

HEROES OF AMERICAN HISTORY



A MAN AMONG MEN

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Roosevelt came from a Dutch family that has lived in America almost 300 years. A very weak boy, he could not go to school, but was educated by tutors. Living on a Western ranch, working hard, he gradually grew strong. He became Assistant Secretary of the Navy, but with the outbreak of the Spanish-American war he resigned and went to Cuba to fight at the head of the "Rough Riders." At one time Roosevelt was Police Commissioner of New York City.



He earned a reputation as a fearless fighter against crime and corruption. In order to shift him out of the way, he was elected Vice-President of the United States. With the death of President McKinley, he came to the White House, the youngest President in the history of the country. Roosevelt was blind in one eye, the result of a boxing match with a young officer.

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Bob Davis Reveals

An American Version of Buddhism's Advent Into Japan AT THE BATH

DON'T think of coming to Japan without making Miyonoshita and Hakone, heart of the natural hot springs country, part of your itinerary; that is, if you wish to meet nice people and clean people, like, for example, one of my own countrymen who blew me to a beautification in one of the numerous boiling pools prevailing in that region.

Not only was he a bearcat for taking the waters twice a day at any and all temperatures, but a guide book as well in matters pertaining to history following the dawn of the Christian era. He was at his best when reviewing the introduction of Buddhism into Korea, China and Japan. At 118 degrees Fahrenheit, seated on a hot rock, his skin glowing like a boiled lobster's, he was 100 per cent when discussing the past.

"Actual dates never meant anything to me," he said, "and I don't think they do to most people. One hundred, three hundred, five hundred years one way or another is near enough. What I'm interested in is legend and mythology, if you get what I mean. Now, take the Buddhist religion and the story of how it came to this part of the world. Swell stuff I call it and worth telling, if you don't mind listening. It shows how that thing called faith takes root and becomes permanent, belief that time cannot shake from its foundations.

Monks Camp in a Tree.

"Anyhow, 53 Buddhist monks shook from their sandaled feet the dust of India, reaching, after a year's pilgrimage, the peninsula of Korea, now called Chosen. Making their way to the northeastern section in the region of the Diamond mountains, they came to Yutenji. I was there in 1918 and know the country thoroughly, but don't get the idea that I guarantee the legend which was handed out to me. Accept or reject it, as you please. Remember, however, that the prevalence of Buddhism in Korea and its spread to China and Japan is founded on what occurred at the time to which I refer.

"Wasn't this information to be

found in existing books?" I queried. "Never as I'm giving it to you," said the American, "and I very much doubt that you will find it anywhere between covers. Appears to have been handed down from century to century, along with a thousand other tales, many of which I have heard. But of the bunch, this one is the best.

"As I was saying, the 53 monks, fed up on touring, finally came to a mammoth spring, beside which grew one whole of a tree, with branches extending into a considerable area of space. In its welcome shade the monks rested, bathed in the pool and had a pow-wow. Night came down. 'We may as well pitch our tents and stay here for a spell,' said the head monk, 'but not on the ground. Safety first, in a strange country. Let's climb the tree and sleep in its branches.'

Dragon Disturbs Sleep.

"About midnight, as the monks, all spread out on the leafy branches, were sleeping like one man, and dreaming of India, a dragon, with flaming eyes, a long tongue and a spine of sharp prongs suddenly appeared on the opposite side of the pool and began to bellow in thunderous tones, inviting the Buddhists to come down and get theirs. Nothing doing; the tree suited the lodgers all right, all right, and that was that. What does the dragon do but cause a hurricane to come romping down."

To all intents and purposes, the history of Buddhism in Korea should at this point have come to a conclusion; it was quite abrupt. To lighten the suspense, my informant slid from his hot rock, deflated his lungs and sank from view, returning rather playfully after a few seconds and blowing like a pup seal.

Monks Vanquish Dragon.

"Well, sir," he went on, swiping the hot water from his jowls, "it certainly looked bad for those 53 monks when the tree left for parts unknown. But Buddhists don't quail from trouble; they can take it. After the tree had disappeared, what did the dragon behold but the batch of 53 holy men suspended in mid-air between heaven and earth, reclining or seated in the same positions they had occupied in the tree before the blast, and with no visible means of support. It was a sock in the eye for the dragon.

"Into the pool below, the monks cast prayer scrolls and magic gadgets that caused the water to boil violently and to fill the air with steam. Blinded by this vapor, the dragon, confused for the first time in his long life, floundered about, lost his footing, tumbled into the hot water and sank, boiled to a turn, never to rise again. At daybreak, the victorious Buddhists, descending to earth, set up a shrine."

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