

HOW AMERICA REACTS TO EDITH CAVELL'S DEATH

Chivalrous Men Would Stay the Law's Hand While Women Deny Their Own Right to Privileges.

By Ruth Dunbar.

HERE is a great terror among reactionaries lest the frail flower of femininity and the sturdy blossom of manhood wither under the wind of equality. If women enter into men's rights and duties, what, they demand, is to prevent them from becoming masculine? Women, on the other hand, lament the days of chivalry. There is talk of sex antagonism, and through it of racial annihilation. While these discussions rage, femininity ever so often evinces that it is still femininity, and there are even traces of the eternal masculine. While there is one case of a woman executed for a crime, there are nine of women charged because they are women. Sex antagonism seems to be directed against its own rather than against the other sex. An unofficial jury of women will pass severe judgment on an erring sister, while an official jury sends in the verdict of not guilty.

Now, barely showing its face through the veil of universal mourning that shrouds the figure of Edith Cavell, is somewhat the same idea, a fundamental sentiment of men stronger for women than the sentiment of justice, a fundamental sentiment of women, that they must expect for women nothing more tender than justice.

Why there is to be found this difference in the viewpoint of men and women, psychologists disagree. Some do not admit that there is a difference.

"If there is such a point of distinction in the reactions of men and women, psychology is not advanced enough to take a definite stand on the reason," said Professor A. T. Poffenberger, of the psychological department at Columbia University. "It is an interesting point for speculation, but it must be largely theoretical, for in such instances we are still in a simple and experimental stage."

"When men are more inclined than women to set aside cold justice in the case of a woman and substitute a warmer sentiment of chivalry, it suggests the fact that sometimes men who deny women equal civil rights with themselves are the first to demand special privileges for women in a case of this kind. There are no psychological data to tell us definitely whether this feeling is inherent or a matter of training. We have ways of knowing that there are fundamental sensations, such as curiosity and hunger. We have no way of knowing that chivalry is fundamental. In fact, we have more reason to believe that it is a matter of training. The small boy has instilled in him a certain attitude of deference toward women, from which it is very hard for him to grow away as a man. We may not all get up in a subway to give our seats to women, but we feel uncomfortable when we do not. We have a similar feeling at sight of a woman in distress, no matter what the ethics of the case."

Dr. James E. Lough, acting dean of the School of Pedagogy, New York University, thinks that though there may be some element of chivalry in the attitude of men, the majority are swayed more by reason.

"If a man had been executed under the same conditions as was Miss Cavell, there would have been practically the same outcry," said the psychologist. "The fact that outrages people, men and women alike, is that the Teutons are pursuing a doctrine of frightfulness in a civilized country. This doctrine can be pursued among savages, but not among educated peoples. The first offense of the Germans was in invading Belgium at all. The second was in laying down this doctrine of terrorism. The third was in forcing Belgians to work in their ammunition factories and to provide them with food. The fourth was the execution of Edith Cavell. Thus she was shot for trying to help Belgians escape oppression, unlawful even in time of war under The Hague Treaty, and her death was a climax of outrages."

"If women are more prone than men to justify the action of the Teutons, I believe it is because they regard it as an isolated fact, as they would the death of Andre, deplorable, but necessitated by the conditions of war, and not as the culmination in a series of outrages. I have studied a great many years and I have never been able to find any great difference, other than that caused by convention, in the mental operations of men and women. What differences appear are caused by the difference in training, interests and acceptance of certain standards, not by inherent tendencies."

Mrs. Leta Hollingsworth, psychologist in the clearing house at Bellevue Hospital, upholds the theory that many of the men who protest most vigorously against the execution are likely to be found among those strong for special privileges for women but weak on equal rights.

"There are, of course, many bases for the opinion of men on the execution of Edith Cavell," she said. "I have not tried to analyze them, but I should expect suffragist men to say her execution was just, except for the fact that she had no voice in making the laws regarding war and peace. And I should expect the non-suffragists to denounce her execution most severely, on the ground that she was a woman. There is no question that the man who is strong for special privileges for a woman is strong for keeping her from her rights. He would rather give her privileges because these depend on his will. He can declare them whenever they do not interfere with his pleasures. He holds them out to her as a reward for not interfering with his desires. He would rather keep her relations so. This attitude is largely unconscious on the part of men. They have not gone through any reasoning on the matter. They get red in the face if any one suggests a change, and don't stop to think it out."

