

Part III.

Theodore Roosevelt's Desire That Mr. Shiras
Write a Book on Hunting Wild Life With Camera
and Flashlight

- - - - -

A marked trait of Theodore Roosevelt was his desire as a patriotic American to aid whenever possible in bringing about any worthy contribution from those he believed in a position to be of service, or a credit to the country, whether it be an art, science, literature, in public life, or in any of the more prosaic trades and professions, and this interest extended to any vigorous sport or out-of-doors pastime of his fellow countrymen. There are many who can bear witness to the stimulating effect of his encouragement and good will.

His motto was a simple one: "Do the best you can with what you have, and do it now"-- a plea for worth-while efforts, and a protest against procrastination.

Colonel Roosevelt frequently deplored the fact that, unlike the English and European sportsmen who had written a vast library on field sports and explorations in the wilderness, the average American sportsman was content, if he did anything at all, to write a brief article in some magazine or newspaper, where its meagre or transient character made it of no permanent value to the country. Three splendid books of Charles Sheldon on big game hunting in Alaska and more northerly countries, Dr. Merriam's extensive monograph on the Bears of America, Dr. Nelson's publications on Alaska and Mexico, and Frederick Selous's several books on big game in this country and Africa, as well as the publication of several others, owe their existence in whole or in part to Colonel Roosevelt's encouragement.

No better example of this kindly persistence can probably be found than in the following letters of Colonel Roosevelt.

Just how Mr. Shiras attempted to meet this appeal will appear in the concluding portion of Part III.

C O P Y

44

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 7, 1906.

My dear Mr. Shiras:

Can not you stop at Washington and let me have a chance to talk over certain matters with you? I think it a dreadful mistake that you do not publish a book containing not only your wonderful pictures, but the innumerable notes you have made on wild animals. Such a book would be a great gain to natural history, whereas scattered pictures really amount to little. I beg you to seriously take this up.

Sincerely yours

(SIGNED) THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Hon. George Shiras, 3d,
Ormond, Florida.

Ormond, Feb. 27th, 1906.

Hon. Theodore Roosevelt,
White House,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. President:

That was a long shot of yours- Washington to Ormond but it went to the mark. Absence in the remote portions of Florida the past two weeks, has prevented a prompt reply. To write a book describing thirty-five years in the American forests with gun and camera is not a simple matter- at least for me. My long continued interest in wild life has, in reality, discouraged such an undertaking, for I hardly know where to begin or within what bounds to confine it.

In your own case each volume represented, to a marked degree, information acquired in the various steps of your contact with nature, insuring accuracy, vividness and an easier assembling of the materials.

From the time my great grandfather hunted wild turkey, bear, deer and elk, about 1785, in what is now Allegheny County, at the head waters of the Ohio, down to last year when I taught my son how to handle the rifle and the camera, our family has been most ardent lovers of life in the wilderness. Since 1849, when my paternal grandfather made his first entry into Lake Superior by portaging across the Sault Rapids, three later generations have followed in his wake and yet we have left little permanent data for the entertainment or instruction of those who, in the future, will seek the

46
woods and waters in that region.

The fact that my diaries extend back for thirty years- with some three thousand negatives of wild game and woodland scenes- makes your suggestion a timely one and I shall attempt putting the material in readable shape.

Having, however, permitted several others to precede me with well illustrated accounts of hunting with the camera, I am inclined to get out a more comprehensive work and when this year's program is completed by a visit to New Foundland in September, perhaps I shall call a halt and digest the accumulated material before it gets stale and unprofitable.

I shall certainly be most happy to talk the subject over with you on my return north the latter part of March.

I have often wished to do so before, but the incessant, and to my mind, unfair demands made upon your time, made me think that the best compliment I could pay you was to keep out of the endless line. Let me say in conclusion that I deeply appreciate the interest you have shown in my endeavors and I especially ask that you forego any reply- leaving this until my return north.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Geo. Shiras, 3rd.

