

of stop-press news, came some words of Vernon Hartshorn, a South Wales miners' leader :

"The Runciman settlement is impossible . . . if leaders accepted it . . . workmen would reject it . . . they can stop the coal field. . . ."

Lloyd George, Runciman and Henderson were brought in together as arbiters, and in conforming to the law, found themselves obliged to decide the two main points in favour of the men. Some minor questions were left to be arbitrated later by an independent chairman. The miners' representatives accepted Runciman as arbiter, believing, from the talk they had had with him, that he agreed to the justice of their claim. On the contrary, he decided every point referred to him against them. He even permitted the two points he had joined in deciding in their favour to be brought up again, and reversed the decision in favour of the employers.

"If a man fools you once, shame on him—if he fools you twice, shame on you!"

This dictum of witty Noah Ablett rang through the valleys.

The negotiators in London refused to sign the agreement because Runciman had withdrawn from the original award. Mass meetings were called in the coalfield. I chanced to be there in those days of excitement. I saw the colliers of Tonypandy, packed standing into a great dim-lit rink, and heard them give their decision, despite all threats of the D.O.R.A. and the Munitions Act, firmly, unanimously, for a strike, if the original award were not immediately restored.

On Tuesday delegates went from all the miners' lodges to the Cory Hall, Cardiff. I met the representatives of the 10,000 Cambrian Combine men, who had already downed tools to give the Conference a lead. Their faces were glowing, they seemed to walk on air. They felt themselves the advance guard of the workers. The Press denounced them: "Remember the soldiers in the trenches!" The reproach did not dismay them, for they regarded the men in the trenches as their brothers, whose interests they were defending by this fight at home. They responded eagerly to the cry of their Left Wing enthusiasts: "The War is being used for the exploitation of the workers; to force us back in the battle we are waging for the emancipation of our class and the brotherhood of man."

The struggle of the miners was stirring the hearts of the organised workers throughout the country. The South Wales rebels were regarded as the flower of the working class, the standard bearers of the workers against compulsion and profiteering. Wherever I went to speak on these things, I found great audiences thronging the largest halls and gathering in the open air in numbers beyond the reach of a single speaker. When I had spoken, I would jump down from the platform, and thread my way amongst the audience selling our literature. Pennies were eagerly reached out to me; great piles of *Dreadnoughts* and pamphlets disappeared. I returned to Bow laden with heavy bags of copper.

## CHAPTER XXIX

KEIR HARDIE

KEIR HARDIE had been ill all that summer. We met seldom, we were both so busy; but each time I saw him I knew that he was tortured by bodily pain and mental anguish. Sometimes he would be at peace for a time, and thrusting the cruel realities of those days aside, would read aloud to me as of old. More often he was obviously suffering without cease, and even his iron self-command could with difficulty maintain control. The War had shattered him. Rightly indeed John Morley had said to him: "You have been ill; what was the matter? Was it the War which so weighed upon your spirit that it made your body sick?"

He complained of the old abdominal pain, and of loss of power in his right arm. So disturbed I was for him, knowing him there alone at Nevill's Court, with none to care for his bodily needs, despite the many who loved him, that during one of his frequent absences I advertised for a woman, used to attending on invalids, to come to him daily, to massage his arm if he wished and attend to his food and comfort. Applications I got for the post, but he would have none of them.

That Easter the Annual Conference of the I.L.P.<sup>1</sup> had met in Norwich. The hall taken for the Conference was cancelled, but the Primitive Methodists placed their hall at its disposal. The I.L.P. was facing an uphill struggle, so hard that it was found necessary for its National Administrative Council to move an emergency resolution that "the Party throughout the country should resume its educational propaganda." Resolutions were carried for international arbitration, democratic control of foreign policy and the right of Parliament to declare war. The British Government was called on to disclose its terms of peace, the I.L.P. to take action with the Socialists of other countries to bring the War to a close. The recruiting campaign of the Labour Party was condemned. The previous question was nevertheless carried when Dr. Salter of Bermondsey and Clifford Allen<sup>2</sup> moved a resolution that Socialist Parties of all nations should henceforth refuse to support every war, whatever its ostensible objects.

