

But this is surely a mistake. It may, perhaps, injure our own individual interests and prospects for the time being to belong to a minority, and at all times it is easier to go with the stream than against it. We are, however, at present considering our *duty*. We have, therefore, to take into account not what is expedient for ourselves, but what is *right*. And in doing this, the "popular thing" must undoubtedly find no place in our calculations. We must be prepared, in acting contrary to it, to have to face some disagreeables. But, at all events, we shall keep our self-respect, and the respect of those whose opinion is most worth, who will honour our action even if they disagree with us.

Emerson's opinion on this subject in his essay on self-reliance is worth quoting here. "For nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure. And therefore a man must know how to estimate a sour face. The by-standers look askance on him in the public street or in the friend's parlour. . . . But the sour faces of the multitude, like their sweet faces, have no deep cause, but are put on and off as the wind blows and a newspaper directs."

If duty bring unpopularity then, what matter? Reformers have, almost without exception, been in the minority, and unpopular in the age in which they lived. Our Divine Master Himself, who laid down His life for the world's reformation, was forsaken at the supreme moment by all but His Blessed Mother, the beloved disciple, and a few women. In our own times Wilberforce fought the battle of the abolition of slavery almost single-handed. Frederic Denison Maurice lost his Professorship because he was not afraid to proclaim what he believed to be truth. Charles Kingsley was viewed with suspicion and distrust by clergy of all schools of thought, and the present Archbishop of Canterbury was, as Bishop of Exeter, pelted with rotten eggs for views which are nowadays so widespread as to cause no comment. Popularity and the opinion of the hour, then, are of comparatively small moment. The one important point is that we should try to discover our duty. Let us listen to the voice of conscience with an honest desire to hear what it has to say, and, when it has spoken, never let us trifle with it. In so doing we shall find that we are, in the end, doing not only what is right but what is expedient.

"Curved is the line of beauty,
Straight is the line of duty;
Walk by the last and thou shalt see
The other ever follow thee."

Again, if we are for the moment in a minority, it may be that we are greatly over-estimating the importance of the majority. "Because half-a-dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate clink, whilst

thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field,—that, of course, they are many in number,—or that, after all, they are other than the little, shrivelled, meagre, hopping, though loud and troublesome insects of the hour"

Lastly, upon those of us who are members of the Royal British Nurses' Association, it appears to me that our obligation to fulfil our public duties is especially incumbent, and at the present moment when a determined effort is being made to force upon us a subservient and unrepresentative Council, we are, I think, bound to consider the wellbeing of the Nursing Profession, and oppose the attempt, although it would be easier, to some of us, to acquiesce in the injustice. We are the first body of women to whom a Charter has been granted, and posterity will hold us responsible for the way in which we have responded to this trust. Let us act, therefore, always with the sense of our responsibilities upon us. If we fritter away our privileges, and repudiate our duties, the nurses of the future will neither thank, respect, nor honour us, but the position is in our own hands, and, if we will, they will do all three. "God appoints to every one of His creatures a separate mission, and if they discharge it honourably, if they quit themselves like men, and faithfully follow the light which is in them, withdrawing from it all cold and quenching influence, there will assuredly come of it such a burning as, in its appointed mode and measure, shall shine before men, and be of service constant and holy. Degrees infinite of lustre there must always be, but the weakest among us has a gift, however seemingly trivial, which is peculiar to him, and which, worthily used, will be a gift also to his race for ever." Let us, therefore, use well the gift with which we have been entrusted—the opportunity of organising, on wise and broad lines, the hitherto unorganised forces of nursing; and if we wish to carry out this task in the best possible manner, let us approach it with high aspirations, considering only how this public duty may be best performed, and sinking all lesser considerations.

If, when we have done all we can, we seem to fail, what then? If, as we believe, we are striving after right and justice we cannot fail, though we may not live to see the result of our work. If we are fighting for principles we must go forward in the spirit of

"One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Held we fall, to rise; were baffled, to fight better,
Sleep to wake."

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