

EDITH CAVELL.

The 12th of October was the Anniversary of the Martyrdom of Edith Cavell, and was solemnly celebrated at the Prison of Saint Gilles in a suburb of Brussels.

The cell which she had occupied was decorated with flowers, the gift of her devoted collaborator, Mme. Bodart, and Mme. de Leu de Cecil and others. In the Prison Chapel an address was delivered recalling Miss Cavell's heroic action, and beautiful music, concluding with a patriotic hymn sung by Mlle. Hilda Bodart, was performed.

In the October *American Journal of Nursing* the following appreciation, entitled "Dawn," is contributed by Virginia L. Montgomery, R.N. It is well Edith Cavell's compatriots should read this beautiful recognition of her glorious death by an American colleague. Would that it had been written by an Englishwoman.

DAWN.

By VIRGINIA L. MONTGOMERY, R.N.

Dawn at Brussels on October 12th, 1915, with the mists of early morning hanging low over wooded hills. Dawn that came unwillingly to lighten up the shadows of a huge stone building on the outskirts of the city and to disclose the outlines of a group of targets stretching away over the hills in the rear.

The ominous silence was suddenly broken by the sound of a sharp command, the clatter of arms and the tramp of heavy boots, and from a doorway marched a squad of grey clad soldiers. In their midst walked two prisoners: a man and a woman. The man seemed nervous as he faced the firing squad, but the woman died as she had lived, heroically, and willing to sacrifice her life to a cause which to her seemed just and righteous.

Her name? Perhaps you have guessed it. It is a name which is famous throughout all Europe, the name of one of the world's most heroic women, mourned as few are mourned, honoured by nations, loved by people of many tongues.

Edith Cavell lives in the hearts of her countrymen of England, in the bosom of Belgium, in the soul of France as none other has lived. A woman of high courage, lofty spirit, unflinching principle, whose example of patriotism and self-sacrifice is an inspiration to those with whom she came into contact, and a source of never-ending pride to those who share her ideals in the profession of nursing. It is fitting and proper that she be so highly honoured.

Every visitor to Brussels goes to the spot of her execution, oftentimes before they visit any other place. My guide, who spoke perfect English, nodded his head quietly and a look of pride came into his face.

"The place of execution, Mademoiselle!" As we drove swiftly through the city, he said, half apologetically, "You see, I knew her. She helped me to get across the lines. I shall never forget how good she was."

"Tell me about her. I, too, think she was wonderful."

And thus encouraged, he told me why this woman was so loved and revered. In spite of the earnest entreaties of her friends, Miss Cavell risked her life daily in smuggling food and clothing to the prisoners. To all their remonstrances she said that the people were in need of her services and that she knew the penalty for her discovery, but thought her life little enough to give if she could do some acts of kindness to ease the pain or suffering of another. That was her creed, her profession of healing was her religion, and she carried on, serenely unconcerned that her acts of goodness might be directly responsible for her death.

She visited secretly, with total disregard of personal safety, wounded victims. She brought them food and surgical dressings and dressed their injuries. She wrote letters to their families, bidding them to hope for the best, encouraging them to face their problems with renewed strength. She was entrusted with the little keepsakes that mean so much to the mothers of men, and invariably she managed to get them to their destination, with a little note of condolence in accompaniment. By heavy bribes, she managed to aid hundreds of British, Canadian, French and Belgian boys to escape to safety, with their bodies cured and whole, and their hearts full of gratitude. They called her "the little angel,"—she who followed in the footsteps of The Lady with the Lamp, her eyes seeing visions of her distinguished predecessor, her soul aflame with the same lofty inspiration. No wonder they revere her!

Her own private fortune gave out, but appeals for money from friends brought quick response. She became pale and thin, emaciated and nervous. Her friends insisted that she stop her dangerous tasks, but she laughed at their fears and persisted in obeying the dictates of her determined will. With the shadow of death—ignominious death—hanging over her head, with the cries of the sufferers ringing in her ears, with the finger of suspicion pointing at her as she slipped in and out of the prison on her errands of mercy, Edith Cavell joined the ranks of the Great. She became an exponent of a new era, an era of mercy, of humanity that knows no discrimination, whose emblem is a cross of flaming crimson, whose creed is equality of justice to friend and foe. Her labour of love took some of the hatred out of men's hearts, and filled their souls with understanding. Her sacrifice has been worth while.

We drove down a broad boulevard, lined on both sides with stately trees. No ornate monument marks that place. Bordered by flowers, the little bronze slab in which are imbedded the four legs of the chair in which Miss Cavell met her death, seems infinitely pathetic. And it is always covered with flowers.

My guide stiffened to attention and I saw tears of emotion in his eyes as he uncovered. The pathos of the scene was touching. After learning the real meaning of the sacrifice of life on the battlefields of France, I was better able to comprehend the meaning of this. All about were visitors, stepping softly on the grass, conversing little, and that in whispers.

A crippled soldier stood looking at the plaque given by France, just behind the slab. His one good hand smoothed out the tricoloured ribbon on the wreath encircling the plaque as he carefully read the printed words. A little child clinging to the hand of a ragged woman in rusty black, tossed a withered wild flower onto the slab where it fell on top of a gorgeous bouquet of hot-house blooms carefully placed there by a well-dressed man who had driven up in a big limousine. One and all stood silent a moment, after laying down their gift, recalling the memory of a little woman who had served them loyally and who had paid the supreme sacrifice in giving her life for her fellow men. A gift of flowers; a moment's silence. Could there be a more perfect tribute?

Brave deeds are done in the heat and madness of battle; but braver are committed in the places of silence, among the pain wracked sufferers, among oppressed and hopeless, among the stricken ones who have lost their all. Baubles of gold, set with precious stones, trinkets of metal with gaily coloured ribbons are given to indicate valour and courage extraordinary. But the golden cross of Service, the diadem of Sacrifice, is set with jewels of matchless glory. Jewels in the hearts of people who set aside a little shrine at which they worship in secret and in gratitude—Jewels, the loving thoughts of those who can never forget. These are real rewards for valour and courage

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