

The Roosevelt Bears--Teddy-B and Teddy-G

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Two boys, a half century and more ago, sat poring over the print and pictures of a new book.

A smell of fresh-baked bread hung in the air, and the warmth of the kitchen range held chilly drafts at arm's length and shut out wind and snow which beat in great gusts at frosted windows and shivered the door which opened into a dreary parlor.

The book, a gift, had come by mail, along with a package of free seeds from a congressman, and a garish advertisement from a plow factory. When unwrapped, the volume turned a blizzard day into sunshine hours of adventure which carried the lads across the whole wide United States in company with two frolicking, mischievous bears—one black with spectacles on his nose and the other gray with a western sombrero between his ears.

The black bear's name was TEDDY-B;

The B for black or brown, you see,

Or bright or bold or brave or boss:

He was always kind and seldom cross.

The gray bear's name was TEDDY-G;

The G for grizzly or gray or gay, for he

Was as full of fun as a bear can be.

Not B for bad and G for good

The black bear wanted it understood.

Although the boys had never heard of, much less seen, a cuddly toy called a teddy bear and made no connection between the plaything and the hunting exploits of President (Teddy) Roosevelt, they delighted in their book. They read it again and again. They carried it, sheltered against sleet and snow, to the rural school, where their teacher, usually not given to pleasure books, was so captivated by the bears' account of visiting a district school that he suspended class to read portions aloud:

The next class called was number two,
They stood in line their work to do,
And started in on problems new.
If half of six is an eighth of three
How much will a third of a quarter be?
If a man and a boy can lift a ton
How big is the man and how old the son?
If a camel can go without water a week
How long could he go if he owned a creek?

The book which enlivened a winter day and broke the monotony of a rural Iowa school and which, in successive volumes, provided additional years of enjoyment, was Seymour Eaton's *The Roosevelt Bears, Their Travels and Adventures*. It first was published in book form in 1906 by Edward Stern & Company of Philadelphia. The youths did not know until they were much older, after one became a professor and the other a lawyer, that before they were issued as books, the tales had been published serially in some twenty newspapers, including *The New York Times*. They learned also that Eaton, who sometimes wrote under the pen name of Paul Piper, could not have spun the exploits of Teddy-B and Teddy-G had not Clifford K. Berryman, newspaper cartoonist and Pulitzer Prize winner, drawn a bear cub in 1902 as a joke on Roosevelt who, so the story goes, refused to shoot a cub while on a hunting trip in Mississippi. From that episode came the teddy bear toy and the Eaton volumes. The books were delightfully illustrated in black-and-white and with eye-catching color by V. Floyd Campbell.

The first volume, relating the bears' tour from the western slopes to the Atlantic coast, included their antics in a Pullman car, a visit to a county fair, a tour of Chicago, a picnic at Niagara Falls, and, among others, a pilgrimage to Bunker Hill and Plymouth Rock. It concluded with a day at the circus, where the bears, carried away by the carnival spirit, briefly joined a troupe of clowns. They received honorary degrees from Harvard University, "rambled over to Copley Square to look at a library building there," and asked the man in charge if Boston culture was made of beans. They inquired

And if born in Boston, is it true
That that is all folks have to do
To master life and conquer fate
And pass Saint Peter at the golden gate?

When the boys learned that a second volume would appear in 1907, they penny-pinched and squirreled away dimes and quarters collected from doing odd jobs. A letter to Stern & Company, as near as

can now be recalled, said, "Please send us your new Roosevelt Bear book as soon as you can." It was the first "business" letter written by the two, and was a torment to compose. The book was terribly slow in arriving, or so it seemed. One day, however, it came—*More About Teddy-B and Teddy-G, The Roosevelt Bears*.

The bears, it will be remembered, were still cavorting about the East when the first book ended. In the second volume, Eaton took them on an extensive tour of the area. At the military academy in West Point, Teddy-G caused an unseemly commotion among cadets and officers when he attempted to fire a cannon. A flying machine, contrary to their intentions, carried the somewhat bewildered bears to Philadelphia, where they landed on William Penn's hat on the top of City Hall Tower. The travelers marveled at pounds and tons of silver and paper manufactured by the Mint. When they arrived in Atlantic City, they, appropriately costumed, promenaded on the boardwalk and dipped their fur into the salty sea. From Philadelphia they moved to Pittsburgh, having fun along the way, but not the excitement they experienced in the nation's capital. There they met and shook paws with President Roosevelt whose sons, said Eaton, had been pleased with the stories. Finally, Teddy-B and Teddy-G, their eastern adventures etched in memory, returned to their home in Colorado, where they rested in a big ravine near a mountain crest, ate their meals, and took their rest.

A third volume, *The Roosevelt Bears Abroad*, was published by Stern & Company in 1908. It was as vigorous and humorous as the previous tales, and illustrations by R. K. Culver were as attractive as Campbell's. The book opened after the bears awakened from a long winter's sleep in their cave out West:

Said TEDDY-G, when Spring came round,
"I'm going to quit this hunting ground
And travel again; I liked the sport;
I want to go to some foreign court
To see a king and try my hand
At things I don't understand."

