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Editorial.

RESPONSE TO OPPORTUNITY.

There is no more striking illustration of the value of education, of the developing power of responsibility, of the capacity brought out by opportunity, than the object-lesson now being given to the world by the Japanese Red Cross nurses. It is only for a comparatively short time that the women of the Western world have taken their share in public life; even now many closed doors must be opened to them before their capabilities can be fully put to the test. But we, with our greater freedom, have been accustomed to associate the women of the Eastern hemisphere with seclusion and protection, certainly not with competency in grappling with the stern realities of life. Are not our dominant ideas of Japanese women associated with charm and grace, porcelain and peach blossoms? But no sooner was the opportunity for efficient instruction in the care of the sick offered to them, and a training-school for nurses established, than the Japanese women proved themselves apt pupils. From that time onwards the movement has developed and prospered, until at present Japan is able to supply its troops on active service with well-trained Red Cross nurses, working under superintendents of their own nationality, in such numbers that the help of other countries, which would be gladly placed at their disposal, is unnecessary.

How does the Japanese nurse stand the test of work amidst the horrors of war? Over and over again her efficiency has been commented on in terms of admiration by the war correspondents, and at Haicheng, and in the subsequent retreat to the heights of Am-shan-chian, one of the most terrible incidents in the war, when the Russians lost, according to St. Petersburg estimates, at least 4,000, when the retreat was a rout, the heat intense, and thousands of Russians fell exhausted, many dying by the

way; at this critical moment were the nurses equal to the demands upon them? A Reuter's special message answers the question with a strong affirmative: "Calmly and quietly they helped the wounded into the trains while the guns roared hard by. The scene was piteous, many of the soldiers having been terribly mangled by shrapnel." Even our own Army nurses have rarely the opportunity of showing their mettle under similar conditions, for "the front" is held to be no place for the woman nurse, who must find her vocation in stationary and base hospitals. The Japanese nurses, however, have proved that women can render service to the sick and wounded amidst the roar of battle and the horrors of a retreat in a manner which maintains the best traditions of their profession, and which must earn for them the universal homage of their colleagues. The lesson is two-fold: the value to the world at large of allowing the latent capacity of women full scope and opportunity of development must be recognised in the first place. If the gifts which they possess are unused, ignored and crushed, by that cruelty the world is so much the poorer. The hands of the maimed women of China, of the sad millions concealed behind the Purdah in India, of the downtrodden races of Africa, might be filled with gifts for the healing of the nations were their talents but recognised and allowed legitimate expression, for the heart of woman in every clime beats true, and impels her to succour, to heal, and to comfort; all she asks is knowledge of the best methods and liberty to carry them out.

We have spoken of the loss to the world at large; the second point to which we desire to direct attention is the injustice to women themselves of restricting their powers and cramping their outlook. All the talents they possess are needed by the world. It were wise to develop them to the utmost. If not, then, by that wrong the world at large is so much the loser.

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