

delight. I was at first puzzled and then pleased to find in this British citizen an attitude toward the war and toward his German captors which was larger and saner than that of most partisans I have met. His experiences with the Germans had not led him to brand them indiscriminately as rascals, and he seemed to be looking forward to an outcome which would bring, not merely or even entirely, the aggrandisement of England, but the advancement of the cause of Christ. Vigorous patriot as he was, he was no blind jingo. And this was one reason why I found an occasional evening with him and his cordial young wife very pleasant.

During one of the first of these evenings, as we sat and nursed our tiny fire—coal is a luxury in Brussels now, and poor Anglican chaplains cannot indulge in it freely, even when they have guests—there floated vaguely into my mind a statement which the American Press had published about an English clergyman who had visited Miss Cavell the night before her execution. I had forgotten the clergyman's name, and it occurred to me to ask my host about it. "His name was Gahan," said the young man quietly. His wife looked up at me quickly from her work on the other side of the open stove, then dropped her eyes again. There was a pause.

He seemed to pull himself together with an effort. I guessed why, but I hope it did him no real injury to tell the story again. "Of course I will tell it, if you wish to hear it," he said. And for an hour or two, with the guns of the battle-line seventy-five miles off to the west rumbling faintly in the pauses, he and his wife, in turn, told me this detail and that of the sickening story.

But it was not all sickening. There is a phase of it which the newspapers touched lightly, but which it is inspiring and encouraging to hear, without any reference to the accident of Miss Cavell's nationality or her partisan sympathies.

She had not been a member of Mr. Gahan's church, but of one of the others. From August, 1914, she had, of course, attended Christ Church when she attended church at all, but her work in her hospital kept her so busy that the chaplain had met her only a few times. One afternoon the German military chaplain sent word to him that he was wanted to go that evening to talk with an Englishwoman who was "dying." He had been deeply interested in the imprisonment and trial of Miss Cavell, but he had no suspicion that she was the "dying" woman in question. He was delayed in starting, and when he was finally ready, he was informed that his destination was the St. Gilles prison.

Miss Cavell had waited for him some time, but had finally concluded that he was prevented from coming, and had retired. When she learned that he had come after all, she dressed again and came out to meet him. He was so unnerved by what had been told him on the way—that she was to be shot the next morning—that he could scarcely stand and his speech was only a stammer; but the quiet, gray-haired woman who came to

meet him was as calm and cheerful as if the next day were to be a day of routine usefulness in her hospital. The hand she offered him was steady and cool, and there was not a tremor in her voice.

They sat down and talked of this and that, even of small matters. But after a time she began to tell him of the trial and the sentence. "I have no regrets," she said. "I did what I could for my country, and I am ready to pay the price. I should certainly do the same thing again if I could. I am sure that in God's sight I am not an offender, for I did what seemed to me clearly my duty. And that is the only thing that matters, my friend—to do one's duty."

So this condemned criminal, within a few hours of her death, sat teaching and consoling the minister who had come to help her. "I know more about life and death and eternity than I ever did before," she said. "It is all clear now. I think I am past all passion and prejudice. I am blaming no one, but I see my own path perfectly well, and I am glad I took the path I did, although it has not always been as clear all the way as it is now. Oh, how little and insignificant they seem to me now, the selfish things we men and women spend our lives struggling for! What happens to you as a result of trying to be useful can't be anything but good, dear friend, and so I know that what will come to me to-morrow morning can be nothing but good!"

In some such words as these did this unflinching Christian heroine set forth her philosophy of life, her vision of the Truth, to the last fellow-countryman she ever spoke a word to; and after an hour or two of quiet conversation, she rose and gave him her hand again, saying: "Good-night, sir; I must get a little sleep now. God bless you; don't forget me!"

There was another pause. The young chaplain sat and gazed into his little Belgian stove. Then he went on: "I am sure she slept, as she said she expected to." Then he sat up in his chair. "Do you know, sir, that that woman had seen and heard something that has never reached you and me? Something definite, something concrete, I mean, about the meaning and purpose of it all? No man could have spent an hour with Miss Edith Cavell, as I did, no matter what he may have been before, and come out from that prison anything but a firm believer. It was hard—it was horrible—but it was wonderful, sir, wonderful!"

And as I passed the St. Gilles prison the next morning, it seemed to have lost something of its gruesomeness and to have taken on something of the beauty of that great soul which went heavenward from its doors.

We are indebted to *The Canadian Nurse* for having brought this interesting article before the nursing world.—Reprinted from the *New York Churchman*.

Alexandra Day will be celebrated on June 20th. £313,000 has been collected for hospitals and convalescent homes since the inception of the Fund in 1912.

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