"Of course, the attitude of men toward women is entirely a matter of custom and training, not of inheritance. An Indian wom-

GERTRUDE ATHERTON.

"Her death is the romantic incident of the war."

an carries a pack. That is purely convention. There is no inherent tendency in man that makes this sight horrifying to man, yet it would horrify him to see a white woman thus burdened."

Somewhat the same opinion is held by Mrs. Charles G. Stevenson, who in 1898 did service as a Red Cross nurse at the front in the Spanish-American War, and who is now vice-president of the New York State Nurses' Association. Mrs. Stevenson, however, views this tendency of men from a professional angle, with which she has had ample opportunity to acquaint herself.

"It is true," she said, "that men who might deny women simple rights would have excused Edith Cavell on the ground that she was a woman. This is natural at all times, and especially in the case of a nurse. If men are more aroused in this instance than women they have cause to be, for they owe a great



DEAN GEORGE W. KIRCHWEY.

"It is not a matter of logic but of feeling."

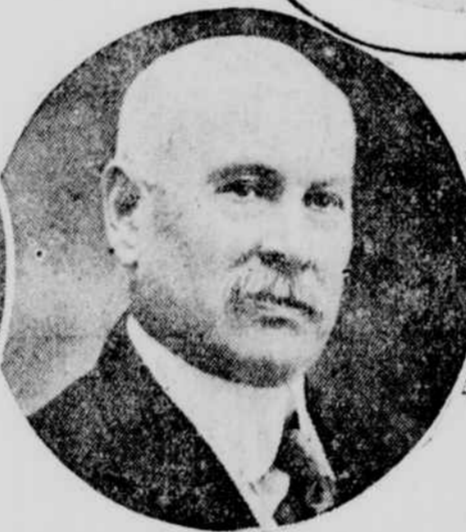
deal to nurses. They are more dependent upon them than women are, and this outrage would doubtless touch some chord that might not vibrate in a woman.

"However, I cannot see how any one would fail to be incensed over the death of Edith Cavell. And I know that no Englishman with a drop of red blood in his veins will let her death go unavenged."

Gertrude Atherton, with the novelist's instinct, does not fail to see the dramatic compensation through the mist of emotion.

"This attitude of men," she said, "is the whole point at issue in the suffrage question. Men like to pity and protect women. I doubt if this tendency will ever be extracted from them, there are so many women to foster it."

"As for Edith Cavell, she knew what she was about. She knew war; she knew the



JUDGE ELBERT H. GARY.

"The entire world would have had a better opinion of the German cause had she been spared."

Germans. She kept her wits till the last, we are told. She probably did not look so far ahead as to know that her death would have this wonderful recruiting value which it has had, but I have no doubt she did know it would rebound to her country's benefit and to Germany's detriment. And what a detriment it has been already to Germany. England has reached the highest point of civilization—that is why they gave Mrs. Herbert only six months in prison, instead of executing her. Germany, so forward of her scientific progress, is fully 200 years behind in humanitarianism. Of course, there are some exceptions, but Germans as a nation are literal.

"I can't see why we should pity Edith Cavell. She was in tremendous luck, for herself and her country. She might just have been struck by shrapnel and never heard of again. But it is a great honor to be shot

EDITH CAVELL. "The tragic figure of the war."



DR. STEPHEN S. WISE.

"It will be decades before the shame of having slain this noble woman will have been effaced."

"The execution of Edith Cavell has, of course, done Germany more harm than all her other blunders. It is true that we have executed women in this country. But they are criminals, and people make an outcry only because it is so unusual, just as they turn and stare if a man walks down the street without his hat."

"If I had been in Belgium, I have no doubt I should have done everything in my power to save Edith Cavell. But now that it is over, I think she has the most enviable fate. Her death is the tragic and romantic incident of the war."

Mrs. Olive Stott Gabriel, president of the Women Lawyers' Association, in spite of her indignation at the circumstances which made possible Miss Cavell's death, naturally reflects the legal sentiment:

"I voted against capital punishment," said

Mrs. Gabriel, who is a native of Oregon, where the death sentence has been abolished, "and I don't believe in executing anybody. It is absurd that women are not given a voice in making the laws which govern them, but, nevertheless, women would be lawabiding. If Miss Cavell had been an ignorant woman, a fool, it would have been different. But she knew what she was doing. Belgium was under military law, and she knew what chances she took. If we didn't hold women to strict accountability along with men, what kind of conditions should we have? We have laws against burglary, but suppose they did not apply to women? If we had separate laws for men and women we should soon have anarchy. Miss Cavell confessed what she had done and asked for no leniency. This is shocking, but the death of a man is shocking. The young man who was executed not so long ago, and who asked his executors to shake hands with him, had his



MISS LILLIAN WALD.

