

Address to Scout Leaders,
Feb 27th, 1936.

You ask me to talk to you on "Dangers and Pitfalls for Boys". Were I to classify such things honestly, I would designate them as follows:

1. Parents. *(destroying)*

2. Associates. *(illness)*

Reading matter. *(illness)*

4. Lack of Discipline. *(illness)*

5. Wrong Ideals

6. Overindulgence. *(illness)*

But those things would not necessarily be the pitfalls for the boy, himself, but those for the parents and other supervisors.

We are, I believe, inherently, liars and thieves. Civilization is to correct those natural inclinations. In the beginning men were merely animals, taking what they wanted or desired wherever they found it. Lying about the taking if necessary to protect themselves. When agricultural pursuits arose and cooperation began then it was found that new rules for the citizenship were necessary to protect against those who remained "natural". It was found that in order for ~~certain~~ society to be protected higher ideals of the citizens must be inculcated in order to accommodate the cooperation of one citizen to another that then became necessary. Prior to that time every man and his family was a lone wolf, depending upon his hunting faculties and shrewdness to escape danger and procure sustenance. As we progressed in this matter and evolved rules to restrain individuals within due bounds, it came to be called civilization.

Now, as a matter of fact the worst pitfall for the youth of the land is his early training. Character is made between two and six years of age, it is further developed, of course through adolescence and life. But the early teachings implanted in a fertile mind remain as the principles and ideals throughout life. Parents are generally too indulgent. It was never meant that boys should have money to spend, except in the most meager quantities. To the same extent money is afforded the youth of the land ~~to the same extent~~ is the idea developed in his mind that life is a matter of ease, when the truth is it is and will always remain a matter of toil and strife. He should be developed and trained to accommodate himself to life as it is, actually, and not as our natural indolence would desire it. This means work. Every child should be made to work, his natural tendency is not to do so. Some times persuasion will accomplish this, but more often it requires either force or fear. It is dependent, of course, upon the quality of mind in the individual.

There are so many confusing amusements to distract the youth from the actualities of life as to make the present day the most difficult for the average boy. The car, the moving picture, the height

the height achieved in providing the average school child with equipment and conveniences for pleasure purposes, in fact the exaggeration of pleasure in the main. Whatever a fertile imagination may think of that will provide pleasure or ^{is provided} enjoyment. Every effort is bent toward providing a pleasurable life for the child when the need is for work. The boy goes into life with this preconceived and trained notion. He is confronted with opposition and toil on every hand. He becomes embittered and thinks the world is set against him. He then resorts to contracting debts he will be unsure of paying or other worse things, to provide him with the pleasurable existence he has been taught to expect. He thinks of ways to provide more leisure for himself and to just the same extent he indulges in these things he unfits himself for the actual and practical struggle of life.

Children have the enthusiasm of youth and a stick horse will afford as much pleasure as the expensive hobbyhorse. Yet we have grown so indulgent that we must provide the hobbyhorse and deceive ourselves into believing that we are doing a kindness to the child. The schools have gone to an extent in this matter that is deplorable. It is an unsound philosophy. The boy peddling papers is afforded a better opportunity in life than the young man driving his father's car about town and patronizing the previews in the middle of the night. I sometimes think that the training of our school teachers in schools for that purpose is a mistake and that our instructors should be drawn from the business walks of life where practical experience is had. The school trained teacher becomes highly theoretical. Life itself is highly practical. Children should be taught practical things.

The multitude of toys afforded the average child of the average family is one ~~of the~~ ~~most~~ demoralizing influences. It teaches the child to expect what it wants formed to its every necessity and desire. It destroys initiative, inventive genius and construction abilities. It would be much better philosophy on the part of parents to furnish the child with the materials for constructing its playthings and let him exercise his mental equipment toward constructive play. By such play the child is taught to work and make himself independent. He is taught that to have he must labor to get it. Such instruction is in keeping with the practical side of life. This fact is mentioned as simply one of the millions of things performed by parents to satisfy their own selfishness rather than be helpful to their children. The parent that don't want his children to work like he has had to do, is a fool. Life, itself, is strife. One who is not hardened to it, is not prepared for it, is handicapped. Parents furnish the most of the handicaps, by listening to their immediate desire and refusing to contemplate the future. It is the future they should be training their children for.

