

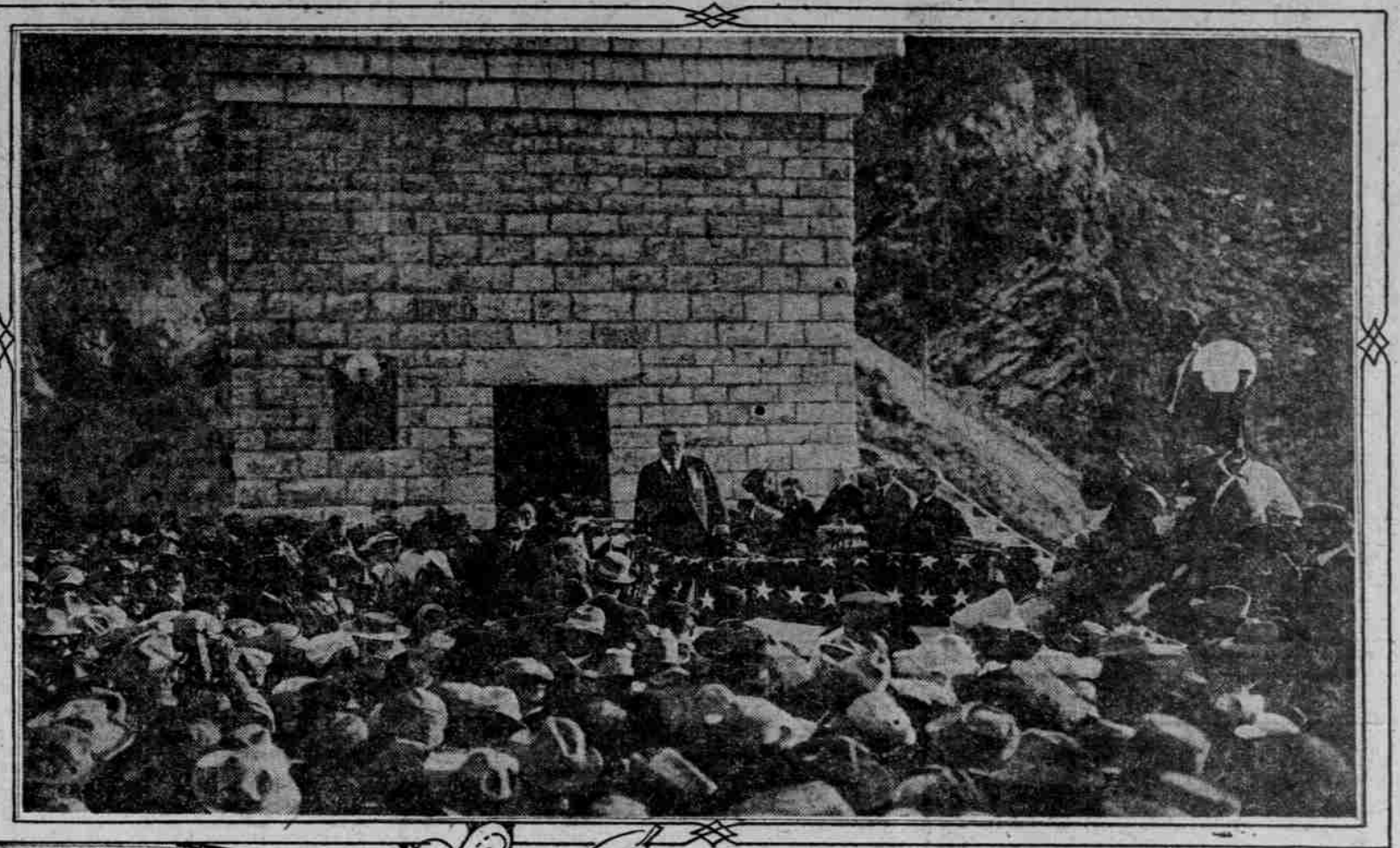


Talks With T.R.

From the Diaries of John J. Leary, Jr.



Muscle Built Up in Cowboy Days.



Roosevelt at Dedication of Roosevelt Dam.



Roosevelt As a Fighter in Cuba.



Roosevelt and Mayor Gaynor.

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DEVIL-FISHING.

"GOOD sport, but not exactly the thing to recommend to a weakling or one at all nervous of a little danger," was Colonel Roosevelt's opinion of devil-fishing. He had one try at this, in the spring of 1917, when the declaration of war against Germany made it seem advisable to call off a visit to the West Indies for which he had made all of his plans.

