by popular enthusiasm. He spoke in definite terms, firing his oratorical broadsides with a boldness and directness of aim that carried conviction. Early in the campaign numerous bands of "Rough Riders" were organized throughout the country in honor of Roosevelt's services in the war. Men from all ranks of life joined these bands that were conspicuous in the many political rallies.

His brief incumbency of the Vice-Presidency was uneventful. He presided over the Senate during the winter session, where by his dignified and courteous treatment of the Senators he gained their friendship and esteem.

When the session ended Vice-President Roosevelt went on a vacation to Colorado to hunt the cougar. A month was spent in this way, a month of peril, hardship and exposure, during which Mr. Roosevelt personally killed fourteen of these dangerous animals. The skulls of these he sent to the Smithsonian Institute at Washington, that they might add to the scientific data of this distinctly American animal.

Returning from the hunt he enjoyed a short summer of rest, the first in many years, from which he was called in the hour of national sorrow to the highest position in the nation.

The day President McKinley was shot Mr. Roosevelt was at Isle La Motte, Vermont, where he delivered an address. He had just finished speaking when he was informed of the tragedy. The news unnerved him and he would have fallen but for timely support. When asked to speak he said: "I am so inexpressibly grieved and shocked and horrified that I can say nothing."

Mr. Roosevelt hastened to the side of the wounded President, where he remained until the physicians thought the President out of danger.

On this assurance he went to the Adirondacks to rest. Here a little after sundown on the day the President died a guide found him and brought him the sad news. Mr. Roosevelt started at once for Buffalo. At Albany he was met by Secretary of State Hay who officially informed him of the death of the President. He reached Buffalo the next day, where, in the library of the Wilcox home, and in the presence of the members of the Cabinet, he took the oath of office of President, Judge Hazel administering the oath. After signing the parchment he said to those present and through them to the nation:

"In this hour of deep and terrible bereavement, I wish to state that it shall be my aim to continue absolutely unbroken the policy of President McKinley for the peace and prosperity and honor of our beloved country."

He then extended an earnest invitation to the members of the Cabinet to continue in office that the pledges he had made might the more effectively be fulfilled. After a brief consultation among themselves the members of the Cabinet assured him they would remain in office.

President Roosevelt's action in adopting the policy of the dead President and retaining the Cabinet officers, met with the hearty approval of the people. The wisdom of the act was manifested in the fact that the sudden change of Ex-

ecutives created no confusion in the financial and commercial markets. The people had absolute confidence in their new President.

Among the first things that President Roosevelt did was to administer a light snub to the spoils politicians. He told them that if they wanted him to appoint their men to federal offices they must bring men to him who have not only the ability required for the positions they seek, but whose records as men are clean. Party affiliation was not to be enough. If good men could not be found in the Republican party, he should not hesitate to seek them in the Democratic party. Acting on this declaration he appointed an Alabama Democrat to a district judgeship. He called Booker T. Washington to the White House that he might consult him about the political conditions in the South, especially as these conditions affect the negro race, and is reported to have said to him:

"If I cannot make the Republican party in the South the dominant party, I can at least make it respectable. I can appoint good men to office, even though I have to select Democrats."

President Roosevelt carried the same energy and industry into his work as the Chief Executive as he had manifested in all the positions he had held. He went to his desk at 9:30 in the morning and remained there until 4:30 in the afternoon, with

but an intermission of an hour at noon. During this time any honest citizen had access to him. A correspondent described his activities during his first few days as President, and before he took up his residence in the White House, as follows:

"President Roosevelt is out of bed by 7 o'clock and as a rule is at the breakfast table shortly after 8 o'clock. He leaves for the White House as soon as breakfast is over. Once he is in his big working room things begin to buzz. Mr. Wm. Loeb, who is in reality his secretary, his stenographer, and his confidential friend, hands him the letters necessary for him to see. These he reads, dictates replies and sees visitors at the same time."

Theodore Roosevelt was the youngest man to be called to the great office of President, but to that office he brought the studious thought, the ripe scholarship, the practical experience, the keen insight into human nature and the wide acquaintance with men in public and private life, that would well become one much older than he. Add to these qualities his abhorrence of wrong in public life, his virile stand for right and his quiet Christian faith, and the people find in him a man who is not only qualified to perform the duties of the office, but on whom they are confident the high honor has fallen to be glorified in good deeds.



