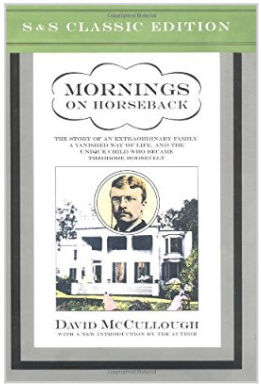

Mornings on Horseback: The Story of an Extraordinary Family, a Vanished Way of Life and the Unique Child Who Became Theodore Roosevelt

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The father is the first Theodore Roosevelt, a figure of unbounded energy, enormously attractive and selfless, a god in the eyes of his small, frail namesake. The mother, Mittie Bulloch Roosevelt, is a Southerner and a celebrated beauty, but also considerably more, which the book makes clear as never before. There are sisters Anna and Corinne, brother Elliott (who becomes the father of Eleanor Roosevelt), and the lovely, tragic Alice Lee, TR’s first love. All are brought to life to make “a beautifully told story, filled with fresh detail” (*The New York Times Book Review*).

A book to be read on many levels, it is at once an enthralling story, a brilliant social history and a work of important scholarship which does away with several old myths and breaks entirely new ground. It is a book about life intensely lived, about family love and loyalty, about grief and courage, about “blessed” mornings on horseback beneath the wide blue skies of the Badlands.

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Editorial Review

Review
Denver Post A fine account of Roosevelt's rise to manhood, well written and, like its subject, full of irrepressible vitality.

Detroit News This is a marvelous chronicle of manners and morals, love and duty, and as captivating as anything you will find between book covers in a long while.

John Leonard *The New York Times* We have no better social historian.

About the Author
David McCullough has twice received the Pulitzer Prize, for *Truman* and *John Adams,* and twice received the National Book Award, for *The Path Between the Seas* and *Mornings on Horseback*. His other acclaimed books include *The Johnstown Flood, The Great Bridge, Brave Companions, 1776, The Greater Journey,* and *The Wright Brothers*. He is the recipient of numerous honors and awards, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian award. Visit DavidMcCullough.com.

Chapter 1

Greatheart's Circle

In the year 1869, when the population of New York City had reached nearly a million, the occupants of 28 East 20th Street, a five-story brownstone, numbered six, exclusive of the servants.

The head of the household was Theodore Roosevelt (no middle name or initial), who was thirty-seven years of age, an importer and philanthropist, and the son of old Cornelius Van Schaack Roosevelt, one of the richest men in the city. Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt -- Martha Bulloch Roosevelt, or Mittie, as she was called -- was thirty-three, a southerner and a beauty. The children, two girls and two boys, all conceived by the same father and mother, and born in the same front bedroom, over the parlor, ranged in age from fourteen to seven. The oldest, Anna, was known as Bamie (from *bambina,* and pronounced to rhyme with Sammy). Next came ten-year-old Theodore, Jr., who was called Teedie (pronounced to rhyme with T.D.). Elliott, aged nine, was Ellie or Nell, and the youngest, Corinne, was called Conie.

Of the servants little is known, except for Dora Watkins, an Irish nursemaid who had been employed since before the Civil War. Another Irish girl named Mary Ann was also much in evidence, beloved by the children and well regarded by the parents -- it was she they picked to go with the family on the Grand Tour that May -- but in family papers dating from the time, nobody bothered to give Mary Ann a last name. Concerning the others, the various cooks, valets, coachmen, and housemaids who seem to have come and gone with regularity, the record is no help. But to judge by the size of the house and the accepted standards for families of comparable means and station, there were probably never less than four or five "below stairs" at any given time, and the degree to which they figured in the overall atmosphere was considerable.

The house stood in the block between Broadway and Fourth Avenue, on the south side of the street, and it looked like any other New York brownstone, a narrow-fronted, sober building wholly devoid of those

architectural niceties (marble sills, fanlights) that enlivened the red-brick houses of an earlier era downtown. The standard high stoop with cast-iron railings approached a tall front door at the second-floor level, the ground floor being the standard English basement, with its servants' entrance. A formal parlor (cut-glass chandelier, round-arched marble fireplace, piano) opened onto a long, narrow hall, as did a parlor or "library," this a windowless room remembered for its stale air and look of "gloomy respectability." The dining room was at the rear, again according to the standard floor plan. Upstairs were the master bedroom and nursery, then three more bedrooms on the floor above, with the servants' quarters on the top floor.

Only one thing about the house was thought to be out of the ordinary, a deep porch, or piazza, at the rear on the third-floor level. Enclosed with a nine-foot wooden railing, it had been a bedroom before the Roosevelts tore out the back wall and converted it to an open-air playroom. It overlooked not only their own and neighboring yards, but the garden of the Goelet mansion on 19th Street, one of the largest private gardens in the city, within which roamed numbers of exotic birds with their wings clipped. Daily, in their "piazza clothes," the children were put out to play or, in Bamie's case, in early childhood, to lie on a sofa.

