

Roosevelt and Senator Foraker Composed Their Quarrel, Private Circulation of Letters Reveals

Brownsville Riot, Involving Negro Troops, Caused Wide Controversy When President Dismissed Them

Washington—(P)—The long obscured question of whether the late President Roosevelt and the late Senator Foraker of Ohio ever composed their celebrated quarrel seems to be definitely settled in the affirmative through private circulation of a print of correspondence between them.

The quarrel which was a sensational one, broke in 1909, as a direct outcome of Senator Foraker's championship of the cause of some of the Negro regular troops who were summarily dismissed from the army by President Roosevelt after the affair at Brownsville, Texas.

Roosevelt Dismissed Troops

The Brownsville riot, as it was then called, involved negro troops of the regular army. It assumed the proportions of a nationwide controversy when President Roosevelt dismissed a whole battalion. Senator Foraker, one of the stalwart republican leaders of his day and one of the circle of confidants which surrounded President McKinley, occupied a position apparently equally intimate with President Roosevelt until the two men differed over the merits of the President's wholesale dismissal of at least some of the negro troops.

Senator Foraker assailed President Roosevelt's course openly in the Senate and the president had struck back in characteristic fashion. The smouldering volcano did not come into full eruption, however, until an occasion in January, 1909, when both men were guests at a Gridiron club dinner in Washington.

Gridiron Club Plays Part

The Gridiron club is composed of Washington correspondents who, at their dinners, "grill" public men and affairs good naturedly, always to the amusement and respect of the latter. Its first rule is that "reporters never are present." Everything said and done is "under the rose" and public men on those occasions, relieved of the prospect of public eyes and ears throw off their restraints and speak their minds.

The Roosevelt-Foraker tilt supplied the second instance of which there is record in which what was said in confidence at a Gridiron club dinner got into print.

President Roosevelt for 30 minutes delivered characteristic shafts at Senator Foraker, and although the President on such occasions is supposed to be the last speaker, the toastmaster of the evening immediately called on Senator Foraker to reply. The Senator did for 20 minutes, while 300 spectators held their breaths for what was described as a battle between gladiators.

Neither Spared Words

Neither spared words or personalities and the report of the proceedings say that when President Roosevelt attempted to reply in rebuttal to Senator Foraker he was almost drowned out by the hum of conversation among the excited diners.

As a result of that occasion friendship between the two men was sus-

pendent. Their hostility became so much talked about in the news of the day that it furnished the material for cartoons, quips and even stage jokes.

So far as anyone knows, it remained thus until 1912, when, a few months before Colonel Roosevelt's nomination at the Chicago Progressive convention, he wrote Senator Foraker complimenting him on his pamphlet on the authorship of the Sherman anti-trust law and at its conclusion inviting Senator Foraker to call. The senator, apparently wiping out old scores, wrote a friendly reply, but declined the Colonel's invitation, because, he wrote: "I have some fear that knowledge of such a call, if it should get to the newspapers, might be exploited in such a way as to cause embarrassment to both of us. Some other time when circumstances are more propitious I shall drop in for a few minutes in memory of old times."

Memoirs Are Acknowledged

The printed record of their correspondence shows no more until 1916 when Senator Foraker sent Colonel Roosevelt his two volumes of memoirs and the colonel acknowledged them in a letter in which he expressed what Senator Foraker's friends may regard as an amende.

Colonel Roosevelt in quite a lengthy letter which contained other references, wrote:

"Not only do I admire your entire courage and straightforwardness (in the railway rate legislation I respected you a thousand times more than I did many of the men who voted for the bill) but I also grew steadily more and more to realize your absolute Americanism and your capacity for generosity and disinterestedness."

Then at its conclusion Colonel Roosevelt penned the following paragraph which will be of interest to both his friends and Senator Foraker's and of special interest to the latter's. He wrote:

Past Is Ignored

"There is no use raking up the past now, but there were some things told me against you, or in reference to you, which (when I consider what I know now about by informants would have carried no weight with me at the time had I been as well informed as at present.

The letter was dated at Oyster Bay, June 28, 1916. Friendly and brief acknowledgment followed from Senator Foraker. He wrote:

"Notwithstanding our differences of opinion on some subjects, there never has been a moment since the beginning of our acquaintance when I was not an ardent admirer of your great intellectual power, fervent patriotism and fearless courage."

Thus apparently an historic friendship, interrupted by an historic quarrel, was resumed while both men lived.