Idleness is, perhaps, the worst of all the pitfalls of youth. How thoroughly it is encouraged by the average doting parent. It has been said that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy; it can be turned around more effectively; all play and no work makes Jack a potential criminal. With his eye continually upon the playful side of life he becomes resentful when he has to ^{provide} ~~prepare~~ for himself the things and means ^{with which} to play ~~with~~ -- it takes so much of his time; he has too little in which to play. Then, having been trained to play and look for playful things it is only natural that he will provide himself time and means to play, even if he has to steal to do it.

It is much easier for a parent to say yes to their child than it is to say no; easier for the ~~the~~ parent. But nine of the yeses should be no, out of ten applications. Of course the child is hurt, thinks it is being abused, but if the parent is thoughtful and really desirous of making the child's life a pleasant and profitable one, the parent will say "no" to most of the pleas of youth. Discipline is absolutely necessary to a child's proper living. Every period of a human life is circumscribed by some law or regulation; in youth it should be the law of the home and the school; maturity brings subservience to the laws of the land and all the time we are under restrictions, although we may not realize it, to nature's regulations. How much better it is for the youth to go into life with a respect for restraint than it is to go in there utterly unprepared. It is this thought that parents are more and more refusing to understand, and by misunderstanding they work an irreparable injury upon their children. Civilization is no more nor less than restraint upon the natural tendencies of our kind. The old Roman law that made the father the absolute master in the home and of the family compelled that father to see that his children were obedient to the laws, for that father was responsible to the state for all the misconduct of the members of that household. Therefore he took no chances of getting himself into trouble by not rearing his offspring in a way that would comport to the requirements of society. It was this that made Rome great. When that law was changed, it is agreed by all thoughtful students, that the downfall of Rome began. It was the greatest contributing factor to the downfall, for just to the same extent the youthful citizenship were untrained in obedience to the law, ^{at Rome} ~~to the same extent was~~ it a burden upon the state and society. The ~~Roman~~ people were renowned for their courage, obedience to authority and duty toward society and the state. This fine disposition was the natural outcome of the old law. The parents, teachers and now the so-called statesmen ^(Machavoy's line) have adopted as their text "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you may die." They live in the immediate present, unmindful of the future. The parent now believes that a child's demand for a plaything must be obeyed even if the thing has to be bought on credit and the parent's future efforts mortgaged to provide. The school teacher bases his entire plan of teaching upon play,

thereby imbuing the child with the belief that the great object in life is to play and it forms a philosophy of that kind. The teacher undertakes to make the child's school years no more than supervised play. This keeps the child in a good humor, the parents are mollified and the teacher's job made easier. And the so called statesmen believe that this is the last generation of people to live and they squander all the assets of the country in trying to provide the indigent and unresourceful, forgetting that by doing so encouragement is given to a slothful existence and the future generation thereby burdened with a greater problem than we have to-day, and the resources of the nations' future are taxed for the present day needs. This is pure sentiment based upon no judgment whatever. To make for a better civilization the utmost care must be given the rearing of our young and to this end every bit of play or work of the children should be with a thought to the future. Otherwise we will raise up a nation soft and indifferent to the problems of life and we will fall a victim to some forward coming, hardy nation of people. To the same extent the youth of our land is untrained for the problems of life is civilization penalized.

Let us just look at the so called present day literature. There isent a modern book of adventure or thrill fit for a boy to read. It is crammed full of drinking parties and lewd allusions, smoking and carousing. It is filthy. The news papersof the land are but little better. They feel it a duty only to give the news, not to mold opinion, and the result is obscene, morbid, nerve racking episodes found in life paraded across the front pages. The crimes and the divorces, the domestic unhappiness, the wild parties; the casual reference to things that should be condemned; all these subconsciously influence the reading public to the some extent it is indulged. The result is bad. It is insidious, creeps upon the people unannounced. It makes the burden of properly rearing children greater for the thoughtful parent. The moral laws are undermined; the cleanliness of mind, necessary to the advancement of civilization, is destroyed. If I were to recommend one book above all others for the boys of the country to read I would suggest Jane Porter's "Scottish Chiefs." There they get a hero in William Wallace, their man of might and fighting strength, combined with an uprightness of character, a cleanlinessof mind and an unblemished virtue that will have a lasting effect upon the youthful mind. Youth loves the fighter; Jesse James is his hero or some other outlaw, because he is a fighter. Give him a William Wallace and he gets the fighter and is unconsciously imbued with the futher thought that in order to be truly great, one must be truthful, upright and honest and above all the little, petty, dirty things of life. That book would b e my suggestion as one to be emphasized in every home and every school.