The house had been a wedding present from Cornelius Van Schaack Roosevelt -- CVS to the family -- whose own red-brick mansion on Union Square, six blocks south, was the figurative center of the Roosevelt tribal circle. The father of five sons, CVS had presented them all with houses as they married and the one given Theodore, youngest of his five, adjoined that of Robert B. Roosevelt, the fourth son, who was a lawyer.

With their full beards and eyeglasses, these two neighboring brothers bore a certain physical resemblance. The difference in age was only two years. Beyond appearances, however, they were not the least alike. Robert was the conspicuous, unconventional Roosevelt, the one for whom the family had often to do some explaining. Robert wrote books; Robert was bursting with ideas. He was a gifted raconteur, a sportsman, yachtsman, New York's pioneer conservationist (fish were his pet concern), an enthusiastic cook, an authority on family origins. He was loud and witty and cherished the limelight, seeking it inexplicably in the tumult of Tammany politics. Until the Civil War, the Roosevelts had all been Democrats. As late as 1863, Theodore had still been an avowed War Democrat -- one who supported the war and thus the Republican Administration -- but when he and the rest of CVS's line at last turned Republican, Robert alone remained in the Democratic fold and was never to be anything but proud of the fact. ("Our party is the party of the people!")

Robert's middle name was his mother's maiden name, Barnhill, but in anticipation of what his political foes might make of this ("manure pile" or variations to that effect), he had changed it to Barnwell and it was as Uncle Barnwell that he was sometimes known to the small nieces and nephews in the house beside his.

Robert's wife, Elizabeth Ellis Roosevelt, was called Aunt Lizzie Ellis to distinguish her from still another Aunt Lizzie in the family, and she too was considered "unorthodox." At the back of her third floor -- the floor corresponding to the piazza next door -- she maintained a marvelous and odorous menagerie of guinea pigs, chickens, pigeons, a parrot, a monkey, "everything under the sun that ought not be kept in a house." The monkey, her favorite, was a violent little creature that bit. She dressed it like a fashionable child, complete with ruffled shirts and gold studs. Once Aunt Lizzie Ellis aroused the neighborhood with the purchase of a cow that had to be led from East 20th Street into her back yard by the only available route, through the house, an event that, for excitement, was surpassed only by the removal of the cow, once Aunt Lizzie Ellis was threatened with legal action. On the return trip through the house the animal became so terrified it had to be dragged bodily, its legs tied, its eyes blindfolded.

To the children next door such occasions naturally figured very large, as did Uncle Barnwell with his talk of fishing and hunting, his yacht, and his flashy political friends. So it is somewhat puzzling that so little was to

be said of him in later years. His immediate proximity would be passed over rather quickly, his influence barely touched on. He is the Roosevelt everybody chose to forget about. Politics undoubtedly had much to do with this, but more important, it would appear, was his private life. For in addition to all else, brother Rob was a bit lax in his morals. He was what polite society referred to as a Bohemian, the kind of man who kept company with "actresses and such." An admiring later-day kinsman would describe him as an Elizabethan in the Victorian era and a story has come down the generations of the ladies' gloves Robert purchased in bulk at A. T. Stewart's department store, these in a violent shade of green. The gloves had been on sale, according to the story, and he distributed them liberally among his "lady friends," with the result that for years those who knew him well knew also to watch for the gloves while strolling Fifth Avenue or driving in the park.

ardOrdinarily, such stories might prompt some question as to whether Robert only *seemed* scandalous -- so very straitlaced was the family, so quick was "the best society" to leap on the least deviation from the prescribed code and call it, if not immoral, then indecent. But in truth Robert was something more than a mere rake or charming boulevardier. He was a man living a remarkable double life, keeping another woman and ultimately an entire second family in a house only a block or so distant on the same street, an arrangement that would come to light only long afterward as a result of genealogical research sponsored by some of his descendants. Her name was Minnie O'Shea, or Mrs. Robert F. Fortescue, as he had decided she should be called, and in 1869 she was already pregnant with their first child.

How much of this Theodore knew, how strenuously he disapproved, if at all, is impossible to say. But the contrast between the two could hardly have been more striking.

Theodore was invariably upright, conservative, the very model of self-control. He cared nothing for public acclaim, "never put himself forward," as friends would remember. Theodore was the model duty-bound husband and father, a junior partner at Roosevelt and Son. He was a faithful communicant at the Madison Square Presbyterian Church, who often attended two services on the same Sunday. He belonged to the Union League Club and the Century Association. He served on charitable boards, raised money for museums. Not in seven generations on the island of Manhattan had the Roosevelts produced so sturdy or so winsome an example of upper-class probity, or so fine a figure of a man -- physically imposing, athletic, with china-blue eyes, chestnut hair and beard, and a good, square Dutch jaw. In his formal photographs, the eyeglasses removed, he is someone who will do what he has to, direct, sure of himself. Only the eyes raise questions, with their unmistakable hint of severity, which seems odd in a man remembered mainly for the "sunshine of his affection."

Clothes concerned him. The choice of a suit, the right hat for the occasion, were issues of consequence. His suits were of the best quality and beautifully tailored. Appearances mattered. Indeed, it may be said that appearances figured quite as much in the life at 28 East 20th Street as everywhere else within the circumscribed world of New York's "good old families." "Did I tell you that he took the other end of the table at the dinner I gave to Captain Cook and behaved admirably?" Theodore writes of brother Rob to Mittie. "He was dressed perfectly, except for a colored cravat with his dress suit."

