



## Service and Self-Respect By Theodore Roosevelt

**U**NLESS democracy is based on the principle of service by everybody who claims the enjoyment of any right it is not true democracy at all. The man who refuses to render, or is ashamed to render, the necessary service is not fit to live in a democracy. And the man who demands from another a service which he himself would esteem it dishonorable or unbecoming to render is to that extent not a true democrat. No man has a right to demand a service which he does not regard as honorable to render; nor has he a right to demand it unless he pays for it in some way, *the payment to include respect for the man who renders it*. Democracy must mean mutuality of service rendered, and of respect for the service rendered.

A leading Russian revolutionist (who is of course, like every true friend of freedom, an opponent of the Bolsheviki) has just come to this country from Vladivostock. He traversed the Siberian railway. The porter on his train refused to get him hot water or to black his boots; stating with true Bolsheviki logic that democracy meant that nobody must do anything for anyone else and that anyhow his union would turn him out if he rendered such service.

Now, this Bolsheviki porter was foolish with a folly that can only be induced by prolonged and excessive indulgence in Bolshevism, or some American analogue. But the root trouble in producing his folly was the fact that under the old system the men whose boots the porter blacked looked down on him for blacking them. Are we entirely free from this attitude in America? Until we are we may as well make up our minds that to just that extent we are providing for the growth of Bolshevism here. No man has a right to ask or accept any service unless under changed conditions he would feel that he could keep his entire self-respect while rendering it. Service which carries with it the slightest implication of social abasement should not be rendered.

**F**OR a number of years I lived on a ranch in the old-time cattle country; and I also visited at the house of a backwoods lumber-jack friend. In both places we lived under old-style American conditions. We all of us worked, and our social distinctions were essentially based on individual worth. We accepted as a matter of course that the difference in degree of service rendered ought at least roughly to correspond to the difference in reward. Each did most of the purely personal things for himself. But nobody thought of any necessary work as degrading.

I remember that once, when there was a lull in outdoor work, I endeavored to be useful in and around the house. I fed the pigs; and on an idle morning I blacked all the boots. Ordinarily our boots did not need blacking—most of them were not that kind. On this occasion I started, with an enthusiasm that outran my judgment, to black the dress boots of every one, of both sexes. I coated them with a thick, dull paste; only a few knobs became shiny; and the paste came off freely on what it touched. As a result I temporarily lost not merely the respect but even the affection of all the other inmates of the house. How-

ever, I did not lose caste because I had blacked the boots. I lost caste because I had blacked them badly. But I was allowed to continue feeding the pigs. The pigs were not so particular as the humans.

Now, there is no more reason for refusing to bring hot water or black boots or serve a dinner or make up a bed or cook or wash clothes (I have cooked and washed clothes often—but neither wisely nor well) than for refusing to shoe a horse, run a motor, brake a train, sell carpets, manage a bank or run a farm. A few centuries back men of good lineage felt that they lost caste if they were in trade or finance—in some countries they feel it to this day. In most civilized lands however the feeling has disappeared, and it never occurs to anyone to look down on anyone else because he sells things. Just the same feeling should obtain, and as we grow more civilized will obtain, about all other kinds of service. This applies to domestic service. It is as entirely right to employ housemaids, cooks, and gardeners as to employ lawyers, bankers and businessmen or cashiers, factory hands and stenographers. But only on condition that we show the same respect to the individuals in one case as in the other cases!

**U**LTIMATELY I hope that this respect will show itself in the forms of address, in the courtesy titles used, as well as in the consideration shown, and the personal liberty expected and accorded. I am not demanding an instant change—I believe in evolution rather than revolution. But I am sure the change is possible and desirable; and even although it would be foolish and undesirable to set up the entirely new standard immediately, I hope we can work toward it. One of the most charming gentlewomen I know, the wife of a man of rare cultivation, ability and public achievement, lives on the top floor of a tenement house in a western city. The rooms are comfortably and daintily furnished—with an abundance of books. In this household the maid was introduced to me as Miss So-and-So; and this is the ideal. Of course it cannot be realized until there has been much education *on both sides*. But it should be the ideal. All relations between employer and employee should be based on mutuality of respect and consideration; arrogance met by insolence, or an alternation of arrogance and insolence, offers but a poor substitute.

Mutuality of respect and consideration, service and a reward corresponding as nearly as may be to the service—these make up the ideal of democracy. Such an ideal is as far from the stupid bourbonism of reaction as it is from the vicious lunacy of the Bolsheviki or I. W. W. type. Perhaps the beginning of its realization may come through the introduction of universal military training. The other day I went through the National Army, or drafted men's, camp at Chillicothe, Ohio. There are some thirty thousand men in the camp; Americans of fine type, who are having the finest kind of education—for these camps are the true universities of American citizenship. An exceptionally efficient and far-seeing army officer, Major General Glenn, is in command. He keeps

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admirable discipline, he tolerates no slackness, no failure in duty of any kind, and by his initiative and personality he is overcoming all obstacles and making capital soldiers of his men. He shows with especial pride the Red Cross Community House. It is a huge building, very attractive, with a big restaurant, reading rooms and a dance hall. When off duty officers and enlisted men come there and bring their friends of both sexes, with absolutely no restriction save, as General Glenn puts it, that "every man is to act as a gentleman and every woman as a gentle-woman." (When we have universal service, and every man has served in the ranks, and representatives of every class have commissions, there will be merely the same distinction between sergeants and lieutenants as between captains

and colonels.) In the restaurant the major general and a private from the ranks may—and sometimes do—sit at the same table. All come alike to the dances. All alike enjoy the privileges of the reading rooms. All behave with self-respect. Each respects the others. When they go back to duty each does his allotted task in his allotted position, with eager and zealous efficiency, and with alert, orderly, and instant discipline. Surely this is the military ideal for a democracy—twenty years ago my own regiment realized just this ideal. Surely it also represents substantially the democratic ideal toward which we should strive in civil life. It is as far removed from the brutal and repulsive folly of Bolshevism on the one hand as from the intolerable autocratic tyranny of the Hohenzollern type on the other.