So packing their bags that very day, the bears crossed the Atlantic. In Ireland, they purchased suits of green and the gayest waistcoats ever seen. They kissed the Blarney Stone, went on to heathered Scotland, and eventually found themselves in Stratford-on-Avon. There they donned Elizabethan costumes, the better to impersonate Hamlet and Falstaff.

They made some jokes about Avon's bard
And quoted Shakespeare by the yard;

The mercy lines, and the lines to be
Or not to be, and Antony,
And the tears you have you shed them now,
And the lines where Shylock made the row,
And about ambition, and the world's a stage,
And you'd scarce expect one of my age,
And Jack and Jill, and the light brigade,
And things that Shakespeare never made.
But they strung it off at a lively rate
And called it Shakespeare up to date.

Hundreds of children, including the two Iowa sons of the Middle Border, followed the bears to gay Patee, saw Dutch windmills with them, and chuckled when Teddy-B, tasting his first stein of German beer, "made a gruff grimace and blew the froth in the waiter's face." Readers worried when rough, whiskered Russians handcuffed the bears and tossed them into jail. They rejoiced when, after release, Teddy-B and Teddy-G fled Russia to make friends with a Swiss mountain goat. In Rome, they did the things that tourists do—marveling at St. Peter's, the Colosseum, and the Appian Way. They rode Venice's Grand Canal in a gondola and saw the Egyptian pyramids from the back of a camel. After two days in Spain, the travelers were ready to return home.

Said TEDDY-G, "It will be a happy day
When we get back to the U. S. A.
But of all the things that upset me,
The one that's worst is a wobbly sea."

Although Eaton claimed no literary merit for the bears' adventures, the European travels of the two roguish tourists were very new and very wonderful to lads who never had journeyed beyond the boundaries of their county. They also learned, as Eaton probably intended, some geography and social customs.

Eaton, in his introduction to *The Roosevelt Bears Abroad*, promised it would be followed by a fourth book in which the bears would "play the role of detectives and solve for the children the old-time puzzles and mysteries of the nursery." When *The Bear Detectives*, illustrated by Francis P. Wightman and William K. Sweeny and published by the New York firm of Barse & Hopkins, came out in 1909, it was something of a disappointment. But Eaton himself said he had no apology for the volume and declared it the best of the series.

The truth seems to be that Eaton, stimulated by the outstanding success of previous volumes, was writing too rapidly and too much. In the past, his bears were bears, even if they behaved as if they were

humans. They simply were not capable, given their previous characteristics, of becoming detectives. When they moved without purpose and for fun, they were believable. When they tangled themselves in a maze of clues and evidence, they could come up only with dreadfully contrived solutions. Imagine Teddy-B and Teddy-G attempting to solve the “mystery” of a lost Little Boy Blue or the goose that laid golden eggs, or even the felonies of Ali Baba and his forty thieves!

The cave was open; the thieves rushed in

And began to make an awful din.

Then TEDDY-G jumped from his tree

And ran to the mouth of the cave, where he

Called out this password: “Shut, Teddy Bear.”

And the thieves were locked forever there.

Despite the defects and clumsy plots of the fourth and last volume, the series opened an enchanting world and became increasingly popular among young people. Indeed, Eaton wrote for the Fleischmann Company *The Teddy Bears’ Baking School*, published in Cincinnati in 1907 and distributed gratis as advertising. Stern & Company published an edition of the detective book. About 1915 and 1916, a New York publisher, whose imprint does not appear on the books, reprinted portions of the original, full-length volumes under the titles *The Traveling Bears in New York: Their Travels and Adventures*; *The Traveling Bears in Outdoor Sports*; *The Traveling Bears in the East and West*; *The Adventures of Traveling Bears*; *The Traveling Bears Across the Sea*; *The Traveling Bears at Play*; and *The Traveling Bears in England*. All were illustrated by Campbell and each ran about 60 pages, in contrast to about 180 pages in the volumes first issued. The Fleischmann giveaways and the reprints are collectors’ items, as are the original editions.

Eaton, when he began writing the bear tales, was a broken man financially. The Tabard Inn and Booklovers libraries which he established in the United States and Great Britain went into receivership in 1904. Both were circulating libraries charging a small fee for the loan of books. His life until the libraries collapsed had been successful. Born in Epping, Ontario, Canada, in 1859 (the day and month of birth never were given in *Who’s Who in America* or in numerous obituaries), Eaton’s first job was that of a country schoolmaster, a task he endured for seven years. The experience laid the foundation for his decision that more profits lay in writing texts and “how-to-do-it” books than in conducting classes.

In 1886, at age 27, Eaton left Canada for Boston, where he resided until 1892. During those years he published volumes on how to learn

shorthand in a day and edited an arithmetic which went into twenty editions between 1885 and 1907. His *One Hundred Lessons in Business*, first printed in 1887, was published in Boston, Cleveland, Toronto, Canada, and in 1912 in New York City. He edited or wrote volumes on practical grammar, on easy problems for young thinkers, on how to write a good business letter, and on short cuts in figures. He published some common sense exercises in geography and a manual of correspondence for schools, colleges, and self-instruction. Bold as his bears, Eaton, if he believed he would profit, turned out educational materials on a variety of subjects, ranging from how to read character from handwriting to how to pass a civil service examination.

