Whenever Daniel Webster died, Charles Graham Hapline wrote a poem, the last verse of which was:

"Gone! We are like old men whose infant eyes
Familiar grew with some vast pyramids;
Given as we gazed, earth years, and it is dead.
A long, wide desert mocks the empty skies."

There has not been previously that feeling from the time of Webster’s death to the time of Roosevelt’s.

Voluminously as he spoke and wrote, the power of his words was amazing. I mean their practical power, their power to do work. He knew this power, as he knew all his powers. Example:

In 1912, when he was the Progressive candidate for President, he went on a month-long swing around the circle. His special train was running close to the borders of Illinois when it was boarded by some Progressives. The train was supposed to go to the city of Chicago and make a speech there. However, the train was turned back and went on its way, being known as the Illinois train. Roosevelt’s train was on the state line, and he was not supposed to go to Chicago.

Roosevelt explained the situation to the Illinois train. It was safe for Roosevelt, but unsafe for the Progressive candidate for Governor, Frank Funk. The Republicans had spread the story that Funk had been a supporter of Senator Lorimer, whose name was among the minor element in the State. Roosevelt was doing Funk so much harm that his chances were growing slimmer all the time, and despite the most vigorous counterpropaganda the truth did not seem to be making any headway. The Colonel was immovable. "Put," he said, "without going to Chicago I will fix that matter all right for Funk."

The next step was a "rear-end" stop; that is, a stop at a little hamlet, where the Colonel would come out on the rear platform and talk for three or four minutes to the villagers. There were perhaps a hundred or two. The Colonel had time to speak only to a few sentences before the train started. He spoke in generalities, and then, just as the whistle blew, he added as if it were an afterthought:

"And while you're voting for me, don't forget to vote for Frank Funk, the most vigorous, honest, and relentless opponent that Lorimer ever had."

That was all. The train pulled out, and the little crowd cheering the Colonel, who waved his handkerchief till they were out of sight. "Now," said he, turning to the west-fallen Progressives. "You'll find that no man is quite so happy as no one who has ever known Funk being a Lorimer man."

"Hotel" was long before it was built, but the Colonel could not believe it. It was but true. The oft-used sentence, tossed to a handful of people by the wayside, did what columns of argument and speeches without number from other men had failed to do. This is what I mean by the practical power of his words, the power to do work.

Many people imagined that the Colonel was rash in his talk, given to reckless statements. No man ever counted the effect of his words more closely or knew more exactly the weight of each one of them. As his slightest word was sure to be pounced upon, dissected, and, if possible, distorted, he could not be reckless and be safe. He spoke with heat and violence, to be sure, but that is not the same thing as rashness or recklessness. A man may be violently accurate.

Anyway, he was; and this laid pitfalls for many commentators on him, who kept falling into them with regularity as long as he lived. They saw the violence and assumed the rashness, and had fully committed themselves to the assertion that he was wrong or mendacious before they found out that he had been exactly right. Example:

In the best of a campaign the Colonel made some remarks on certain features of the law. He was not a lawyer, and the first response was a shower of criticism; but one would not expect an expert in matters beyond his knowledge. Then came a retort. Simon B. Halley, the Chief Judge of the highest court in Connecticut, a lawyer of national reputation, issued a statement, cautious and judicial in tone, declaring that Colonel Roosevelt's statement of the law was wrong.

Then what a chorus of jubilation over the rash politician who hung his mouth on a hair trigger and let it go off by himself. The Colonel repeated, with some what more emphasis, his original statement about the law. More jeers; here was an instance actually entering the lists on a question of law with one of the most eminent Judges in America. The laughter was hushed. But within a few days Judge Baldwin voluntarily issued another statement, saying that on further examination of the point of law in question he had found that he was wrong and Colonel Roosevelt was right.

It was an awful moment. The only thing to do was to pass Judge Baldwin's confession in the inside pages, but the chorus of jeers stopped so dead that the Colonel could have heard a pin drop in the dense, opulent silence.

He was called impulsive, and I have no doubt he was; but he had that trait, if it was indeed his, so well under control that he never did a public act or said a public word from impulsiveness. I say both deliberately after searching a memory of Roosevelt that goes back many years. To understand him one must bear in mind the fact that he made him himself; he was, in an entirely new sense, a self-made man.

He was a weak, puny boy and youth. He resisted to make himself not merely a strong, big man, but a man surpassing most others in size, strength, and the ability to use this strength in a great variety of directions; and he did this. Similarly he resolved to bend his mind in the direction in which it ought to go, and he did that, too. He could not make for himself a new mind, as he virtually made for himself a new body, but he planned out coolly for himself the limitations and the expansions which with his mind must manifest in action, and he accomplished that feat as he accomplished the other. He could not cut impulsive out of his nature, but he could so control it that it should never influence his actions; and in the same way he organized his mind in every direction, just as he organized his once weak body.

