

The
William Booth
Collection

LETTERS TO SALVATIONISTS

CHAPTER 26: Duty

My DEAR COMRADES,

Everyone knows that on going into the Battle of Trafalgar, Lord Nelson hoisted at his masthead the signal, "England expects every man to do his Duty." That sentence has been memorable ever since.

I suppose that this expectation is not confined to any one Nation, but that every Country cherishes the same expectation from its Subjects. I am quite certain that The General of The Salvation Army expects that every Soldier in its Ranks will do his Duty to his Saviour, to his Flag, to his Principles, to his Country, to his Saviour, and to a Dying World.

Duty is a good old English word. I like it very much. It is so expressive, and so well understood by young and old, rich and poor, saint and sinner alike. Who is there that does not know what is meant by doing his Duty?

Duty signifies neither more nor less than doing what you feel you ought to do, and leaving undone what you know you ought not to do.

It may apply to a man's deciding on a course he intends to follow for life, as for instance:

A sinner giving up his Sins, a drunkard renouncing the drink, a swindler abandoning his cheating, a liar forswearing his falsehood; and that for ever and ever.

Have you, my Comrades, put away from you every evil habit? If not, that is what God requires from you at this very moment. Will you do your Duty?

It may apply to a Saint placing himself and all he possesses at the service of his Saviour. Have you done that? If not, you cannot truthfully say that you have done your Duty.

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It may apply to a Soldier offering himself to be an Officer, or to fill any other post for which he may be thought best qualified in The Army, being ready and willing to fight at that post to his dying day. What are you called to? Will you do your Duty?

The word Duty may apply to something which is more or less the act of the hour, such as the reading of your Bible, praying in your family, speaking to someone about his soul, going to the Open-Air, giving money to feed the poor, wearing Uniform, or the like. When the call comes to you for any of these things, you must do your Duty.

Now, the first thing a Soldier has to do with what appears to be his Duty is to give himself up to its performance, whatever the consequences.

When Duty presents itself Comrades:

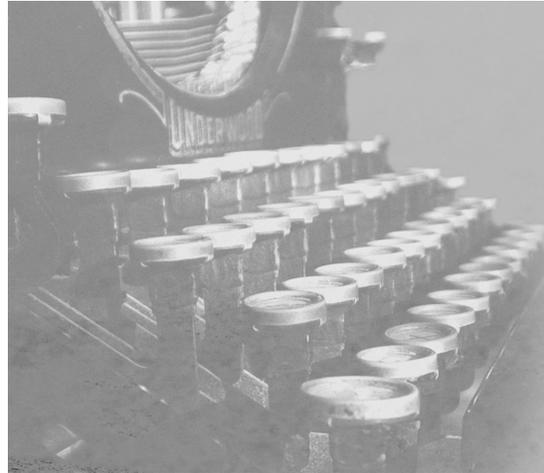
Do not stop to enquire about your ability or worthiness to perform the task. All you want to know about it is, "Is it my Duty?"

Do not stop to consult your feelings. They will possibly, nay, very likely, be in direct opposition both to your judgment and your conscience. Simply ask, "Is this my Duty?" Do not stop to ask how far it will affect your worldly interests, risk your health, please your family, or anything else. Remember Daniel and the Three Hebrew Children, and ask, "Is it my Duty?"

Look at the precious things that will follow the doing of your Duty:

(i) To begin with, doing your Duty is inseparably connected with your Peace of Mind. Peace is a great treasure, but you cannot have peace without a clear conscience, and you cannot have a clear conscience without doing your Duty. You can settle that once for all. If you are to have that precious treasure amid the storms and changes and disappointments of life, you must do your Duty.

(ii) Doing your Duty is a condition of the assurance of the Divine Favour. The assurance of God's favour means the witness of the Holy Spirit in the soul, not only to the fact of your being a child of God, but that God is pleased with the way in which



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you are conducting yourself in all the affairs of your every-day life. But if you are neglecting that Duty, how can He testify to the fact that you are doing it? You must do your Duty.