Together at dinners and balls, he and the exquisite Mittie made a picture people did not forget. It was in the Roosevelt tradition to be solicitous to women. While their mother was alive, the five brothers stopped regularly every morning en route to work to pay her their respects. But Theodore seems to have genuinely preferred the company of women -- he had an eye for feminine beauty, his children all remembered -- and the attention he showered on Mittie was exceptional even for that day and those circles. An employee at one of his charities remarked that he had never understood the meaning of the word "gentleman" until the evening he watched Theodore Roosevelt escort his wife about the premises.

In all Theodore was a seemingly uncomplicated person. He had no particular gifts. He was not musical as Mittie was. He shared little of her love of art. He was not creative; he did not write or charm after-dinner audiences as Robert could. He dabbled in nothing. He was perfectly intelligent, to be sure; he enjoyed books, enjoyed the talk of lawyers, editors, and others who traded in words and abstract ideas, but he was unintellectual. In matters of taste he habitually deferred to his wife, refusing even to buy a bottle of wine unless she had passed on it. If he regarded himself as an authority on anything, it was horses.

But greatest of all was his interest in and feeling for children. He responded immediately to them, and they to him. "My personal impression," a nephew would recall, "...is that he was a large, broad, bright, cheerful man with an intense sympathy with everything you brought to him. He loved children especially."

From childhood he had been called Thee and as the youngest son, the Benjamin of the family, he had been doted on. He was Mama's darling and did nothing but shine in her eyes until her dying day. In turn, he adored her and would credit any good qualities he had to her and her "settled notions." She had been an event in the Roosevelt line, the first non-Dutch entry on the family tree. She was Margaret Barnhill of Philadelphia. Her background was English-Irish-Quaker. She was gentle but dominating and the first of the Roosevelts to espouse the spirit of *noblesse oblige.* Great wealth imposed obligations, she preached; the opportunities bestowed by private fortunes must be put to "some good purpose." Bamie, as the oldest of her father's children, could remember going as a very small child to call on her at the house on Union Square. There was a cavernous front hall with a floor of polished black-and-white marble and great mahogany doors with silver knobs and hinges that opened to the dining room. "In the dining room, where a bright soft-coal fire was always burning in the fireplace, between two south windows, we invariably found my grandmother sitting in her corner with her work basket on a table near her, and some books, always apparently delighted to see us, and with a most lovely smile."

Through Theodore's youth, dinner conversation in that same room, at his father's end of the table, had been in Dutch. Short, homely, pink-faced, invariably punctual, CVS Roosevelt regarded his brood with rather quizzical large, round eyes that were made to look even larger by his small, square gold-framed spectacles. He was the essence of old-fashioned New York. "Economy is my doctrine at all times," he had once informed Margaret Barnhill in the midst of their courtship, "at all events till I become, if it is to be so, *a man of fortune."* And though Roosevelt and Son had been founded by his own father and grandfather, it was he, CVS, who had become the family's initial man of fortune, the first Roosevelt millionaire. It was he who switched the family business from hardware to importing plate glass. And still more fortuitously, in the Panic of 1837, when Theodore was a child of six, he bought up building lots, "hither and yon," on the island of Manhattan, all at a good price.

Theodore's formal education had been limited and erratic, as his spelling gave evidence. There had been a private tutor through boyhood and never a lack of books at hand, but college was ruled out because CVS thought it would ruin him. (Weir Roosevelt, the oldest brother, had gone to Columbia College, but to study law, which apparently made it tolerable in the father's eyes; Robert, in his turn, had become a lawyer without going to college, as was still possible then.)

In 1851, however, at age nineteen, Theodore was sent off on a Grand Tour, something his brothers had been denied and that Robert for one greatly envied. It was the year of the London Exhibition and the opening of the Crystal Palace, an event of obvious importance to a family in the glass business. He saw the Exhibition, traveled the Continent, even went on to Russia, which was unheard of. He improved his French, acquired a little German and Italian, and sent home dutiful, descriptive letters that were his mother's joy and to Robert a large annoyance.

"I'm afraid, Theodore, you have mistaken the object of traveling," Robert lectured. "It is not to see scenery, you can see finer at home. It is not to see places where great people lived and died, that is a stupidity. But it is to see men. To enlarge your mind, which will never be enlarged by looking at a large hill, but by conversing with, and seeing the bent of the minds of other people."

A month later, after still more from Theodore on the churches and monuments he was seeing, Robert could barely contain himself.

I have it in mind to go to all the big stores in Broadway and write you an account. So look out as sure as you describe to me any more big buildings, you may know what to expect. Now answer seriously, have you been anywhere but to monuments, etc.? Have you been to a masked ball, a theater, an opera, or even into a French store where little girls tend the counters? Have you seen a Dutchman, a Frenchman, an Irishman; besides the porters who carried your trunks? If so, what did you say to them and what did they say to you? Have you seen anything odd or original? Where have you been, where are you going?