In 1892 Eaton accepted an invitation to become director of the year-old Drexel Institute of Technology in Philadelphia. During the five years he managed the Institute, Eaton, by working long days and far into the night, published profusely. His potboilers ran the gamut from advice on school exercises and recreation, through instructions in the use of business forms, to *How to Do Business as Business Is Done in Great Commercial Centers*, which went into three editions. A substantial textbook, *Banking, Securities, Transportation, Insurance, and Foreign Trade*, was published in 1895 and again the following year.

After Eaton left the Institute, he devoted much time to educational writing, concentrating until the turn of the century on the rapidly developing national trend of practical business instruction. One text followed another—business customs and forms, a business geography of the United States, and *Success in Business*, which again dealt with banking and insurance. Each sold well, was used in business colleges, and swelled his income.

About 1899 Eaton, feeling he had about saturated the business field, switched his interest to home-study groups. Self-education was increasing, and Eaton cashed in on the new educational vogue. His fifteen-volume *Home Study Circle Library*, appearing between 1899 and 1903, was published by Doubleday & McClurg in New York City and by the Home Circle Library Association of Chicago. The books included lessons on the world's great scientists; mathematics; world government; English, French, and American literature; ancient and modern peoples; history of science; and the world's outstanding musicians and artists. In 1915 and 1916, the American College Society reprinted the Home Circle Library volumes under the title of *The American Course*, stating the work was edited by Professor Seymour Eaton.

Stimulated by chapters on literature edited for home-study organizations, Eaton conceived the idea of publishing for private circulation rare prints, including portraits and caricatures, of distinguished men

of letters. After considerable research, in 1900 he brought out prints relating to Robert Burns, Dickens, and Shakespeare. (All three collections are held by the University of Iowa Libraries.) Four years later, the Library Publishing Company, Philadelphia, published an attempt at fiction. *Dan Black, Editor and Proprietor*, although weak in structure and frail in style, convinced Eaton that he was capable of writing for juveniles and paved the way for the Roosevelt Bear narratives. When, in 1910, he published *Prince Domino and "Muffles,"* readers found little to fascinate them. Teddy-B and Teddy-G were remembered and lived, but Dan Black and Prince Domino were forgotten and died.

From time to time Eaton was connected in editorial or advertising capacities with *The Outlook*, *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The New York Times*. The latter said he was "noted for brilliant promotion work" for newspapers and magazines. The governor of New York appointed him secretary of the International Policyholders Committee, an insurance investigating committee. An active member of Philadelphia's Poor Richard Club, he frequently entertained leading authors there.

During the final years of his life, Eaton secluded himself more and more in his home at Lansdowne, near Philadelphia, where he managed the Library Publishing Company, salvaged from the wreck of his circulating libraries, and engaged in advertising work. He died on March 13, 1916. All death notices said relatively little about his texts and his public relations activities, but each one emphasized the fact that he wrote the bear books. "The Teddy bears, Teddy B and Teddy G," said the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, "were his principal contributions to American humor."

That was quite correct, but to the youngsters who first read the tales on a cold Iowa day so long ago the adventures opened a whimsical, sometimes satirical, window to the world and, in so doing, taught a wholesome lesson or two, for Teddy-B and Teddy-G

Did things fair and neither would bite
If deals were square and white was white
And neighbors tried to do things right.
They lived for fun and not for fame,
And if fame came it was just the same,
They were honest bears from nose to paw;
They kept out of debt and obeyed the law.

THE ROOSEVELT BEARS

at the

COUNTY FAIR

The bears had learned the farming trade,
 They could milk a cow or use a spade.
 They'd taught a school and learned the trick
 How country boys get ahead so quick.
 They were ready now for city life ;
 For fame or fun ; for business strife.
 They had rested up for a day or more ;
 They'd bought some things in a country store :
 Two sweaters gay, a red and blue ;
 Some lighter shoes and stockings, too ;

Two caps, the kind that tourists wear,
 And walking sticks and a dozen pair
 Of cuffs and collars of glossy white
 To wear when they went out at night ;

And pins and buttons on cards in rows ;
 And two handy grips to hold their clothes.
 They said good-bye to farm and beast,
 And started again on their journey East.

"Pullman travel," said TEDDY-B,
 "Is too expensive for you and me ;
 Let's try an engine for a mile or so
 To learn the way that engines go."
 "A good idea," said TEDDY-G.

"I have always thought I'd like to be
 A circus clown or an engineer.
 You run the fire and I shall steer,
 And we'll make the engine hit a pace
 That was never seen in a railroad race."



Opening page of an episode from Seymour Eaton's *The Roosevelt Bears* (1906), "arranged in merry jingle and fitted to the love of incident and adventure which is evident in every healthy child."



"They took the books and down they sat,
To read Emerson and the Autocrat."

One of the full-page illustrations from the episode "The Roosevelt Bears Arrive in Boston."