He thought so well of the sport that just before he died he wrote to his friends, Russell J. Coles of Danville, Va., accepting an invitation to join him in an expedition on March 1, and thanking him for having included Captain Archie, then practically recovered from his wounds, in the invitation.

"The devilfish," said the colonel describing the sport in his library at Oyster Bay, "is the big game of the sea. There is nothing else quite like it that I know of, though I doubt if it will ever become a very popular sport. It is good sport, but not exactly the kind to recommend to a weakling, or one at all nervous of a little danger. I do not know that careful physicians will agree in recommending it to gentlemen of advanced years for, as you may imagine, it is hard work."

"I became interested in devil-fishing through Russell Coles of Danville, Va. Coles is rather an extraordinary sort of person, the unusual combination of good business man and high-class scientist. Most of his year he devotes to his tobacco business in Virginia. The rest of it he puts in hunting devilfish and sharks, and by way of diversion at odd moments writes scientific articles, or prepares papers to be read before scientific societies. He takes a very practical interest in public affairs, and is in every sense of the word a mighty fine citizen."

"I became interested in him through something he did for the American Museum of Natural History. That was some years ago. Since then I have had much correspondence with him, and when I found that I could not go south as I had arranged, I decided to accept one of his many invitations to go fishing. His proposal was that I should spend a month. We compromised on about a week."

"In devil-fishing you camp in a house built on a scow that is anchored off a Florida key. Your fishing you do from a launch. Coles, who is a whale of a man himself, has a crew that is as good as he is. His captain, Charley Willis, is a powerful, two-handed sort of a man, who has been with him many years. Another of his outfit is Captain Jack McCann. He's unusual, too, a good seaman and a naturalist, who habitually describes plants by their scientific names. The

others of his crew—he usually has four men—are of the same high type of intelligence."

"It is some considerable journey to the 'camp.' There you get up at sunrise, get into rough clothes, and after you've made sure that the gear is all right, make off in a launch for the fishing grounds. The weapons used are harpoons, which the real fishermen call 'trons,' just as I have heard some whalers call their weapons, and a lance. Sometimes the old-fashioned whaling lance is used. Coles has had some made on designs of his own. New Bedford, by the way, is the best place to get these things if you ever wish them."

"The iron is a business-like weapon. It has a head of the finest tempered steel, on a shaft of soft iron. There is one there, minus the wooden handle. When you see the way that is bent, you will see why it is necessary to make the shaft of comparatively soft metal."

"The instrument, somewhat rusted, was bent to an angle of almost 45 degrees and occupied a place of honor on the mantel on which rested the bronze presented to him by the famous 'meanie' cabinet."

"That's one I used on the big fish I got with Coles' assistance. You see it is so built that once in the struggles of the beast release the barb and usually, though not always, prevents your prey escaping. The iron is attached to a rope which is either run out of the boat or made fast to what they call a drog—sort of a sea anchor, or drag. This is a powerful brake, but one of these creatures will pull a heavy launch almost unbelievable distances with one of these drogs fastened to it with another harpoon."

"I missed my first fish through inexperience in gauging the speed at which it was moving. The second one I got square in the middle of the body. When we came to take my iron out we found I had driven it through the beast's muscle, and hid more than two feet—two feet four inches to be exact—and the thing had gone through the beast's heart. After I got my iron into it, Coles also put one in. With these two in its body, the thing dragged the boat a full half-mile before it became exhausted enough for us to get it alongside. Then it was necessary to use the lance on it twice."

"I should say that before I went to Florida, Coles had coached me a great deal—so that I knew how I was expected to handle myself, where to aim for with the harpoon, and how to use the lance. He drilled and drilled me so that while it was my first 'appearance on any stage' as a devil-fisher, I was by no means ignorant of the art."

"On the second fish we struck, Coles' iron pulled out. He got it a second time. This one towed us two miles. "One of our specimens when we

came to measure it proved to be the second largest of which there is any record of being killed. Coles has the record fish."

"We did not have such good luck on the second day, the one fish we struck being lost. In this respect it is like every other kind of sport; you must figure on having good luck and bad, and on days when you will get nothing as well as the rare days when you will get a big bag."

"You call this fish the 'big game of the sea.' How does killing it compare with 'big-game' killing ashore?" I asked.