But six months later, Robert felt obliged to rescind.

Firstly, Advice. Don't write any more experience in the lower walks of life, or moralize upon its wickedness....Mother gets into a pigeon fit and thinks her "darling innocent" is going straight to destruction. And the old gentleman ruminates on the disappearance of the £1,000 and looks blank when it is suggested to him that he is supporting Theodore's "French teacher." The old lady takes it hard and no matter what you do perhaps you had better not write about it. You had better keep to towers and castles.

Russia -- the overwhelming splendors of St. Petersburg, the squalor of Moscow -- affected Theodore profoundly. "I scarce know terms strong enough to express my feelings...Everything is in the extremes." Conceivably it had taken Robert's admonitions to bring him to see the human element; still, the kind of sensitivity that began to emerge in his letters and in his journal was very much his own. He toured a Moscow foundling hospital where every year some six thousand infants were received. On the edge of the city early one Sunday he watched a thousand prisoners start the long march to Siberia. A dignified, elderly figure he identifies in the journal only as Dr. Haase had come to bid the prisoners farewell. Nothing or no one that Theodore encountered in his travels seems to have impressed him as this man did.

He was dressed in the old style with silk stockings and slippers, his breast decked with honor...He is one of the finest-looking old gentlemen I ever saw and his actions carry out his appearance. He went around among the prisoners asking them if they were well and content...when they were departing he distributed among those whom he thought deserving. It was more the universal feeling of kindness which prompted every movement than any particular action which I can adduce which evinced his character.

The prisoners must be fairly treated, the old man insisted, for at Judgment Day their word would count as much as that of anyone. Though a few of the sick had been put in wagons, the rest had started off on foot with the prospect of six months of continual walking before them.

To the great relief of his father, Theodore came home with no new revolutionary ideas or worldly airs. Nor, apparently, was it with the least misgiving that he entered directly into the family firm, downtown at 94 Maiden Lane. The Russian journal would be taken up and reread from time to time and one "treasure" among the few he had brought back, a small square of malachite supporting a small gilt Russian peasant pulling a gilt sledge, was to occupy a prominent position in the 20th Street parlor. Only after they were grown would the children become aware that it was anything other than a priceless work of art.

The impression is that the family business more or less ran itself. CVS had announced his retirement soon after Theodore joined the firm, and another brother, James Alfred Roosevelt, was made senior partner. James Alfred, as nobody disputed, had the best head for business. He was shrewd and tough, and he had married an Emlen from Philadelphia, a move which, in the words of one descendant, "did the family's fortune no harm." James, too, like his father, was made a director of the Chemical Bank, and the Chemical Bank, with real estate, was of greatest importance to the Roosevelts and their standing in the financial community. CVS had been a founding father of the Chemical Bank, the only bank in New York that had never failed to meet its obligations in gold, even during the Civil War.

The family's real-estate holdings were lumped under what was called the Broadway Improvement Association, of which James Alfred was also head and chief spokesman.

So it was James Alfred, ultimately, who had the final say on all questions pertaining to money, a subject about which all Roosevelts cared deeply, but which they preferred also to keep altogether private. When, in 1868, a publication called *Gallaxy* presented the names of New York's ten bona fide millionaires, with CVS listed among them, Weir Roosevelt responded angrily in a letter to *The New York Times* that no man's privacy was safe any longer. "I ask you whether it is the present opinion of the respectable newspapers that a rich man has no rights, or, in other words, whether the mere accumulation of property by a private citizen is of itself a sufficient offense against society to call for a public exposure and justify the interference of the press?"

One of Theodore's rare observations on the atmosphere at Roosevelt and Son is contained in a love letter to Mittie written hastily at his desk in 1853, shortly before they were married. So wonderful was the mere thought of her, he said, it could even brighten a day at 94 Maiden Lane, "where such a thing as sentiment would be laughed at as a humbug worthy of Mr. Barnum's collection." The bookkeeper, he cheerfully informed her, had warned him never to marry a southern girl.

As a businessman Theodore appears to have been miscast. He had no apparent aversion to trade, or any philosophical conflict with moneymaking as such. (For a time he even thought seriously of leaving the family firm in order to make more in some other line, though what that might be he had no idea.) Rather he appears to have found little or no satisfaction in the work. His letters rarely touch on it. The one picture we get of him having any fun on the job, evincing any of his usual enthusiasm, is an account of a winter day in Washington when he scaled the snow-covered roof of the new Treasury Building to measure for skylights. He felt like a mountaineer, sometimes sliding thirty or forty feet down the roof. All he needed was his alpenstock, he said. Otherwise, the impression is of years at a desk going through the motions, performing dutifully as the proper Victorian breadwinner, a prudent, attractive figure, quite in the Roosevelt mold, but uninspired, unaggressive, and, probably, not very good at what he did.

The power rested in the older brother's hands. Theodore was free to do Europe at will, while James Alfred stayed on and ran things, and Theodore seems to have gone off to Europe -- or to the country or to his eager philanthropy -- at every chance.