(iii) Keeping on doing your Duty is the only way by which you can build up a strong Character. To be able to resist the Devil trample on his Temptations, glory in the Cross, live above the World, to spend and to be spent for the Salvation of Souls, is a condition of heart and will that must be admired of the Angels. Do you want to be strong enough to always do the right? Then, whether pleasant or painful, keep on doing your Duty.

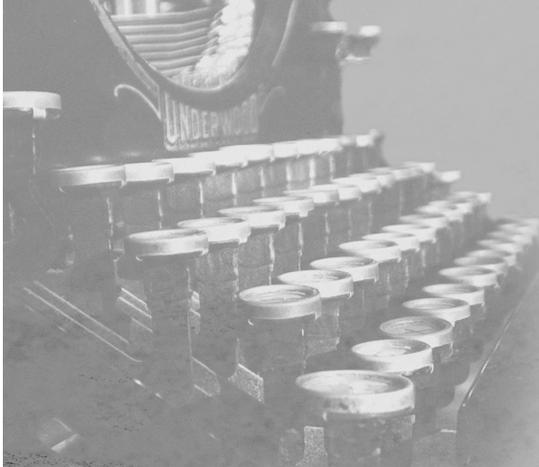
If you want to be a proper Example for those around you to imitate, keep on doing your Duty.

You are watched continually – in your home, at your work, in the Corps. Someone's eyes are always on you. Someone is always reckoning you up, and judging whether you are what you profess to be or not; or, what is more important still, someone is always shaping their own doings and character by yours.

You have probably heard the story of the man who complained to his minister that he had four miles to walk to his Church. "Oh, my dear fellow," said the Parson, "you must not grumble at that. You have an opportunity every Sunday morning of preaching a sermon four miles long." He meant that all the people along the road he travelled had an example before their eyes which said, "Why don't you go to Church? Why don't you do your Duty?"

When you pray, when you sing, when you suffer without repining, when you carry one another's burdens, when you warn sinners, when you give your money; in short, whenever you do any good act, you say by your action to those around you, "Go, and do likewise. Do your Duty! Do your Duty!"

The Esteem of those around you, and in many cases your own earthly profit, will be promoted by your doing your Duty. Men who hate your Saviour and despise your religion will admire you, and employ you, and reward you, if they are confident that



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you do your Duty. They will say: "That man is not governed by what is pleasant, or easy, or profitable to himself at the moment, or even by what will gratify other people. He means to do his Duty."

If you want the Review of your Life to give you satisfaction when you come to your death-bed, you must do your Duty. In that terrible battle of Trafalgar to which I have referred, Nelson was mortally wounded. They carried him below to die, and when the last moment came he said to a favourite Captain who was bending over him, "Kiss me, Hardy. Now I am satisfied. Thank God, I have done my Duty." Now, I say nothing here about the cruel business of war. But leaving that entirely out of the question, I do feel that there was something very pathetic about this incident, and I want to ask you one or two questions suggested by it.

If death overtook you, my Comrades, to-night, would you be able to say,

"Husband, Wife, kiss me. I am leaving you, but I am satisfied. Thank God, I have done my Duty!

"Father, Mother, Children, kiss me. I have loved your souls, and toiled for your Salvation. Thank God, I have done my Duty!

"Brother, Sister, Master, Servant, kiss me. I have tried to bless you. I am satisfied. Thank God, I have done my Duty!

"Comrades, Captain, Lieutenant, kiss me. I have fought with you, and been true to the dear old Flag. I am satisfied. Thank God, I have done my Duty!"

Would you be able to say this? And when, at the Judgment Seat, you meet these dear ones again, and the poor Sinners who now live around about you, speeding on their way to the land of Misery and Despair, will you be able to say to them, "I knew you on earth; I loved you; I prayed for you; and in trying to save you I did my Duty"?