

PRINCE OF WALES ROYAL INDIAN MILITARY COLLEGE.

Opening Address by the Commandant.

February 1922.

[Cadets, I have called you together today in order to mention to you personally a few points upon which it is necessary that there should be a clear understanding. But first of all let me bid you welcome and congratulate you upon being selected to become Cadets at this College.] The mere fact that you have been selected is in itself a great honour and I want you to realise from the very start the nature of the honour that has been conferred upon you and what it implies. Further, I wish you, each one of you, to determine to prove yourselves worthy of this honour.

[Now as you know, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales has graciously consented to open this College, which is to be called "The Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military College." It is surely a great honour to have been selected from the whole of the youth of India to be one of the first Cadets at a College to which the son of the King-Emperor has given his name. Now we have in English a saying "Great honours are great burdens;" let us see what sort of burden we all have now to take upon our shoulders. Our association with this College means for every one of us, myself, the Staff and Cadets, that we have a great responsibility thrown upon us. It is our work to prepare you and your work to do all you can to make yourselves fit to go on to another Military College whence, if you are successful, you will become officers of the Indian Army.]

x The position of a commissioned officer signifies the implicit trust of the King-Emperor in a loyal and faithful subject, to whom he commits the welfare and training of his soldiers, relying upon his officers at all times and in all circumstances for the protection of his person and his Empire. Surely no greater honour could be desired by any one than to be given that trust and confidence. Now I must tell you at once that to become an officer, which is your eventual goal, demands a very high standard of fitness, moral, educational and physical; and, if you are finally to reach that goal, you cannot commence too early your efforts to render yourselves fit in every way.

The honour and efficiency of the Army is a thing so precious and of such vital importance that I shall refuse absolutely to recommend the retention at this College of any boy who shows that he is unlikely to be a credit to the Army.

As far as I can see there is no reason why any of you should fail to reach the necessary standard of fitness, if, from this moment, you conscientiously and with firm determination apply yourselves to the task.]

[I myself and the members of the staff are going to help you to the full extent of our capabilities, but it will mainly rest with you and your individual efforts to prove that your selection as Cadets was well justified and to ensure the success of this College.]

[Now another responsibility which you Cadets take upon you from today is the task of safeguarding and upholding the name of this College. Nay, you have to do even more than this, for with you lies the task of making a name for the College.]

[One of the things which go to make the good tone, the spirit, and hence the good name of a school, a College or a Regiment is "tradition."]

× (Some of our old English Public Schools have been established for over 500 years and in that long period of existence they have built up a name for themselves based on a glorious tradition of hundreds of years.)

(“Tradition” means “that which is handed down” and in the sense which we are using the word we mean the spirit, the tone and the pride in a glorious past which leads every boy to guard as a precious jewel the good name of his College.)
 × (There are doubtless black sheep in every flock but speaking generally you may say that such a tradition, once formed, is so strong a factor in determining the good tone of a body of boys or men that amongst them few written laws or restrictions are necessary, for each boy or man is governed by the unwritten law of tradition, which tells him what is right and what is wrong and prevents him from doing anything that would besmirch in the eyes of the world the fair name of the Regiment or College to which he belongs.)

(Now as this College is a new institution it lies with us all, and with you boys even more than with the Staff, to form a basis of “Tradition” for this College. Remember the eyes of all India are upon you. It is therefore incumbent upon you, not only whilst you are here but throughout your lives, to adopt such a mode of life that will enhance the good name of the College and never to act in such a manner that you will bring discredit upon it. I hope therefore that you, the first batch of Cadets, will be a model for all who come after, in conduct, bearing and all round efficiency.)

× (Such, then, is the nature of the responsibility, the burden which the honour of being selected as a Cadet here implies. Now let me give you some points which will help you to fulfil the responsibilities which rest upon you. You all received yesterday a copy of the Standing Orders of this College and I want you to study them carefully. (You must remember that you are now Cadets, not school boys, that is to say you are, as it were, “baby soldiers,” and in the Army ignorance of orders is no excuse, so long as the opportunity of becoming acquainted with them has been afforded.)

(The whole efficiency and daily life of an Army is based upon good discipline which perhaps I may describe as “training to act in accordance with rules and regulations that have been formulated for the common good.”)

(So the sooner you become accustomed to discipline and acquire the habit of implicit, cheerful and intelligent obedience of orders the easier will life in the Army be for you hereafter, and the better Commanders you yourselves will be when the time comes for you to command others.)

(You will notice that I say “cheerful and intelligent obedience.” I do not want grudging, grumbling obedience; that is not the spirit at all. I want the type of willing, cheerful obedience that leads to unhesitating performance of whatever is required, with the utmost zeal and energy that you can command, however great the personal inconvenience or even hardship may be.)

× (In this connection I will repeat that you are now no longer school boys but are Cadets, who, have been honoured by being selected to come here and who are aspiring to the still higher honour of becoming officers: therefore you are presumably men of honour. For this reason you will be trusted to obey and carry out such orders as are from time to time given for your guidance and the general welfare of the College.)

✓ (You will never be spied upon, but will be trusted, as men of honour, to do that which is right.)

+ (Let me give you an instance of what I mean.

You have seen in Standing Orders that no smoking is allowed here. Well, I trust you all not to smoke. If I hear of a boy being caught smoking I shall punish him to the full extent of my powers, not because there is any great sin in the actual fact of smoking, but because it is against orders which you have been

trusted to observe, and by the non-observance of which a boy shows himself to be lacking in a sense of honour such as is essential in a Military Cadet.]

