

"Princess Alice" Remembers—



Alice Roosevelt Longworth and her daughter Paulina

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

ALTHOUGH America is a democracy, believes that it believes firmly in that phrase from the Declaration of Independence which says "all men are created free and equal" and has elected more than one President because he was "born in a log cabin" or some such humble dwelling place, there have been times when it has not been averse to intimations of royalty in affairs of government. It has accepted dictatorships and despotisms—sometimes benevolent and sometimes not so—in fact if not in name, and in various other ways it has departed rather far from the tradition of pure democracy.

It would resist to the utmost the conferring of any such title as "king" or "emperor" upon its Chief Executive, but once upon a time it conferred the unofficial title of "princess" upon the daughter of a President and rejoiced in doing so. And for a time "Princess Alice," daughter of President Theodore Roosevelt, was a symbol in the minds of the American people quite as much as the prince of Wales is a symbol in the minds of the English. The reasons which could be assigned to that fact are various.

Perhaps the best one lies in the fact that she appeared on the scene at the "turn of the century" when, as one writer has expressed it, "America was just beginning to feel its international oats," so "the public that idolized her father made of Princess Alice a heroine after the pattern of its own desires and dreams." And they felt somehow justified in conferring royalty upon the daughter of their President when, a few years later, she went on a grand tour of the Orient and "everywhere was received like a crown princess and presented with lavish gifts." Another possible explanation lies in the fact that, like her father, she was a vivid personality which naturally attracts attention to itself but which remains unspiced by much lime-lighting and keeps the "common touch" without condescending. So the American public accepts such a personality as "one of our own kind" and then, paradoxically, exalts it to a pedestal of hero-worship or invests it with robes of royalty.

When Alice Roosevelt was a child she "could spend hours of time pretending I was a fiery horse, preferably cream-colored, like Cinderella's horse, able at a bound to cover vast regions of the earth, and also able at will to turn into something quite different, such as a princess with very long hair, or an extremely martial prince." There's something a bit prophetic about that, for in her future career she was to cover some of those regions, to become a "princess" by popular acclaim, to "talk with cowboys and kings, emperors and empresses and gypies, to behold a multitude of pageants and all sorts of people and things." So it's quite appropriate that she should choose for the title of her reminiscences the two words "Crowded Hours" and that book, published recently by Charles Scribner's Sons, is a record of the crowded hours in the life of Alice Roosevelt Longworth, who was—and still is to many Americans—"Princess Alice."

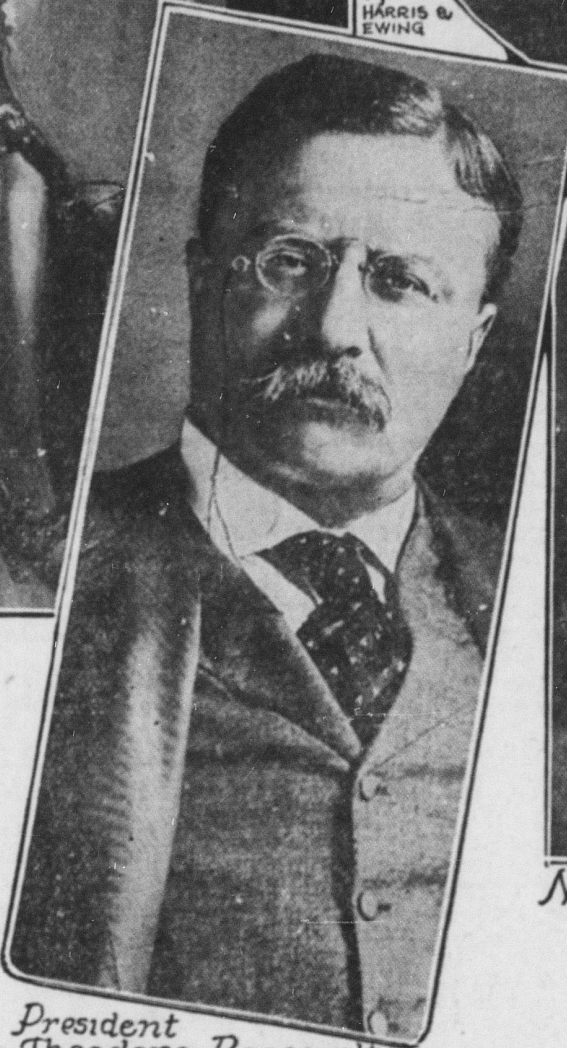
To some extent a political history of the United States during the last quarter of a century, in that she has been a participant in, as well as an observer of that history during that length of time, "Crowded Hours" is even more interesting as a lively memoir of the great and near great whom she has encountered in that center of all political activity, Washington, D. C. Before her father had left the White House she had married a man destined for future political importance—Nicholas Longworth, congressman from Ohio, later speaker of the house of representatives and a man whose friendships among all political factions made him unique. So, as his wife, the "reign of Princess Alice" continued long after her father had left the White House.

"Princess Alice" was initiated into politics when she was only six. Her father was appointed federal civil service commissioner and she was taken to the White House to meet the first President she was to know—"the small, bearded Harrison; and later I have a memory of Mrs. Cleveland there—young, lovely and friendly." Some of her characterizations of later Presidents and their First Ladies are not so kindly, but they are the opinions of a strong personality—strong in dislikes as well as likes—and interesting because of that as well as because they are based upon first-hand knowledge.

The first of the vivid memories of "Princess Alice's" crowded hours are of the Spanish-American war, which was a sort of a glorified picnic to Alice and the other young Roosevelts. A visit to Camp Wyckoff, where her father's regiment was stationed, was an exciting experience in more ways than one. "At fourteen and a half, if I was in love with one Rough Rider, I was in love with twenty, even though I did have a pig-tail and short dresses."