Keir Hardie, so ill and exhausted that at times the delegates thought him sleeping, made but one speech: a protest against the heavy sentences passed by the Russian Government on 53 members of the Russian Seamen's Union and five Socialist members of the Duma. The Secretary

<sup>1</sup> Independent Labour Party.

<sup>2</sup> Now Lord Allen of Hurtwood.



That month came news of the execution of Nurse Cavell ; her last words made one's heart thrill : " I realise that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone."

She had grasped a tremendous truth, and had risen nobly above resentment for her execution. Could her words have reached the Higher Command responsible for her death, one felt that her life must have been spared ; yet maybe the notion was moonshine, for war is ruthless. The war-mongers here acclaimed her as a heroine, but spurned the truth she voiced in her last message. In the flood-tide of their lust for victory, they used her martyrdom to fan the flames of the hatred she had overcome.

The pacifists praised her in lower key ; some even refused to admit her worth, hearing her so lauded by the war party.

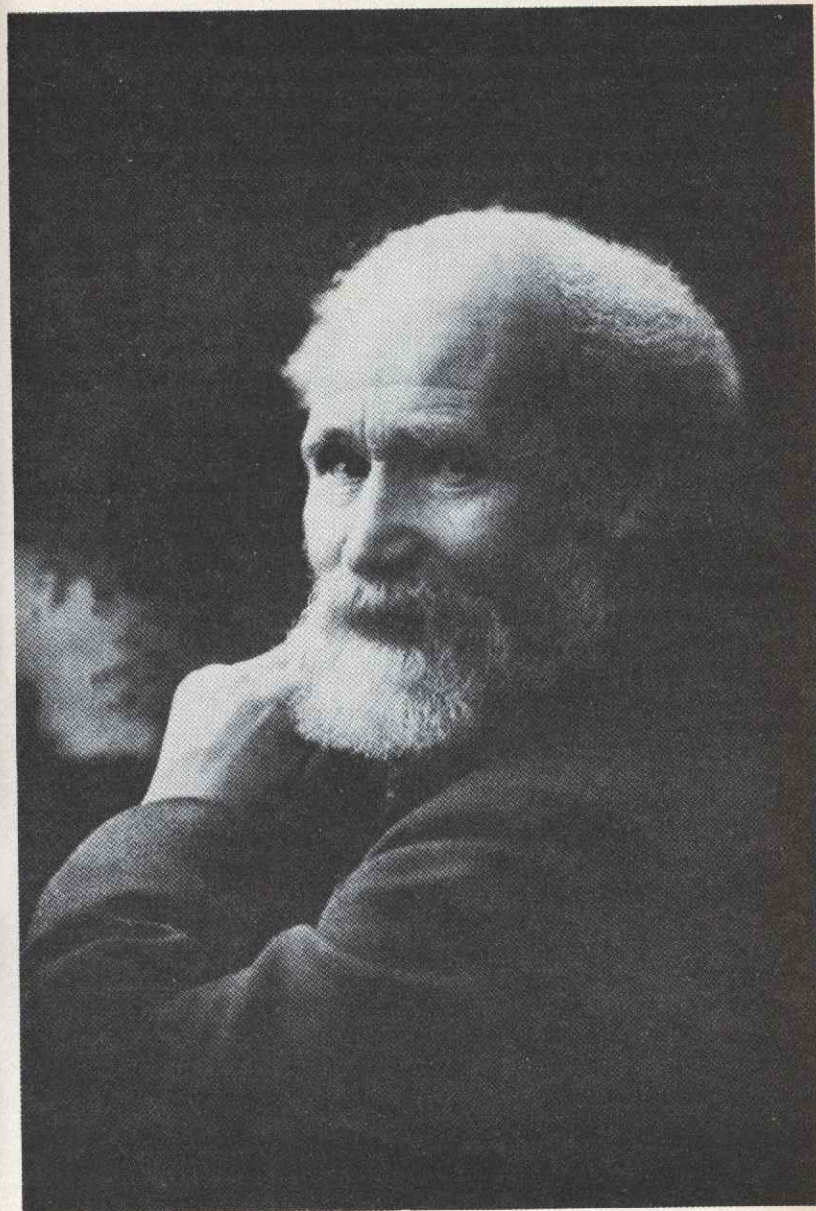
In the future her story will become a great source of legend, because it typifies an important passage in social evolution. Herself of the fairest flower of patriotism, she understood that it had had its day, and must give place to its loftier successor—Internationalism.