"This is just a part of the general horror."

life before him. That was quite as sad and impressive a death to me as Edith Cavell's. He had done the noblest thing he had been trained to do. I don't believe in war, but if we are going to have war and spies, then, logically, spies should be honored, not executed. But I believe in enforcing laws in any community. That's why I am strong for suffrage, because all the people's sentiment is back of laws and they are then enforced, not allowed to become dead letters, as they are in the State of New York.

"Men sentimentalize about women being put to death, but that is all theoretical. Practically they don't stay their hands because of a woman. Roosevelt often refers to the woman whom he refused to pardon merely because she was a woman. There is only one way in which women escape punishment, and that is through the unwritten law, but men get off on

Psychologists Discuss This Attitude—Some Say Men Have More Sentimentality Than Justice.

that, too—witness Harry Thaw. Mrs. Surratt was executed because she was implicated in Lincoln's death, yet she was only an accessory before the fact. The conspirators met in her house, and she was not spared because she was a woman, nor should she have been. Occasionally men are carried away by sentiment and let women off; then they hold that rare case up to women for years afterward to show how generous they are. The old-fashioned man who indulges in maudlin sentimentality about special privileges for women is usually the first to cheat her in business. I am strong for women, but I am stronger for justice. If women have a voice in lawmaking they won't need any special privileges. They will take care of themselves. The crime against Edith Cavell was not in executing her, but in the fact that she had no voice in the laws that governed her."

Miss Lillian Wald, head of the Henry Street Settlement, also regards the matter from a broad humanitarian view.

"On the whole," said she, "the killing of Edith Cavell is just a part of the general horror and may be classed with the invasion of Belgium and the sinking of the Lusitania. We are shocked to our marrow by the loss of this splendid woman, this valuable nurse, who is as highly esteemed here as in England, and who cared for Germans as well as her own people. Now, if she merely, as a faithful, competent nurse, helped prisoners escape, that is a part of the tenderness and compassion of nursing, and there isn't a woman living who would not have done the same. But if she was engaged by the government as a spy, that is a different matter. She took her chances and she should not have escaped because she was a woman. Which was the case I do not know. I do know that whatever the reason for her death, whether it was justified or not by the laws of war, it is one of the most convincing proofs that war should be abolished."

Like many other suffragists, Mrs. Harriot Stanton Blatch reads into the Cavell case another argument for equal rights.

"The furor of the men over the Cavell case is pure hysteria," she said. "They hang, they electrocute, they shoot women in this country. One group objects only when another group does it. When it comes their turn, they are quite ready to execute women, with whom they are always willing to share their sufferings, but never their powers."

"Women can't sidestep responsibility because they are women," said Miss Henrietta Rodman. "War is not woman's expression—that is the only argument against the execution of Edith Cavell."

"During this war Germany has committed three appalling outrages, which, from every point of view, are also three appalling blunders—the invasion of Belgium, the destruction of the Lusitania, and the execution of Edith Cavell," said Miss Elizabeth Jordan, of Harper & Brothers. "She has tried to justify each of these, and in every attempt she has shown to a horrified world the vulnerable spot in her mighty armor—the quality which, great as she is, must lead to her ultimate defeat."

"No nation which performs and defends such actions can long survive; no such nation can triumph over the civilized peoples of the earth. For Germany is undermining her own social structure as well as the world's; she is tearing away from beneath her the splendid foundation of civilization and high ideals which her own people built. That the many high-minded and heroic Germans should suffer for the blindness and blunders of the few is the real tragedy of the Fatherland."

Other expressions are:

Judge Elbert H. Gary: "My opinion is that Miss Cavell made herself amenable to military law and gave the Germans the right to put her to death, but I also think that, as she was a woman and believed herself to be working in a good cause, it would have been better if her punishment had been less.

Alice Hill Chittenden, of the Anti-Suffrage Association:

"Certainly the execution of Edith Cavell was by no manner of means justified. Women from the point of view of sentiment are entitled to certain privileges of protection."

Miss Alberta Hill, of the Woman's Political Union:

"From the point of view of sentiment the execution of Edith Cavell was not justified, but it has at least refuted the argument of the 'antis' that in time of war women cannot die for their country."