If one reflects that Roosevelt could not have been over 21 when he thus set about the reorganization of his mind and body, one must be astonished at the concentration of will and energy which such a decision and its invertebrate fulfillment stand for.

There were, no doubt, times when Roosevelt’s action in a given case seemed impulsive, but that was because of the startling suddenness with which the thing was done. It had been carefully weighed and calculated before he sprung it on the public. We all know now that

Photographs of Ex-President Roosevelt in Scores of Characteristic Attitudes Will Be Found on Pages 8 and 9 of This Section.
that was the case with the "grabbing," as his opponents called it, of the Panama Canal Zone, when at the moment the sudden outbreak of an enraged child. Well, if we knew it in that case we can assume it in others; but, as a matter of fact, I need not assume it. It is simply a fact.

If this is misunderstood to mean that Roosevelt used it more for mere dramatic effect, the misunderstanding will be justified. We praise William Shakespeare because of his dramatic sense, not, I suppose, because he was untruthful; and, unless we are to assume that Wilson thinks out his moves in advance or not, and there are certainly some occasions when he is not always seen to do it, while Roosevelt, by his unsuspicous way of doing the thing, generally seemed not to have thought it out.

Have you noticed that Roosevelt never was interviewed in any proper sense? If you have, it will give an idea of how thoroughly his mind controlled his warmth of temperament. He gave out any statement, even one of his as in the form of interviews, and sometimes, too, he was actually interviewed, but in such cases he always controlled the terms of the interview should take. Now, a real interview is an unpremeditated thing, in which the reporter asks what questions he pleases, and takes the answers with merciless accuracy. The best type of the real interview is the colloquy between reporter and public man on a convenient platform as the public man gets off his train. It may be short, but it is spontaneous, unpremeditated, personal—your memory; did you ever hear of an interview given by Roosevelt as he got off his train or entered a hotel corridor?

Editors seemed never to learn of this peculiarity, and continually sent reporters to interview him. The Colonel never evaded anything; he had thought out what he wanted to say and easily wanted it published. He could not be budged or worried into an interview; he had nothing to hide and the press could not say to expect to say will laugh at that idea. Yet no doubt his naturally impulsive nature was all the more being vainly against the stone wall of his will.

Furthermore, he would not talk freely, even under the seal of secrecy, to reporters; he did not know. The extent of the acquaintance might be short, for among the qualities the determined young had forced to full growth in the character of the man was a powerful faculty of appraisal. He could size a man up very quickly. There was something to do, he would tell, on a little acquaintance, whether a new reporter would fit in and whether it would be possible to use him in the "mold.

That atmosphere was a very real thing—almost tangible. It was the atmosphere of the natural confidence and natural friendliness. I wish to emphasize that word "friendliness," for it bears hard on another question. Roosevelt was not a perfect democrat. He was a democratic man, as everybody knows, and many were shocked by what they considered the exclusiveness of the development of this democracy, as in phrase, or shaking hands with the enemies of his party, or dealing with a bully run. But the Colonel had his own notion of dignity, and any one who approached in a way that he did not like would be put down hard and so at his peril. People who thought his democracy meant that he had no rare nor the colonel's dignity meant that he had no regard, when a dignity re-rose the mistakes, for they never has, the chance. He never forgot that he had been for seven years the head of the nation, and he never did or permitted an act that conflicted in his opinion with that fact.

Example: A new reporter was added to the Oyster Bay contingent, just as the Presidential campaign of 1912 was closing, and went with the rest to Sagamore Hill to see the Colonel on the eve of election. The Colonel, as he came into the room, looked at the new man with a glance which meant nothing to the latter, but was full of meaning to the rest of us. It was the appraising look, and the first respect it brought back to the Colonel's mind was unfavourable. That much was evident from the way the Colonel spoke, which had a certain restraint about it. The new arrival did not take long to pose of covering our retreat, got a pleasant answer, and we all left him good night and went out. There was a taxi-cab outside, and it was the newcomer's wife. He had brought her up so that after he had got acquainted with the Colonel he might bring her in and introduce her. It was really a sad and tragic thing, I'm sorry I did not do to offend him," he kept saying over and over.

Later on or two or three of us went back to Sagamore Hill and were received by the Colonel with open arms. "But that new fellow won't do," he said. "I felt creasy as soon as I saw him, I knew he didn't have the Oyster Bay atmosphere and couldn't get it." Then he unfolded the all the news to us, and we went back and gave it to the rest, including, of course,

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