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Editorial.

"ENGLAND EXPECTS EVERY MAN WILL DO HIS DUTY."

Rarely has the country seen such a demonstration as that which took place on Saturday and Sunday last in honour of our great naval hero, Lord Nelson. With common consent, 100 years after his death, he was judged worthy of all honour, and in paying their tribute of respect to his memory the nation judged wisely and well.

What is the quality which stands out pre-eminently in the character of this great man? Neither his valour nor his genius, though these were conspicuous traits, but the patriotism which inspired them. It was the love of his country and his strong sense of duty which raised him to the pinnacle of fame, and to the position in the hearts of his countrymen from which he can never be dethroned.

As nurses, we shall do well to make our own the watchword which Nelson signalled to his fleet on the never-to-be-forgotten day of the battle of Trafalgar. In these times of softness and pleasure-seeking it will remind us that duty and not personal enjoyment is the keynote of life, that we cannot escape the responsibilities imposed upon us, that we are bound to adopt a definite line of action in regard to them, and that a Laodicean policy is neither admirable nor permissible.

Let us first honestly define in our own minds the direction in which our duty lies, for, unless we see clearly the goal at which we are aiming, we shall not progress very far along the path of attainment.

Within the boundaries of our profession a devotion to its interests answers to the patriotism which we owe to our country in regard to national matters. There are few trained nurses who, if asked a definite question, would not agree that the matter of first importance to their profession at large at the present time is the definition of a standard of nursing education, followed by the legal registration of those who attain it.

This being conceded, we must further admit that it is our duty, by all means in our power, to help forward the work which is going on in this direction. It is quite beside the mark to excuse ourselves from taking our share, on the ground that we do not care to enter into the contention inseparable from a great fight on a matter of principle. The question at issue is not inclination but duty, and our conception of what constitutes our duty is poor indeed if we are deterred from performing it by such inadequate reasons as personal inconvenience, or disinclination to touch contentious matters. Every vital reform passes through a period when the fight around it wages hot and strong. Had Wilberforce excused himself from touching a contentious question the abolition of the slave traffic might still be unaccomplished; had Charles Kingsley shunned the thorny problems of social reform some of his best work would have remained undone.

It is possible to stand aside in serene self-complacency, offering only captious criticism to those who are doing the work for the public good, and to accept the fruits of that work when the victory has been won. To judge from the conduct of the non-combatants, in connection with the Army Nursing Reform Movement, they have no hesitation in adopting this line of action. But those who are inspired by a strong sense of professional duty prefer to be found in the van, not the rear of the fighting force; it is their pride to be able to say, when the victory is won, of the spot where the struggle was sorest, "I was there."

The reward of duty is the consciousness of its due performance so far as in us lies. On the other hand, if we remain silent when we should have spoken, inert when we should have striven, let us remember that there are sins of omission as well as sins of commission, and that the account which we must one day render will be no less strict in regard to the former than in regard to the latter.

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