57

C O P Y

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Personal

March 1, 1906

My dear Mr. Shiras:

Many thanks for your letter of the 27th ultimo. I shall count upon your seeing me in March without fail. Your letter makes me all the more certain that it is your duty to write what you have seen and done, and moreover, your duty in a preface to give as much as you can of the hunting record of your family in the wilderness from the days when your great-grandfather hunted wild turkey, bear, deer and elk in Allegheny County, down to last year, when you taught your son how to handle the rifle and the camera. Remember that it is worthless to be able to write or to be able to use the camera unless you leave permanent records, and that the only fundamental difference between the savage and the civilized man is this power of leaving the written word. I shall count on seeing you without fail.

Sincerely yours,

(SIGNED) THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Hon. George Shiras, 3d,
Ormond, Florida

Boone and Crockett Club Dinner.

ON Saturday, April 7, there was held at the New Willard Hotel, Washington, D. C., a dinner of the Boone and Crockett Club. There were present about twenty-five members. The guests of the evening were Hon. James W. Wadsworth, chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, and E. Harold Baynes. The members present were: Gen. H. T. Allen, W. T. Boardman, R. P. Carroll, Arnold Hague, Henry May, Col. W. D. Pickett, Gifford Pinchot, Theodore Roosevelt, Alden Sampson, W. Cary Sanger, M. G. Seckendorff, Charles Sheldon, L. S. Thompson, Maj. W. A. Wadsworth, Owen Wister, Col. D. L. Brainerd, Hon. J. F. Lacey, Hon. H. C. Lodge, Dr. C. Hart Merriam, Hon. George Shiras, Charles D. Walcott.

Mr. Baynes read a paper on the buffalo illustrated by lantern slides in which he described some of his adventures in breaking and training some buffalo at Corbin Park, N. H., and ended with a plea for Government aid in protecting the few remaining buffalo in the country.

He was followed by Dr. Merriam, Mr. Lacey, Mr. Shiras, Mr. Pinchot and others, the general opinion being that it would be better to keep up a number of small herds in different places than to attempt to have one large herd, which might be entirely destroyed by accident or disease.

Mr. Roosevelt, being called on, made a vigorous speech that was enthusiastically received. His theme was that the difference between the civilized man and the primitive man is that the civilized man leaves behind him a record of things done; and with this statement as a text he proceeded to urge an eminent naturalist present to publish the results of his investigations into the life histories of various North American mammals.

The dinner was a most excellent one and the occasion greatly enjoyed. During the meal a flash photograph was taken, which was developed, printed, mounted and passed around before its close.

C O P Y

Oyster Bay, N. Y.,
July 14, 1906

My dear Mr. Grosvenor:

I thank you for your letter and the copy of your magazine. Those are wonderful pictures. Most of them Mr. Shiras had shown me himself, but some of them are new to me. I have been doing my best to persuade Mr. Shiras that he is derelict in his duty in not writing a book in which these wonderful pictures and his almost equally remarkable written observations shall be recorded in more permanent form. Pamphlets disappear and photographs vanish completely. It is only by putting the observations in book form that a permanent record can be made. If Mr. Shiras will do this he will rank among those Americans like Audubon who have added to the sum total of worthy achievement of the nation, and he will render a literally inestimable service. I feel that every man who has any influence with him should urge him to take this action.

Sincerely yours,

(SIGNED) THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Mr. Gilbert H. Grosvenor,
Editor, National Geographic Magazine,
Sixteenth and M Streets,
Washington, D.C.

C O P Y

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Oyster Bay, N.Y.,
July 14, 1906.

My dear Shiras:

I have just been looking through your photographs in the National Geographic Magazine. Now, my dear sir, no other work you can do (not even going to Congress; still less, writing articles for pamphlets or magazines, utterly evanescent in character) is as important as for you to write a big book - a book of bulk as well as worth, in which you shall embody these pictures and the results of all of your invaluable notes upon the habits not only of game but of the numerous other wild creatures that you have observed. I feel very strongly that this country stands much more in need of the work of a great out door faunal naturalist than of the work of any number of closet specialists and microscopic tissue-cutters. Do go ahead and do this work!

