



active on horseback and sympathetic as she visits crippled children

## TIRELESS LADY: Eleanor Roosevelt Charms as Public Precedent Breaker

"Dear God, please make Eleanor tired." So runs the legendary prayer which reputedly falls from the trembling lips of the maids, secretaries, chauffeurs and Secret Service men who follow in the train of America's First Lady.

But Anna Eleanor Roosevelt\* Roosevelt is tireless. She is the essence and symbol of that restless energy which, in less than two centuries, wrought the world's No. 1 nation out of wilderness.

This week, as she beams down upon the Inaugural Parade from behind the President's broad back, she will be embarking on the second four-year hitch of the most strenuous career any woman in the White House ever had; embarking on it with that priceless sense of humor which enables her to laugh at the tale of the child who, hearing the *Robinson Crusoe* saga, opined that the footprints on the desert isle must have been those of Mrs. Roosevelt.

**Aids Soldiers**—Eleanor Roosevelt was leaving footprints long before her husband attained the goal of every American boy. The mother of six children\* (one died in infancy) is not apt to be idle.

When her husband became Assistant Secretary of the Navy during the Wilson Administration, Mrs. Roosevelt took up war work in Washington, making sandwiches, ladling coffee and handing out food to soldiers and sailors in troop-trains at all hours of the day and night.

She took small part in her husband's campaign for the Vice Presidency in 1920, but when he was stricken with infantile paralysis the following year, she became an active participant in politics, the twice busy hands and feet, eyes and ears of her husband. Then too, his morale had to be kept up; she must convince him that such a handicap was an asset, not a liability; that because of an inability to travel geographically, he had before him a golden opportunity to travel mentally, thinking out and understanding the problems of a nation. She made the trips he could not make.

**Traveler**—When he was nominated for President, she continued as a busy and valued adviser to the Democratic National Committee. Having traveled more than 50,000 miles by plane, rail and in her own famous roadster during her first fifteen months in the White House, she soon became recognized as one of the major sources of the President's vast and detailed information about people and conditions in the United States.

Her defiance of precedent in a thousand ways was discussed all over the country, the first wave of opposition being succeeded by an appreciation of the value

\*She was a Roosevelt before she married a Roosevelt.

\*The five living: Anna (Mrs. John Boettiger), James, Elliot, Franklin, Jr., John.

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of her work for her husband and the people of the country. Always her sense of humor prevented her from being discouraged by criticism. She loved it when jokesters told about how Admiral Byrd set two places for supper in his South Pole shack "just in case Mrs. Roosevelt should drop in."

**Defies Conventions**—Outstanding among broken precedents, begun by the President himself when he flew to Chicago to thank the Democratic delegates for his nomination to the highest office in the land, and carried on by the First Lady to defy convention, are the following:

1. She is the first President's wife to continue her own career in the White House.

2. The first to hold regular press conferences.

3. The first to travel by air.

4. The first since the first Mrs. Roosevelt to serve food at receptions and punch at musicales.

5. The first to have traveled so widely, so extensively and tirelessly, and to have examined conditions at first hand and under all situations.

6. The first to drive her own car on long trips and to refuse the guard of Secret Service men except when she is with the President.

7. The first to walk unrecognized among miners' wives in West Virginia and to descend into the mines in the regular cage for first-hand inspection of conditions.

8. The first to cross a dam (the Norris) in a cable-car.

9. The first to drive over mountain trails (in Kentucky) and to win a walking marathon with reporters (Chicago Fair).

10. The first to wander as a tourist through San Francisco.

11. The first to announce with courage and dignity that her son (Elliot) was seeking a divorce.

12. The first to make a fortune (for charity) by speaking. (In sixteen weekly radio talks of fifteen minutes each, Mrs. Roosevelt made \$72,000, which she gave to the American Friends Service Committee for social work.)

13. The first to entertain girl textile workers (from Alabama) in the White House, and to give a garden party to inmates of a school for delinquent girls.

14. The first to edit a magazine (*Babies, Just Babies*).

15. The first to write a syndicated newspaper column, and to assist in the management of a furniture factory (Val-Kill).

**Private Citizen**—To less ambitious mortals, what seems strangest of all is that the First Lady of the Land should choose to live like a human being; to maintain the privileges and pleasures of a private citizen. Never before has a President's wife engaged in so many activities, seen so many people of so many kinds, received and answered so many thousands of letters—or taken the stump for a friend.\*

Not for a long time was it known that she contributed her earnings to charity, and when it was leveled at her that she should harken to the wisdom of a woman's place being in the home, she retaliated in

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\*Mrs. Caroline O'Day, who in 1934 ran for Representative-at-Large from New York and was elected.

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a magazine article by saying that the conception of a home comprising only the four walls of a house was too outmoded.

But the domestic amenities of her home have been by no means neglected. She has taught women the world over that there is as graceful and dignified a way to scramble eggs for a Prime Minister (which she did for Ramsay MacDonald on March 24, 1934) as there is of advocating in a formal lecture the abolition of militaristic toys for children; that a woman can knit in the Senate Gallery with as much charm and composure as she can attend an Embassy or Legation tea in a simple street dress instead of elaborate afternoon attire (society women of Washington have learned from her it is not ruinous to their reputations to wear the same evening gown two seasons); and that there is a funny side to everything, even when one's youngest son comes home from school with twenty-two guests, and one has to prepare an unexpected supper for 100.

**Unceasing Seeker**—Mrs. Roosevelt is of vigorous intellect; her chief characteristic: unceasing seeking. "Go out and see for yourself," is her motto, "if you want to make other people *feel* what you have seen. The only thing to be afraid of is fear."

She says it convincingly, for she is convinced. When, through her guidance, her husband overcame fear during the early stages of his illness, his battle was won. "It is the battle of every individual; the battle of every nation."

The White House has known no hostess more gracious. The most coldly formal reception is made pleasurable by her presence. She is not beautiful; not even physically attractive in the opinion of many, but her every-day manner and conversation on any subject bear an ineffable charm that is completely winning. She has the rare faculty of making the White House seem, even to strangers, a real home. No guest has ever failed to feel the abiding warmth of her hospitality.

Alive, curious, seeking, actively humanitarian, pitying, sincere, Eleanor Roosevelt perfectly supplements the character of the man who is her husband. It would not be fair to say that without her he would be any less a great man, but it is possible to say sincerely that without her he might never have been President.