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## EDITORIAL.

### SOLDIERS OF EMPIRE.

No class of those who serve their country appeal more strongly to public sentiment than the soldiers of His Majesty's Army, for the public is always ready to appreciate and applaud courage, and recognises that beyond those who have earned the Victoria Cross "for valour," there is many a man ready to exhibit similar bravery if the occasion offers and demands it.

There is another class capable of courage and heroism as great as that of the soldier who marches to battle to the strains of martial music, with colours flying, and the support derived from comradeship. The trained nurses of the Empire risk their lives just as freely as those who serve their country on the battlefield, intent on the destruction of its foes. They expose themselves fearlessly to the infection of such diseases as smallpox, dysentery, plague, diphtheria, scarlet fever, leprosy, and cholera, isolating themselves if necessary with patients suffering from these diseases; they mount guard single-handed in the lonely night watches in wards of suicidal or homicidal patients, they adventure into tropical regions infested by the malarial mosquito and the tsetse fly, where men die painful and lingering deaths; they brave the rigours of the Polar regions, and they penetrate to the loneliest outposts of Empire, well knowing that they carry their lives in their hands, and that at any time they may succumb to death in one of its most terrible forms, in order that they may save human life instead of destroying it. And this they do so cheerfully, so much as a matter of course, that the nation is apt to minimize the risks they take, and certainly places a very modest monetary value on their services.

Yet the war they wage is just as real as that of the battlefield, and just as vital to

the national welfare. In the course of a campaign, for the thousands killed by the enemy, tens of thousands have been killed by disease, though the splendid record of Japan in the war with China is an indication that another era is dawning. The soldier meets his enemy face to face, the doctor and the nurse grapple with an unseen but deadly foe, the germ life, which if it gains an entrance to a congenial habitat, smites its victim with a force as deadly as the agents of war.

Just because the enemy is invisible, because small lapses from duty are easily undetected, are doctors and patients dependent upon the honour, the intelligence and the devotion of the trained nurse.

How nobly nurses have responded to the demand made upon them is to be found in the mortality statistics at home and abroad, which invariably decline when they are introduced.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies speaking at the meeting of the Colonial Nursing Association last week, with an intimate knowledge of the work done in Crown Colonies, attributed the reduction of mortality and disease in West Africa in part to the work of trained nurses, and referred to their presence in lonely outposts as the daylight of humanity, and to their voices as the music of the world.

Surely trained nurses who form a disciplined army obeying orders with military precision, perform their duties with military promptness, and fight national foes with military directness, may be regarded as "Soldiers of Empire" just as much as those combatants in the field whom we delight to honour. Surely also a Government which utilizes their services—and there is scarcely a Government office which does not—should be jealous of their honour and protect it (as it does that of the Army) by granting them legal status, and an assured position in the body politic.

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