Sincerely yours,

(SIGNED) THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Hon. Geo. Shiras, 3rd,
434 Diamond Street,
Pittsburg, Pa.

212

52

C O P Y

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Oyster Bay, N.Y.,
July 25, 1908
Jure

My dear Shiras:

I am delighted to receive your letter and those copies of the magazine and see your really extraordinary pictures. Kermit shall study them for purposes of profit. I am particularly pleased that you are making genuine headway in your book. Do remember, my dear fellow, what I have so insisted upon to you and Hart Merriam even at the cost of seeming to be rude; viz: that to have the capacity to do a monumental piece of work and then not to do it leaves the net result just exactly as if you had no capacity at all. My own outdoor work in hunting and natural history has been of an exceedingly commonplace and ordinary type compared to yours, and I have made it count for a great deal simply because I have utilized each experience in a way in which anyone could utilize it if he chose. So it will be with my African trip. I am too old and have not the physique to enable me to do work of the first class, and I shall have to depend upon making so much out of second class work - that is, work which almost anyone could do if he chose - as to make the result of value. Kermit has long been interested in camera work. He is going in to see Chapman's cameras and get some hints about their use.

X

With all good wishes, believe me,
Faithfully yours,
(SIGNED) THEODORE ROOSEVELT
Hon. Geo. Shiras, 3d,
Stoneleigh Court,
Washington, D.C.

46-57

THE AMERICAN HUNTER-NATURALIST¹

EDITORIAL BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

IT has been wisely said that the most valuable work done by any individual in a nation, from the standpoint of the nation itself, is apt to be, from that individual's own standpoint, non-remunerative work. The statesmen and soldiers who have really rendered most service to the country were not paid, and indeed, according to our theories, ought not to have been paid, in a way that represented any adequate material reward as compared, for instance, to the sums earned by the most successful business and professional men. Great scientists, great philosophers, great writers, must also get most of their reward from the actual doing of the deed itself; for any pay they receive, measured in money, is of necessity wholly inadequate compared to the worth of the service. Finally, there are certain kinds of work in which the man not merely gets no adequate remuneration, but is obliged to spend far more than he receives, so that he actually pays for the privilege of render-

ing the public a service. This is peculiarly apt to be the case with explorers and with those adventurous naturalists whose love for their pursuit takes them into lands difficult and dangerous of access. From the days of Lewis and Clark to the days of Peary our greatest explorers have not only made no money out of their explorations, but have had to pay heavily for the privilege of doing work of incalculable risk and hardship; and their sufficient reward has been that the result of their work added materially to the record of honorable achievement of the American people.

Here follows a review of
Mr. Sheldon's book on Alaska,
concluding as follows:

Mr. Shiras and Dr. Abbott are two men with experiences so remarkable that it is really lamentable that they should not understand that in the last analysis all that distinguishes civilization from savagery rests on the written word, and that the lack of will to write is always likely to make even the best work of ephemeral value. Dr. Abbott's feats as a naturalist and explorer in Africa and in Asia have been extraordinary, but they have not been of more than the smallest fraction of the value that they should have been, simply because they have not been recorded. There are very few men alive whose experiences would be of more value than his, if only they were written out. Mr. Shiras has done extraordinary work in the woods with a camera as well as with the notebook. He is a great hunter, but he has finally almost abandoned hunting and become a great field naturalist and observer of wild life. His photographs are extraordinary, his note-books are filled with matter of extraordinary interest; but he will not publish them! He comes out of the wilds and gives his photographs to some daily paper and talks about his experiences to a reporter. He might exactly as well talk about them and show his photographs in a smoking-car, so far as any real value in the way of recording what he has seen is concerned. If he could or would put into book form his experiences, thus preserving his written notes and his pictures, he would render a very real service to the cause of science, he would confer a boon upon lovers of nature; and, unless he does so, his experiences will really amount to very little excepting in so far as they have given him personal gratification.