"It is difficult of comparison because all of the circumstances are so different. Both are good, but I think I prefer the land game. I am too much of a landlubber not to have a preference for solid earth under my feet. But it is great sport, and I am going back when I have more time to spare, just as I hope to get another chance at lions in Africa. I have no desire for the bigger game, elephants and that sort of thing, but I would like a few more lions."

"Like all big-game hunting, in devil-fishing you have to depend very much on your guides and you must expect some considerable danger of being hurt. The fish will not attack any one, but when attacked they will fight back. At the risk of being called a nature fakir, I'll add that the male of the species has been known to attack a boat which had made fast to a female. At least, that is what veterans at the sport tell. Like everything else of this sort, this is something one would like to verify. However, Coles, who like most scientists is skeptical of many things, is inclined to credit these stories."

"Coles, by the way, got into this thing in a rather unusual way. He had the groundwork of a good education when he went into devil-fishing and shark-hunting because he had become wearied of other fishing. The scientific side of the thing appealed to him, and when he began to look things up, he found that very little work had been done. Now he is probably the world's best authority in this line. He has also gone to the point where he has made shark-fishing attractive from a commercial standpoint. He has no interest in the commercial side of the thing—he has passed that up to others after spending quite a lot of money in pioneer work. That, of course, is the scientist of it."

"Colonel Roosevelt's last college degree—that of doctor of science—was awarded him by Trinity college, at the same time Coles received a similar honor. To be invested in the degree they journeyed together to Hartford. On their return the colonel said he had had a 'bully' time. "Jack Morgan was there to get a degree too," he said, "and he was very much interested in Coles. Coles invited him to go fishing. It would not surprise me if he went for Morgan, you know, is a husky chap who knows a thing or two on handling a boat himself—much more than I do."

A VARIED READING DIET.

IN HIS travels Colonel Roosevelt's reading was catholic in scope. It ranged from a volume of "Plutarch's Lives," he may have taken from his library, a bulletin of some learned

society picked up from a desk as he was about to leave home, or a popular magazine filled with detective stories and tales of adventure.

"I wish," he would say as we were arriving in a town, "that you would try and get me a copy of the Red Book; there's a detective story in that I want to finish"; or, "see if you cannot pick up a copy of Adventure. I am somewhat of an adventurer myself and want to know what the rest of the tribe may be interested in just now."

Once I remarked that this was "rather low-brow diet." "True," he said, "but why feed entirely on the heavier stuff? I get all the 'high-brow' magazines at home. Lord! I don't read one-half of them. This low-brow stuff, as you call it, is good for a change. I like a good detective story when I can get it. These things may not be literature, but they interest and rest me. They make up the salads of my reading."

"You remember old Senator Hoar from your state? Do you remember that he was addicted to dime novels? That used to be a shock to some very good people who imagined the Senator lived on the Transcript and the Congressional Record when he was not devouring law books and even heavier things. Some saw in this evidence of total depravity on the old man's part—an evil example to the young. It was merely his way of relaxing and setting up between times."

"I was very fond of Hoar, though I did not know him as well as I would have liked to. I have often laughed at that mot of his on 'Ben' Butler's funeral. You remember some one asked the senator if he were going to attend it. "No," he is said to have replied, "but I approve of it."

"TRYING TO KILL ME."

IT SOMETIMES seems that some of my admiring friends wish to work me to death. The idea of most committees seems to be to pass me on to the next place as nearly dead as possible."

Most considerate of the comfort of others, Colonel Roosevelt at times complained of the lack of consideration for him.

"It is queer," he said on another occasion, "the time when he was reported recovered from a serious illness, 'that people should hail my discharge from the hospital as the signal to pile invitations to work on me. Really it seems as though one-half of the letters congratulating me on my recovery conclude with an invitation to speak here, there, anywhere. There are hundreds of them."

Returning from his last extensive tour of the west, the colonel spoke of this demand of speeches from him. He had been ill on this trip and as we neared New York I ventured to advise that he spend the summer quietly at Oyster Bay.

"I hope," I said, "that if I may say so, this experience has taught you something. It is a result of your not following Dr. James' orders and taking a rest. It is a warning. You must take things easy."

