

ESSAYS  
ON  
DUTY AND DISCIPLINE

By

His Grace the Archbishop of Armagh.

His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin.

His Eminence Cardinal Bourne, Archbishop of  
Westminster.

Field-Marshal Earl Roberts, V.C., K.G., O.M., etc.

The Right Hon. the Earl of Meath, P.C., K.P.

The Right Rev. the Lord Bishops of London, Durham,  
and St. Albans ; and Bishop Welldon.

Professor Paulsen, of Berlin.

The Hon. George H. Martin, Litt.D., Treasurer of  
Massachusetts Board of Education.

The Headmasters of Eton and Bradfield.

Rev. Prebendary Carlile, of the Church Army.

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The Lady Laura Ridding, Ex-President National  
Union of Women Workers.

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AND OTHERS

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# ESSAYS ON DUTY AND DISCIPLINE

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ESSAY NO. 32

## British Discipline

BY

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### WHY SAILORS WEAR BLACK NECKERCHIEFS.

**HAVE** you noticed that British men-of-war's-men all wear a black neckerchief round their necks? And do you know why? They wear it as a sign of mourning for Lord Nelson, the great admiral who was killed in the battle of Trafalgar over a hundred years ago. On October 21, 1805, the British fleet attacked and, what is more, defeated the combined force of French and Spanish men-of-war.

It looked almost hopeless for a small fleet to attack so large a one; but Nelson made that grand signal which called on every man that day to do his duty, and every man, like a true Briton, did his duty, even though in many a case it cost him his life.

Nelson himself showed the example, for he drove his ship in between two of the enemy's ships, and fought them, one against two. He never attempted to take cover, but exposed himself to danger as much as anyone, and was killed at the moment of victory; and he died happy, because, as he said, "He had tried" – and we know how successfully – "to do his duty." His duty was always present in his mind.

### THE BALACLAVA CHARGE.

On October 25, 1854, the Light Cavalry Brigade got the order to charge the Russian artillery, which was supported by the infantry and cavalry.

It was a hopeless task. The order had really been given by mistake. But that did not matter to men who were accustomed to obey. They charged, and, though it cost them a great number of gallant lives, they carried out their duty with such bravery and dash as to command the highest praise even from their enemies, and they won for British soldiers the name of being ready to

sacrifice their lives to carry out their orders, even though the job looked hopeless. That is why Boy Scouts to-day have as their motto the single word

“BALACLAVA”

to remind them that if they get an order which it is a bore or even a danger to perform, their duty is to do as their brave fathers did at Balaclava, and carry it out cheerily and well. That is true discipline.

### THE MADNESS OF DISOBEDIENCE.

Gibraltar is a big fortified mountain, off the south coast of Spain, which belongs to Great Britain.

The British captured it over one hundred years ago, and were then besieged there by the French and Spanish armies, working together. The Spanish army attacked it on the land side, the French attacked it by sea; but although they fought hard and with the greatest endurance for over three years, our troops defending the place were a match for them, and held out successfully until they were relieved by the fleet from home.

General Elliott, who had been a cavalry officer in the 15th Hussars, commanded the troops at Gibraltar, and it was chiefly owing to his strict discipline that the garrison succeeded in holding out. Every man had learnt to obey orders without any hesitation or question. One day a soldier disobeyed an order, so General Elliott had him up before him and explained that for a man to be disobedient at such a time showed that he could not be in his right mind; he must be mad.

So he ordered that he should be treated as lunatics were at that time, viz., that his head should be shaved, and that he should be blistered, bled, and put into a strait waistcoat, and should be put in the cells, with bread and water, and should also be prayed for in church.

Well, the general was quite right. If a man cannot obey orders when there is danger to all he must be mad. But it is difficult for a man to be obedient at such a time if he has never learnt to be obedient in ordinary times; and that is why discipline is so strongly kept up both in the Army and Navy in peace time.

A man is taught to obey even the smallest order most carefully and without hesitation until it becomes such a habit with him that when an order is given him to do, a big or dangerous one, he does it at once without any question. And when everyone can be trusted to obey orders, it is an easy thing for the commander to manœuvre his troops and carry out the battle with some chance of success. Well, it is just the same in business, in factories, in your school. If the master knows that whatever he orders will be carried out he doesn't worry about it; he goes ahead, and everybody backs him up by doing his share of duty, and so the whole thing succeeds, and everybody is contented. It is only when some few fellows shirk their duty, and throw extra strain on others, that there is trouble or ill-feeling.

## THE “BIRKENHEAD.”

You remember the story about the ship *Birkenhead*, on board of which discipline and obedience were so splendidly shown by the soldiers.

The ship was carrying about 630 soldiers, with their families, and 130 seamen. Near the Cape of Good Hope one night she ran on to some rocks, and began to break up. The soldiers were at once paraded on deck, half-dressed as they were, just out of their hammocks.

Some were told off to get out the boats and to put the women and children into them, and others were told off to get the horses up out of the hold, and to lower them overboard into the sea, in order that they might have a chance of swimming ashore. When this had all been done it was found that there were not enough boats to take everybody, and so the men were ordered to remain in their ranks on the deck, while the women and children, with a few men to row them, moved off from the sinking ship.

The boats had not gone far when the ship broke into half and began to go down. The captain shouted to the men to jump overboard and save themselves, but the colonel – Colonel Seaton – interrupting the captain, ordered the men to stand where they were and to keep their ranks, for he saw that if they swam to the boats, and tried to get in, they would probably sink them too.

