

## APPRECIATION OF SCOUTMASTERS

We are here gathered to express our appreciation of the scoutmasters of the city of Charlotte. We do this because it is our conviction that they are helping to solve what is always the supreme problem of mankind.

What is the biggest question that confronts us today and every day? It is the child question. Here is a group gathered about a cradle. In that cradle is a baby. Wisely the adults look at this infant with wide-eyed wonder. Then they ask: "What manner of child shall this be?" We have a contradictory scene in the Old Testament. A father and mother are talking about a son of promise. They ask this question. How shall we train the lad? Whatever is he to be?

The answer to this question is of supreme importance. This is the case. Because an army is marching upon this land of ours that is going to take over literally everything we have. That army is going to take every place of business, every bank, every store, every railroad, all the air ways, every steamship line. It is going to take over every school, every college, every university, every church, and every home. That army is made up of the boys and girls that are now in our homes.

What chance is there for a better tomorrow? Is there a stronger and saner and safer America hidden in the bosom of the future? This all depends upon what we do with this younger generation. There is only one chance for a better world and that is the making of our boys and girls into better men and women. This is a part of the task of the scoutmaster and of the Boy Scout Movement.

By this we do not mean that this fine organization is in any sense to take the place of parents. There is no substitute for fathers and mothers. This will be sad news to many because in this busy world there are many parents in search of substitutes. This is indicated by the appalling growth of juvenile delinquency. It is indicated by the millions of boys and girls who through no fault of their own are being robbed of any sort of moral and religious training.

I used to have a neighbor in Oklahoma City who was a very public spirited woman. She was so busy saving the children of the city that she neglected her own. She reminded me of a cartoon I saw some years ago. A rooster was standing by a nest of eggs. Those eggs were in the process of hatching but the mother hen was away. A friend passed and asked the rooster, whose face was wet with tears: "Where is your wife?" He sobbed out this pathetic answer: "She is down at the city hall lecturing on how to hatch eggs."

If mothers give their children everything but themselves, fathers are, generally speaking, far more guilty. They seem to expect to glory in that beautiful word in the twenty-seventh psalm, "When my father and my mother forsake me" the boy scouts will take me up. There was the son of such a father who owned a dog named Laddie. This dog was very dear to him. One day while the boy was away at school Laddie was run over and killed by a car. When he came home the mother hesitated to tell him the bad news, but she ventured by saying: "Laddie is dead. A car killed him." "Too bad," said the boy and went on up stairs. The nurse, seeing the boy, decided that he had not heard the bad news, so she said: "Laddie got killed today." "He did," the boy shouted as he burst into tears. Then he ran down stairs to his mother, sobbing as if his heart would break. "Why son," his mother said, "I told you that when you first came in and you never shed a tear." "Yes," he answered bitterly: "But I thought you said 'Daddy'."

If the Boy Scout Movement is not to take the place of parents, no more is it to take the place of the Church. The founders and leaders of this organization have been very wise in teaching their members loyalty to their own faith. They are not propagandists. They are not out to make converts. Protestants, Catholics, and Jews are all trained by it to a greater loyalty to their faith.

What then is the work of this organization? It is to cooperate with the home and the church in the making of good men and good citizens. They do this in the faith that children are not so much born as made. This is a discovery that was made a long time ago and yet it is only recently that we have come to feel the solid truth of it. Of course, heredity and environment play an important part. But the overwhelming factor in determining what a boy or girl is to become is the training that that boy or girl receives.

1. The first witness I call to testify to this truth is the sanest of all books, the Bible. This book lays a heavy obligation upon parents properly to train their children. It gives this solid encouragement: "Train up a child in the way it should go and when it is old it will not depart from it." Do not put more weight upon this text than it can bear. It does not say to try to train a child in the way it should go. The most earnest of parents sometime make mistakes, but when the right bent is given in childhood, that right bent continues in the overwhelming majority of cases.

2. The second witness I call is modern science. If there is one contention upon which modern psychology agrees, it is this: that children are not so much born as made. It has been demonstrated that you can train a child to fear a rabbit and pet a snake just as readily as you can train him to pet a rabbit and fear a snake.