"I shall do that; I shall have to do that. But I shall have to do some things." "Colonel, you simply will have to

rest. There are two hot months ahead, there's good boating and fishing at Oyster Bay, you haven't cut your winter's wood yet. I am presuming, I know, but you must rest, for there's hard work ahead and you will be needed. In saying this I do not mean to be offensive."

"You're not; you are perfectly right and I shall take things easier. You simply say what all my real friends say. But I must go to Passaic July 4. I must do that."

"You should not accept any more invitations. It is asking too much." "I know it is. The usual committee idea is to pass me along to the next town as nearly dead as possible, always taking pains to see that I do not die on their hands."

"And don't yield to any 'just one speech' appeal." "I won't. You are saying what those who really have my interest at heart say. The others say to me, 'Save yourself,' and then ask me to come out and speak for them. Jim Goodrich wants me to return to Indiana for another speech. I'll see him in hell first."

LOYALTY.

THE longer I live the more I am inclined to think of clan loyalty. I am afraid of those superior persons who are so good they can long stand by nobody, not even themselves."

Colonel Roosevelt had in mind some members of the old progressive party who did not fully approve of his war attitude. These were the more respectable of what he had been known to call the "lunatic fringe."

"The spirit of the clan," he went on, "is that we are Americans lack. We need no big American clan, with its members always for the clan. I must confess that I have never been able to get the viewpoint of those very excellent persons who object to the old navy toast: 'My country, right or wrong, my country.' There are other versions, and I may not have it exact, but that is the thought."

"I suppose it is another manifestation of my general bloodthirsty, swashbuckling frame of mind, my fondness for the big stick and violence of all kinds. I know it is most reprehensible for me to talk to a youth of your tender years—you aren't much over 40, are you?—and I should know better, but I don't. I cannot bring myself to that point where I can disagree with that sentiment."

"I want my country to be right; I hope she always will be right; but right or wrong, whatever she gets into I am going to be with her until she gets out. Then if there is any correcting to do, I'll try and do my share. And I am not prepared to concede the possibility of error in that doctrine by agreeing to debate it with anybody."

"It is said to be bad ethics, just as it is said to be bad ethics to teach a boy to defend himself, or his baby brother or his sister or his mother. Some good people hold that a boy who gets into a fight, whether he is right or wrong, should be punished. I do not. If one of my boys was a bully, I'd try to thrash it out of him. If he would not defend himself against a bully, I'd thrash him until

I had some degree of manhood in him. He'd require but one thrashing."

"The clan, of course, is one of the oldest forms of organization—it is a crude manifestation of the organizing spirit. At bottom there is no real difference between the spirit that makes possible great corporations and that responsible for our New York gangs. It is the clan spirit—the organizing spirit. The difference is that in one instance the organizing spirit is developed along good lines, is used in a proper direction, and in the other it is not. Organization per se is bad only when it is used for bad ends."

"The New York street gang is but a form of clan. The gang leader comes to the top because of the same general qualities that makes another, born into happier surroundings, a society leader. Both have to fight their way up through. I do not like gangs, and I do not admire gang leaders, but this much is to be said for them—they do stand for something and you know where they stand. They have in them the essence of loyalty."

GERMANS IN AMERICA.

THERE is nothing in sound Americanism that will not be indorsed by the preponderating majority of the men and women of German blood in America."

This sentiment Colonel Roosevelt expressed again and again to all who would listen to him before, during, and after hostilities. He was most emphatic in declaring it after leaving Milwaukee, and again on leaving St. Louis.

After a meeting in Toledo, largely made up of Germans, he declared they "seemed only 'pseudo-Americanism.'"

"It is," said he, "only the pseudo-Americanism of Wilson that they object to."

With this declaration went a call for fair play for the Germans in this country and he went out of his way to practice what he preached.

A notable example of this was in St. Louis, which in addition to a large German population also has a Mayor of German blood—Henry Kiel.

When the colonel paid his last visit to St. Louis, he was very sick with erysipelas. He was insistent on keeping the dates made for him by the National Security league, and, by following his physician's orders to get all possible rest, managed to do so. In St. Louis, however, conditions made it necessary that he take a hand in arranging the details of his meeting, lest injustice be done somebody and a bad matter made worse.

This condition, partly political and partly hysterical, arose from the fact that the local committee was not in sympathy with Mayor Kiel, who, according to some of its members, was pro-German. For this reason Kiel had been overlooked to a large extent in making the arrangements for the colonel's reception and meeting.