¹The Wilderness of the Upper Yukon: A Hunter's Explorations for Wild Sheep in Sub-Arctic Mountains. By Charles Sheldon. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

Note Mr. Shiras' reply on following page.

52

C O P Y .

Washington, D. C.,
December 18, 1911.

Hon..Theodore Roosevelt,
Oyster Bay, N. Y.

Dear Colonel:

On returning from Alaska late in September, I read your nice little Outlook jab regarding Sheldon's and my indisposition to make any proper and permanent use of our material. "The Wilderness of the Upper Yukon" followed so quickly thereafter that it put me all the deeper in the shade.

I tried to get a second copy of the Outlook, containing your more recent comment, when reviewing Sheldon's book, but none was to be had either here or in New York. Whether the article, "What's the Matter with Business", or the other inquiry "what's the matter with Shiras", exhausted the edition, I don't know.

Sheldon certainly justified your faith in his ability and accuracy and I feel sure that your persistent encouragement did much good in his case.

I had expected to be present at the Boone and Crockett dinner on Wednesday, but the continued and serious illness of my mother -- who is now with me --has left me in no mood for the trip.

Perhaps I should make a brief reply to an alleged tendency of turning over the results of all my expeditions to the first newspaper reporter who appears, and then becoming content with such an outlet.

It was the well-meant but misdirected efforts of Congressman Humphreys which set the whole Seattle press at my heels, and had I not been able to hide part of the time in Billy Hofer's little fur store down by the water-front, I would have had all my Alaska material taken from me. On the other hand, an occasional article in the National Geographic Magazine does no harm and is rather expected of me now since I became one of the Board of Managers of the Society. Most of my other articles in sportsmen's magazines have been directed towards game protection, and what I may have done more particularly for "Forest and Stream" in the way of wild animal photographs was due to my great admiration for Mr. Grinnell, a feeling in which I know you share. His paper has been one of the few of its class always maintaining the highest ideals.

Only last month the Rev. Dr. Long was permitted to occupy considerable space in "Outing" describing his futile efforts to murder, with the aid of a large rifle, a brooding anerkahn in the German forests. This "characterless" creature needs another clubbing - even if he carries a gun, in line with your talk at the Labor Temple last night.

Now as to the prospect of your ever getting anything out of me in the way of sportsman's literature, I may say it is not entirely hopeless. And, moreover, if the delay seems an unduly one there are several pretty good reasons - for in the first place I have greatly enlarged the scope of the work since you became interested in the subject, and again the last two winters have been wholly

53

Hon. Theodore Roosevelt, 2.

given over towards the completion of a treatise on the "Supervisory Powers of the Federal Government" -- which I think sustains practically every one of your favorite doctrines falling within the term New Nationalism.

While it is true that I began this analysis of Federal powers partly as the result of my interest in health legislation, and partly in the effort to sustain my position of a Federal jurisdiction over migratory birds and migratory fish, yet as I advanced in this field of research it became very apparent that I was laying the legal foundation for many new national powers you had already advocated, and yet had hitherto lacked a constitutional basis acceptable to a considerable portion of the legal profession. Part first of the treatise, dealing with the existence and extent of National Police power is really nothing more than New Nationalism in a garb compelling its judicial recognition.

Hence while my summers have been spent in gathering a good deal of important biological material, the writer instead of devoting the winter months to its compilation, devoted his time to the aforesaid legal problems.

True, it may be, that there are a thousand lawyers trained for such latter work where there is one educated sportsman who has spent more of his life in the study of wild animals -- yet suppose, by a rather burdensome freak of fortune, my attention became directed towards an entirely new source of national power -- would it not be one's duty to develop the idea to point where it would survive and could be fostered by other hands than to let it die at the very time when the authority of the Federal Government is approaching a crisis? Of course you may think that I am unconsciously obsessed by the importance of this idea -- for such instances are the rule rather than an exception.

