

Bill Taft, Jolly Good Fellow

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Burly Bill Taft, six feet tall, in weight 360 pounds, in manner democratic, in politics straight republican, jurist and statesman, will take up the war portfolio which Elihu Root will lay down next January.

It would perhaps be more dignified to write "Hon. William H. Taft," but to the thousands who have grasped his hand, heard his hearty laugh and felt the infection of his genial "I'm mighty glad to see you," he is "Bill" Taft. At Yale he was sometimes called "Bull" Taft, on account of his big frame and the determined way in which he broke down obstructing barriers.

He has, however, no difficulty in establishing his title to "Hon." A glance at his biography is enough. Assistant prosecutor for Hamilton county, Ohio; collector of internal revenue at Cincinnati, judge of the supreme court of Ohio, solicitor general of the United States, judge of the Sixth United States circuit court, member of the circuit court of appeals, president of the Philippine commission and first civil governor of the Philippines, besides twice refusing a place on the supreme court bench, make a list of honorable positions that needs not the addition of secretary of war to guarantee the title.

Judge Taft is of fair complexion, and some people think he looks like ex-President Cleveland. He is taller than the Sage of Princeton, weighs more and has a little more hair, although there has been a decided thinning out of his light brown locks in the last few years. He wears a light brown mustache, somewhat long. His face is full and indicative of geniality, but a pair of steel gray eyes, that usually twinkle with good nature, can give warning that his geniality is not to be trespassed. He can get mad, but never without reason, and heaven pity the poor mortal who provokes his wrath.

In one respect Judge Taft is much like ex-President Cleveland. He dislikes to dictate to a stenographer, and does a great deal of his own writing by hand. Like the writing of Mr. Cleveland, that of Judge Taft is in a small, feminine hand that would suggest anything but the big man behind it. His autograph is in as great demand as that of any other public man, and he is immensely good-natured about giving it.

One result of Judge Taft's residence in the Philippines has been the introduction of the "glad hand" in those islands. No better proof is needed of his democracy and his success as a mixer. As he traveled from Manila to the uttermost provinces of the archipelago, establishing local civil government, his loud hearty laughter and magnetic handshakes dispelled centuries of Spanish dignity and reserve, and left a democracy that would delight the most enthusiastic spellbinder. As an example of his influence in this direction on the Philippines the following will serve:

He went into the province of Bulacan to inaugurate a local civil government. Naturally, he inquired for the most prominent citizen of the place, who was produced in the person of Senator Jose Serapio, an ex-captain of Spanish volunteers and president of Malolos. The gallant captain was stiff with dignity, and on his uniform coat hung half a dozen gaudy decorations received in his military and civil career. He was prepared for some grand ceremony and all the people expected to see the new American governor appear in gold bullion, glittering stars, shining belts and all the blazonry of military pomp. Instead Taft came along in a suit of light linen, and when presented to the foremost citizen grabbed the little fellow's hand with a hearty "How d'ye do? Glad to see you," and a chuckle that startled the captain out of his dreams.

Two weeks later Captain Serapio received his commission as governor of that province. When he appeared to take office the natives were surprised to see him in plain white clothes. The fine uniform and handsome decorations were gone.

"How is this?" was the cry.

"It is no longer customary," replied the captain, as he shook hands and greeted his people in imitation of Taft's democracy.

The Filipinos caught on, and a class of "glad hand" politicians has arisen in the wake of the governor general.

"You have described 'Billy' Taft," said ex-Secretary of State Day to the late President McKinley one day in 1899. The two were traveling on a railroad train to Canton, O., and earnestly discussing the most absorbing administration problem at that time—the government of the Philippines.

"I want a man to head the Philippine commission," said Mr. McKinley, "who is strong, honest and tactful. A man of education and executive ability. A man fearless, but conservative, and one who will get along with the military authorities."

President McKinley's schedule of the qualities desired in the head of the commission immediately brought Judge Taft to the mind of Mr. Day, and the choice was then determined.