Of course the companions of the boys are the best or worst influence. It takes strength of character to withstand the insidious promptings of an evil companion and we are not all blessed with sufficient strength. The parents of the land should know every hour of the day and night exactly where and with whom their children are. Otherwise the very best of teachings may be destroyed in a single hour, a dare to steal (not realizing the theft but the cunning in doing the thing without apprehension) brings a broken life. A swiftly driven car, most often to show off, brings a broken body. Too much care cannot be taken by parents and supervisors as to the companionship of their children. And now days with the promiscuous philandering of the sexes the horrid threat of blood disease with its destroying effect upon both body and mind is ever present. The duties of the parents today are far greater than at any other period of our existence, and yet there are more bridge tables full, more picture shows crammed and more cars being enjoyed than at any other time in the history of peoples. Added precautions must be adopted under such circumstances. It is strictly upon the parents of the world, and particularly the mothers.

I have a great number of parents come to me for advice. Their children just will not obey them, they are going to the dogs. Is it not strange that children will not obey their parents? Have you ever asked yourself why that is, and then sat down and reasoned it out to your own satisfaction? ^{It is the rural} One of the main reasons is that sentiment throughout the land ~~has~~ has ~~happened~~ hampered even those who desire to make something out of their children. If a parent is wise enough to demand strict obedience of his children, the neighbors butt in and charge him with brutality; or if so much as a lick is struck to correct an erring child, the neighbors call in the law. Then, after while, when the child grows up and in the absence of the neighbors from home, he steals from them, they yell their heads off to have him sent to the penitentiary. It is sent the children of the land that are to blame, it is the grown ups; who through a sort of fetid sentimentality have built up a monstrous thing in our midst that deters conscientious parents from doing the very things they believe to be best and most profitable for their children. Remember this, the pitfalls which you want to avoid for the boys, are mostly those made and prepared by the grownups. If the grown people of the country would ALL suddenly devote ^{their best judgment to} the rearing of children along the lines of sound, well thought out ^{principles} ~~judgment of the parents~~, the country would raise up a generation that would be a blessing to itself, to society and to the world. I firmly believe the greatest pitfall for the boys of America are the fool grown ups.

The existence of so many laws in this land of ours is proof of an improper rearing of our people. If the people were properly and judiciously trained there would be no need of law. Education is the only thing (education for right doing) that will correct many errors of our citizenship. But through indolence our parents leave the rearing of their children to "the law." What a poor substitute. If it ever becomes possible for the nation ^{to} live up to the Golden Rule it will be because of proper training, all the laws on the face of the earth cannot accomplish that objective. And yet it would save us the costs and troubles of government, of courts and of all the other restraining influences in our midst.

Until the parents of the country realize that the welfare of their children demands strict surveillance and supervision, inculcation of high ideals and consideration for other people and their rights, we cannot hope to make much progress in civilization. It is difficult to correct errors, it is not nearly so difficult to prevent them. This is the function of the parent toward the youth of the land. Let it be neglected and confusion and discontent will result. Let it be strictly understood and substantial efforts made to conform to the idea and a better, more happy people will come forward. The parents leave too much to chance (and usually the chances are against the better result) and avoid needed efforts to correct erroneous ideals. The greater chances are that the result will be toward our natural tendencies unrestrained. Civilization is simply a restraint upon those tendencies. Chances should not be taken with the youth of the land. Certainly the betterment of mankind should be the ultimate object of every thoughtful citizen. If the children are not taught restraint how can you expect them to require restraint upon mankind when they grow up. The result is back to savagery. Intensive training may keep us going forward, it is certainly true that laws will not. The laws should be made for the very few, now days they are made for the many. This is because of lack of training of the young.

The first thing that should be taught to a boy is that his life should be useful. That thought should run through every training and teachings youth receives. It should be taught on every hand that it is honorable to be useful and dishonorable in the extreme to be useless. There is an idea loose in the land to the effect that it is dishonorable to be useful. The parents and the teachers can correct that fallacy. The sooner it is done the better for society.

The trouble with our people is that they have not the courage to say what they believe or live up to what their judgment dictates best for them. They are hampered by maudlin sentiment on every side. It takes a courageous citizen to stand up to sophistry and sentiment advanced by the designing or unthinking. Moral courage should be encouraged among our children.