
TIME

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HEROES: Elder Statesman

Of the 31 men who have been President of the U. S. only six were not, at some time in their lives, contemporaries of Elihu Root.* John Tyler was President when Root was born. Twenty-one more Presidents took office during his lifetime. Last week when Death, as it must to all men, came to Elihu Root, the incumbent of the White House might never have been there but for Mr. Root's sense of duty.

For 38 years ago when Elihu Root, aged 54, was an eminent corporation lawyer in Manhattan, the solace of Boss William Marcy Tweed and Financier Thomas Fortune Ryan, President McKinley drafted him as Secretary of War to organize the new colonial empire, which the U. S. had just acquired in its war with Spain. A year later when McKinley was running for reelection, it was suggested that Root run for Vice President to succeed Garret A. Hobart who had died in office. Root refused because he was in the midst of his job of giving new governments to Puerto Rico and the Philippines, of reorganizing the War Department on its modern basis with a General Staff. On this work Root remarked: "I made the Army my client." If Root had been a candidate, Theodore Roosevelt might not have become President when McKinley was shot, and Theodore Roosevelt's distant cousin might not have been started on a political career, the fortunate possessor of a great name.

In that event also, the 26th President of the U. S. might have been Root, whom Theodore Roosevelt called "the greatest man who has appeared in the public life of any country in my time." Instead. Corporation Lawyer Root continued as Trustbuster Roosevelt's Secretary of War and, after John Hay died, as his Secretary of State, one of the ablest the U. S. has ever had, who 30 years before Cordell Hull and Franklin Roosevelt toured South America proclaiming: "We neither claim nor desire any rights or privileges or powers that we do not freely concede to any American Republic." But Elihu Root was a man of mind, not of emotions as politics requires. He quit in disgust after one term in the U. S. Senate (1909-15). Devoting himself to the role of Elder Statesman, he became a member of The Hague Court, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, won the Nobel Peace Prize, was called by the League of Nations to help draft the plans of the World Court.

This week Elihu Root would be 92. From his home in Clinton, N. Y., his birthplace, after services in the chapel at Hamilton College where his father taught mathematics, where he was graduated the year Sherman marched to the sea, he was borne to his grave.

*George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe and William Henry Harrison, who died prior to Feb. 15, 1845.

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