

# GOOD CITIZENSHIP

AN ADDRESS TO THE BOYS OF THE HILL SCHOOL

BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Although not one of the most widely known, certainly one of the most interesting, addresses made during this Commencement Season was that given by Mr. Roosevelt to the boys of the Hill School at Pottstown, Pennsylvania, on Monday, June 9. It was given under the auspices of an organization of the boys of the Hill School called "The Civic Club," and was one of a course of lectures in memory of Dr. John Meigs, the son of the founder of the school, and for thirty-five years its head master. By some of our readers, at least, he is regarded as one to be numbered among the great American teachers of the last twenty-five years. We find the address reported in the "Hill School News," and from that excellent contemporary we quote the substance of the address.—THE EDITORS.

**M**R. CHAIRMAN, and you members of the school, and parents: It is about sixteen years ago that I came to the Hill School to speak, and I have always remembered my visit. I take a peculiar interest in speaking to you, as introduced by the President of the Civic Club, because I feel that every school such as this fails in its duty unless it turns out men who in after life will play a useful part in the world. The first thing I want to say to you here, to the boys of the school, is that the only efficient way in which, in after life, you

can show your gratitude to the school is by the kind of reputation you win in the great world. You cannot, save in wholly exceptional cases, individually do much of direct return to the school itself for what the school has done for you. Your return must be in the way of adding to the school's good name, adding to the sum of reputation which will come, and can come only, from the part played by the graduates of the school in the life of the Nation after they have graduated.

The first point that I want to make with you is the dual character of the obligation

that rests on you when you leave' here ; that is, that first you have got to be efficient, and next, and equally, you have got to be decent and straight.

The one thing that I wish to see avoided in this connection is a segregation of our people into two camps : the camp of those who know how and can do things but who do them crookedly, and the camp of those who have excellent purposes and no power to achieve them. I am not in the least interested in virtue that is only virtue in the abstract. I want to hold up to you nothing in the way of an ideal that you cannot live up to if you have got in you the right stuff for citizenship. That is why I want to dwell upon the need of your combining the qualities of idealism and efficiency.

First, efficiency. Remember that you cannot do good to anybody else until you can pull your own weight, and no amount of lofty ambition will atone in the least if you have not the practical efficiency that will make you count among your fellows. I don't care in what line of work you make the effort, you cannot be a benefit from the standpoint of those with high aspirations until in addition to the high aspirations you develop the trait that will enable you to put them into effect.

If I were speaking only to the Civic Club, for instance, I should say to you that you would be perfectly worthless in politics if you did not have a lofty purpose, but that you would also be utterly worthless if you did not possess the necessary physical and moral robustness to do more than meet other men like yourselves in politics and say, "How nice it would be to have that lofty purpose realized in our National life!" If you go into politics with an idea that merely because you have, and because you have announced that you have, fine qualities, you are going to have any special consideration shown you, you will be left.

What is true of politics is just as true of business. I do not want you to think even for a moment that I intend to put efficiency as the sole idea before you. I do not. I shall speak of that later. But you must have it. You cannot do any good to anybody as a business man unless you make your business succeed. You cannot take care of those who work for you unless you are such a good business man that there will be something that you have to divide with them. If you do not earn anything you cannot divide it,

because it is not there to divide. If you take up newspaper work, unless you can make a newspaper which people will read, then it does not make any difference what you write in it ; some one has got to read it, or else the writing does not do any good. I could extend that beyond newspaper men. I could extend it to the pathetic portion of the brotherhood of authors (I am one of them—one of the authors—myself, not one of the pathetic portion) who keep writing to me and explaining that they have written poems or essays or novels of such unexampled excellency of purpose, but that nobody will read them. Then the poor, good people usually ask me to get them read, or tell them how they can get them read. There is not any answer that I can make, except to make them interesting, which, although excellent advice, is a little too large to meet the needs of the case. What is true of the man with the newspaper, and true of the business man, is true of the public servant, is true in every relation of life. You must be efficient, you must be able to hold your own in the world of politics, the world of business, able to keep your own head above water, to make your work satisfactory, to make it pay. If you do not, you cannot do good to others. You must be efficient. You must never forget for a moment that, so far from the doctrine of efficiency being a base theory, it is a vital doctrine, a doctrine vital to good in this country. If the elders as well as the boys would keep that in mind, they would appreciate better what I regard as one of the cardinal political doctrines that should be preached in this country, the doctrine that we should never penalize efficiency ; that the line we should draw on business is on conduct and not on size ; the line that we should draw, and what we should discriminate against, is misconduct in any phase, and not efficiency. If the efficiency is gauged by misconduct, then strike it, but strike it incidentally, not as efficiency, but as misconduct. If a man in any way owes his business success to swindling, to sharp practices, get at him under the law if you can, get at him by public opinion if you cannot get at him under the law, but do not get at him because he is efficient. Get at him because he has done evil, get at him because he has achieved his efficiency in anti-social, in improper fashion.

So with politics. One of the hardest things to do is to make men understand (this will



be especially appropriate in speaking to the members of the Civic Club) that efficiency in politics does not atone for public immorality, and that morality, good intentions, decent conduct, all together do not atone for inefficiency. You must have both traits. I am always tempted to illustrate what I mean by referring, simply because it is so easy to understand and so clear, to army experiences. Take my own brief military experience, merely an experience of four months, but it gave me in part an understanding of all the problems that come in connection with soldiery, of the problems that were fronted on a gigantic scale by your fathers in the days of the Civil War. I could gain nothing with any man in the regiment unless he had the right purpose in him. I did not want him unless he had the right purpose in him; but even if he had the right purpose, even if he was boiling with patriotic enthusiasm, he was not of the least use to me if he could not shoot and walk and ride. And I could not accept any amount of patriotic fervor as offsetting a slight tendency to run away.