Bernard Shaw wrote :

" What we can do is very simple. We can enfranchise her sex in recognition of her proof of its valour. The Bill might gracefully be introduced by McKenna in the Commons and Viscount Gladstone in the Lords.<sup>1</sup> If this proposal is received in dead silence, I shall know that Edith Cavell's sacrifice has been rejected by her country."

Shaw's comment was apt. I had it printed with Nurse Cavell's message on cards for those who cared to hang upon their walls.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Gladstone, when Home Secretary, had introduced the forcible feeding of Suffragettes. McKenna, when occupying that office, had introduced the " Cat and Mouse " Act.



KEIR HARDIE





DOING THEIR SON'S JOB

Alfieri

Attacked from the Left and Right, the Government struck out at its less powerful opponents on either side. The Independent Labour Party's head office was raided in London and its printing works, the National Labour Press, in Manchester. The cases were heard in camera. Seven thousand pamphlets were destroyed by order of the Court,<sup>1</sup> and some which the Manchester magistrate had ordered to be returned were nevertheless destroyed by the police.

An International Conference was held at Zimmerwald in September, on the initiative of the Italian and Swiss Socialist Parties. F. W. Jowett, M.P., and Bruce Glasier of the I.L.P., and E. C. Fairchild of the B.S.P., were appointed as delegates, but the Government refused their passports.

The conference, which became a name to conjure with in the Socialist Movement, strongly condemned the War and repudiated all Socialists who had supported it. Lenin, who was one of the promoters of the conference there, upheld the doctrine that Socialists must not content themselves with pacifism, but must oppose the capitalist war with sabotage and insurrection, calling into being the Social Revolution to establish the Socialist era of international fraternity. These views were steadily gaining ground, but only amongst a minority of Socialists.

A representative delegated from the conference to confer with Socialists in this country was refused permission to land.

In an Abertillery lodging house a man peered over the shoulder of another who was writing, and read a denunciation of war based on a published article of Keir Hardie. The writer, a poor labourer named John Bennetts Bailey, was informed against and arrested. In his pocket was found another anti-war essay, recording a dream of his own. Neither document was intended for publication; but Justice Bailhache at the Monmouthshire Assizes sent Bailey to prison for three months, declaring that had the prisoner been charged with the intention of doing harm the maximum penalty would have been death.

The *Globe*, a Tory newspaper, for extreme militarist attacks on the Cabinet was suspended for a day or so. Sir John Simon, the Home Secretary, said of it in the Commons: "So perish all who such crimes commit." Yet though he stigmatised the attacks on the Government made by the *Times* and the *Daily Mail* as prejudicial to British interests abroad, no action was taken against the organs of Northcliffe; the powerful foe who had made, and was preparing to unmake, the Asquith Coalition Government, could publish what he chose.

"Votes for the soldiers in the trenches" was now one of the slogans of the extreme war party. All the advocates of Votes for Women who had maintained their Suffrage propaganda during the War, and many

<sup>1</sup> One of the documents destroyed was a leaflet by Clara Gilbert Cole, *To the Women of the World*, appealing to them to use their efforts to end the War.



## CHAPTER XXXIV

### ANOTHER WAR CHRISTMAS

IT was the second Christmas of the War. I had a longing to go to Merthyr Tydfil, to renew myself in the communion of memory with him who had made the name of that place a household word. Smyth and I and Jim went down there together, enjoying long walks over the mountains, and pleasant meetings with comrades, gathered together as a little company of believers, working and hoping for the dawn of Peace to break, in a world distraught by war. Harry Morris, a frail, small man, rejoicing in regular practice with the Dowlais Male Voice Choir, and toiling with devoted zeal in the business management of the I.L.P., showed us his cherished collection of Keir Hardie letters. Originally a miner, Morris had been victimised for his Socialist activities, and was now an insurance agent. Obligated by this business to take long tramps over the mountains in all weathers, he often arrived home in a state of exhaustion which aroused the concern of his sharp-tongued, warm-hearted sister, who was always tender and considerate towards him. Their brother Tom, a clever fellow, who had gained his position by evening study, was manager of a mine at Troedyrhiw. In the hard days of unemployment and reaction after the War, he too was victimised, on his brother's account.

