

# Royal British Nurses' Association.

Incorporated by



Royal Charter.

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## AT ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL, WINDSOR, ON JUNE 15.

With the calm of deep sorrow and with ceremony majestic in its very simplicity our Royal President was laid to her rest at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, on Friday, June 15th. As we entered the Castle gateway the scene was one of unforgettable significance and grandeur. Little groups stood about here and there within the precincts of the Castle grounds in a silence, broken only by occasional sharp words of command to the soldiers who lined the paths, their scarlet uniforms and glittering accoutrements made more striking by the background of the brilliant green grass, sloping up from the path. The peace of the summer morning seemed strangely in keeping with our thoughts, as they centred on the great Personality who had passed into the Unknown, as they dwelt upon the courage, the uprightness, the calm confidence with which she had faced the trials, the problems, the difficulties that are part of the lot of those born into high places. The whole atmosphere was vibrant with the splendour of great traditions, one felt as though almost lifted into the holiness and wonder of a supernatural world, so that the great towers, the marvellous architecture all around, and that lovely gem of a chapel with its exquisite masonry, seemed somehow to be but a shadow thrown forth from the heavenly world, a kind of human interpretation, at its best, of the thoughts of God. Until the time for the arrival of the Royal mourners was nearly come we lingered in the stillness about the door of the sanctuary, hallowed by so many memories of a nation's sorrows, made sacred to the heart of England by the tears of her Royal House, and then we passed reverently under its arches to await the coming of the cortège. There, under the delicately-groined roof, surrounded by majestic pillars and lovely carvings, there gleamed the colours of the Banners of the Knights of the Garter, so that it seemed as though the deeds of the noble and the good were raying out their brightness from the ages and blending themselves with memories of the Royal Lady soon to be laid to her rest.

Suddenly upon the stillness there broke the sound of a tolling bell, and soon, vibrating on the air, came the notes of the Funeral March. Slowly towards the altar the waiting Archbishop, the Clergy and the Gentlemen and Choristers of St.

George's Chapel turned and led the procession singing as they passed, "For all the Saints who from their labours rest." The coffin, covered with the standard of the Princess, was laid on the catafalque and her coronet and insignia were placed upon it. The King, with Princess Helena Victoria and Princess Marie Louise, quietly took their places as chief mourners, and the other members of the Royal Family passed to their places. Then the simple service unfolded itself in such a lovely spiritual way as to appeal to our highest aspirations, so that it must live in the thoughts of those who participated in it, like some lovely flower dropped into their memory from the spiritual world. Words are strangely ineffective when we try to bring before our Members something of the stateliness and the beauty of the ceremony upon which the thoughts of nurses all over the world were at that moment centred. The loveliness of it all seemed to flood our spirits as the voices of the choristers thrilled us to the soul with the wondrous message of the hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light." Then, as we listened to the lines—

"And with the morn these angel faces smile,  
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile,"

our thoughts were suddenly lifted away to a lonely grave in far South Africa, where sleeps her soldier son, the first Prince of Royal blood, since the Black Prince, to fight on England's foreign battlefields. Here in this beautiful Chapel of the Garter Knights, it seemed as though space had sunk into its true significance and the loneliness of that burial place in a far off land had blended itself now into the holiness, the all oneness of this simple ceremony on an English summer morning.

Then, when the coffin had been carried into the choir, followed by the Royal mourners, there broke upon our ears the notes of "The Last Post," and we were thrilled with the significance of this, the earthly symbol that our beloved President was set free from all the great obligations which the circumstance of birth had laid upon her and which, with such splendid faithfulness, such high endeavour, she had ever sought to fulfil. Then, soaring to the skies, came the notes of the Reveille, as though to speed a gallant spirit on to its great awakening, a perfect climax to the ceremony just closed, a grand "Amen" to the nobility of the life that was ended. Words and thoughts had failed to bring to our consciousness the full sig-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)