

# THE PEOPLE OF THE PACIFIC COAST

EDITORIAL BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

I WISH all Americans who travel anywhere would travel to the Pacific Coast, and, above all, I wish that every one who goes to Europe would go to the Slope, either before or afterwards. I doubt if there are any communities now growing to maturity anywhere in the world more interesting than the three States of California, Oregon, and Washington.

Last spring, traveling through the country and meeting men of all kinds foremost in every species of effort—political, industrial, artistic, scientific—I felt that we Americans, who nowadays are so much more apt to be pessimistic than to be optimistic about ourselves, ought to be more profoundly thankful than we are for just the kind of government under which we live, and just the kind of continental background upon which our civilization is developing. We are one Nation; we are steadily becoming more strongly National than ever before, and realizing as never before the need of using the whole power of the Nation to deal with the things that are really National; and yet we have and use the opportunity for an extraordinarily varied local life; and our system of home rule for each State and each city in the things that concern primarily that State or city gives us the opportunity to develop along many different lines and prevents the deadening effect of mere uniformity. It is a great advantage, for instance, to have each community allowed to try the experiments it wishes in local legislation. In Texas I met a number of young reform mayors of the different cities, vigorous, disinterested public servants whom it was a pleasure to meet. Without exception these men strongly believed in the commission form of municipal government, which indeed originated in Texas, and also without exception they strongly disbelieved in the recall, not only for the judiciary, but for public servants gener-

ally, and pointed out instances where it had been tried and had worked signal damage. In Arizona, on the other hand, where the people were, by stock, of much the same kind, the general sentiment was strongly in favor of the recall. I was much amused at something that occurred at a reunion of my regiment, after I had been arguing in a public speech against the application of the recall to the judiciary (although at the same time insisting that Arizona had a perfect right to adopt the recall for the judiciary if she chose). The men of the regiment were all devoted to me personally, and inclined to look with the most favorable view upon anything I said, and had been especially delighted at the way I had handled a Socialist who interrupted me in my speech. But they were utterly unmoved by what I had said about the recall of the judiciary. As President I had taken one of the Territorial judges off the bench, for very good reasons, and this the members of the regiment triumphantly brought up as an answer to my statement, saying, "Why, Colonel, you practiced the recall of the judiciary yourself, and if you can, why shouldn't we?" I explained that I wished it to be possible to recall the judges when they did wrong, but I thought it was safer to have them recalled by the action of a picked body of men rather than by popular vote; but I made no impression on my hearers. After all, in our form of government it is best that we should have Texas or Arizona or any other State each both willing and able to try its own experiments in government, to test them by actual practice, and thereby to give a chance to the States that look on to profit by the results, whatever they may be.

On the Slope the advantages of having different centers of National development were even more evident than anywhere else. The three Coast States, taken together, form an area considerably larger than any

European country except Russia, and California by itself is much larger than Great Britain or Italy. Those flourishing communities, growing with such abounding vigor, are typically and intensely American; and yet they have a quality of their own. There is nothing quite like the Coast, either in America or anywhere else. Nature is different from what it is elsewhere. The giant sequoias and redwoods, the wonderfully beautiful isolated mountain peaks and great mountain ranges, the giant chasms like the Yosemite, the forests, the flower meadows, the soft, sunny, luxurious beauty of Southern California, the colder but equable wet climate of the Northwest coast proper, the marvels of Puget Sound, the Valley of the Columbia and of the rivers running into it—all these things, taken separately, may be matched elsewhere, but not when taken together. Moreover, the people in the land are not only developing in a way different from that in which our people are developing elsewhere, but there are also marked differences among themselves. In Southern California we have the soil and climate of Provence, and we see before our eyes the trial of a great experiment, the experiment of developing our pushing, masterful, vigorous race in such a climate and on such a soil. It will be very interesting indeed to see what comes of suddenly setting a typical people of the North in a New World Provence. On the other hand, along the coast of Oregon and Washington the conditions of climate and surroundings are more like what they are in northwestern Europe, in the British Islands for instance, than in northeastern America, and here we have in such surroundings the same restless, energetic American people working out its development along a hundred different lines. There are half a dozen cities in these three States, each one of which within the lifetime of men now living will probably reach the million mark in population; and while I personally care infinitely more for the development of the country than of the city, and, indeed, do not at all like to see what I cannot help feeling to be the over-development of city life, yet every one must freely admit that this thriving urban growth on the Pacific Slope is bound to have a great effect in

helping to develop a highly individual social and cultural life. Moreover, thanks largely to irrigation, and, as I hope and believe, thanks to the renewed and intelligent interest in farm life problems, there is going on and will continue to go on a very great development of the country regions. It was the Spokane Chamber of Commerce which, at its own expense, printed and distributed thousands of copies of the Report of the National Country Life Commission when Congress, for very discreditable reasons, refused to authorize its printing. In political, in economic, and in industrial and social thought and work of many different kinds, the States of the Pacific Coast are among the leaders. They will make mistakes, of course, and in their own interest they should beware of trying to go too fast. But in the end they will correct their mistakes; and it would be a real misfortune if they abandoned their position of leadership in the movements which are both the symbols and the results of the awakening to new vigor of our National conscience at the opening of the twentieth century.

But what perhaps especially interested me was not the abounding vigor of the people of these cities, not their extraordinary material development, but their very distinct and interesting cultural development. Of course it is more important that a people should be of full stature from the spiritual and moral standpoint than from the standpoint of culture, but the latter is very important also, and no National development that omits it can ever be really satisfactory. Moreover, the Athenian democracy has taught the lesson for all time that the development to the highest degree of the democratic spirit may not only be compatible with, but be the direct cause of, an extraordinary development of the individual soul and individual mind, an extraordinary development of the love of beauty and of truth, the love of science and of art, by the people as a whole.