We helped the I.L.P. women members to dress the tree for a children's party, and later heard the children sing the verses Keir Hardie had written for the melody of the Welsh anthem. A vision of him crossed my eyes, as he came from the station that Easter I was in Merthyr, a scurry of children to meet him, his firm steps brought to a standstill by the clasp of a toddler's arms about his leg.

Back again at Old Ford, our New Year opened with children's parties in Bow, Poplar, and Canning Town. Children are only children once; we wanted to compensate them as far as we could for the dark days of war. In Bow Baths were gathered more than 900 children of our members, and two nights later a crowd of the members themselves. Smyth's whimsical cousin Georgie Mackey gave a huge Christmas tree, and Smyth, disguised as Father Christmas, presented the gifts. George Lansbury and his friend Hobday provided a marionette show. Dr. Harry Schütze of the Lister Institute, and his wife who writes stories as Henrietta Leslie, had arranged a spring pageant. Its flowers were our East End blooms: dark Mary Carr from poor little Ranwell Street, where people all helped each other, the two pretty Cohens, one as slender as the lily she represented

### ANOTHER WAR CHRISTMAS

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and the other, Nellie, my secretary, glowing as a ripe peach; fair, straight Violet Lansbury, garlanded with primroses, "the Spirit of the Spring." Pale Lily Gatward, with our own purple, white, and green flag, was "the Spirit of Liberty," and beside her Joan Beauchamp, a stern, stiff young "Spirit of Peace," who afterwards became the editor of the Conscientious Objectors' *Tribunal*, and went to gaol for it. They were led by a quartet of merry three-year-olds, with red caps of liberty, and the mottoes: "Peace" and "Plenty," emblematic, indeed, of the urgent needs of our human case.

To me the central loveliness of it all was sixteen-year-old Rose Pengelly, "the Spirit of the Woods." A charming elf-like figure, with red-gold hair and skin rosy as a flower. Playing upon Pan's reeds, she danced with unimagined grace, artless, untaught—a vision of youth's loveliness, the denizen of a slum! Delicious little creature, I had loved her since that day, just before the War, when she led the strikers from Back's asbestos factory into our "Women's Hall," telling us they had nicknamed her "Sylvia," and that it was her business to pack the heavy "saggers" of ware and carry them to the furnace, to run errands for the housekeeper, to peel potatoes, to wash the "governor's" shirts and sheets.

On Thursday I saw her at the children's party dancing before the rest, a glimpse of moving ecstasy, which made my heart tremble with its beauty. On Saturday she should have danced again—but the knife of the machine she was working descended on her pretty right hand, rending and mangling the thumb and a couple of fingers. She fainted, poor child, and lay unconscious whilst someone was sent to seek a policeman and ask his permission to procure a small quantity of brandy to revive her. (Except by such sanction, war-time regulations permitted the sale of brandy only by the quart.) Her new employer making no offer to pay a cab fare, she walked to the station, took the train to the London Hospital, and there sat in the Out-Patients Department till late in the evening, when her crushed thumb and two fingers were amputated. Poor stoic maid of the working class!

A prize was offered to the child who wrote the best account of our Poplar party. I asked Bernard Shaw to judge the essays. He did so in amusing fashion:

"MISS MOLLY BEER,  
9 Brabazon Street, Upper North Street, Poplar  
*in account with G. Bernard Shaw.*

Correcting two mistakes in grammar . . . . .	1d.
Striking out two apostrophes put before "s," when there was nothing belonging . . . . .	½d.
Completing the word "affectionately" as it was written "affec." . . . .	1d.
Counting 22 kisses for Miss Pankhurst . . . . .	1½d.
	<hr/> 4d.



## CHAPTER XXXV

## THE TURBULENT CLYDE

ON the morrow of Christmas we knew that there had been trouble on the Clyde. The advocates of compulsion and economy complained that both soldiers and munition workers were too independent and too highly paid. *The Times* said:

"We must deal as harshly with strikers who throw down their tools as with soldiers who desert in the field."