As time went on, his crusades among the needy, his hospital and museum projects, became his true vocation. It was thus that he became one of the prominent men of the city, as truly a good citizen as New York had ever known. "Whatever he had to do, he did all out," remembered Charles Loring Brace, the pioneer social worker. To some, he seemed strangely driven. John Hay, another friend, spoke of his "maniacal benevolence," and in letters to his wife Theodore himself infers occasionally that "with so much to do" he has no choice. "I feel that as much as I enjoy loafing, there is something higher for which to live."

Together with Brace and a friend named Howard Potter, he had helped establish the Children's Aid Society, to do something for the city's homeless children -- "street rats" as the police chose to call them -- whose numbers by 1869 probably exceeded twenty thousand. Largely through Theodore's initiative a permanent Newsboys' Lodging House had been established on West 18th Street, where nightly several hundred stray boys, most of them newsboys, were given a clean bed in a warm room for five cents, a fraction of what was charged by the lowest kind of commercial flophouse. It was Brace's contention -- the theme by which he appealed for funds and enlisted the efforts of men like Theodore -- that decent society had no greater threat than the existence of a "class of vagabond, ignorant, ungoverned children." The time would come, Brace warned, when these children would have the vote, "the same rights as ourselves" -- a very different justification for Christian mercy from that espoused by Theodore's old gentleman in Moscow, but one that carried Brace and his projects far.

The mission of the Children's Aid Society was to bring "moral disinfectants" to the festering "crime nests" of New York. A kind-hearted agent or "visitor" was first dispatched to the "infected quarter," someone who could naturally befriend the homeless waifs, this being work that Theodore, for one, did extremely well. Then an informal religious meeting, or mission class, was established; then a reading room, then an industrial school or workshop. Presently came the Lodging House. But the long-range objective was to return as many of the children as possible to their own families, if such existed, or, more often, to ship them off to farms in the Middle West or beyond, to get them out of the city entirely. By 1869 some 4,500 children had been thus dispatched to Ohio, Illinois, and points beyond. In time more than 100,000 would be sent.

When Brace first asked Theodore if he might spend every other Sunday evening at the Lodging House, talking with the boys, Theodore declined, saying his "troublesome conscience" would not permit it. He would be there *every* Sunday.

He "threw himself" into the work, Brace remembered: "He knew them by name, he knew their histories...they would gather round him, and he would question each one as to what he was doing, and give him advice and sympathy and direction. You felt the moment Mr. Roosevelt was in the room that he was a help to those poor fellows."

As generous with his money as his time, he gave regularly to this and other causes, and raised still more among his well-to-do friends, some of whom eventually learned to take out their checkbooks the moment he came into their offices. One man, on hearing that Theodore was going abroad, estimated it would save him at least a thousand dollars.

Importantly, Theodore's influence was felt just at that stage in the city's growth when it could have the greatest effect, a point he never lost sight of. He believed in New York, he said, not so much for what it was as for what it might become, the example it could set. No city offered more opportunity for those wishing to do something for the good of mankind; his joy, he said, was being connected with new work, worthy institutions in their infancy, the influence of which would be felt throughout the country. The year following the war he helped start the New York Orthopedic Dispensary and Hospital, for the treatment of children deformed by spinal disease. With Joseph Choate, Pierpont Morgan, Howard Potter, and others he had founded the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the American Museum of Natural History. It was in the front parlor at 28 East 20th Street that the original charter for the Museum of Natural History was approved the evening of April 8, 1869.

No one seems ever to have spoken ill of him. A man who knew him in business for more than twenty years said he never heard him utter an angry word, never saw him out of sorts. When Albert S. Bickmore, the brilliant young naturalist, first came to the city with his idea for a natural history museum, it was to Theodore

that he went, because he had been told that Theodore Roosevelt was "just the man" to make such a project a success. Thirty years later Bickmore could still quote Theodore's response: "Professor, New York wants a museum of natural history and it shall have one, and if you will stay here and cooperate with us, you shall be its first head."

Most memorable was what Brace called his "rich power of enjoyment of everything human." Pious as he was, as solemn sounding as his religious speculations might become, he adored parties and would dance all night. Like the new President of the United States, Ulysses S. Grant, he had a passion for fine horses and to see him astride one of his own in Central Park was, as one friend remarked, to see the model of Christian manhood.

He would make the most of any situation, of every moment, often replenishing his energies with occupations or chance conversations that others would have found irksome or boring. "I amused myself by drawing the little there was in him out," he would say of someone he met on a train.

Best were the pleasures of a morning walk or his books or a good cigar or what he called the quiet luxury of home life. He loved flowers, yellow roses especially, and the Palisades along the Hudson River. Separated from home and the beloved "home faces," he could slip rapidly into abject homesickness and sound, on paper at least, most uncharacteristically plaintive. He felt bereft of real friends, he wrote to Mittie one such summer evening. "The city is deserted by all my acquaintances and I scarce meet anyone now in the Park that I know."

I wonder in so large a city, living here all my life, how it comes that I have so few intimate friends; it seems strange, especially when I know that you consider me so very sociable. But I have no more time to moralize. Those who I love love me and I would not give up their affection for the lukewarm article called by that name by thousands.

