

THE YOUTH'S COMPANION

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The New Citizen By Theodore Roosevelt Now President of the United States

IN 1796 George Washington issued to his "Friends and Fellow Citizens" the Farewell Address which fixed the standards of American patriotism. In 1894 Theodore Roosevelt, then a federal Civil Service Commissioner, wrote the letter to which here we give the title, "The New Citizen." It was addressed to an organization of which he was president, made up of young men united under the auspices of THE YOUTH'S COMPANION, for "cultivating good citizenship." By reprinting this letter on Washington's Birthday, THE COMPANION would impress upon all its readers the fact that American ideals, from the beginning of our national life up to the present day, have remained the same. The private virtues which builded the state have guarded and must preserve it.

The good citizen must in the first place recognize what he owes his fellow citizens. If he is worthy to live in a free Republic, he must keep before his eyes his duty to the Nation of which he forms a part. He must keep himself informed and must think for himself on the great questions of his day, and he must know how to express his thoughts. He must possess an intelligent opinion upon the issues that arise; for in a government like ours the fool is only less harmful than the knave. Above all, he must be, in the truest sense of the word, deeply and broadly patriotic. There must be nothing narrow in his patriotism. The welfare of the whole country must be dear to him; and he will have but a poor soul if he can ever see the flag without feeling a thrill at the thought of all that the flag implies.

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But patriotism should be to each man more than mere feeling. He must not merely think and talk; he must act, he must work. He is bound in honor to act disinterestedly and uprightly; he is bound to do his full share of the civic work of his community. If public men do their work ill, then he is responsible if he does not try to see that they do their work better; and if they do their work well, then he must try to hold up their hands, so long as they persevere in well-doing.

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He must combine with his fellows in order to make the weight of his influence felt, and yet he must never so sink his individuality as to fear to stand up for what he deems to be right and just, whether the bulk of his fellow citizens stand with him or against him. He must work for the whole people, and yet he must not hesitate to go against the people if he is convinced they are wrong. He must aim to be a well-rounded man. He must cultivate the qualities which tell for success no less than those which tell for the general welfare. He must be brave and strong, as well as truthful and unselfish. He must preach and enforce the doctrine of obedience to the law. He must remember that in the last resort it will be his plain duty, if the emergency arises, to take arms in defense of the law, in defense of the country. The weakling and the coward have no place in our public life or in our private life; it is the duty of every decent man not only to stand up valiantly for the right, but to war mercilessly upon the wrong.

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In political life, whether a man acts without or within party lines is not of very great moment, if only he always acts honestly, fearlessly and effectively; but remember that it is necessary to be both efficient and upright, too. Parties are necessary. Without association and organization, and the necessary partial subordination of individual preferences, no great work can be done; but on the other hand, no man has a right to condone crime, to excuse moral shortcomings of any kind because of alleged party necessity.

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The young American, now entering upon his duties of citizenship, holds in his hands the fate of the coming years. With him it rests to decide the failure or success of the tremendous experiment begun by Washington. He must work out the future of our country; he must carry on the government planned by the wisdom of great statesmen, founded and saved by the valor of great soldiers. No material prosperity, important though material prosperity be, will by itself avail if as a Nation we lose either the virile, fighting virtues, or that regard for character and honor and probity which alone can keep a race mighty.

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The young American must as a citizen be an American indeed, in spirit, purpose and hope; he must "prove by his endeavor" that he is a man able to hold his own in the rough work of the world, fearless on behalf of the right, resolute never to flinch before the forces of evil; and, finally, by his life he must show his conviction that all else is useless if he does not build on the foundation of those basic virtues which lie deep in the character of every nation that really deserves to be called great.