The great curtailment of profits which it was promised the Munitions Act would effect was already proving an illusion. In the case of one great manufacturing company, the balance sheet of which showed a net profit of £103,822 against £65,096 the previous year, the *Manchester Guardian* declared that matters had been so arranged that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would get none of the increased profit.

A Health of Munition Workers Committee had been appointed by the Government. It issued grievous reports of weary workers, spent by excessive toil, struggling for a place in overcrowded trains and trams, spending long hours in journeying to their homes. It stated:

"Family life is impossible. Mothers and grown children make munitions, younger ones suffer neglect at home. In the lodgings of munition workers beds are never empty, rooms are never aired, as day and night shifts prevent this."

Sometimes a woman wrote to me, broken down in health by overwork, complaining of long walks over sodden, impromptu tracks, ankle-deep in mud, to newly-erected factories; of night shifts spent without even the possibility of getting a drink of water; of workers obliged to take their meals amid the dust and fumes of the workshop.

By the end of the year there were three women to one man in the munition factories and *The Times* announced that the proportion of women would presently be doubled. Despite all promises their wages still averaged from 8s. to 14s. At a controlled factory in Croydon, women got 8s. a week, forewomen in charge of 50 or 60 others, 12s. 6d. Women replacing men who had earned £2 to £3, got 12s. 6d. The workers complained to me that some well-to-do ladies were paid up to 35s.

As to the men whom women were steadily replacing, their wages were variously estimated. Lord Charlemont, who had gone into a munition factory as a munition worker, said he earned from £1 15s. to £3 10s. on piece rates—scarcely an extravagant sum. The *New Statesman* reported that the wages of semi-skilled men on the Clyde averaged 39s. per week and of the women 15s. These rates were in fact common.

The promise that the men dilutees should be paid the standard rate of the skilled men who had previously done the work was soon broken, although the pledge had been embodied in the Treasury Agreement and the Munitions Act itself. Workers complained that the new-comers were getting 15s. a week less than their predecessors, and that whoever objected was dismissed. Some of the skilled men who had been replaced by the new dilutees were obliged to take work as unskilled labourers in other factories.

The Clyde Workers' Committee had sprung into being on the passage of the Munitions Act. It rapidly gained many thousands of supporters. Its object was to build up in the factories and shipyards a system of workers' committees, linked together by their chosen representatives or stewards. It was an essential principle that the organisation should be built "from the bottom up," each workshop sending its delegate to the committee for the factory, each factory to the committee for the area. The shop stewards were already established, the employers and trade unions alike recognising them as their medium of contact with the workers. Each factory had its convener of shop stewards, and so far as they could be brought into line, it was these conveners who formed the Clyde Workers' Committee.

In the height of its strength the Committee had supporters in all the local sections of the working-class movement in Glasgow. Its originators, and most active spirits, were members of the Socialist Labour Party, a small body founded in 1905 by James Connolly, the Irish Socialist and industrial unionist, on the model of the organisation of the same name created by Daniel De Leon in the United States. The De Leonite theory differed widely from the ideas entertained by the average I.L.P. and B.S.P. Socialist of the time, whose notions of the desired future Socialist community centred around Parliament and the City Council, and whose thoughts turned to the Post Office and the municipal tram service when occasionally they considered the management of industry in the Socialist State. The De Leonites assigned to industry the primary place in the Socialist community, conceiving it as managed by industrial unions built on the basis of the workshop. "Socialism must proceed from the bottom upwards," wrote Connolly, "whereas capitalist political society is organised from above downwards." The central administration of the country was to be entrusted to representatives elected by the various departments of industry. In Connolly's words: "Socialism will be administered by a committee of experts elected from the industries and professions of the land; capitalist society is governed by representatives elected from districts, and is based upon territorial divisions."<sup>1</sup> It was the guiding axiom of the S.L.P. that, as an essential prelude to the Socialist era, the workers should be fully organised on the basis of industry, and the industrial unions linked together to form an industrial republic within the shell of the old political state. When the workers, thus practically organised for the management of the Community, and consciously desirous of power, should appear on the political battle-ground, no power could

<sup>1</sup> *Socialism Made Easy*, by James Connolly. 1905.