To his own children he was at once the ultimate voice of authority and, when time allowed, their most exuberant companion. He never fired their imaginations or made them laugh as their mother could, but he was unfailingly interested in them, sympathetic, confiding, entering into their lives in ways few fathers ever do. It was as though he was in league with them. As Ellie once told him, he was one of those rare grown men who seem never to forget that they were once children themselves -- "just my ideal," Ellie said, "made to govern and doing it so lightly and affectionately." Sweetest of all was his undivided attention, the "sunshine of his affection."

Day began with the three youngest poised at the foot of the long stairway waiting for his descent and their morning prayers together, this ritual being held on the library sofa, two of them seated to one side of him, the third wedged into what they regarded as the prime position between him and the arm of the sofa. Evenings, in the library, they would wait for the sound of his key at the door, then rush to greet him and troop after him up the stairs to his room to watch him dress for dinner. (He always dressed for dinner and with what seemed to them the most amazing speed.)

He taught them to ride and to climb trees. Conie remembered "the careful way in which he would show us dead limbs and warn us about watching out for them, and then, having taught us and having warned us, he gave us full liberty to try our wings..." As they grew older he tried to include them in his own outside activities, taking along one or more, for example, on his Sunday-night visits to the Newsboys' Lodging House. Those evenings when he brought some friend of special interest to the house -- John Hay, Matthew Arnold, Albert Bickmore -- he saw that the children sat and listened to what was being said.

His own preachments were fundamental and heartfelt, and it would be hard to overemphasize the extent to which they charged the atmosphere. Cultivate a hopeful disposition, he told them. Accept the love of others and you will be loved.

"I always believe in showing affection by doing what will please the one we love, not by talking." (To show their love for him, they could improve their handwriting or learn to swim or memorize a passage from the Bible.)

"I have often thought that unselfishness combined in one word more of the teachings of the Bible than any other in the language."

He hated idleness. Every hour must be accounted for and one must also enjoy everything one did. Get action, he said. Seize the moment. "Man was never intended to become an oyster."

Deceit or cowardice was not to be tolerated. Courage he rewarded openly and sometimes with dramatic effect. At a rented country house in New Jersey one summer, he surprised the three youngest children with a new pony. When he asked who would jump on, Conie, then four, was the only one not to hang back, and so he declared the pony was hers, to the humiliation of her older brothers. "I think I did it," she would write long afterward, "to see the light in Father's eyes."

That a great, bearded figure of a man was also one so readily touched by the sufferings of others, so tender-hearted with children, so sensitive to the pulls of conscience, seemed strangely incongruous to some who knew him. But to those closest to him this androgynous quality was the essence of his personality. Howard Potter, the friend who probably knew him best, saw him as a "singular compound of feminine and masculine qualities, lovable as a woman, and as strong as a man."

To Teedie, the little namesake, he was at once the most magnificent creature on earth and quite frightening, but then Teedie was full of fears of all kinds, as he would acknowledge in time. Anna Bulloch Gracie, the elder Theodore's pious and adoring sister-in-law, called him Greatheart. It had come to her on a Sunday morning as she watched him go off to church with his children -- the warrior Puritan, Greatheart, from *The Pilgrim's Progress,* stout Greatheart, guide and protector of wayfaring innocents, fearless leader in life's purposeful journey. *"Come now, and follow me, and no hurt shall happen to you from the lions...."*

"There never was anyone so wonderful as my father," Bamie remembered. And the fact that he swept in and out of the house, in and out of their lives, the fact that he was not always around as their mother was, made him seem all the more special and "wonderful."

Of the four children it was Bamie who most closely resembled him; Bamie, who, to use her own words, never let herself be young, and who, as would be said, probably had the best mind in the family.

Bamie was the mainstay, then and for as long as she lived. For a girl born into New York society she was also severely handicapped. She was not in the least pretty, for one thing. Her dark-blue eyes were deep-set, the lids heavy, which made her look tired and years older than she was. In repose she could look painfully sad.

More seriously, she was also somewhat physically deformed. The standard family explanation for this has been that as an infant she had been dropped by a careless nurse. However, no mention of such an incident is to be found in family records dating from the time it supposedly occurred, or afterward. The one specific early reference to the problem is in a letter written by Grandmamma Bulloch, an observant member of the

household in that earlier day. Writing of the infant Bamie, she said, "I am quite uneasy about her back. There is something wrong there. She cannot stand more than a second on her feet, then her countenance expresses pain, and she crumbles down."

The problem, in fact, was Pott's disease, the form of tuberculosis which softens and destroys the bones and which, when localized in the spine, causes hunchback. Known to have been a child crippler since the time of the Pharaohs, it was first identified in the eighteenth century by a British physician, Percivall Pott. Still, by the late nineteenth century, it remained a mystery and was thought to be incurable.

In Bamie's case the effect was severe curvature of the spine and intense suffering. At age three, at the time of Teedie's birth, she was fitted with her "terrible instrument," a heavy steel-and-leather apparatus that left her immobile and rubbed a hideous sore on her back. The doctor came regularly each morning to wash and dress the sore and to strap her in again, and through the rest of the day she had to be picked up and carried from room to room or out to her sofa on the piazza. She could lie face down only. In the evening it was her father who removed the apparatus and at bedtime Grandmamma Bulloch would rub her legs until she fell asleep.

