

Heroine of The Faith



Edith Cavell was the daughter of a Norfolk rector, and as a girl was at school in Brussels where she made her first acquaintance with the Belgian people. School years over, she chose the profession of a nurse, and having undergone her training and filled various appointments in England, became matron of an institution in Brussels, where Belgian young women were trained as nurses, not to the pleasing of the Romish nuns who regarded her with suspicion. Her success in nursing won for her the confidence of many of the Belgian people of high rank, and one grateful patient, who had been cared for with great devotion by the English nurse, said "She was a minister of God working for my good." While home in Norfolk on a brief holiday with her aged mother in the summer of 1914, war was declared by Germany and the German armies invaded Belgium. "My duty is out there, and I shall be wanted," said the noble nurse. And bidding farewell to friends and home, she hastened to Brussels to find the invaders shelling the city. On August 20th, they were at the gates of the Home, and the following day, footsore and war-weary, German soldiers rested and received hospitality in Nurse Cavell's Home, which had become a Red Cross Hospital, into which wounded men of all nations were received.

When Brussels was surrendered to the Germans, Baron Von Bissing, the German Governor, forbade the inhabitants to receive or render any help to those belonging to the nations whose lands they had invaded. To this order Nurse Cavell gave no heed, but sought to heal and help men in distress wherever found. For giving an English soldier a drink of water, and a shivering French soldier an overcoat, she was rudely arrested while in the act of dressing the wounds of a patient, dragged through the streets at night, thrown into prison, kept ten weeks in solitary confinement, tried by secret military court martial, and condemned to death. On a dark October morning in 1915, at two o'clock, she was led forth blindfolded to the place of execution and shot by a German officer with his pistol. Her testimony to three great truths of the Christian faith during the last hours of life was clear and confident, well worth remembering by all who honour her heroism and love of her country.

- 1) First: As the British chaplain who was allowed to visit her tells, she said: "Standing as I do in view of God and Eternity, I realize that patriotism is not enough." She spoke of God's Word as only a Christian can. The blood of Christ and the Word of God were her soul's rest.
- 2) Second: In respect of her enemies and murderers she said: "There must be no malice." This is the true Christian spirit, and should be the distinguishing mark of all who belong to Christ.
- 3) Third: Her devotion and service was toward her opposers and betrayers, as truly as to her own people, and as has, since her death, been shown, it was one whom she had befriended who betrayed her to her enemies.

It was so with Edith Cavell's Lord and Master, and it will be so with His followers to the end. But they serve and suffer for "His sake." It was in these three bright testimonies that this lone English nurse declared her faith and manifested her Christianity, as surely as she displayed her patriotism and love of humanity in that hour when all seemed against her, and in which she found in the faith of the Gospel and the assurance of the Word of God her solace and her peace.

The removal from Belgian soil, and transference to her native land, of the body of this noble heroine of faith, recalls one of the saddest incidents of the great war, and brings to mind a bright and beautiful testimony to the faith of Jesus Christ, well worth placing side by side with the treasured confessions and recorded witnesses of those who in former ages gave their lives a sacrifice for the Gospel and the faith of Christ, in times of persecution and fiery trial.

Real Life Stories
Nurse Edith Cavell 1865-1915



Edith Cavell's monument stands near Trafalgar Square, London in the midst of the busy city from which she went to aid her fellow-countrymen in the early days of the awful war. To it her confined body was brought from Belgium when the war was finished. But her best memorial is the faith she so fearlessly confessed, and the Gospel testimony she bore, with death full in view, and Eternity unfolding its portals before her.

It is not given to all to die a martyr's death. But it is open to all to confess the Son of God, and to manifest His Spirit among those who persecute and oppose.