In a few weeks he was "reported missing." Eventually he was "presumed dead."

His mother took to Spiritualistic séances, in the hope of finding him, and sought to obtain messages from him by a board the Spiritualists supplied. "Some have their boys; — has her board!" her sister said.

The No Conscription Fellowship held a great convention of two thousand objectors of military age and many hundred sympathisers at Devonshire House, Bishopsgate, the headquarters of the Society of Friends. There had recently been rowdy scenes there during lectures by Roden Buxton. To provide against disorder only ticket-holders were admitted. The shouts of the would-be disturbers were heard outside. After the first great burst of applause, when the pledge not to undertake war service was adopted, it was decided not to provoke the opponents by further applause. The waving of handkerchiefs was substituted. Three sailors climbed over the barriers and were met in the passages of the building by stewards who induced them to depart quietly with friendly handshakes.

The atmosphere was very tense. Clifford Allen, the chairman of the N.C.F., a frail young man afflicted with curvature of the spine, was then regarded almost as a saint by thousands of followers. One could hardly realise that he had been satisfied to work as business manager of the jingo *Daily Citizen* until it ceased publication.

In December 1915<sup>1</sup> the German Social Democrats had made a plea in the Reichstag for peace negotiations. The Chancellor had replied that his government would welcome negotiations; but the peace must guarantee security and freedom of development to Germany. General Hindenburg, however, announced in the Press that the time for peace was not yet. Asquith and the French and Russian Ministers made bellicose statements. In the New Year it had been reported here that crowds demanding peace had assembled at the opening of the Reichstag, that the military had fired on the people and four hundred men and women had been killed.

When our Parliament reassembled in the New Year F. W. Jowett had tabled an I.L.P. Amendment to the Address, urging that the British Government and its Allies should disavow aims of conquest, and intimate willingness to accept the mediation of neutral nations to conclude the War, on a basis providing for the evacuation of Belgium, Northern France, and all invaded territories. The Government refused to allow time for this Amendment to be debated. Its terms were undoubtedly inconvenient in view of the agreements for annexation the Allies had already made. Instead a general peace discussion, opened by Snowden, had been permitted on February 23rd. Asquith then scouted Snowden's suggestion that the Germans were willing to open peace negotiations, and repeated his old declamation that this country would "never sheathe the sword" until Belgium and Serbia had recovered "all, and more than all" they had sacrificed, until France was adequately secured against aggression, the rights of the smaller nationalities of Europe established, and the military domination of Prussia "wholly and finally destroyed." At the

<sup>1</sup> On June 23rd, 1915, *Vorwaerts*, the Majority Social Democratic newspaper, had published an appeal for peace negotiations. On June 26th it had been suppressed.



John MacLean, who had been held in custody since February, was brought to trial in April, 1916, and sentenced to three years' penal servitude for advising the soldiers to lay down their arms, and the workers to down tools against Conscription and the Munitions Acts. Gallacher, Muir, and Bell were tried, at last, for publishing the suppressed *Worker*, Gallacher and Muir getting twelve months' imprisonment, and Bell three.

The I.L.P. was meeting in Newcastle that Easter. Mrs. Boyce was organising there for our Federation. I went up with Smyth for a meeting Boyce had arranged, and to attend the conference. I had not been to an I.L.P. conference for many a year; but in those days there was a drawing together of all who worked for peace. The Union of Democratic Control and numbers of Pacifist societies, old and new, gathered round the I.L.P., with its long established branches, its touch with the masses these others desired to influence.

I had pleasure and sorrow in meeting old friends I had known in childhood. The absence of Keir Hardie loomed over us.

Katherine Bruce Glasier, Katherine O'Bruce, as she liked to call herself, spoke at our meeting, talking in her effusive way of the "noble and true work" of our Federation, which seemed to her to typify the "working woman's soul"; calling up images of "the good grey poet," Walt Whitman; of Keir Hardie, William Morris, Edward Carpenter; denouncing with fervour the "hideous blasphemy of war."