Her father's devotion became the most important thing in her life. A summer when she had to be left behind at 20th Street while her mother, grandmother, the new baby, and Dora Watkins went off to the country was a summer of untold happiness because he was there with her so much of the time, because at the end of his business day he would come directly to her on the piazza, bringing her ice cream or fresh peaches or some small gift, because he would sit with her while she had her supper, then carry her to bed "with his very strong arms."

She was also released from the "terrible instrument" that same summer, the summer of 1859, when she was four. He had found another doctor for her, Charles Fayette Taylor, an orthopedic surgeon who in some professional quarters was thought to be a quack. Pott's disease was Taylor's specialty. He treated it with what he called the "movement cure," a form of physical therapy based on Swedish techniques that he had learned in Europe. Bamie was among his first patients and he not only transformed her daily regimen, giving her virtually a new life, but interjected into the family circle his conviction that physical well-being and mental outlook are directly correlated.

She was fitted with a radically different kind of back brace, a custom-made "spinal assistant" that was light in weight and designed so that she could be up and moving about, which, Taylor stressed, was the whole point. He wanted her moving about, both for her back and for what it would do to her spirits. Improvement was slow but unmistakable, and it was seeing this, seeing what Taylor had done for his own child, that led Theodore to establish the Orthopedic Dispensary and Hospital with Taylor at its head.

A full cure was never to come, however. Through most of childhood she was required to lie down part of every day and, by Roosevelt standards, her physical activity was limited. The rest of her life she wore a piece of ram's wool on her back beneath her clothes in order to sit comfortably in a chair. She was not, by the time she attained her full growth, exactly a hunchback, but she did have an odd hunched stance. The small figure she presented to the world, or that she confronted in the hall mirror, was plainly "curious," thick through the shoulders.

"Poor little thing," her father wrote when she was seven. "I never think of Bamie without pain. It seems such a dreary life that is in store for her."

He wanted her with him whenever possible. At some point during the war, on one of his periodic trips to Washington -- the exact date is not known -- he took her along and she sat on Abraham Lincoln's lap. She

would remember nothing of the event, only that she had been with her father.

In a family notable for its intense attachments, theirs was perhaps the most intense of all. She was emphatically "Papa's pet." He kept her photograph in a leather case and carried it with him wherever he traveled. His letters to "My own Darling Bamie" were overflowing with tenderness, with concern for her every move, with advice, warnings, and not a little baring of his own soul. "Try to cultivate a quiet sober style," he would write, "and bottle up your spirits a little until I have possession of you. Then you may let them out again as much as you please."

The one and only time he ever physically punished Teedie -- possibly the only time he ever physically punished any of his children -- was when, at age four, Teedie bit Bamie on the arm.

Bright, conscientious, she picked things up quickly (French, the piano) and her energy was very nearly the match of Theodore's. "Dear busy Bamie," Grandmamma Bulloch called her. But it was her odd, almost quaint maturity that set her off. She was "competent beyond her years," even when very small. She had no interest in games or toys. She wished only to be "useful," to look after her own needs, to look after the younger three, to whom she never seemed like anything but another grownup. Teedie, by way of introduction to his diary of the European tour, was to explain, "When I put 'We 3' I mean Ellie, Conie, and I. When I put 'big people' I mean Papa, Mama, and Bamie." That she was plain and deformed seems never to have figured in their picture of her. Not once in all that Mittie wrote about her children is there even a trace of pity or worry over Bamie. Bamie was strength. Bamie was good sense, the one to lean on, to turn to for help. She was, as Teedie would tell her fondly, "a kind of little feminine Atlas with a small world on her shoulders."

Of the youngest three, Ellie was the best-looking and the most convivial, and in many ways the most endearing. As a baby he had been "decidedly pretty." At two he could speak more clearly than his older brother and in no time became larger, better coordinated, the natural athlete of the two. Little brother was big brother. He was also distinguished by a sweet, even temper and what seemed an inordinate fund of kindness for someone so young. Once, at about the age of seven, he had gone off for a walk wearing a new overcoat and returned without it. He had given it away, he explained, to a ragged child who had none and looked cold.

Unlike Bamie, whose hair was dark brown, he, Teedie, and Conie were all fair-haired and Conie was known for her "ardent" blue eyes.

Teedie, in Bamie's expression, was the "great little home-boy" of the family. He was extremely frail and undersized for ten, a nervous, timid, often solitary child with bad color and what his mother described as a "quiet patrician air...his large blue eyes not looking at anything present." His joy was in stories of high adventure, in birds and animals, almost anything to do with nature. "My mouth opened wide with astonish[ment] when I heard how many flowers were sent in to you," he had written to his mother the spring before, in April 1868, when she was in Savannah. "I could revel in the buggie ones. I jumped with delight when I found you heard the mockingbird, get some of its feathers if you can." He kept pet mice in a bureau drawer, and, in partnership with a cousin, West Roosevelt, had founded his own "Roosevelt Museum of Natural History" in the back hall on the fourth floor, a collection already comprising some several hundred specimens.

