



"The letters of Theodore Roosevelt"

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'papers' from the files of the twenty-fifth (or twenty-sixth) president were left to the Library of Congress, where they have been available in the Division of Manuscripts. Looking toward eventual publication of the Roosevelt letters among other publishing projects, officers of the Association began before World War II to order microfilms of certain series of these letters. As described in the following note, the complete record of Roosevelt's outgoing correspondence was eventually filmed, much of it from old-fashioned letter-books, but the post-presidential section mainly from deteriorating carbon copies whose preservation and sorting caused some delay. Deposit of these films at Harvard and the easy accessibility of a microfilm reader in the Roosevelt Study have greatly increased the collection's importance for research from primary sources.

The collection includes some 150 'official' scrapbooks of newspaper clippings kept by Roosevelt intimates or staff from his college days through his presidency, as well as less personal scrapbooks and clipping collections of widely varying value kept in profusion by a public which was absorbed in any or all phases of his military and political career. There are the notes

and manuscripts of several of the Roosevelt biographers or associates. Especially interesting as primary sources are the extensive original records of the Progressive Party in 1912 and 1916, received from the estate of the one-time party treasurer.

With the collection, and suggesting its richness in at least one aspect, is Mr Vail's manuscript bibliography of Theodore Roosevelt's published writings. A by-product of the prodigious Vail collecting in the early years, it extends to well over 5,000 5 x 8 cards containing fullest bibliographical detail, much of which could not be rediscovered at the present day. This unique record, which is within measurable distance of being up-to-date, remains unpublished.

The Roosevelt Memorial Association continues to add materials of interest, and contributes an annual fund for further acquisitions by the Harvard Library staff. The scope of the collection, the zeal of those who have been associated with it, and finally its generous transfer to a center of scholarship have all reflected the Association's purpose: to promote the study of Theodore Roosevelt's contribution to his time and the dissemination of his ideals.

THOMAS LITTLE

The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt

IN 1946, after several years of planning, the Roosevelt Memorial Association appointed an editor to prepare the letters of Theodore Roosevelt for publication. Two years later the editorial staff was increased to five,

It now includes seven full-time and two part-time workers. The work of the group is supported by a grant from the Roosevelt Memorial Association. In 1948, the Harvard University Press assured publication by agreeing to

underwrite production costs. The first fruits, two volumes, of the collective effort appeared in April, 1951; two more will follow this autumn. Volumes five and six are at the printer's, and work was begun this summer on volume seven. One more volume is planned to conclude the edition.

The first task was to assemble in one place all the available letters of Theodore Roosevelt. There have now been gathered together, after a search through almost 160 public and private collections, microfilms of about 125,000 letters. These microfilms have been placed in the Widener Library as part of Harvard's Theodore Roosevelt Collection.¹ It is from this assemblage of microfilm that the staff preparing the letters for publication works. The procedure thus far has been as follows.

A preliminary examination of the microfilm is made to eliminate trivia and duplicative material. This preliminary screening was conducted, from March 1946 until March 1951, by Miss Nora Cordingley, custodian of the Harvard Collection. Since this spring Thomas Little, Miss Cordingley's successor, has continued the work. Letters selected by this screening are then printed off in enlarged form by the photographic department in Widener and sent to the editorial offices in the Hayden Memorial Library at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. A word of appreciation should be given here to the members of the photographic department for the promptness, efficiency, and economy of their indispensable contribution. By working directly from these prints the editorial staff has been able

to reduce greatly expenditure of time and money in preparing the material for the printer.

From the prints sent to M. I. T. the final selection is made of the letters to be published. Elsewhere the criteria for selection have been set forth in considerable detail;² there is no need to repeat here our bases for judgment. Suffice it to say that the reduction of material by the dual screening process is about 12 to 1. In other words, about 10,000 letters will be published. It may also be added here that, in the opinion of the editors, these 10,000 letters represent all that could profitably be drawn from the assemblage of material and, in the opinion of some perhaps shortwinded readers, rather more than all that is necessary for anyone to know about Theodore Roosevelt.

The final selection of the letters to be published is made by the three historians in the group. Having made their selection they proceed as best they may to embellish the selected residue with editorial comments of their own. These comments are based upon research in secondary works, newspapers, periodicals, reference works, and manuscript collections. The research work has been enormously facilitated by the officers of the Harvard and M.I.T. libraries. From the holdings of these two institutions the staff has been permitted to build up, on a long-term loan basis, a library of its own in the editorial offices. Neither the generosity nor the magnitude of this contribution can be adequately suggested. To have ready at hand, for instance, the Congressional Record, the Federal Register, the records of

¹For an account of this collection see pp. 376-378 above.

²See *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951-), I, xvii-xix.