At the reunion before the conference the great attraction was the caustic Irish fiddler, Casey, striding the platform like a quizzical satyr, lean and fit for leaping as a goat; his hard legs tightly cased in knee breeches; his goat's face, handsome in its odd way, more than half covered by a short, stubbly black beard. All the wild things of the woods seemed to gambol round him when his fiddle sounded, and his sprite of an accompanist, Dolly, played like a creature enchanted by his spell. She had the gift of perennial childhood; for they had been travelling about the country together, playing to working-class audiences, more years than I cared to remember, and one might have taken her for a school-child still. It was Keir Hardie who had discovered and employed on the *Labour Leader* Casey's mordant irony. Subsequent editors of that paper had found his plebeian jests too inelegant for publication; Casey was driven back upon his fiddling, but he still yearned to express himself by the pen. He told me he had a notion that he ought to abandon music to write on the War, and "just satirise the whole thing."

"Dolly manages her harmonics very cleverly; what a child she looks!" Katherine O'Bruce cooed at my elbow.

R. C. Wallhead,<sup>1</sup> whom I first knew as a working decorator in Manchester, gave humorous improvisations in Lancashire dialect. He had grown to be a prominent man in the I.L.P. I wondered what had really drawn him into the movement. Was it the contact he had with the I.L.P. when Henry Cadness, the teacher of design at the Manchester

<sup>1</sup> Later M.P. for Merthyr Tydfil.

School of Art, introduced him to me as a manual assistant to aid in carrying out of the decorations for the Pankhurst Hall, Hightown, I had designed?

"That is a pathetic story on your front page," W. C. Anderson said to me. He was referring to the execution of the East London boy I had recounted in the *Dreadnought* that week. All the delegates were talking of it. Fenner Brockway reproduced it in the *Labour Leader*. A reader of that paper paid for the I.L.P. to reprint it as a free leaflet.

Snowden, with cold, keen eye, nut-cracker jaw and bulging forehead, hobbled in on his stick. His narrowness and acidity had long repelled me; but in those days he appeared to have shed the raucous uncouthness of his earlier period. True, he never seemed a Socialist in theory; but one fancied him mellowing and broadening to the type of an upright, incorruptible Quaker, frail of physique, sturdy of purpose, as though he were qualifying to wear the mantle of John Bright in his great attack on the Crimean War. Snowden never rose to that height, though the time was more hugely tragic than that which had inspired John Bright's lamentation: "The angel of death has been abroad through the land. You may almost hear the beating of his wings."<sup>1</sup>

Ethel Snowden, who once had seemed like a caged bird in her marriage, chafing under her husband's infirmities and his brusquerie, now fair, plump and forty, had discovered his merit since the War. Wearing him, as it seemed, like a choice orchid, she declared herself "aided by a noble husband," and perorated: "I pray from the bottom of my heart that the War will soon be over." She came nearer to popularity with the rank and file Labour folk than she had ever been, though one of the zealous I.L.P.-ers grumbled: "When she is speaking in public she is like a cat walking on hot bricks—always afraid of offending the other class." She spoke to me affably: "You must have very able helpers, dear. Philip says your paper is about the best on our side."

I knew that the *Dreadnought* had one virtue: it was in touch with life—not made up in an office from Press cuttings, like most of the propaganda sheets.

MacDonald was there, erect and debonair, a drawing-room favourite rather than a Labour leader, he would seem to the passing observer; talking elegantly, with his Scots accent many people found charming; speaking so eloquently, as many considered, and at such length. He was really in the heyday of his popularity, had he but known it; for never again would comrades so zealously cheer him. Yet, even now, his temporising struck a chill to the heart of their warmth. I was anxious to think well of him. Despite his political gyrations and very obvious weakness, I appreciated the stand against the War he had taken, however imperfectly; I desired very heartily to unite in solidarity and comradeship in those ranks so hardly pressed; yet I could never overcome my distrust of him; he woke it within me perpetually by his tortuous strategy. To go by the straight road to a clear-cut objective seemed impossible to him. He must always be travelling roundabout, with so much concession to the

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, 23rd February, 1855.



opposite pole, that unless rudely thrust on by a strong force behind him, he was apt to end to the rear of the point from which he started. The Conference began on the morrow, very tense, very earnest. MacDonald was temporising as ever. He said that the men who were responsible for the recruiting campaign were responsible for the imposition of Conscription, for the recruiting campaign had encouraged the Government to undertake policies which could not be carried through except by Conscription. The delegates knew that he himself had sent a letter to the Mayor of Leicester to be read in furtherance of the recruiting campaign.