✓ (Another point concerning which I desire that there should be a clear understanding is this.) [I am determined that a spirit of good fellowship and friendliness shall prevail throughout this College.]

Once you come here you are all "Cadets" and each one is just as good as his neighbour.]

✕ We have here boys from all over His Majesty's Indian Empire, Sikhs, Pathans, Burmans, Bengalis and so on; and it is right and proper that each should take a pride in his birth, his people, and his own district. But, I would have you observe that this College is not called the Prince of Wales, 'Pathan' Military College, or 'Sikh' Military College, but the Prince of Wales 'Indian' Military College.

Moreover, you are aspiring to be officers of the Indian Army, the force upon which the King-Emperor and people of India rely to guard, not some special portion but the whole of the Indian Empire.

Now what does this imply? [It means that first and foremost you must remember that you are loyal subject of the King-Emperor and that beyond that you are "Indians" first and Burmans or Pathans or whatever the case may be afterwards.]

✓ [Now unless an Army is pervaded by a spirit of comradeship and a determination to sink all personal and party grievances in a united effort for the common cause, that Army can never be truly efficient. And so it is with this College, and to ensure its success you must all strive for the common good. I may tell you all, at once that I will not for one moment tolerate anything in the way of quarrelling or factions amongst the Cadets and in you all, whether at work or at play, I shall expect to see a spirit of good feeling and friendship, a spirit of mutual assistance and sympathy.]

Some of you are older than others, some have had greater educational and social advantages than others and thus in many ways can help those who have not had the same advantages.

Remember this is a Military College and therefore amongst other things we are going to lay the foundation of Military discipline. Now there is nothing irksome or unpleasant in the observance of Military discipline such as it is essential that you Cadets should observe.

I will enumerate some of the points connected with Military discipline which you must constantly bear in mind.

- (1) Prompt, unhesitating and cheerful obedience of all orders received, whether written or verbal.
- (2) Punctuality for every sort of duty.
- (3) Careful exactness in the performance of all duties.

Any thing in the way of shirking duty, trusting to not being found out, is a most serious breach of Military discipline. No personal consideration or convenience should ever be allowed to interfere with the proper performance of Military duty.

- (4) Cleanliness and general smartness in "turn out."

A Cadet who is slovenly and untidy in his dress cannot be classed as a good Cadet in all respects.

- (5) Steadiness and smartness on parade.] ✓

✓ [Intimately connected with Military discipline is what is termed 'soldierly spirit,' a spirit which it will be our endeavour to foster here, and which you must make every endeavour to acquire. Some of the essentials of such a spirit are as follows:—

- (1) Devotion to the King-Emperor and Country.
- (2) Proper pride in the uniform which you wear.
- (3) Loyalty to one's superiors.
- (4) Courage, coolness, and cheerfulness in time of trial and hardship, a spirit of determination to endure and conquer at all costs.

Remember you are never beaten until you admit you are. The great Napoleon said that the English only won the battle of Waterloo because they did not know when they were beaten: but still they won.]

x [In this connection I have no doubt that there are many of you who have since childhood had many servants at your beck and call, but I want you all to remember that there is nothing detrimental to a man's dignity in doing good honest work with his own hands. An officer should be able to do all that he calls upon his men to do and should be in a position to show them that he can do it. Unless he has at some time or other done such work, as say digging trenches, himself how can he appreciate what he is asking his men to do or judge what standard of work he can in fairness demand from them? Again there are occasions when an officer can greatly inspire his men by sharing personally in the work which they have to perform.]

- ✓ (5) A high sense of honour and duty, zealous regard for the good name of one's College and one's friends, disregard of self. Not looking for personal advantage but for that of the Country and College, later on your Regiment and your men. Playing for the team in fact and not for yourself.
- (6) Keeness and the giving of one's best to any duty.
- (7) Keeping one's self fit mentally and physically. A Cadet (and this applies to all soldiers) who through his own fault, or by reason of his mode of life, renders himself unfit is unworthy to serve the King-Emperor and his Country.

- (8) Honourable dealings with all men generally.]

x [Now all that I have been saying may sound rather alarming to you boys, and indeed I mean it to be taken seriously, for the sooner you grasp these facts the easier will you take to Military life and the better men you will be afterwards.]

✓ [But do not think that it is going to be all work here and no play. I am anxious that you shall have plenty of time for games and I want you to take plenty of healthy exercise, and hope to see you enjoying yourselves doing it. All I say to you is "while at work, work hard; and while at play, play hard." We are not trying to turn out simply "candidates" at this College, we hope to turn out "Men"; so I say to you, "in all you do above all things be men."]

x [Some of you are but small boys as yet and I quite realise that you may have had difficulty in understanding all I have said, so I will ask you now to go away to your Masters who will run through it with you and explain any points which may not be clear to you.]

✓ [And I would remind you of this. You are here to learn and we are here to teach you, are anxious to teach you, and realise that some of you may often fail to understand straight away what is said. So I earnestly pray you all never to allow anything to pass without understanding it, and never to be afraid during lessons of holding up your hand and saying "Please, Sir, I don't understand that, will you explain it again."]

✓ [Finally. I will add that I hope that in days to come you will look back upon the days spent at this College as a very happy and profitable period of your lives.]