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THE HOME LIFE OF MR. TAFT

His Happiest Hours Those Spent in the Companionship of His Family

HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES (Mrs. Post Wheeler), who has written the following entertaining sketch of the home life of the Tafts, has always been interested in politics. Naturally, perhaps, as she was born and reared in Kentucky.



HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES

By Hallie Erminie Rives (Mrs. Post Wheeler)

THE home life of Mr. and Mrs. William Howard Taft is typically, ideally American. Its simplicity, its open-hearted hospitality, its freedom from ostentation give one a pervasive sense of ease everywhere—innocent of hotnooses, which drew their muck from a soil that never knew selfishness or inhospitality or arid struggle.

In a journey around half the world this husband and wife who have chosen to live in such an atmosphere carry their penates with them. In the palaces and lotus gardens of an Oriental emperor, on our own flagships in tropic waters, in nihilist-defying armored cars flying across the steppes of Siberia, they exude the same fragrance of lives fashioned by home-living, of a family environment that has been assembled bit by bit like a warm-toned mosaic.

The head of such a home could be none other than strong, loyal and intensely human. But Mr. Taft gave more qualities than these to the formula of living. The broad-shouldered Yale athlete had the priceless gift of optimism, and from his attitude of a clean youth and an audacious courage he looked across all barriers to achievement.

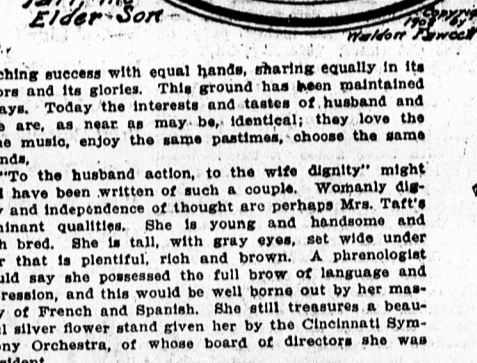
To him, law was not only the most fascinating of studies, but a breathing organism in whose functions he had a part, and to whose judicial brain he looked for inspiration. He practiced law as he performs the smallest act, with scrupulous attention and with all his might. He gave it the best he had, and was cheerfully content with its rewards. Always he was willing to meet fate even—to give it ounce for ounce of effort for success.

A life framed consistently on these lines has given the William H. Taft of today a smile like a sunburst, a frank friendliness of greeting that can no more be assumed than good breeding, and a grasp of the hand as genuine as the record of unselfish labor the years have etched in his kindly face. One can assume that the level-headed young law student then looked forward to success as he himself deemed it, first of all—to success as the world counted it, next.

Man hears three voices: The brazen-throated throng, the silver-throated few and the golden-throated one. The brazen voice, in all William H. Taft's career, has never served him. The silver voice was never the voice of expediency, but of the right, and to that his ear was



Mrs. William H. Taft



Robert Taft, the elder son

touching success with equal hands, sharing equally in its labors and its glories. This ground has been maintained always. Today the interests and tastes of husband and wife are, as near as may be, identical; they love the same music, enjoy the same pastimes, choose the same friends.

HER HOME HER HOBBY

She dresses with inconspicuous elegance and a regard for detail that demands nothing less than perfection. She reads much and discriminatingly, and has an understanding of public questions and a shrewd grasp of the intricacies of politics that leaves superciliousity far in the shadows. Yet no one could be less of a "blue stocking."