To this meeting the colonel insisted upon being introduced by the mayor. The active members of the committee did not wish anything of the sort, the mayor was not on hand to speak for himself and there was on one to speak for him.

In this middle the colonel insisted that courtesy and fair play demanded that Kiel be given an opportunity to decline to take part in the meeting, and that every other consideration supported this demand. If the mayor declined, it would, he said, be another story.

"Then I'll hang his hide on the barn door," he declared to me, "but I'll not attack him nor any other man until I am sure of my grounds for attacking."

After much backing and filling, Judge Dyar, whom the colonel, as president, had placed on the federal bench, called to leave a card.

"I understand the colonel is not well, so I won't ask to disturb him," he said.

I asked him to wait until I could learn the colonel's wishes in the matter.

"By all means," he exclaimed. "He is the one man in St. Louis I do want to see."

"The judge," he told me after the visit, "says Kiel is all right. He knows I'd rather have that old hard-boiled opinion than that of any other man here. These young men on this committee are nice boys, but they don't know. If they were residents of New York they would be members of the citizens' union and strong for

reform, but they would not know the names of their assemblymen."

It was, however, not easy to locate Mr. Kiel; he was not, in fact, located until the colonel reached the barnlike auditorium where the meeting was to be held. Just before I left for the hall I asked what would be done about Kiel.

"We will do nothing until we find whether or not the mayor shows up," he said. "If he does, all right. If he doesn't, well, I'll preside myself if I have to."

Mayor Kiel was, however, waiting at the hall, a bit nervous, but glad to do the honors. His brief, clean-cut speech was satisfactory even to the colonel, who was mightily pleased with the way the matter turned out.

"Don't you see," he asked, on the way back to the hotel, "that it was far better to do as we did do? Had we proceeded on the theory that Kiel was all he was said to be, an injustice would be done to the man, the cause for which we all stand would be injured and we should have gone far toward setting up such another situation as exists in Chicago. Kiel is not another Mayor Thompson; he is entirely of another type, and he is making the best of a condition that at times must be very difficult for him."

"It is always best to be fair in the extreme in such matters; best to go slow until you have all the facts. Then if the man is wrong hit him, and hit him hard; show him no mercy. Had Kiel justified what they had said about him and not taken part in that meeting, I'd have pilloried him. I'm glad I did not have to."

"Just think how it would have heartened the enemy abroad and the enemy at home if it had gone broadcast: Roosevelt denounces St. Louis mayor as pro-German; or, St. Louis mayor refuses to speak at loyalty meeting."

"Did you notice how well the crowd took what I had to say about Germany and straight Americanism? That audience was very largely German—it was full of German types—but they all seemed to like me. There was on chap there—I wonder if you noticed him, he sat well down front and looked like the German bandman the funny papers print—he enjoyed it every minute. If I had time and it were possible I'd like to meet that old fellow and talk with him. Without knowing a thing about him, I'll wager that he is one of those Germans who left Germany to escape the 'kultur' we are now fighting to escape."

"I watched Kiel closely during your speech," I said, "and he seemed as well pleased as your German down front did."

"Probably, though he is in rather a different position. But the old judge was all right. Depend upon men of his type. He's an old hard-shell republican on the bench and out of politics, but he's one of the all the nice boys on the committee ever will. Steve Connell, whom you met today, is another shrewd fellow. He was with me when I was in the White House—secret service, you know. He's a fine fellow and I'm glad to have you meet him. You'll find him dependable and straightforward."

This visit to St. Louis was part of an "invasion of the enemy's country," including Milwaukee, and Springfield, Ohio, the latter the seat of Wittenberg college, one of the oldest Lutheran institutions in the country, and Madison, Wis., seat of the State university, which Dr. Robert M. McElroy of Princeton had reported, after rather an unpleasant experience, "was not 100 per cent loyal."

Proceeding to these places, the colonel declared it to be his intention to give them all that is in me. "In Milwaukee," said he, "I shall give them everything I have said anywhere else, and if I can think of it, something more. Being in what Bryan might call the 'enemy's country' will make no difference with me. I do not anticipate any bother, but if there is any, we shall have to make the best of it."

Anticipating "bother," secret service men detailed by the management of the St. Paul road, the colonel's ever-faithful colored valet, James Amos, by whom his last words, "Please turn off the light," were spoken, and I grouped ourselves about him as he left the train. He broke away from the group to greet a white-whiskered

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