# WORKS OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT IN FOURTEEN VOLUMES, VOL. XII. THE STRENUOUS LIFE

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Works of Theodore Roosevelt in Fourteen Volumes, Vol. XII. The Strenuous Life by Theodore Roosevelt

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### THEODORE ROOSEVELT

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How dull it is to pause, to make an end. To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use! As the to breathe were life. Life piled on life Were all too little, and of one to me Little remains: but every hour is saved From that eternal silence, something more, A bringer of new things; and vile it were For some three suns to store and heard myself, And this gray spirit yearning in desire To follow knowledge like a sinking star. Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took. The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed. Free hearts, free forcheads—you and I are old; Old age hath yet his honor and his toil; Death closes all; but something ere the end, Some work of noble note, may yet be done.—

Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding ferrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, cutil I die.

—Tennyson's "Ulysses."

Ja! diesem Sinne bin ich ganz ergeben,
Dass ist der Weisheit letzter Schluss;
Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben,
Der täglich sie erobern muss,
Und so verbringt, umrungen von Gefahr,
Hier Kindheit, Mann und Greis sein tüchtig Jahr,
Solch' ein Gewimmel möcht' ich sehn,
Auf freiem Grund mit freiem Volke stehn.

-Goethe's "Faust."

Executive Mansion, Albany, N. Y. September, 1990.



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#### THE STRENUOUS LIFE

SPEECH BEFORE THE HAMILTON CLUB, CHICAGO, APRIL 10, 1899

In Speaking to you, men of the greatest city of the West, men of the State which gave to the country Lincoln and Grant, men who pre-eminently and distinctly embody all that is most American in the American character, I wish to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease, but the doctrine of the strenuous life, the life of toil and effort, of labor and strife; to preach that highest form of success which comes, not to the man who desires mere gasy peace, but to the man who does not shrink from danger, from hardship, or from bitter toil, and who out of these wins the splendid ultimate triumph.

A life of slothful ease, a life of that peace which springs merely from lack either of desire or of power to strive after great things, is as little worthy of a nation as of an individual. I ask only that what every self-respecting American demands from himself and from his sons shall be demanded of the American nation as a whole. Who among you would teach your boys that ease, that peace, is to be

the first consideration in their eyes-to be the ultimate goal after which they strive? You men of Chicago have made this city great, you men of Illinois have done your share, and more than your share, in making America great, because you neither preach nor practice such a doctrine. You work yourselves, and you bring up your sons to work. If you are rich and are worth your salt, you will teach your sons that though they may have leisure, it is not to be spent in idleness; for wisely used leisure merely means that those who possess it, being free from the necessity of working for their livelihood, are all the more bound to carry on some kind of non-remunerative work in science, in letters, in art, in exploration, in historical research-work of the type we most need in this country, the successful carrying out of which reflects most honor upon the nation. We do not admire the man of timid peace. We admire the man who embodies victorious effort: the man who never wrongs his neighbor, who is prompt to help a friend, but who has those virile qualities necessary to win in the stern strife of actual It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed. In this life we get nothing save by effort. Freedom from effort in the present merely means that there has been stored up effort in the A man can be freed from the necessity of work only by the fact that he or his fathers before

him have worked to good purpose. If the freedom thus purchased is used aright, and the man still does actual work, though of a different kind, whether as a writer or a general, whether in the field of politics or in the field of exploration and adventure, he shows he deserves his good fortune. But if he treats this period of freedom from the need of actual labor as a period, not of preparation, but of mere enjoyment, even though perhaps not of vicious enjoyment, he shows that he is simply a cumberer of the earth's surface, and he surely unfits himself to hold his own with his fellows if the need to do so should again arise. A mere life of ease is not in the end a very satisfactory life, and, above all, it is a life which ultimately unfits those who follow it for serious work in the world.

In the last analysis a healthy state can exist only when the men and women who make it up lead clean, vigorous, healthy lives; when the children are so trained that they shall endeavor, not to shirk difficulties, but to overcome them; not to seek ease, but to know how to wrest triumph from toil and risk. The man must be glad to do a man's work, to dare and endure and to labor; to keep himself, and to keep those dependent upon him. The woman must be the housewife, the helpmeet of the homemaker, the wise and fearless mother of many healthy children. In one of Daudet's powerful and melancholy