Congressional hearings, biographical dictionaries, and local and state histories, as well as the significant secondary works in appropriate fields, has been a daily satisfaction. The existence of this library has not only saved much time but has rendered much more palatable the often wearisome pursuit of Fact. Anyone who has spent long hours tramping the corridors of a stack or who has had lifelong difficulty in understanding or accommodating to the necessary regulations of a large library will appreciate how much it has meant to have many of the required books and papers in a room of one's own.

One aspect of this editorial library deserves special attention. One of the most imperative needs was for a complete file of a Washington newspaper during the years in which Roosevelt was president. No such file existed in Boston. With the aid of Vernon Tate, the Director of Libraries at M. I. T., an arrangement was concluded with the Library of Congress whereby the staff obtained on temporary loan a microfilm record of the *Washington Star* from 1901 to 1909. This arrangement, apparently the first of its kind, was of such obvious advantage to the undertaking that I trust others will be able to make similar arrangements in the future.

After the historians have completed their research and added their footnotes (clipped to the prints), the letters are turned over to the editorial side of the house for preparation in final form for the printer. At least fifteen separate operations are involved in this process: placing letters in correct order, verifying dates and places of origin, typing footnotes, checking cita-

tions, epitomizing letters for the staff's card file, correcting the spelling errors of Roosevelt's secretaries, applying the rules of style that the historians, in the frenzy of creation, have inevitably violated — and so forth. Many of these operations are performed twice, by different people, to reduce the incidence of error. The editorial group also has charge of the galley and page proofs returning from the printer. Both proofs are read aloud by two readers.

I have described these strictly editorial procedures at perhaps undue length because they have to do with what is one of our main preoccupations. The elimination of error from a work of this kind requires, apparently, even a higher order of divinity than does the capacity of forgiveness. Over the years we have devised procedures to reduce the incidence of error, but we have not eliminated inaccuracy. It is there and will be there, unhappily, in each volume. We can only hope that mistakes will not appear at any time in sufficient quantity to shake the confidence of the scholar in the general reliability of the work; and we solace ourselves with the thought that at the worst our finished product will give some pleasure — has already — to those who derive a kind of rapture from pursuing the trail of error across the printed page.

This brief description will, I trust, give some indication of how we collectively proceed. In conclusion, I should like to say a word or two to the librarians who may read this. The members of the editorial staff owe great debts of gratitude to various institutions and agencies: the Roosevelt Memorial Association, initiating

agency for the project and source of its principal support; the administration of M. I. T., which has made impressive contributions in terms of space, equipment, and reduced teaching loads; the officers of the Harvard University Press, who have acted at all times to encourage and facilitate our undertaking and who have given our labors a permanent habitation in the bound volumes. But in our day-to-day work our dependence has natu-

rally been principally upon the libraries and librarians, and of these primarily upon the libraries and librarians of Harvard and M. I. T. We are all grateful for the opportunity to render thanks here to these institutions and their staffs for the constant care and thoughtfulness that have so greatly lessened the inevitable pain in such a venture and so positively contributed to the equally inevitable pleasures.

ELTING E. MORISON

The Collections of W. Cameron Forbes

WITHIN the past year the Harvard libraries and museums have been considerably enriched by materials from the collections of W. Cameron Forbes, grandson of John Murray Forbes and of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Boston merchant, and former Governor-General of the Philippines and Ambassador to Japan. Mr Forbes, who graduated from Harvard in 1892, has been a frequent donor to the University Library. But with the closing of his house in Norwood, Massachusetts, he has turned over to the University the buildings themselves, together with his extensive collections of books, manuscripts, and museum objects, reflecting his interest in a wide range of fields. A considerable portion of the manuscripts and printed items together furnish materials basic to any study of the Philippines. With real understanding of library needs, Mr Forbes has not required that the collection be kept intact.¹ The ensuing description, there-

fore, is arranged in part in accordance with the divisions of the Harvard libraries to which the materials have been sent. Ian Thom, before leaving Widener for the Northwestern University Library, did much of the preliminary sorting and distribution; a memorandum prepared by him has been of help in recording the disposition of this large and important gift.

The most significant parts of the collection, from the standpoint of the events in which Mr Forbes participated, are his files of correspondence and his journals; these have been placed in the Houghton Library. Because of the responsible positions which he has held, Mr Forbes early made it his practice to preserve copies of his outgoing

¹Essays might be written — indeed, have been — on the perennial embarrassment suf-

fered by large libraries, in administration, housing, and use, through the enforced existence of little enclaves within their boundaries. There are situations where the establishment or perpetuation of such Monacos and San Marinos may be entirely appropriate, but officers of libraries universally appreciate the opportunity to consult with prospective donors regarding the most effective means of integrating a particular collection with the general one.

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