

A CRIME. AGAINST HUMANITY.

The unspeakable crime committed by the German officials in Belgium in executing Miss Edith Cavell, the English Matron of the Ecole Belge d'Infirmières Diplômées in Brussels, has caused a tempest of righteous indignation not only in the nursing profession, but throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom, which will be shared by every man and woman in the civilized world. A more cold-blooded murder was never perpetrated.

Miss Cavell was trained at the London Hospital, entering its nursing school in 1896, and leaving after five years' experience in private nursing to take the position of Night Superintendent at the St. Pancras Infirmary, Dartmouth Park Hill. Two years later she was appointed Assistant Matron at the Shoreditch Infirmary, Hoxton, where she was not only a very efficient officer, but much loved by the poor of Hoxton, amongst whom, in her off duty time, she did much good work. The poor do not easily forget their friends, and though it is now some eight years since Miss Cavell left Hoxton, on the invitation of Dr. Depage and a committee in Brussels, to become the Matron of the new Nursing School in the Rue de la Culture, she is still remembered with affectionate regard in many a home in the locality.

The Ecole Belge d'Infirmières Diplômées was opened on October 1st, 1907, with four pupils. In 1909, when Miss Cavell attended the International Congress of Nurses in London, as a fraternal delegate, and presented a paper on "Nursing in Belgium," she was able to report that this school, founded to improve the training of nurses, to open a new career to Belgian girls, and to train new aids to the cause of science, had 13 pupils, for whom a varied and practical three years' curriculum had been arranged. By 1912 it had passed the experimental stage, and had 32 pupils training in four different hospitals, each with its trained Matron, and a trained head nurse in each ward. Miss Cavell still held the position of Matron of the school when war broke out. A Red Cross Ambulance was immediately started by the Committee, who equipped a number of beds in neighbouring houses for the wounded of all nationalities. Her nursing staff was to have been distributed among these houses, together with many English and Belgian ladies who had offered themselves in a subordinate capacity, but after the entry of the Germans into Brussels, Miss Cavell put herself and her staff wholly at the disposal of the authorities. She could, had she wished, have left Brussels

with the party of British nurses who, owing to the good offices of the American Consul, were eventually allowed to return, with an armed guard as far as the frontier, by way of Denmark, but refused to do so. After the enemy's occupation of Brussels, she and her staff worked hard and cheerfully among wounded German officers in the Royal Palace.

The charge against Miss Cavell, of which she was found guilty by a German military court, and condemned to death, was that she had harboured fugitive British and French soldiers, and Belgians of military age, and had assisted them to escape from Brussels. According to the Foreign Office statement issued on Friday night, October 15th, she was arrested on August 5th, and executed on the 13th inst., after sentence of death had been passed on her. So far as the Foreign Office is aware, no charge of espionage was brought against her.

The *Daily Mail* correspondent reports that the execution ground was a garden or yard in Brussels. A German firing party of six men and an officer were drawn up in the garden, and awaited their victim. She was led in from a house near by, blindfolded with a black scarf. Until within some thirty yards of the spot where she was to have been shot, though deadly white, she stepped bravely out to meet her fate, but her strength at length gave way, and she fainted and fell to the ground. As she lay there, motionless, the officer in charge of the party drew a large Service pistol from his belt, took steady aim from his knee, and shot her through the head, the firing party looking on. He then directed the soldiers to carry the body to the house, where charge was taken of it by a Belgian woman, acting under the instructions of the Spanish Minister, who had undertaken the responsibility for the body, pending arrangements for its burial.

The execution of Miss Cavell has shocked the whole Belgian community, who speak of it as the bloodiest act of the whole war. Her blood indeed cries aloud for just retribution, and when the day of reckoning comes, the British nation must demand it.

Our remembrance of the martyred woman when with us during the great international gathering of nurses in London in 1909, is that of a resolute woman of forceful character, and a devoted nurse, with deep feeling. She loved the pioneer work in which she was engaged at Brussels, and aroused great interest amongst her colleagues from all over the world who had met to help one another to raise ever higher the standards of education and professional ethics, public usefulness, and the civic spirit amongst trained nurses.

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