

Carry a Big Stick: The Uncommon Heroism of Theodore Roosevelt by George Grant, Cumberland House Publishing, 2012 (6 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

It is not the critic that counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly, who errs, and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming: but who does actually strive to do the deeds." ¹²⁶

¹²⁶. Thomas Russell, ed, Lilt and (York of Theodore Roosevelt (New York: L.H. Walter) p. 257.

1. Leaders were Disciples.

Roosevelt was convinced that leadership could not exist in isolation. Leadership had to be modeled after some tangible, practical, and realizable ideal. Thus, all great leaders were, in truth, simply students of men of unimpeachable character, unrepachable courage, and unswerving vision. Leaders had mentors. They were disciples. Rather than striking out as lonely pioneers, they were willing to stand on the shoulders of those who had gone before. They were men who comprehended the sober notion of legacy. [Page 89]

2. Doctrine of Strenuous Life.

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 easy peace but to the man who does not shrink from danger, hardship, or from the bitter toil and who out of these wins the splendid ultimate triumph.

Roosevelt did not believe greatness could be inherited. Our great legacy merely affords us with potential. It is up to each succeeding generation to give a good account of what they have been given. "Leaders are those," he asserted, "who make the most of every moment, of every opportunity, and of every available resource:" To be sure, he practiced what he preached. [Page 148]

3. Pursue the Ideal.

Leadership is the art of pursuing the ideal in the midst of a world that is less than ideal-and never losing sight of either notion. Thus, the stewardship of nature was Roosevelt's chief concern, not the sanctity of nature. Such balance is rare indeed. [Page 103]

4. Perfect Whirl of Work.

I am of course in a perfect whirl of work and have every kind of worry and trouble-but that's what I am here for, and down at bottom, I enjoy it after all. [Page 96]

5. Read a Lot

He usually read at least five books a week-unless he wasn't too busy, in which case he read more. And yet his attitude toward the torrid pace of his intellectual pursuit was refreshingly relaxed. [p.76]

6. Better for Reading a Book.

I am old-fashioned, or sentimental, or something about books. Whenever I read one I want, in the first place, to enjoy myself, and, in the next place, to feel that I am a little better and not a little worse for having read it." [Page 96]