

LORD CROFT AND ARMY CADETS

Following is text of a speech by Lord Croft, delivered at Harrow this Sunday afternoon.

In the Cadet movements of this country we are seeking to enlist the aid of all the best of our youth, and we rejoice that so many of our boys have a real chance at last to pull an oar in the hard and desperate race for victory.

You are associated with and standing behind the great forces which are saving England and the world at large.

What is the type of lad we welcome?

He must be a <sup>good</sup> citizen of high ideals, because we want the country to think of cadets as the pioneers and leaders of the future. For this reason we want boys of character who are imbued with the ideas of service and ready to give of their best for their Corps, who by their example, pride in their regiment, courtesy and chivalry and corporate spirit will set the highest standard for British youth.

Secondly, we want to provide exceptionally good raw material for the fighting services so that if the war continues they will at once step into the ranks with all the best qualities of training, discipline and comradeship - the three essentials of the modern fighting man - strongly developed.

From this source we hope that ex-cadets will speedily prove their fitness for non-commissioned rank and many of them later for commissioned rank.

No boy will ever become a first-class leader unless he is also a good citizen.

A good citizen is he who is not concerned so much with what he can get or make out of life as what he can give to it. Successful democracy in my opinion depends upon recognition of the fact that it can only work if all do their share in common effort. Our British world is not yet perfect, but we have much to take pride in and much to be thankful for.

When you walk through Harrow upon wonderful roads and pavements, when you see the policeman on his beat preserving an ordered life, when you go to schools where you have received education without a penny of cost to your parents, when you see a wonderful water supply and the whole vast sewerage system which carries disease away from your homes, and when in happier days you see your streets perfectly lit - these things do not just fall on you as manna from heaven.

Some of you take all these things for granted, and I suppose you would say, if you stop to think, - Oh well the State, the Country Council or the Municipality has to provide for those things - "they" pay.

Yes, but who are the State or the Municipality? They are the great body of taxpayers and ratepayers including your fathers and mothers, your grandparents, Uncle Tom Cobley and all the rest who go to make up the community.

You see a great crowd of people going to a football match. Who are they? They are the people who by corporate effort have at the cost of great sacrifice in the past and present given you your education, paid for your teachers, built your schools, provided your highways, trains, water and light, your police and fighting services for defence.

They have done the job pretty well for you.

I have travelled to many of the capitals and greatest cities of the world and I say that in the total service of democracy our achievements are unsurpassed in any land - indeed I think we clearly lead the world.

Why do I mention this? Because I want you to realise that you are starting life with a great gift in that all the foundations are there on which you can build, provided you have character, guts, industry and the determination to succeed.

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This is England's gift to you. What can you give to her?

I think, perhaps unconsciously, the great cadet movements of this country are providing the answer. You are giving service; you are submerging natural selfish instincts in a disciplined comradeship of high quality; you are definitely aiding the great citizenship of which you form a part, and it may well be that the half a million youths in the cadet movements of this country today will prove a decisive weight in the scales for victory to come.

Your countrymen are grateful because of your gift, and because you are giving you will find greater happiness. Happiness never comes to the sponger or the loafer, but some of it always comes to the man or woman who serves, who stretches a protective hand to his neighbour.

I should like to say one word about the Army which is of such special interest to Army Cadets.

This war has been so dispersed in the far corners of the earth that only a small percentage of our people can appreciate just what part the British army has played in the titanic conflict in so many theatres, so many thousands of miles from home.

We started the war with a very small army, but with colossal obligations of defence. These commenced in the North, from Iceland and the Faroes to this island and Northern Ireland. From Great Britain, the heart of the defence of civilisation, our army stretched its hand to defend Gibraltar, Malta - immortalised in its epic defence - thence to Alexandria, Palestine, Syria, Persia, Iraq, Egypt, Aden, East, West and South Africa, and right away to Ceylon, India, with its vast frontier to the Far East, whence we join hands with the great self-governing Dominions of Australia, New Zealand and Canada, which so far are maintaining with their own armies their own defence.

So you see our hands were pretty full - too full in the Far East at the start, for we obviously could not be in strength everywhere at once; whilst all the time from 1939 our little army, then less than a million men, was facing up to the vast German army across the Channel, and after the collapse of France in 1940 we stood alone with German, Italian and satellite armies of a potential strength of perhaps 15,000,000.

Notwithstanding this grim picture we have serviced and reinforced all our distant garrisons and fought the enemy, or the enemy's agents, on no less than sixteen different fronts.

We fought desperate rearguard or delaying actions in eight campaigns; we have fought victorious, aggressive or protective actions in nine different countries - Italian Somaliland, Abyssinia, British Somaliland, Eritrea, Iraq, Syria, Madagascar, culminating in the great conquest of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania.

All these vast territories once in the hands of the Axis in Africa are ours; a few hundred miles in Tunisia alone remain under slavery, and there we are about to put matters to the test. In all the rest, fighting on a circumference of some seven thousand miles, the Union Jack now flies proudly in the breeze, whilst three quarters of a million of the enemy will never fight again because they met the armed might of Britain and the Empire.

This is the British Army which you and I salute, and never will we forget the superb fighting qualities of our brothers of the Empire armies of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, or of the African Colonies, nor the splendid army of Canada, which came here so speedily when the invasion of Great Britain looked certain, to die if necessary in defence of the Motherland, and now ready to spring at the throat of the enemy overseas.

We salute, perhaps above all, the Royal Armoured Corps - the spearhead of every attack, cavalry of steel who have won undying fame; our incomparable Infantry, descendants of the men of Agincourt, Blenheim, Malplaquet, Plassey, Quebec, Waterloo, the Old Contemptibles of 1914, the men who licked the great German army in the glorious hundred days of 1918. In these men, who have stood up to and triumphed over the great armoured engines of the enemy, our heroes are born again. The Royal Artillery, who have never been closer to the enemy than today; the Anti-Aircraft gunners, to be found now in every battle, defending their comrades from the menace of the air, and with which your Cadet regiment is so honourably associated. The Royal Engineers, never so busy in battle as now; and the Royal Army Service Corps, who have so miraculously served and supplied the Eighth Army in the greatest advance in the history of war.

Now your Army is taking to the air and we have formations of parachute and air-borne troops who will descend from the skies like eagles on their prey.

Army Cadets, you have joined a great company! You wear their battle dress, you wear badges and insignia which have been proved in the highest test to which mankind can be subjected. You will never I feel sure prove unworthy of that uniform, and I ask you to treasure the great tradition of the regiment whose honour is now also in your keeping.

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