But I have already put many of these views to the severest test, and the result has been satisfactory. However, on this subject I will not bother you further than to say that a portion of my treatise has already been used in a considerable number of departmental reports and legislative debates -- covering pollution of interstate streams, water power, irrigation, interstate quarantine, Federal incorporation, the Sherman Act, Federal protection of migratory fish, Treaty regulations over fish in international waters, regulation of non-commercial intercourse between the States, the Protective Tariff, the unconstitutionality of the Canadian Reciprocity agreement, etc.

In a preface to my article on the Tariff, I stated there what I repeated here, the reasons for studying such questions, and enclose it herewith.

In order to bring this already too long letter to an end, let me add that I shall be greatly pleased to submit to you a summary of the chapters completed and in progress in re: "Hunting Wild Game with Camera and Flashlight; an account of forty years' experience as a sportsman and animal photographer in the American Wilderness." A title, however, that is purely tentative - since a year or more must elapse before the typesetting begins.

I have given up the work on the treatise this winter for most of it is in galley-form -- in order to get my field notes in such shape that were the curtain to descend, some kind biographer will find the material available.

Yours truly,

(Signed) GEORGE SHIRAS, 3d

7

54

C O P Y

THE OUTLOOK
287 Fourth Avenue,
New York

Office of
Theodore Roosevelt

December 21st, 1911

Dear Shiras:

If anything should make me pardon your not turning your attention to hunting and natural history, it would be such admirable work as you are doing in placing before the people the proper conception of the supervisory powers of the general government. Now when are you coming on here? I want to see you and talk over both things. You must get out that "Hunting Wild Game with Camera and Flashlight", and, on the other hand, you must go on with your governmental work. More power to your elbow in every way!

Very sincerely yours,

(SIGNED) THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Mr. George Shiras, 3rd.,
Washington, D.C.

114
33
C O P Y

OYSTER BAY,
LONG ISLAND, N.Y.

July 7th, 1915

My dear Shiras:

It was good of you to write me. Will you give my very warmest regards to Mrs. Shiras? I am delighted to learn that you are going to take up seriously the white-tailed deer biography. That's a great thing to do. I don't want to see foreigners do the serious work of natural history - to use an old-style word to which I am attached. There isn't anyone who can do as well as you can the kind of work that just at this time is best worth doing. I earnestly hope you will sit right down to that white-tailed deer biography and not let up until it is absolutely finished.

Faithfully yours,

(SIGNED) THEODORE ROOSEVELT

George Shiras, 3d, Esq
Marquette, Mich.

A NEARLY FINISHED DUTY.

As a result of the preceding correspondence between Colonel Roosevelt and Mr. Shiras, supplemented by a number of personal talks on the same subject, it was agreed that the latter should continue writing a series of articles for the National Geographic magazine, descriptive of his experiences in the wilderness, with the end in view of assembling in book form this and other material.

This plan seemed the best in considering that Mr. Shiras had long been an active member of the Board of Managers of the National Geographic Society, and was expected by his associates to contribute such articles, and also because it gave the opportunity for collecting additional material and pictures on several important subjects not heretofore satisfactorily covered by his field work. To date seven such articles have been published in the magazine, totaling 416 pages and 390 illustrations. On the completion of the eighth article, covering wild life on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, the series will be finished.

THE LAST APPEAL

On June 17th, 1918, at the Trinity College commencement, Colonel Roosevelt said to Mr. Shiras: " I really think you are getting along very well in the serial publication of the material for your book, but I want to warn you that we are no longer young. The bullet is on the way for each of us, and may not be very far off. " A sad prophecy of the speaker for six months later, his voice was silenced -- but his deeds will continue to speak with a thousand tongues.