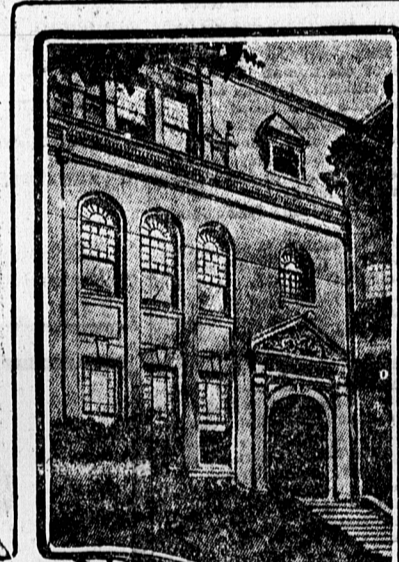
At Yale is Robert Taft, a sturdy 19-year old replica of the war secretary—he took two prizes there last year—and Bryn Mawr counts Helen Taft, the 18-year-old daughter, one of its most brilliant students. Charlie, the 10-year-old, is the home boy—a boy who has inher-



Charles Taft, the youngest member of the family



Miss Margaret Taft



The Taft Home in Washington

strident megaphone: "That big red house is where Secretary Taft lives!" Charlie looked down with a wink and said, "I wonder how many in that rubber-neck wagon hope he'll be living here still this time next year?" In another moment he was across the limb, "skinning the cat" for the delectation of the Vice President, who passed along the street under the projecting branches.

Charlie inherits from both sides a large share of mother wit, that sparkles refreshingly. "Buffalo Bill's coming to town," he observed, one morning. "He used to send us tickets. I hope we've been enough in the public eye lately for him not to forget."

"Wouldn't it turn your head, Charlie," some one asked him, "if you should become the son of a President?" "Well," he said, "it didn't turn Quentin's. I guess I could weather it."

The "big red house" of the Washington megaphone guides has many home-like touches. Over parlor and library window clamber crimson roses. No pompous British velvet-breathed footman guards the door. Jackson, the colored butler, in from Virginia, and has the perfect polish of a southern major-domo. One of the servants is a Filipino named Donico, and is endeared to Mr. and Mrs. Taft through long service when the secretary was governor general of the Philippines. The house is filled with souvenirs, each

of which is wound with some incident that gives it an especial interest.

The Korean chest and brasses, the great Russian samovar and the teakwood chairs, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, that decorate the hall, are mementos of trips to Japan, Russia and China. The exquisitely carved furniture library was used in the palace of Malacanan, the governor's residence in Manila. The wall-hanging displayed above the mantel is Japanese. It shows a long vista through the giant cryptomaria trees of Nikko, with the sacred red lacquer bridge, that has never been trodden by any foot save the emperor's.

On one side of the room stands a cabinet filled with miscellaneous treasures, for every one of which its owners have a particular fondness.

APPRECIATES JAPANESE ART

"Isn't this gold lacquer box beautiful?" the secretary said to me. "Just look at the raised pearl inlaid on it. Isn't it Japan's? See all those little grains of gold? They are as precious as the sands of life to the men who make them. You know the working of this lacquer is so typical of the infinite patience of the people! I have seen those young Japanese workmen bending over sawdust, fondly handling each fleck of gold, and it takes months to finish the smallest jewel boxes. This, you see, has the imperial crest—the sixteen-petaled chrysanthemum! They say the artists gain their highest pleasure in making something for the use of the imperial household. I don't think, however, they could appreciate this piece any more than we do!"

In the music room hangs a marvelous tapestry, a gift to Mrs. Taft from the empress of Japan. It is about sixteen feet long and ten wide. There can never be another like it, for the design was destroyed when this was completed. Above the piano hang the portraits of the father and mother of the present czar of Russia, framed in twin frames of dull gold, with the imperial double-headed eagle poised above them. These portraits were presented to Mr. Taft's father when the latter was minister to Russia.

The main drawing room is in rose color, with ivory-tinted paneling. The furniture is good, with traceries of black that set off the garbure-pattern of upholstery. A primed chandelier trembles from the center of the ceiling. A French cabinet of black and gold is one of the conspicuous notes of beauty in the room.

The dining room is pure eclecticism, but such a row as one might have found in with Mayor Townsend, Richard Carvel. The silver represents the hand-made art of China and Japan, besides old English and French patterns of historic periods. In the center of the large dining table stands a large silver vase, a gift of Prince Fushimi, the scion of the imperial house of Japan. It is decorated with crests of the emperor and empress, the former a chrysanthemum, the latter a three-pronged kirii leaf.