I have just spoken of the Athenians. The very silliest thing any people can do is to copy something merely because somewhere else or at some other time it was of use. But it is a very wise thing, not to copy, but to take and adapt, anything which is useful, wherever it is found.



Here and there on the Pacific Slope there are some curious and interesting and altogether admirable efforts being made to develop the community sense of the cities to a degree hardly elsewhere paralleled in our country. At Tacoma the city has built an extraordinary amphitheater fronting on Puget Sound, an amphitheater that can be used for all kinds of purposes, somewhat as the cities of the Greek and Roman civilizations used their amphitheaters; and its building and the choice of the site where it was built seem to me to show both a lively sense of community interest and a lively appreciation of beauty, such as it would be well to have more widespread among our people at large. At Seattle I spoke in another great amphitheater, that of the State University, as I had previously spoken in the University of California and Leland Stanford University; and no one could help being thrilled and impressed by the vigor, the independence, the originality, which one both saw and felt alike in the teachers and the taught.

In Leland Stanford (and in the University of California, aside from the older buildings) one of the refreshing things was to see scholarship in an attractive housing, in attractive surroundings. The average Eastern university, even Harvard or Yale, for instance, has none of the beauty which gives so peculiar a charm to Oxford and Cambridge. Here and there in Eastern universities this beauty is developing, but it is only developing. In Leland Stanford, however, a really great architect—Richardson—was allowed to develop a distinctive native type of architecture, the old Spanish-American type; not to copy it merely, but to adapt it to the needs of an American university. The result is a beauty wholly distinct from and unlike the beauty of Old World universities, but a beauty quite as great in its own way—which makes the ideal toward which we should strive. In the University of California the old buildings, as I have said, are not attractive, but the new ones are attractive, and the open-air theater is something the like of which could hardly be elsewhere found in any other university. Of course such a theater is possible for wide and continuous use only in a climate like that of California. At the University there are now plenty of

students who represent the third generation of Californian life, students who represent a life that has now gotten its roots down into the soil, and from them we have a right to expect much creative work of permanent value along many different lines.

The University of Nevada has been peculiarly happy in the statue which it has erected to the memory of one of its chief benefactors, the one-time Nevada miner, Clarence Mackay. Instead of the conventional frock-coated monstrosity, or, what is worse, the crude effort to be original with dime-novel grotesqueness, the figure, which is by a sculptor of power and note, is that of Mackay as a miner, in strong, easy pose, out in the open, looking across through the dry, clear air to the distant mountains where in life he toiled and won success.

In Oregon I had two small experiences which perhaps will illustrate what I mean when I speak of the development of the cultural life on the Coast, of the development of the kind of citizenship that realizes the need of trying to make life more beautiful and satisfactory for the individual at the same time that we try to make the individual stronger, and to do what we can towards bringing about the reign of righteousness and justice as between individuals.

In Governor West, of Oregon, I found a man more intelligently alive to the beauty of nature and of harmless wild life, more eagerly desirous to avoid the wanton and brutal defacement and destruction of wild nature, and more keenly appreciative of how much this natural beauty should mean to civilized mankind, than almost any other man I have ever met holding high political position. He had put at the head of the commission created to express these feelings in action, a naturalist of note, Mr. Finley. He desired to preserve for all time our natural resources, the woods, the water, the soil, which a selfish and shortsighted greed seeks to exploit in such fashion as to ruin them and thereby to leave our children and our children's children heirs only to an exhausted and impoverished inheritance; he desired also to preserve, for sheer love of their beauty and interest, the wild creatures of woodland and mountain, of marsh and lake and seacoast; and while he put the

economic need first, the need of permanently bettering the material well-being of our people being the foundation purpose of the movement, he also put in prominent position the desirability of adding to our stock of popular pleasure and interest the inexhaustible delight that comes from knowing and loving, in and for itself, the wealth of beauty in bird and tree and blossom. The lack of power to take joy in outdoor nature is as real a misfortune as the lack of power to take joy in books.

Nor was Governor West alone in this. While riding in the train on the way to Portland, Mr. U'Ren was sitting beside me and answering my questions about the workings of the so-called "direct" governmental system in Oregon. I had been unpleasantly impressed by the preposterous size of the legislative ballot which was voted at the preceding election. Suddenly I heard some bird-song—I think that of the Western meadow-lark—and stopped to listen to it. My companion looked at me for a moment, listened also, and then gave the name of the bird. I nodded and remarked that I was really pleased to see that he so evidently cared for and appreciated birds, not only because of the fact itself, but because I hoped that it was a symptom; for I hoped that those who most earnestly

led and strove for the success of the radical democratic movement, with which I so heartily sympathized, would never fail to insist on the need of keeping and increasing the power of the individual to get from life that high type of happiness which comes only when neither the ability to achieve material success, nor even the need of doing one's duty, is permitted to atrophy the capacity to derive joy from all that is beautiful, from all that is of interest, in the works of nature and of man. He answered me by expressing his belief that such power of enjoyment and of varied interest would inevitably increase as injustice in our social system was diminished, because the average man would thereby have more time free to devote to the things of the spirit.

I do not know whether all this will impress others as it impressed me. To me it was both delightful and impressive to see in the great communities of the Pacific Slope not only an abounding vigor in achieving material success, not only a public conscience awaking to the need of righteousness in government and in business and domestic relations, but also a natural and unforced development of the joy in things beautiful, in art or science or nature, which is so much needed in our American life.