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Five Minute Chats on Our Presidents

By JAMES MORGAN

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THE STRENUOUS LIFE

1858—Oct. 27, Theodore Roosevelt born in New York city.
1880—Graduated from Harvard.
1882-4—Member of New York legislature.
1884-6—A ranchman at Medora, N. D.
1889-95—Member of national civil service commission.
1895-7—Member of New York police commission.
1897-8—Assistant Secretary of the navy.
1898—Colonel of the Rough Riders in Cuba.
1899-1900—Governor of New York.
1900—Elected Vice President.
1901—Sept. 14 took the oath in Buffalo as the twenty-fifth president, aged forty-two.
1904—November, elected president.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT was the most popular of all our presidents. With the exception of Lincoln, his was the rarest, the most interesting character that we have had in the presidency.

Yet he was born apart from the multitude whom he led and he might have lived and died a stranger to the masses of his countrymen but for one thing: He had not the health to enjoy the life of ease which opened to him at his birth. Roosevelt had to fight for his very breath in his gasping, asthmatic childhood.

Finally he took a post-graduate course in physical culture in the wild West, where the "four-eyed tenderfoot" had to fight the battle of his youth all

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WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT

1857—Sept. 15, William Howard Taft born in Cincinnati.
1878—Graduated at Yale.
1887-90—Judge of the Superior Court.
1890-2—Solicitor General of the United States.
1892-1900—United States circuit judge.
1900-04—Commissioner in and governor of the Philippines.
1904-8—Secretary of war.
1909—Inaugurated twenty-sixth president, aged fifty-one.

WHEN Roosevelt and Taft rode up Pennsylvania avenue on March 4, 1909, it was the first time since Jackson and Van Buren had passed that way side by side, more than 70 years before, that a retiring president would not have preferred another seat mate and successor than the one whom the fortunes of politics had thrust upon him.

Roosevelt alone selected his successor. Naturally, everyone assumed that we were to have a Roosevelt administration by another name, and it was expected in the campaign that the ex-president would not go farther away from the White House than Oyster Bay. Instead, he plunged into the depths of Africa.

The fate of William Howard Taft would be pathetic if he himself had not met it and borne it with a smile.

He was able, more upright, more independent than some far more successful presidents. But by bent and training he was a judge, and the

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A statement of condition called for by Comptroller of Currency, Washington, D. C., at close of banking business, June 30, 1920, follows:

RESOURCES	
Loans and Discounts	\$ 756,206.44
Overdrafts	81.19
United States Securities	134,100.00
Other Bonds and Securities	398,953.41
Federal Reserve Bank Stock	6,000.00
Banking House	42,000.00
5% Redemption Fund	1,900.00
Interest Earned—not collected	10,240.98
Cash on Hand and in Banks	296,151.32
	\$1,645,633.34
LIABILITIES	
Capital Stock	\$ 100,000.00
Surplus Funds	100,000.00
Undivided Profits	27,274.36
National Bank Notes Outstanding	96,900.00
Discount Collected not Earned	5,347.69
Total Deposits	1,316,111.29
	\$1,645,633.34

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Roosevelt as a Young Man.

over again, in a strange world, with entirely different standards for measuring men.

Roosevelt cut his eye teeth in political leadership in the corrupt machine-run legislature of New York. He could not have chosen a more thorough school for instruction in the hidden, muddy springs of parties and politics. His experience at Albany put realism into his idealism and made the academic reformer over into the most intensely practical politician we have had in the presidency.

He decided at the outset to act in each office as if it was to be the last that he ever would get, and for nearly 25 years after he left the legislature, Roosevelt could not have been elected to anything in the boss-ridden state of New York. For a long time he was "shelved" on the civil service commission at Washington, until a reform mayor of New York appointed him on the four-headed police commission; but it was soon single-headed so far as the public could see, and that head was full of teeth for police grafters and lawbreakers. At thirty-eight the most he could ask of the Republican politicians, with any hope of getting it, was the assistant Secretaryship of the navy. The entire administration sighed with relief when at last he went off to lead his Rough Riders.

In five months he was back from Cuba in the far more troublesome role of a popular hero. The New York machine was in such sore need of a good name to pull it through the pending election that it met him at the wharf and humbly laid at his feet the Republican nomination for governor. But in the governorship, he realized the worst fears of Boss Platt that he harbored, as the boss naively wrote him, "various altruistic ideas," and that he was "a little loose on the relations of capital and labor, on trusts and combinations and . . . the right of a man to run his own business in his own way."

The only thing to do with this wild engine was to turn the switch and shut it on to the side track of the vice presidency. Roosevelt loudly protested that he wanted to be re-elected governor. And while Platt was trying to push him on to the national ticket McKinley and Hanna just as earnestly tried to push him back on to Platt. The Republican national convention rose up and roared his nomination blighting him, in spite of himself, upon the tide that led to fortune.



William Howard Taft.

White House is no place for a judge.

As lawyer and governor of Manila, Taft had won the confidence of his oriental subjects, and rather than desert his post, before his task was finished, he sacrificed the dearest ambition of his life. In a year and a half Roosevelt had him in his cabinet as secretary of war—and soon had him in his eye for the presidency.

Roosevelt had the weakness of his strength. He thought he was strong enough to make a president. But real presidents are born, not made.

The moment Roosevelt was gone, the standpatters, the reactionary forces, emerged from their seven and one-half years in the cyclone cellar. The moment the political broncho felt the tenderfoot on its back, it bucked, and threw Taft from the seat of leadership. The next thing the rank and file of Republicans knew, the party was slipping back into the old rut from which Roosevelt had jerked it when first he laid upon it his masterful hand.

But the people refused to go back. Eight months after Taft's inauguration, the election of 1908 sounded a clear warning of the disaster that overwhelmed the party in the congressional election of 1910, and which all but destroyed it in the presidential election of 1912.

According to a story that was told of Taft, a curious stranger asked a gatekeeper at the Union station in Washington where he would stand the best chance of seeing the president in the few spare hours that he had between trains. "Right where you are," was the reply. "He's always either taking a train or getting off of one."

Taft was the first president to draw the present salary of \$75,000. Congress had also adopted, two years before he came in, the custom of allowing \$25,000 yearly for the traveling expenses of the president, and he became the great presidential traveler, making a record of 150,000 miles in four years, as he went about the country appealing for a reversal of the verdict against his administration. In vain he strove to turn back the tide, which only spouted with him.

After having elected him by 1,200,000 plurality, the people parted with Taft more in sorrow than in anger. They did not question that he was a good president, but that is a secondary consideration. A president must be first of all a politician and a leader.

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