I am speaking now to a body which has had peculiar advantages in training. I am speaking to boys, young men, who will speedily be out in the world, to whom we shall speedily be able to look for leadership in their respective communities. I have a right to expect that you will remember that your duty is twofold: that you cannot for one moment forget that you are worthless unless you make yourselves count in the world, and also that if you make yourselves count for evil you are not merely worthless, you are worse than worthless. You must, if you want to do your part in the world, remember that you must pull your own weight; that until you have pulled your own weight you cannot help any one else. And then further remember, having pulled your own weight, you must strive to work for the common good.

And you, boys of the Hill School, and the undergraduates of every large school and of every college in this land, know that the supreme test in the effort to get clean athletics comes when you are required to condemn your own side and not the other side. It is perfectly easy to arouse indignation against foul play in the other team, but you never get clean athletics until you get a sentiment which will condemn successful trickery in your own interest. Until you can get that, until you can get a sentiment which

will back up the principle of professors when they will not let the man who plays foully play on the team at all, until you can get that, you do not get fair play in athletics, you do not get the right kind of sporting spirit. It is the same thing in public life. Until we get a public opinion so genuine that the man on the side that is benefited will condemn the crooked act of the successful politician, until we can get that tone, we cannot get the right standard of public conduct in this country. You must have efficiency, and you must have high idealism combined with efficiency.

I want to say a word to the two different classes of boys to be found in this as in all similar schools. Some of you boys, I suppose the big majority, in fact (I rather hope the big majority), will, when you leave, have to work for your own livelihood, just as my boys will have to. I do not pity you at all, unless you are afraid of working for your livelihood. In that case I pity you, but with the pity that is akin not to love but to contempt. Then there is in addition the smaller number who do not have to work for their own livelihood. I want to say a word to the latter first. You will sometimes find that people advise the boys of the country of the latter class to go into active business when they become men, just as if their own livelihood depended on it.

There is in this country ample room for non-remunerative work, but there is no room at all for leisure that is not spent in work. I wish it were possible to express as strenuously as I feel it that the man, whatever means he has, who does no work, real work, hard work, is a useless cumberer of the world's surface, is not only a useless citizen (I am not putting it quite strong enough), is not only a useless cumberer of the world's surface, but by his mere existence represents just so much of a detriment to the community as a whole. If one of you here, a graduate of the Hill School—especially if he goes to college afterward and graduates from that college—if one of you with that education, with that training, and with ample means, then becomes not even a noxious but merely a useless member of society, he is discrediting himself and his associates. He is a discredit to his school and to his college, he is a discredit to the people with whom he associates. He is a social menace, because his existence tends to give point to the animosity, the slumbering animosity, which is

so easy always to awaken, of the "have nots" against the "haves." The man who has, and who makes a bad use or makes no use of what he has, is one of the prime menaces to our social system to-day.

I believe in happiness, I believe in pleasure, I believe in having just as good a time in life as you can have, and I do not believe you will have any good time at all in life unless the good time comes as an incident of the doing of duty—doing some work worth doing. The men I have known whom I respect and admire are, without exception, men who have achieved something worth achieving, by effort, by the acceptance, perhaps, of risk and hardship, by hard work and even by dreary work, who have had their eyes fixed on a goal worth striving for and have striven steadily toward it; and those are the men who have had real happiness in life. I know a considerable number of people, men whom I knew in my youth, whom I know slightly now, who have with more or less intelligent industry devoted themselves to having a good time. They strike me as having had an uncommonly poor time; and the very few of them who have enjoyment have it only because gradually their brains have atrophied so as to enable them to take pleasure out of the infinitely vapid.

In any institution such as this, all of you know that the boy is not really happy if he does not have some school feeling, that you cannot have a school a success at all unless the average boy in it thinks not only of his own individual success, but thinks of the school success. He may think of it in a great many ways. He is pretty sure to think of

it in connection with the "eleven" and the "nine," and to develop a very fervid patriotism toward the close of either the baseball or the football season. As he gets more of a sense of responsibility in the upper forms, he grows to think of the standing of the school in all respects, and part of his own pleasure and of his own pride comes not only in his own achievements, but in the sum of the achievements of himself and his fellows in the school. If you do not get that feeling in the school, the school goes down. It is the same thing in the country on a large scale. If, when you get out into actual life, you do not grow to feel, and to feel continually more and more, that in addition to your own success you wish to see community success, you wish to see National success, if you are not influenced by these emotions taken in the aggregate, you lose a large part of your power for usefulness, you lose a large part of your power of achieving not merely success, but happiness.

In short, to-day, under the auspices of the Civic Club, I preach to you the doctrine of realizable idealism. I preach to you the doctrine that in after life, whether you go into politics as a career, or whether, as every good citizen should, you go into politics as a decent citizen, whether you are making a career of it or not, or into business or literature or art or any of the professions, that wherever you work you must set before yourselves high ideals, and you must set them before you in realizable fashion. You will amount to nothing unless you have the ideals, and you will amount to nothing unless in good faith you strive to realize them.