

1898-1900] THE LIFE OF EMMELINE PANKHURST

Though in the first shock and difficulty of her bereavement she almost withdrew from active politics, Keir Hardie and those she knew best among the I.L.P. speakers, found open house with her still. When the Boer War was declared she publicly opposed it, and, with sixteen others, resigned from the Fabian Society because of its refusal to declare against the war. For her opposition to it, and some words of his own, her little son was set upon by the boys of his school, and found by the schoolmaster lying unconscious in the road; a cowardly deed for he was the youngest boy in the school.

When, in the General Election of 1900, a woman told Mrs. Pankhurst that Keir Hardie was in for Merthyr Tydfil, she cried: "I must give you a kiss for that! He is a good man!" She wrote to him: "Parliament will have more interest for us now." Her political activity returned. In the same year she was elected, under I.L.P. auspices, to the Manchester School Board, on which she served till March 31st, 1903, when the care of education was transferred to the Municipal and County Councils. Women were not yet eligible for these bodies, but they could be co-opted to the Education Committees, and on the nomination of the I.L.P. Councillors, she became a member for that of Manchester. Parliament had not yet granted power to the local authorities to feed starving school children; the Manchester women teachers were providing meals for the underfed children in their classes out of their own meagre earnings, and giving the greater part of their own dinner-hour to serve them. She was indignant that these devoted women were paid at a

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lower rate than men, though they taught all the subjects taken by the men, and in addition, sewing and domestic economy. As a member of the Committee on technical instruction, she observed that training for many skilled occupations was closed to women, not by reason of any unfitness on their part, but because, on account of their inferior status in Society and the labour market, men believed their presence in any occupation would inevitably reduce wages. Notably they were excluded from the Trade School classes for professional cooks!