How Taft would regard such a proposition was another question. He was



WILLIAM H. TAFT, NEXT SECRETARY OF WAR.

asked to Washington, and in President McKinley's private office there occurred a conference that showed the stuff the future governor of the Philippines was made of. There was then looming up a probable vacancy on the supreme court bench, to which Judge Taft would be appointed if he so elected. At this conference there were present President McKinley, Secretary of War Root and Judge Taft. The president and secretary of war wanted Taft to go to the Philippines, and it was left to Mr. Root to put the matter before the judge. Mr. Root had only a short personal acquaintance with Mr. Taft, but sufficient to enable him to read so open a character.

"Judge," he said, "we need you in the Philippines. You are now confronted with two propositions—an easy one and a hard one. You are now occupying an honorable life position on the federal bench with a prospect in the near future of reaching a seat on the supreme court bench, the goal of every lawyer's ambition who puts reputation above dollars. You have money enough with your salary to live comfortably. You can remain upon the supreme bench for life. That is the easy proposition."

"On the other hand we need you in the Philippines. You may be prostrated and wrecked physically by the diseases incident to that climate. You may die at your post. You have the opportunity of being the savior of the little brown men, advancing them centuries in civilization and still be damned by the public for your work. You may administer affairs with great success and still have to feel the sting of ingratitude. You will have to resign your circuit judgeship. The chance of going upon the supreme court bench may never again come to you. That is the hard proposition. Which will you accept?"

Several hundred of his old college mates who have seen "Bull" Taft take hard knocks at Yale and tackle the most unpromising propositions could have answered for him as he did for himself, "I go to the Philippines."

Judge Taft is not a man of fads or fancies except one. He is an intense, enthusiastic, loyal, uncompromising Yale man. If you want to see his steel gray eyes snap and flash just reflect upon the glory or prestige of "Old Eli." All the honors and achievements of his life since graduating in 1878 are nothing to him compared with his triumphs in his four college years. Away out in the Philippines it has been no unusual thing to hear his voice raised in the songs of Valencia just as he used to sing when sitting on the college fence with his classmates about him.

There are a hundred or more of Judge Taft's old classmates, men prominent in business, church and politics throughout the country, who would take off their coats at any time to fight for him. A quarter of a century has not lessened their loyalty, and their devotion illustrates the esteem he commanded in Yale from the time he entered until graduation.

Young Taft went into Yale from Andover with a choice lot of boys who formed a clique that ruled their old class and to a

great extent the whole college. Of this party the athletic Taft was facile princeps. Formed by nature for victories in the athletic field Taft denied his inclination and entered the sphere of mental achievements. He rowed, played foot ball and practiced in the gymnasium only enough to keep his body in trim. He was not so devoted to his books, however, that he failed to respond when his class was in a rush, row or contest of any kind. He was always in the forefront of the fray.

His father, Alphonso Taft, secretary of war and attorney general under Grant and in the diplomatic service under Arthur, was a Yale graduate, and he wanted his son to take high honors from his alma mater. Bill did not disappoint his parent. He graduated second in a class of 120 and was salutatorian and class orator.

"I'll never be content until I throw Bill Taft again," laughingly said Herbert W. Bowen, minister to Venezuela, one evening while in Washington conducting negotiations for the settlement of the Venezuelan imbroglio. Mr. Bowen was a member of the same class with Taft at Yale. They were the two biggest fellows in the college and a friendly rivalry existed between them as to strength and ability to wrestle. Bowen was a little taller, but Taft was the heavier of the two. They were pretty evenly matched in wrestling.

"Up to our last year it was about a stand-off between us," said Minister Bowen, "but I think I had just a shade the better of him. In the last week of the commencement of 1878 we had two or three rounds and Taft threw me. I will never be satisfied until I have another go at him."

Mr. Bowen's wish may be gratified. When Judge Taft gets settled as secretary of war and Minister Bowen comes to Washington on a leave of absence there is nothing to prevent their having an old-fashioned wrestling bout. President Roosevelt can take them up to his gymnasium in the attic of the White House and act as umpire while the pair have it out on the mat used by the president in his wrestling exercise. It would be safe money to bet on Bowen. Taft has laid on flesh of recent years, and now tips the beam at 310.

