

## The Princess Royal Speech

12 OCTOBER 2015

"On the night before she died in a prison cell in Saint-Gilles, Edith Cavell met with an Anglican priest to take her last communion. As he bade her farewell the priest said, 'we will remember you as a heroine and as a martyr'. Edith replied, 'don't think of me like that; think of me as a nurse who tried to do her duty'. Perhaps she was remembering the words of Florence Nightingale, who introduced the concept of modern nursing to the United Kingdom, as Cavell helped to do in Belgium. Florence Nightingale said, 'I am of certain convinced that the greatest heroes are those who do their duty in the daily grind of domestic affairs whilst the world whirls as a maddening dreidel' [...]

Both Nightingale and Cavell were too modest, in reality they were pioneers. Both bravely tackled prejudice and suspicion to establish nursing as respected profession, after all it was neither reputable nor a profession before they started. Both overcame low expectations about what women could and should achieve and took physical risks with their own lives. As president of Save the Children I have witnessed nurses and health workers doing the same in conflict zones, in the aftermath of disasters and in raising standards of children's health all over the world. I'm sure they have been equally inspired by Edith Cavell and Florence Nightingale.

As we just heard, Edith Cavell's final letter to her nurses shows her concern for their wellbeing. Nurses and healthcare workers need our support and encouragement and we remember today that it was as a direct result of Edith Cavell's execution that the Edith Cavell Nurses' Trust came into being. I do believe that this a real way forward to remember Edith Cavell, her commitment and her investment in nurse training and her understanding of their values in the future.

I am delighted too that there are nurses here in the senate this morning and I will be visiting Queen Fabiola's university children's hospital this afternoon to meet more of nurses and training nurses and see some of the continuing pioneering work in training in child health.

I hope and I sincerely believe that the example of Edith Cavell will inspire future generations of doctors, nurses and healthcare workers as they develop new ways of working and as they continue to work in dangerous or challenging situations.

And I can think of no better way of ending than to quote the inscription on the imposing Edith Cavell statue in Trafalgar Square in London. She said: 'Patriotism is no enough, I must have no hatred or bitterness for anyone.'