

## THE DOING OF DUTY

A scrawny 12-year-old snaps to attention amid the shadows of my memory, right hand raised. "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country...." Noel Lovett and Bobby Jack Chambers, leaders of Troop 39, nod affirmation as another youngster under their tutelage embraces the Boy Scout Oath--and the duty it commends.

The Bible also accentuates duty. "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

And as illustrated by the following insightful excerpts from THE TRUE CITIZEN, a century-old reader for seventh and eighth grade pupils, the pen of duty inscribes names in the roll books of history.

Duty extends the highest calling. "No man has a right to say he can do nothing for the benefit of mankind. We forget that men are less benefited by ambitious projects than by the sober fulfillment of each man's proper duties. By doing the proper duty, in the proper time and place, a man may make the entire world his debtor and may accomplish far more of good than in any other way."

Duty stands faithful despite contrary circumstances. "Just what is meant by faithfulness to duty may be clearly seen in the following incident. During the famous 'dark day' of 1780, in Connecticut, candles were lighted in many houses, and domestic fowls went to their roosts. The people thought the Day of Judgment had come. The legislature was then in session in Hartford. The house of representatives adjourned. In the council, which corresponds to the modern senate, an adjournment was also proposed. Colonel Davenport objected, saying, 'The Day of Judgment is either approaching, or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjourning; if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish, therefore, that candles may be brought.'"

And duty shrinks not at certain death. "More than sixteen hundred years after an eruption of Mt. Vesuvius (A.D. 79) had buried Pompeii in ashes, explorers laid bare the ruins of the ill-fated city. There the unfortunate inhabitants were found just where they were overtaken by death. Some were discovered in lofty attics and some in deep cellars, whither they had fled before the approaching desolation. Others were found in the streets, through which they were fleeing in wild despair when the tide of volcanic gases and the storm of falling ashes overwhelmed them. But the Roman sentinel was standing at his post, his skeleton-hand still grasping the hilt of his sword, his attitude that of a faithful officer. He was placed there on duty, and death met him at his post."

In times of wars and rumors of war, duty naturally steps forward. And whether Scout or soldier, breadwinner or bread maker, student or sage, may our epitaphs declare: "He gripped the sword of duty in the closing season of life, and death met him at his post."