Since Judge Taft's residence in the Philippines physical bulk has become a badge of rank among the Filipinos. They imagine that every big man must be a high official. Judge Taft is their hero. Another man they have respect for on account of his avoirdupois is Mr. Ferguson, the disbursing officer of the Philippine commission. He rivals Governor Taft in weight, and he is respected accordingly by the natives. It is said that should Ferguson be a candidate for appointment to the vacancy that will be created when Taft leaves the commission, his large size will be a recommendation. He will remind the Filipinos of Taft, who has so thoroughly commanded their obedience and respect.

In all the positions he has held Judge Taft has never changed in his manner. His characteristics have remained the same, and when he reaches Washington as secretary of war the thousands who know

him predict that his laugh will be just as loud, his handshake as hearty, his good humor as infectious as they were in college, in court circles or away off in the Philippines. He will throw himself back in his chair and enjoy a good story with as much zest as he ever did. Taft is not much of a story teller himself, but he is at all times bubbling over with good humor; so that while his narratives may not always be pointed and witty, they are bound to create a laugh by the very force of his good humor. He likes to chaff those who are disposed to put on official airs and dignity. His associates on the Philippine commission have frequently been the object of his jokes, and he has the faculty of infecting those about him with his own manners and good spirits.

"I was not a month with Judge Taft until I was shaking hands with everyone I met and greeting them with a laugh," said Rutherford Corbin, son of Major General Corbin, who was Governor Taft's secretary for some two years in the Philippines. "I never saw anyone who could so thoroughly dominate everybody about him and saturate them, as it were, with his own geniality."

Governor Taft is as strong in his dislikes as he is in his likes. Soon after reaching the Philippines he came in conflict with General MacArthur. A bitter feeling grew up and, as Judge Taft felt he was in the right, the coolness still prevails. He had a difference also with General Chaffee, but it was altogether good-natured. They argued their points with each other and were on the most intimate terms during the whole controversy, always addressing each other by their first names. The trouble grew out of a conflict between the civil and military governments, and each considered himself in the right.

JOHN E. HIGGINS.

He Couldn't Forget

"I'll never forget my 33d birthday in New York," said an old resident meditatively.

"Was it a joyful one?" asked the young man who was lounging about the club as if time hung heavy on his hands.

"Joyful!" exclaimed the old resident. "That's no name for it at all. It was downright lively. I think my wife realized afterward that she rather overdid the matter."

"Tried to surprise you, did she?"

"She not only tried to, but she succeeded. You see, she always was an enthusiast in everything she undertook."

"Barkrupted you in getting you presents, I suppose," suggested the young man.

"Well, not exactly," returned the old resident reflectively, "but her presents came very near bankrupting me later. However, they are a good deal of comfort to me now, so that I can't say I regret it."

"Now!" ejaculated the young man. "Do you mean to say that you still have them?"

"Certainly."

"And how long ago was this 33d birthday?"

"Twenty years ago."

"Twenty years! Heavens! That's a long time to keep a birthday present."

"Two of them," corrected the old resident quietly.

"May I ask what they were?" inquired the young man after a pause.

"Certainly—twins, both girls," replied the old resident.—New York Times.

Pointed Paragraph

Only the man who understands women admits that he doesn't.

Some live men remind us of dead ones who forgot to get buried.

Heed the teachings of adversity if you would avoid a second lesson.

Many a good woman can see where she might have been better looking.

An act of heroism is but temporary, while an act of charity is everlasting.

It's impossible to convince a lazy man that there is such a thing as easy work.

A woman's education is never completed until she acquires the title of grandmother.

Awe is the feeling with which one woman regards another who wears imported gowns.

Fortunate is the man who doesn't have one-half the troubles that his neighbors think he has.

Esau was foolish to swap his birthright for a mess of pottage if he could have traded it for breakfast food.

After marrying a man to reform him a woman soon begins to complain that he isn't a bit like the man she married.

Nothing delights a woman who loves nature so much as gathering wild flowers and grasses for the purpose of dyeing them.—Chicago News.

His Faux Pas

They were uttering the tender nonsense that succeeds the great question.

"And," said the girl, bravely, "if poverty comes we will face it together."

"Ah, dearest," he replied, "the mere sight of your face would scare the wolf away."

And ever since he has wondered why she returned the ring.—New York Tribune.