

THE DUTIES OF CITIZENSHIP

An Address delivered before the College Literary Society.

It may seem strange that I should choose for a familiar and somewhat popular appeal such a theme as "The Duties of Citizenship." From time immemorial men have felt that there is something repellent, if not quite repulsive, about duty. So long ago as the palmy days of man's innocence, when he wandered in the garden with the whole world of nature animate and inanimate, at his disposal, he found it impossible to obey the one command that was laid upon him in the form of a prohibition. Since then well nigh countless ages, and certainly countless moral failures, with their consequent reaction upon character, have made it that tasks, once pleasant, because natural expressions and outgoings of our nature, have passed into the category of things hateful. The number of things easy is now reduced to a minimum, while the number of things hard is increased to a maximum. To-day, heirs of all the ages, not only in the fortunate sense of culture and intelligence, but in the unfortunate sense of impaired constitution, it needs all the force of an already forceful personality, the clearest tones of the voice of God's vice-gerent in our souls, and the liveliest realization of the rewards attendant upon a life of virtue to enable us to conform even approximately to the demands of moral law.

Still further. If I were to choose any one word that would stand collectively for the duties of the citizen, that word would probably be Patriotism. Now, there is a feeling that in this workaday world of ours, with its restricted vision, its sordid interests, its petty motives, patriotism plays but a small part. We are apt to think that in the modern reconstruction of society upon economic and industrial lines patriotism has been practically shelved. Had we lived in other times it might have been different. Had we lived in the good old Roman days; the days of Pompey or Caesar or Cicero, when the consciousness of Rome's supremacy operated like an electric current in the veins of the in-

dividual Roman, when the words, "I am a Roman citizen" could not be pronounced in any quarter of the globe without magic, talismanic effect; had we lived in the halcyon days of Greece, in the days of Pericles or Demosthenes, when the individual Greek might have walked the more firmly when he remembered the role his country was playing in the culture of the nations; had we been members of the Swiss Confederacy, when the bosom of Winkelried became a meeting point for the spears of Austrian tyrants; had we been subjects of that tight little island over the sea when she stood face to face with the greatest flotilla of modern times and girt on her sword, not only to defend her own honor, but to espouse and champion the religious cause of half a continent; had we lived in any of these times, Patriotism, the name and the thing, would have meant something.

As a matter of fact, this is fallacious. Patriotism is not a mere umbra nominis—it is neither a shadow nor a name. Let a hostile army kindle its camp fires on the frontiers of our land, let the flag of our country be insulted, let the life of a fellow-citizen be imperilled, and the collective heart of the nation will rise in its majesty, and the figment of Patriotism will be justified afresh!

Not that I would be understood to mean that the content of patriotism is equivalent merely to a ready response to a call of arms. Patriotism makes just as great demands upon the citizen in the long and quiet reaches of the nation's peace as in the cataclysm of war. Nay, more. I devoutly pray that in the future patriotism may come to stand increasingly for the enlightened discharge of the duties of peaceful citizenship.

The circumstances are indeed rare that justify an appeal to arms. Children of the same parents, the handiwork of the same God, virtually and literally brothers, nothing but the necessity of avenging the national honor, or the perhaps more imperative necessity of espousing a right-