Teedie was an asthmatic. His attacks had started at about the age of three and more even than Bamie's affliction they had had a profound effect on the life of the family -- summer plans, sudden cancellations of dinner engagements, changes in plans of all kinds being determined time and again by the status of his health. During the first few days at any summer house or hotel, his mother would keep her bags packed, knowing from experience that some unknown something might trigger an attack and off she would have to

go with him, back to the city or to try still another, different locale.

Conie, too, had "the asthma," but very infrequently and never so seriously. Teedie, moreover, was beset by chronic stomach trouble, by headaches, by colds, fevers, and a recurring nightmare that a werewolf was coming at him from the bottom of his bed. Earlier in the year, in January 1869, he had fallen into such a low state that Mittie had taken him off to Philadelphia for a stay with her half sister, Susan, whose husband, Hilborne West, was a physician. Teedie, as Mittie said, kept everyone "on the stretch." Rarely could he sleep without being propped up in bed or in a big chair, so difficult was it for him to breathe. For a time, his father had thought possibly the trouble had something to do with the furnace at East 20th Street.

The attacks were a dreadful experience for everyone. They happened nearly always at night and there was little anybody could do. Theodore would gather the child up in his arms and walk the floor with him for hours. Some nights, in desperation, he would bundle him up against the cold, servants would be roused to fetch the carriage to the door, and father and child would drive off in the dark in the hope that the sudden change of air might bring relief -- which sometimes it did.

Like other parents of their social position, the Roosevelts did not wish to see their children "coarsened" by public schools. But mainly it was from worry over their health that all four were kept from school of any kind, public or private. They were tutored within the home walls and from within the home ranks by their own Aunt Anna, who, until her marriage to James K. Gracie in 1866, was, like Grandmamma Bulloch, a vital part of the household. At one point Teedie and Ellie were sent down the street to private classes only a stone's throw from the house, these conducted by Theodore's own boyhood tutor, but even so cautious a departure had proved unsatisfactory. The boys were withdrawn after only a month or two and not made to go again.

Since school played no part in their lives, they were cut off from their contemporaries. The only accessible -- the only permissible -- playmates were those within the family circle, namely cousins and the approved offspring of a few old family friends of comparable station and antecedents. Bamie seems to have had no childhood friends, while the youngest three had but one who had figured significantly thus far -- little Edith Carow, who was Conie's age and the daughter of Charles Carow, a lifelong friend of Theodore's.

But then neither did any of them suffer from a lack of affection or stimulation. If anything, there was a surplus of both. Aunt Anna, who had no children, was as devoted as though they were her own. Grandmamma in her lace cap was famous for her "melts," overwhelming outbursts of maternal, southern affection; and nurse Dora Watkins was considered so overly indulgent to the children as to be a possible hindrance to their health and/or moral character. Years after her death, the mere mention of Grandmamma's name was enough to make the youngest three burst into tears.

The charming, erudite Dr. Hilborne West, the Philadelphia uncle, spent part of each summer with them, read and acted Shakespeare with all four children under the trees, and allegedly no one had more to do with their "early stirring of intellectual desires." "The very fact that he was not achieving a thousand worthwhile things, as was my father," wrote Conie years afterward, "the very fact that he was not busied with the practical care and thought for us, as were my mother and aunt, brought about between us that delightful relationship when the older person leads rather than drives the younger into paths of literature and learning."

It was, plainly, a family of paradoxes: privileged and cushioned beyond most people's imagining, yet little like the stereotype of the vapid, insular rich; uneducated in any usual, formal fashion but also uninhibited by education -- ardent readers, insatiable askers of questions; chronically troubled, cursed it would often seem, by one illness or mysterious disorder after another, yet refusing to subject others to their troubles or to give

in to despair.

Of the tawdriness and drudgery of the workaday world they knew almost nothing. They had never experienced drought of hunger or steerage or any of a dozen other ordeals common to so many Americans of the day. They were never without money or servants. They scarcely knew what it was to clean out a stall or put their hands in dishwater. When a cook got drunk one evening at the Union Square house and CVS went to see what the fuss was about, it marked the first time he had set foot in his own kitchen.

They knew themselves to be aristocrats, though it is unlikely they used that word: "people of good family" was preferred. They had little patience with bad manners, no use for social climbers, little knack for the kind of easy familiarity that businessmen and politicians traded on and that Europeans thought so very American. "Be careful always in chance acquaintances" was another of father Theodore's admonitions to the children.

"Family" and "stocks" or "antecedents" were favorite topics. Their own position relative to that of the common herd was an accepted fact of life. Theodore was no more averse to using an expression like "our class" than was anyone else of comparable background. But if conscious of their position, they were also conscious of their duty. They had standards, standards which they never questioned. They were Roosevelts, but, being Roosevelts, that in itself could never be thought of as enough. Duty and the family name demanded more.

And then, in addition, there was Mittie, in some regards the most fascinating of them all, "darling little Mittie," a Roosevelt by marriage only.

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