

ROOSEVELT TO COLORED MEN

He Addresses a Small Audience in the Lenox Lyceum.

DID NOT DISCUSS CAMPAIGN

He Tells of Colored Troops at Santiago and of His Civil Service Experiences.

What the official programme called an "Afro-American mass meeting to ratify the nominations of the Saratoga Convention" was held in the Lenox Lyceum last night. Col. Roosevelt came down from Troy yesterday afternoon to address the meeting. He spoke for nearly half an hour about the bravery of the Ninth and Tenth United States Cavalry at San Juan and Las Guasimas, and assured his hearers that during his term as Civil Service Commissioner he had been instrumental in having more colored men and women appointed to office in the Government service than had any other incumbent of that office. His address contained no mention of political issues, State or National. He did not use the terms Republican or Democrat. His every reference to the colored troops was rapturously cheered.

The Lenox Lyceum is capable of seating about 3,000 persons. On the stage, which was handsomely decorated with flags and palms, were about 200 chairs for the Vice Presidents, Secretaries, and guests. There was a speaker's stand gayly decorated with the National colors, and over the stage was a large picture of Col. Roosevelt in his Rough Rider uniform, all of which had been furnished by the Republican County Committee, under whose auspices the meeting was held. Many policemen were on hand to take care of the crowd. At 8 o'clock, the hour advertised for the meeting to begin, there were forty persons of both sexes and colors in the hall. The lights had not yet been fully turned on, and the audience sat silently in semi-darkness. At 8:45 there were 170 men and women scattered through the hall, and these showed their impatience by stamping and shouting for the meeting to begin.

Five minutes later the following gentlemen, who were set down on the programme as speakers, came in and were cheered. They took seats on the platform. The forty-five Vice Presidents and Secretaries mentioned in the programme did not appear. Those on the platform were Col. W. A. Pledger of Atlanta, Ga.; Judson W. Lyons, Register of the Treasury; J. C. Dancy of Wilmington, N. C.; Charles W. Anderson of Manhattan, W. R. Lawton of Brooklyn, the Rev. F. M. Jacobs, pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Fleet Street, Brooklyn; the Rev. J. M. Henderson, pastor of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Manhattan, and Bishop J. T. Derrick.

Meanwhile a band in the gallery had played a wide variety of airs. It was just 9 o'clock when Chairman T. Thomas Fortune came forward. He got as far as "Ladies and Gentlemen" when there came a roar of applause from the audience, and Col. Roosevelt entered from the rear of the stage and slipped into a seat. It was impossible for him to escape attention, and at sight of him the crowd made up in enthusiasm what it lacked in numerical strength. A half dozen Rough Riders in uniform in the audience cheered lustily as Mr. Fortune introduced the Colonel.

"When the troops at San Juan charged up the hill," said Mr. Fortune, "they were supported on the right and left by the Ninth and Tenth black regiments. If the Rough Riders carried the day it was on account of the sustenance given them by these black arms, and when the polls close on Nov. 8 I want it known that the blacks have further supported the Rough Riders' leader. Ladies and gentlemen, I take pleasure in introducing to you Col. Theodore Roosevelt, the brightest ornament in the diadem of Republicanism."

As Col. Roosevelt came forward he was met with all the concentrated applause that 170 men and women could produce. Time and again they cheered and hurraed for "Teddy," and when Col. Roosevelt could finally be heard, he said:

"I want to touch upon just two points to-night, and these two concern my relations with my fellow-citizens who are colored in civil and military life. Now, in the first place, as you know, whatever of merit my words have comes from the fact that I'll always make them good. [Applause.] I'll never say before election what I won't do after election. I am particularly glad to have a chance to be brought into contact with colored men, because I have always lived up to the doctrines in which we all believe—the doctrines that collectively we dignify by the name of Americanism, which, reduced to their simplest forms are, that you shall treat a man for what he shows himself to be as a man, neither favoring him nor opposing him for anything unconnected with the qualities he really possesses. [Cheers.]

"One of the pleasures of my administration of the office of Civil Service Commissioner was that through it and through the fact that I administered it with absolute impartiality to all, I was able to bring into the public service a number of colored men and colored women who otherwise would not have had a career opened to them. This was accomplished simply by saying that you should come forward and have a chance of showing what your knowledge was, and if in a fair trial you could show your superiority over your competitors, that you should have the office. [Applause.] I no more gave the office because men were colored than because they were white. If colored men proved themselves the ablest, they got the offices, and it should be a source of pride to you that so many of your race were able to enter the Government service. I remember B. K. Bruce once telling me that double the number of colored men had entered the service during my incumbency than during the term of any of my predecessors.

"In other words, in civil life the only safe test to apply to a man is the test of his qualities as a man. You must judge and treat him as a man without regard to his creed, color, or his national origin. If he's a good citizen, stand by him, and if he's not a good citizen see that he gets his deserts also.

"So much for civil life. Now a word as to the colored man in military life. I think I see some uniforms here, and I rather think that no matter how far any other colored man might go, you'd never find any man of the Ninth or Tenth Cavalry against me. [Cheers.] I remember hearing my Rough Riders say, 'The Ninth and Tenth are all right; they can drink out of our canteens.' [Cheers.] I recall when we were lying in reserve at San Juan and we got our orders to move forward, we struck the Ninth Cavalry as we charged up Kettle Hill, and the Ninth and the Rough Riders went up absolutely intermingled, so that no one could tell whether it was the Rough Riders or the Ninth who came forward with greater freedom to offer up their lives for their country." [Cheers.]

Col. Roosevelt then went on to minutely describe the San Juan engagement, and said that the Ninth Cavalry was always on the right and the Tenth Cavalry on the left. He had a chance, he said, to observe the colored troops under all conditions and circumstances.

"Now," he went on, "when you have fought with men and marched with them, and dug trenches and charged and laid under fire and advanced, and when you've gone hungry with them and divided your food with them, you naturally feel a strong tie of friendship for them, and I don't think there is a man in the Rough Riders who will forget the tie of friendship between them and the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry. I say, when you've had these experiences with a man you feel a sense of friendship which nothing else gives, and I think the reason why we feel it, should have full weight in civil life. We didn't feel it for the Ninth and Tenth because they were colored any more than we felt it for the Third and Sixth because they were white, but because they showed themselves brave men, worthy of respect. And now in civil life it should be the same way. I don't want to see any of our citizens claiming or receiving favors because they belong to a certain race or are of a certain color, but I want to see every American citizen treated on his merits as a man, so that he can rise or fall according as he does or does not show himself worthy.

"Gentlemen, as the Ninth and Tenth reflected not only on all Americans, but especially upon Americans of their color by the way they served in time of war, so I hope and believe you will reflect honor upon our people, and upon our people of your color especially, by the way in which you discharge your obligations of citizenship in times of peace. If you do so, it is your right to have the same treatment in every respect as other Americans, whatever their color may be."

Col. Roosevelt sat down and waited until the band had played and the three cheers proposed for him had subsided, then withdrew as quietly as he had entered.

Chairman Fortune next introduced Col. Pledger of Georgia, but the auditors filed out after Col. Roosevelt's address and the meeting was over.