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# What is the Boy Scout Movement?

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BY  
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BOYS OF NAAUWPOORT,

Although there are some here this afternoon who are not boys, it is to you that I wish to speak principally, and first of all I want to thank you all for giving me the opportunity of being here to-day and talking to you a little about the Boy Scout movement. It is due to one of you boys that I have been able to come, as it was on my journey from Johannesburg to Cape Town that one of you spoke to me on the station platform and asked whether I was a Scout Master, as the Boy Scout Troop was for the time being inactive and he wanted to give it a fresh start. I promised to see what could be done in Cape Town and the result is that I am able to be here this afternoon. I have every hope and see every promise that the Troop will again become an active one, and I must therefore thank you boys for getting me here through your own initiative, and in thanking you I wish to say how glad I am that the initiative did come from you. It shows me that you boys think seriously enough of your life to try and follow the Scout motto of "Be Prepared," and to be a Scout is one of the best methods of being prepared for whatever life holds in the future for you. I say that I am glad that you look upon life as a serious matter, for to lead a life of success to yourselves and usefulness to others is no easy matter nor is it one that each individual boy can take up for himself. He needs comradeship to help him along, he needs the example of others to instruct him and he requires a knowledge of what other men and boys are in order to help him to know himself. To assist you to this I am asking you to join in a game, the Game of Scouting for Boys, for it is the best method of preparing to play the greatest of all games—the Game of Life and of Death.

Before I go further I would like to say a few words about what Scouting is not, before saying more about what it is. Some people, parents mostly, think of Scouting as a means of teaching boys how to climb about kopjes so as to wear out as much shoe leather as possible, and then, having got them to the top of the kopjes, to teach the boys how to slide down again so as to wear out as large an area of their trousers as possible. Other people,

parents again, I am afraid, think the Scout movement an excellent thing because there are certain men, rather soft-hearted sort of people, who like to look after boys, and so they may as well do so. It keeps the boys out of mischief and saves the worry of having the boys kicking their heels round the house. I know that kind of parent quite well; it is a curious thing that they do not really believe in Scouting from this point of view, for if they did they would occasionally say "Thank you" to these soft-hearted people who take on the job of looking after their boys, and there is no case on record of their ever having done so. More seriously, many people think that there is no need for Scouts when we have Cadets. No greater mistake could be made: the two things are totally different. It might be more true to say that if every boy had been a Scout there would be no need for Cadets. The Boy Scout training is not a military one in any sense, it is voluntary and the other is compulsory. They are as far removed from each other as the "Thou shalt not" of the Old Testament is removed from the Faith, Hope and Charity of the New. Moreover, the Boy Scout movement has nothing to do with Politics, it has nothing to do with any particular religious sect. I will say no more on these particular means for dividing men, I want to speak of the means of bringing boys together; we hear too much about them already.

Though I have just said that the Boy Scouts is not a Military organisation, it is necessary for boys to learn a certain amount of drill, for if a large number of people have to be handled together it is impossible even to fall in unless they know what to do and how to do it. Boys also learn something about shooting, but neither of these is learned in a military manner and cannot be looked upon as more than an introduction to military service. Boys are all the better for having this introduction, as it will help them later on, but it must not be looked upon as more than this.

When a boy is but an infant the only person that can look after him and give him what he needs is his mother. Later a small boy can and must be helped by his father, his school will help him too in learning such things as may be taught from

books. But later when a small boy is becoming a big boy, when he is entering his 'teens, then the life in the family is not sufficient. He has to begin to learn other things, the knowledge of what the world is like and what the people in the world are like is what he has to know in order to prepare himself to take his own part in the world, to help on what is good to help, to choke back what is evil. It is not only the knowledge of what is good in this world that is going to take men and boys through this world; there is evil there and a knowledge of it is necessary.

I asked one of our Boy Scouts the other day whether he always remembered that he was a Scout. He told me quite frankly: "No, sir; I am not an angel." Nor is he, neither a white, nor a black one, but he is a boy—a real boy—who shows every promise of growing up into a fine man well fitted to take his part in this world and to leave it all the better for having been in it and having done his little bit of work in it.

Now, getting to know what is in this world is a part of a boy's education that he cannot get from his parents, nor does he see very much of it in a school. Where is a boy to obtain it and how can it be provided? The Boy Scout movement is the best means that I know of doing this and thus of preparing boys for their life's work. It is a part of their education that is too often left alone, and boys are allowed by their parents to pick up a knowledge of the world they live in in any kind of way that they can.