Dr. Stephen S. Wise: "The execution of Edith Cavell is perhaps technically justifiable. I am presuming that the German law dealt thoroughly by Miss Cavell. If so, one must be sorer for the spirit that informs and executes German law than for Miss Cavell."

Mrs. Arthur M. Dodge, president of the Anti-Suffrage Association:

"Capital punishment should only be meted out to women if it can be proved that they are a danger to the community and cold-blooded criminals. Otherwise, from the viewpoint of sentiment—not sentimentality, be it understood—Edith Cavell should not have been put to death."

George W. Kirchwey, formerly Dean of Law at Columbia University:

"According to strict military law, Edith Cavell is guilty, and the fact that she is a woman should not be taken into consideration; but from the viewpoint of humanity and public opinion it seems to me that her execution was absolutely unjustified. It has been the practice of all nations to apply the rules of war less vigorously to women than to men, even though the offence committed be technically the same, and I think this policy is sound.

Are Women People?

By ALICE DUER MILLER

Song Before Election.

Men of our state, how long
Must women struggle and coax and plead
For the thing for which you would fight and bleed,
For liberty, loved of the strong—
Men of our state, how long?

Men of our state, how long,
How long will you sit at ease and say:
"Oh, yes, the women will win some day,
But waiting will do no wrong"—
Men of our state, how long?

Men of our state, how long
Would you love the women who had no part
In the thoughts that have always stirred your heart?
In liberty, loved by the strong—
Men of our state, how long?

"Anti" Comments on the Parade.

Commenting on the suffrage parade, one of the leaders of the opposition said: "There was much to make the on-looker wonder if the substitution of pageantry for sound logic held any guarantee that a doubled electorate would mean an improved electorate."

If we remember rightly, there were some who said of the Sound Money Parade of 1896: "We doubt if the substitution of pageantry for sound logic is any guarantee that the defeat of free silver would mean an improvement in our financial situation."

"I think," says the president of an "anti" organization, "that the public is opposed to women marching."

They showed their opposition by standing about four hours and cheering the marchers as they passed. But the most eloquent comment of all is that the august president of the Men's League Opposed to Woman Suffrage refused to comment at all.

"Antis" We Have Known.

"My principal reason against it," said he, "is that women don't want it, as far as I see."

"O Father," his daughter exclaimed, "is that true? You know that I want it, and Mother does, too."

He smiled with omniscience peculiar to him: "My darling," he said, "that is only a whim."

"But it isn't a whim," she replied, "in Miss Hays. Who writes all your letters. You frequently praise her poise and good sense; well, she wants it, she says."

"Do you think that her judgment or mine is the ripest?" He asked. "Must I learn how to vote from my typist?"

"Well, then," she went on, "all the teachers at school are for it."

He laughed. "I have found as a rule that all of the unmarried women I've known want nothing so much as a home of their own; if all of your teachers were married, you'd note a striking decrease in their wish for the vote."

"Many teachers are married," she started to say. But he begged she would not contradict in that way.

"You're growing," he said, "both aggressive and vain. I think we won't mention this subject again."

That night at the club they were speaking of it. And he said that he wasn't opposed—not a bit.

"It is true I am voting against it," said he; "but the women I know do not want it, you see."

Short Obituaries of "Anti" Arguments.

In the early 80's, during the opening of the colleges and professional schools to women, after a long illness, quietly passed away, the intellectual inferiority argument against woman suffrage.

Suddenly, in all belligerent countries, following the national service rendered by women in munition factories, hospitals and the field of battle, the argument that women must not vote because they are of no use in war.

Very suddenly, on October 23, 1915, in New York City during the great parade, the argument that women do not want the vote.

Where Women Don't Vote.

"The affairs of the greatest corporation in the United States, the Empire State," says Senator Root, "are conducted upon principles that would ruin a corner grocer."

Of course if this situation arose in a suffrage state, we could easily explain it as the result of women's pernicious influence; but as it occurs in New York, where only that sex votes every member of which is a financial expert, we are at a loss.

The Favored Sex.

Women, we are often told, are not sufficiently grateful for the privileges they receive on account of their sex.

We, therefore, beg the two women stenographers who have just won typewriting contests over men and women competitors to remember that if to-morrow they take employment under the government they will have the privilege of receiving a smaller salary than the men whom they have surpassed.