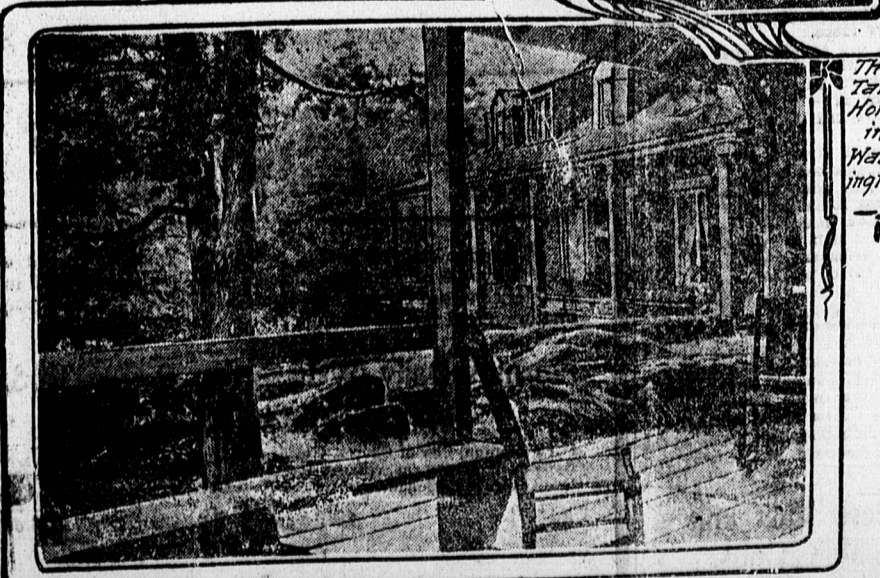
Mrs. Taft's own room is hung in gobelin blue, with carved furniture of Filipino design. It contains many intimate personal treasures, but none that she prizes more than a portrait that hangs above her dressing table, that of a 45-year-old judge in his robes of office—the favorite likeness of her husband.

In this home Mrs. Taft is mistress of every detail. The completest art of "keeping house" for her hides no mystery. Each room in every season is made to minister to the war secretary's passionate love for flowers. At half-past 8 each morning she herself arranges the flowers for the breakfast table, the same round mahogany upon which they ate their breakfast breakfast twenty-two years ago. The high table sits before her, so that her own hands can reach the dish her husband likes best.

It may be guessed that the man who inspires these attentions is not the sort who buries a gloomy breakfast countenance in a newspaper. He is one to whom the little courtesies of courtship days have not become obsolete, who has an eye for the filmy silk morning gown that his wife has chosen, knows whether it is pink or mauve, and fixes the tulp at her belt, caught with the old canopy pin he saw her wear with the first dress he ever brought her.

Consideration of others, high and low, has always marked the Taft home. It is a part of the family creed. No matter how late he has worked the night before, no matter how dogged has been the office grind, Mr. Taft dresses in the morning with his coat toward the sun and meets the day smiling. Almsgiving is a habit with him. In Moscow and St. Petersburg, on his recent trip around the world, each passing he filled his pockets with silver pieces to give to the poor, whose misery and want met him at every turn. In such practical charity Mrs. Taft, too, is clear-eyed and to rest for the work of winter, their thoughtfulness of others is proverbial. In this small, congenial colony for the spot has so far been discovered by a mere handful of families, who go there for refreshment, not for fashion—the war secretary can play golf with his sons and come near to forgetting the practical details of statecraft. Many a summer morning has seen him swinging off down the laurel and wild honeysuckle paths with his arm through a heavy picnic lunch basket and his family beside him. If the master had a holiday, why should not the servants get one, too?

This broad, human, considerate Taft is marked in all that Mr. and Mrs. Taft do. They are motivated in the uplift of others' lives, and cherish an abounding belief that the world is far better than it is bad.



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