Alice Roosevelt Longworth



President Theodore Roosevelt



Nicholas Longworth

display it in any house she has lived in since.

The campaign of 1912 was a difficult one for this daughter of one leader and wife of another who were going separate ways, although that never made the slightest difference in the personal relations of the two men nor their respect for each other. Nick Longworth stayed on the stand-pat Republican side of the fence, to save his own political life, and this fact made it more or less impossible for Alice to campaign openly for her father.

Throughout her father's career she was a loyal, passionate and complete partisan of his. Those who succeeded him in the Presidency were somehow usurpers in her eyes. So when the break between Roosevelt and Taft came she took something of a savage delight in the defeat of Taft in 1912. She regarded him as an "amiable and good-natured" follower of her father who had been quite outside his rights when he had broken away from T. R.'s policies.

"To me there was something not quite pleasing in the idea of 'my dear Mr. Taft' as a great man, and still less pleasing as a great President, rubbed in by my in-laws, too! . . . There was also an unmistakable attitude on the part of members of his family of 'here he is where he ought to be,' and 'we don't owe so very much to Roosevelt anyway; he could have got along quite as well without him.'"

In reply to an invitation to the White House inaugural lunch, Mrs. Longworth explained to Mrs. Taft that she might not be able to attend, as she was seeing her father off for New York at noon. "Mrs. Taft said most civilly that was all right and in case I did decide to come, she would send me a ticket, so that I should be able to get into the White House. . . . I flew shouting to friends and relatives with the news that I was going to be allowed to have a ticket to permit me to enter the White House—I—a very large capital I. . . . Indeed, I gave myself over to a pretty fair imitation of mischief making."

Woodrow Wilson was her father's political enemy, so he was her enemy, too, and so "when President Wilson got back from Paris . . . I went down to the station and parked on the outskirts of the crowd. It was a sparse crowd . . . there was very little cheering . . . I hurried uptown to see how many people turned out to greet him as he entered the White House grounds. There were not more than two or three hundred. I got out of my motor and stood on the curbstone, fingers crossed, making the sign of the evil eye, and saying: 'A murrain on him, a murrain on him, a murrain on him.'"

As for succeeding Presidents and administrations, "Princess Alice" has some rather acid comment: "Harding was not a bad man. He was just a slob." "Coolidge changed the atmosphere of the White House from that of the back room of a speakeasy to that of a New England parlor." "I should say that his (Hoover's) nomination was primarily owing to the huge publicity organization that he and his supporters had built up and kept on the job for him." "The present President Roosevelt has the name of Roosevelt, marked facial resemblance to Wilson and no perceptible aversion, to say the least, to many of the policies of Bryan."

The much-talked-of Gann-Longworth "social war" she lays to a foolish mistake by newspapers. It was not a matter of social precedence between her and Mrs. Gann, she says, but a question as to whether Mrs. Gann, as "hostess" for Vice President Curtis, should precede wives of foreign ambassadors at official and semi-official dinner parties. "It seems to me the word hostess has lost its meaning, or acquired a new one, since it has become associated with night clubs and hotels," she adds by way of comment.

The immediate cause of the whole affair was a dinner at the Eugene Meyers, a "dry" house—and Speaker Longworth seized upon the Gann precedent quarrel as an excuse for not going to this "dry" dinner party.

"Of course, obviously, there never was any row; anyone who knew me was aware that rank and conventionality were things I always fled from and shirked. I could not very well tell the true story—that Nick had seized a straw to avoid a dry dinner, so all I could say was, 'I have really nothing to do with it.'"

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Plan to Use Pythons to Combat Rabbit Pest

With varying success entomologists have been introducing insect enemies to destroy fruit and other pests for a long time; now an experiment in that line is to be made with larger animals. Australian farmers lose heavily every year by the depredations of wild rabbits, and plans without limit have been tried to destroy the rabbit pests without success.

Now the government is to experiment with the python of India. Like the boa, the python is a large snake, and like it also a constrictor. It has no poison glands, and while its size is terrifying, the python is easily tamed, and by many of the natives venerated in a religious way. It is capable of swallowing a young antelope, and a rabbit would be a small mouthful for it.

The serpents reach the usual length of 30 feet, and while they ordinarily stalk their victims, they can make considerable speed, and can also throw themselves forward instantly a considerable distance. It would be possible for a python to kill a child, and one naturally wonders whether in adopting the python Australia is not getting something more objectionable than the rabbit.—Columbus Dispatch.

Prisoner Took Advice, and Was Making Tracks

A man was being arraigned for murder. "Where's your attorney?" asked the presiding judge.

"I ain't got no attorney, yer honor," answered the man. "Mr. Green," said the judge, indicating a young lawyer standing nearby; "take the prisoner into that room at the rear of the court, hear his story, and give him the best advice you can."

Accordingly Green disappeared with the prisoner, and in half an hour's time returned into court—alone.

"Where is the prisoner?" asked the judge.

"Well," replied Green, slowly, "I heard his story, and then I gave him the best advice I could. I said: 'Prisoner, if I were you, I'd get out of that window and make tracks.' He slid down the water pipe, and the last I saw of him he was passing over the top of that hill half a mile away."—Exchange.

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Floating Islands

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Foolish

Financial Magnate—I give my lawyer \$10,000 a year to keep me out of prison. Wife—Oh, Samuel, I wish you would stop spending your money so foolishly.—Pathfinder Magazine.

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