So the men kept their ranks, and as the ship rolled over and sank they gave a farewell cheer, and went down with her.

Out of the whole 760 on board, only 192 were saved, but even these would probably have been lost had it not been for the discipline and self-sacrifice of the others obeying the order to keep their ranks and not to try to get into the boats.

So you see the value of discipline in a difficult crisis or moment of danger.

The great Duke of Wellington, who was Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, when describing this heroic act on the *Birkenhead*, praised very highly the discipline of the men – he did not praise their bravery. It was brave of them, but he considered that all Britons are naturally brave – he expected bravery of them. But discipline is another thing; it has to be learnt. In battle or in a big danger a brave man may be very useful, but if he does pretty much as he pleases he is not half so valuable as the man who, besides being brave, has also learnt to obey every order at once.

## A DISOBEDIENT SCOUT.

I once had a brave scout in my force in the South African War. He was a brave man and an active scout, but he was not good at obeying orders, and in the end this cost him his life and did harm to our plans.

We had news of a force of the enemy which did not know of our presence in that part of the country. So we hid ourselves, meaning to surprise and capture them when they came along. The orders that not a sound was to be made and not a man was to show himself, and these orders were faithfully carried out – except by this one scout. He thought he knew better than others, and he slipped away unseen to go and look out for the enemy’s approach. Presently he spied a hostile

scout, and fired at him; the enemy's scout returned his fire, and after a short duel both of them fell mortally wounded. But the noise of their shooting gave the alarm to the enemy's force; more came upon the spot, and, finding a British scout there, they naturally guess that there must be more in the neighbourhood, so they took all precautions, sent out scouts in all directions, and then, coming on our tracks, at last discovered our hiding-place, and gave warning to their own side, who were then able to make their escape.

If my scout had only learnt, when a boy, to obey orders it might have made a great difference to him, to us, and to the enemy.

### THE FIRE BRIGADE.

But it is not only soldiers and sailors who have to learn discipline. Obedience and "playing the game" is just as necessary in every other line of life.

Watch firemen at work. They are all brave enough; they would all like to be at the top of the ladder fighting the flames, but their discipline makes them work at their different particular jobs, each playing in his place, obeying orders, and doing his share in order that the fire may be put out, not that he should win special glory or excitement for himself. It is exactly the same when you are playing football or hockey. If each player wanted to play his own way, and have the ball all to himself, his team would never win a match. The whole art of playing successfully is that each player should merely do his utmost to help his side win. So soon as he has got the ball he does his best with it, and then quickly passes it on to another of his side, who is ready at once to back up and take his turn at getting the ball along. Each man plays in the place where he is told to play by the captain, and all this means discipline; it is the team which has the best training and the best discipline that generally wins.

It is just the same in all other paths in life, whether in games or in duty or in trade. Even in the streets there is discipline. The policeman regulates the traffic so that all vehicles moving in one direction keep to one side of the road, and thus allow the traffic in the opposite direction to keep moving along the other side. But if one motor-'bus driver did not feel inclined to obey orders, but dashed about in his own way, not caring to which side of the road he went so long as he went ahead, there would be accidents and delay in no time and the whole traffic would be upset.

### MAKING PINS.

If you are in business with a large number of others it is useful for the good of the whole that you obey the orders which you receive from those who are in authority over you. If the seniors can be sure that their assistants will, each in his own department, carry out their orders they can carry on the business properly.

How long do you suppose it would take you to make a pin by yourself? Well, it would take one man about a day to make twenty. But it has been found that ten men, working together, each doing his own bit, can turn out 48,000 pins in a day.

If each worked alone, they could only make 200 altogether. So that you are able to do much greater work directly you do it with others, when each is doing his bit of the work under orders of the head man.

### COMMAND YOURSELF.

The soldier does not go into a battle because he likes it. It is a dangerous place, and he feels inclined to run away; but he commands himself and says, "I must go, whether I like it or not, because it is my duty." When he gets his orders from his officers to attack the enemy, he would probably be more anxious still to go in the opposite direction, but he commands himself and says, "I must obey the orders of my officers." And the officers obey the orders of the general, and so the whole force moves to the attack simply from a spirit of discipline, each man making himself do his proper share, so that, although he may lose his life, yet his side may win the battle.

You may get tired and out of breath, and you may get a hack on the shins, but that doesn't stop you playing, does it? No. You stick to it and go on because it is "the game" to do so. You are one of a team; you've got to peg away, passing the ball on to your comrades when you get the chance, not for any honour or glory to yourself, but because you want your side to win. And the whole team are working in the same way, each in his own place in the field, obeying the orders of the captain, like soldiers in a battle.

That is the way to "play the game," whatever the game may be, whether it is war or commerce; science or sport. Remember we are each one of us trying to do our little bit towards winning the game for our country.

### BE A BRICK.

You may think that where so many thousands of men are doing it, it doesn't very much matter if there is a shirker or two. But we are like so many bricks in a wall. Many thousands of bricks are used in making a big building, and each little brick has his place in keeping it up; he may have a humble place where he is not much seen, or he may be in a showy position, but, wherever he is, he has got to do his duty and be a good strong brick, firm and trustworthy. If he is a rotter, and cracks or crumbles away, he throws extra strain and work on the others, and some of them may begin to crack too, and then the walls get unsteady and the whole building may fall down.

So be a good brick in this great nation of ours, be strong and stick to your duty, obey orders cheerily and at once, and don't be a waster; play the game without thinking of your own comfort and safety, but in order that your side may win – that the great Empire to which you belong may be strong and flourish for ever.