3. Third to the testimony of the Bible and of modern science, the law of sowing and reaping adds its voice. "Be not deceived. God is not mocked

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and whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." That is true in the case of wheat and corn and cotton. It is true in the case of fruits and flowers. We find it true when we deal with our poultry and livestock. Would it not be a mad world if we could determine the harvest everywhere else except in the case of our boys and girls.

This word that we are accustomed to use as a threat becomes a written promise. The profession into which your boy enters may be in some measure beyond your control. But the quality of character that he possesses depends upon his training. This is the case because we do<sup>not</sup>/live in a world of chance but in a world of law. (The boy who hit the telephone pole.)

4. To the testimony of the Bible and science and law we add the voice of experience. Over and over it has been demonstrated that children are the product of their training. It has been my privilege to speak a good many times to reformatory audiences. At my first effort I was appalled. I asked myself that question: what can I say to a bunch of morons and nit wits as they must be that would interest them? But I found them quite the quickest audience to which I have ever spoken. Why were they there? They were there for lack of training. Take the Hitler Youth Movement. Any nation can, by training, change the character and outlook of its people in a single generation. The Boy Scout Movement then is an organization that recognizes along with the parents and the Church that children are the product of their training and it seeks to cooperate with these other organizations in building right character.

## II

Not only do we honor these Scoutmasters for the worth-while work that they do. But by our appreciation of them, we share with them and reflect some honor upon ourselves. To fail to appreciate such work is simply to show ourselves morally and spiritually immature. Appreciation is a mark

of growth and maturity. To fail to appreciate is to brand ourselves as backward.

Of course, we do <sup>not</sup> expect appreciation from infants. When my first born was a baby he had three-months colic. It was such an interesting performance that he gave us a return engagement and had it three months more. I was one of the floor walkers for the firm. One night I walked him until the small hours. When at last I laid him down he smiled a twisted smile and said: "Thank you. You have done the best you could. Go on to bed and I will see it through with honor."

No, that was what any decent six-months-old baby ought to have said, but what really happened was this. I tipped gently and laid him down. He had hardly touched the sheet until he let out a yell that was as blood-curdling as a war whoop and do you know what I said to him? Well, I am not going to tell you, but the only reason I did not throw him out the window was because I hoped when he grew up he would come out of it. Suppose he never does. Suppose he is the keenest man in his university and the smartest one in his business, but he never learns to say 'I owe. I ought. And I appreciate.' I submit to you that in the things that make a man he is still a baby, a pitiful little runt that never did grow up.

Finally, we express our appreciation because we believe, because it is real, and because we believe in what this organization is doing. We express our appreciation further in the faith that it will help and encourage those who have charge of this important task.

The other day a gentleman shrugged his shoulder and said: "Well, I do not care what anybody thinks. It does not matter to me whether I am appreciated or not." What did that mean? It did not mean that he was telling the truth. It meant rather that he was wounded and heartsick because he had tried to carry on and nobody seemed to care.

I had a friend who sat some time ago for some two hours in a cross-road station out in Texas. It was a hot summer day and the ticket agent

at that station was also the bureau of information, the telegraph and telephone operator and the baggage master. People him here and there and shouted at him impatiently until at last one train came and went. Then he had a breathing spell.

This friend watched him as he sat down on an old trunk, took out his cob pipe and began to stuff it with tobacco. Seeing that he liked to smoke he sent his secretary out to buy a box of the finest cigars. When the cigars came this friend took them over to the agent and said: "You have had a hectic hour, but through it all you have been a gentleman and you have been courteous and gracious. I want to give you these cigars in token of my gratitude. The agent looked amazed at first and then tears mingled with his sweat as he said: "Brother, I have been working in this station for sixteen years. You are the first man that ever gave me a word of thanks. I want you to know, by doggies, that I appreciate it."

Not only so, but I have an idea that he did his work better after that. I know I do. I am sure you do. The truth is, when I remember how much more smoothly the machinery of life would run if it were oiled a little more frequently and a little more abundantly with the fine lubricant of appreciation. I wonder that we do not employ it more. Therefore, on your behalf and upon mine, I say to these scoutmasters: Thank you for we appreciate what you are doing.