AMERICAN IDEALS AND OTHER ESSAYS, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL; VOLUME I

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649180684

American ideals and other essays, social and political; Volume I by Theodore Roosevelt

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THEODORE ROOSEVELT

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UNIFORM EDITION

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AND

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By
THEODORE ROOSEVELT

VOLUME I.

PHILADELPHIA
GEBBIE AND COMPANY
1903

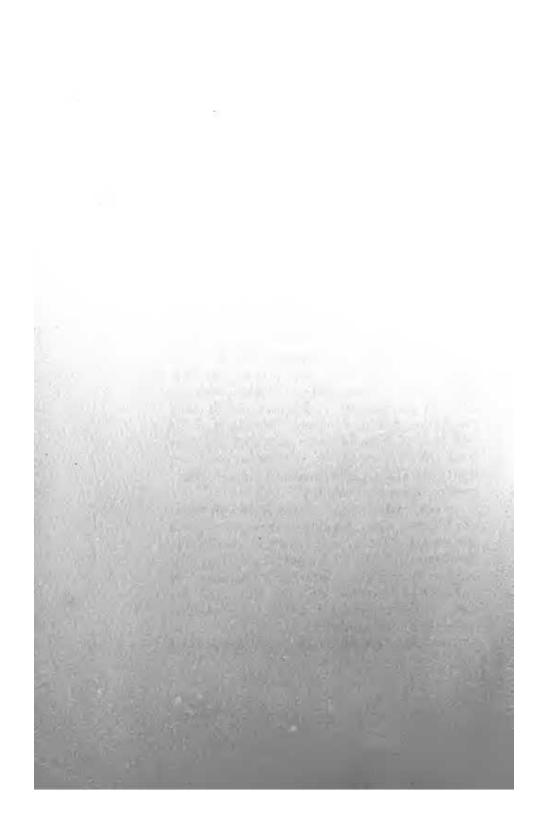
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E660 R8 1903 v.1

TO
HENRY CABOT LODGE

October, 1897



PREFACE

It is not difficult to be virtuous in a cloistered and negative way. Neither is it difficult to succeed, after a fashion, in active life, if one is content to disregard the considerations which bind honorable and upright men. But it is by no means easy to combine honesty and efficiency; and yet it is absolutely necessary in order to do any work really worth doing. It is not hard, while sitting in one's study, to devise admirable plans for the betterment of politics and of social conditions; but in practice it too often proves very hard to make any such plan work at all, no matter how imperfectly. Yet the effort must continually be made, under penalty of constant retrogression in our political life.

No one quality or one virtue is enough to insure success; vigor, honesty, common sense,—all are needed. The practical man is merely rendered more noxious by his practical ability if he employs it wrongly, whether from ignorance or from lack of morality; while the doctrinaire, the man of theories, whether written or spoken, is useless if he cannot also act.

These essays are written on behalf of the many

men who do take an actual part in trying practically to bring about the conditions for which we somewhat vaguely hope; on behalf of the underofficers in that army which, with much stumbling, halting, and slipping, many mistakes and short-comings, and many painful failures, does, nevertheless, through weary strife, accomplish something toward raising the standard of public life.

We feel that the doer is better than the critic and that the man who strives stands far above the man who stands aloof, whether he thus stands aloof because of pessimism or because of sheer weakness. To borrow a simile from the football field, we believe that men must play fair, but that there must be no shirking, and that success can only come to the player who "hits the line hard."

Theodore Roosevels-

SAGAMORE HILL, October, 1897.