We take boys when they are big little boys at the age of eleven up to the time that they are little big men at the age of eighteen, though boys may remain in a troop after that age. This is a very critical period in a man's life, for it completes the boyhood period, the period of bodily growth and of bodily change, and a boy emerges from the period in a state of budding manhood. He has not yet completed the flower of his manhood that will come later, but a beautiful form of manhood cannot be expected from an injured or damaged bud. It is the Garden of Youth that is our Garden of Eden and we must see to it that our trees are well pruned, our lands well cultivated, free from weeds and well irrigated in order that the Great Gardener of us all

may give us the increase. No farmer or gardener, however clever he may be, can do the growing for his crops or flowers; his share in the process is one thing, the plant's own share is another. A plant takes in the nourishment of the soil unconsciously, and a boy takes in the nourishment that is going to make his character unconsciously too. A plant cannot grow if the proper soil is not given to it, a boy's character cannot grow properly either without giving him proper surroundings. The means of giving these proper surroundings are at hand, it is for the parents to see that the boys are not denied the benefit of them.

I saw a few days ago in an address to Boy Scouts the statement that the best thing that a boy learned as a Scout was discipline. That is a very inadequate statement and shows a want of knowledge of what the game of Scouting really is, or else shows a want of appreciation of the proper values of things.

Discipline in a troop is necessary, but discipline forms only the reins of government. Between a horse and its rider the reins are necessary. An indifferent rider always uses the reins, sometimes to hold himself on by, often to saw and to pull at the horse's mouth until horse and rider are out of patience with each other. A very bad rider does not use the reins because he is afraid of the horse and expects him to get up on his hind-legs. A very good horseman does not use the reins either, but for a very different reason. There is such perfect understanding between the man and the horse, each knowing and appreciating the other's use, necessity and requirements that a gentle pressure of the hand or leg or perhaps no more than a thought is required for each to help the other. The relationship between a Troop of Boy Scouts and their Scoutmaster should be that of horse and rider, a knowledge and understanding of each other so that each is the other's comrade and friend. A high-spirited horse to ride and a horse-lover who is master of himself and of his animals, these things are nearly priceless; who then would say that they valued discipline, a mere bit of inanimate leather that costs a few shillings only, more than these?

The thing that controls horse and rider too, for both have to be under control in his own particular way, is touch, not the

reins or whip or spur; they have to be there for their necessary and proper use, but touch is the real control. Touch can only be acquired by an artist, either in painting, singing or performing upon some instrument, after much labour and study; it is incommunicable, for it is the heaven-sent interest given only when we have exercised our talents to the utmost.

Where so much is required it is evidently no easy matter to find a Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmasters, but these are difficulties that can be overcome. In starting a troop it is more difficult to find the grown-ups than to find the boys. The work is arduous and takes much time and is full of responsibility, but the rewards are great. It is something to be an only brother's keeper, but to be keeper and friend to many little brothers is the most responsible position that can be filled by any man.

The Boy Scout movement is a brotherhood to which boys are admitted on passing certain elementary tests and on making the Scout promise. The boy makes this promise on his honour, which is to be trusted at all times. When a boy gives this promise he gives the best thing that he has, the thing that he is most proud of, and therefore it is for all other people to respect and honour this promise. Once given the promise should last for all time, for once a Scout always a Scout. Who, then, ought to join the Scouts? Why, every boy, of course, for none want to be left behind in getting on in life. The Scout training and the Scout Brotherhood are the things that will help boys most, and parents should see to it that the boys get it. A troop of Scouts should form in little what the outside civilian organisation of business should be in great. I am afraid that it is not so yet though it may become so in the future. Unions of either masters or men are doomed to failure in that they seek their own advantage; the Boy Scout training is to help each other.

Each individual is a necessary part of the structure of the community, and the recognition of this is the modern view of the service of men each to the other. The boy as an individual in a Patrol, the Patrol in its relation to the Troop, the Troop in its relation to the whole Scout Organisation that spreads not only

over this country but over most of the world is an epitome of the organisation that should exist in grown-up life. In a few years' time when those who are now Scouts shall have grown up into men we shall, I hope, see that the spirit of the movement has quickened not only boys' lives but men's lives too.

All those who love their country, and there are, I hope, none who do not, should be only too glad to co-operate and assist in this movement. If I were asked to state briefly what I think that the Scout movement is, I would say that it is the "Spirit of the years to come, yearning to mix himself with Life." You will find that in Tennyson's poem that begins "Love thou thy Land," which is a poem that I think you should not only read but know.

I would ask parents to see that a strong committee is formed, so that the movement may grow and increase and remain a permanent institution in Naauwpoort. The boys want help, it is for you to give it to them. By doing so you will assist in loving your land by helping to make it a greater and a better one. The raw material is here in you boys, it wants to be made up into good citizens. There is no better occupation for grown-up people, the work is at hand and you can see the result for yourselves. There are plenty of people here who can tell how the whole country should be run, let them show that they can run a little bit of it properly by looking after a score or so of boys and themselves. It is not necessarily the result that is all-important, it is the effort to reach the goal that tells.

I trust that you do not feel that I have spoken too long or not long enough. I came here hoping to be able to persuade you to start a Troop, but I go away knowing by the work that has already been done that there is no need for me to persuade you. I have only to wish you every success in your Troop and in your lives.

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