Many of the delegates were Conscientious Objectors, at large for a brief space pending their appeals for exemption. James Maxton and others sent greetings from prison, others from barracks.

The much talked-of Bermondsey resolution, sponsored by Dr. Salter, that Socialists should refuse support to every war, had been shelved by a majority of one vote the year before. It was now adopted with but three dissentients. Henceforth it represented the policy of the I.L.P.<sup>1</sup> Yet C. H. Norman was induced to withdraw a proposal to give immediate practical application to it, by instructing I.L.P. Members of Parliament to vote against any further increase in the British Army.

Margaret Bondfield's suggestion that the Munitions Act should be amended rather than repealed, was swept aside.

A rift displayed itself in relation to Conscription and the Conscientious Objectors. Clement Bundock and Morgan Jones complained that the members of the I.L.P. executive had flinched from their original position. Before Conscription was enacted they had pledged themselves to resist it, and had called on the members of the party to do likewise. They had also expressed the hope that the I.L.P. might provide financial support for Objectors and their families. Later they had decided it would be inadvisable to establish a fund for this purpose, and when the Military Service Act became law, they had warned members and branches that any expressions or acts on their part which could be construed as an incitement to disobey the order for military service, might render those concerned, and the Party itself, liable under the Military Service Act and the D.O.R.A.

Such divisions and failings notwithstanding, the spirit of the gathering was that of a band of comrades facing great odds. "One half the manhood of the I.L.P. will be in prison before we meet again. We shall require to stand very near one another," Bruce Glasier said, in closing the conference.

<sup>1</sup> At Leeds, a year later, Dr. Salter moved a similar resolution in the form of a proposition to be laid before the Socialist International. Though Ramsay MacDonald opposed it with all his strategy, it was carried by 226 votes. Again practical application was rejected, by the shelving, by 178 votes to 62, of a resolution of the City of London branch that the I.L.P. members should henceforth vote against the war credits, as had been done by the German Minority Socialists. I had moved this resolution in the City of London branch of the I.L.P., which I had rejoined that year, having drifted away from it in the Suffragette struggles.

## CHAPTER XL

EASTER WEEK, 1916

WHILST still we were in Newcastle we opened the newspapers, and learnt that the Irish rebellion had taken place. The hopeless bravery of it, the coercion and the executions which followed, to me were a grief cutting deep as a personal sorrow. Connolly on the Albert Hall platform, in the days of the Dublin lock-out of 1913, quiet-mannered and serious, came back to my eyes; his voice, restrained and deep, with its undercurrent of strong emotion, rang in my ears. I mourned him as one who had lived laborious days in the service of human welfare; a man of pity and tenderness, driven to violent means, from belief that they alone would serve to win through to a better life for the people.

Tied up in my mind with Eva Gore Booth, her pacifist sister, strove thoughts of Constance Markiewicz, the brilliant dilettante; dabbling in art with her Polish count; driving a four-in-hand at Winston Churchill's Manchester bye-election in defence of the barmaids' right to serve behind the bar; ladling out soup to the starving poor in the Dublin lock-out; drilling her company of Boy Scouts.

Day by day came news of amazing doings: the little Republic of a week, established by a tiny majority, with promises of "equal rights and opportunities" for all citizens; the suppression of the rebels, with their "job lot" of old arms, by machine-guns, bombs, bayonets, and poison gas, massacres, imprisonments, executions.

Amid the destruction and the carnage shone the pure fire of idealism and bravery; Connolly, mortally wounded, carried out on a stretcher and strapped in position to be shot; the young lovers, beautiful Grace Gifford, art student, painted by Orpen as "Young Ireland," married in the prison to her poet, Joseph Plunkett,<sup>1</sup> on the morning of his execution.

Grave P. H. Pearse, the scholar and teacher of St. Enda's, Thomas MacDonagh, Tom Clark, Con Colbert,—fifteen of the company of young poets, glorious and radiant in their fervour for the renaissance of their national literature, of the old lovers of Ireland and the lads who burned to die for her were executed. Save Constance Markiewicz, all the signatories to the Republican Proclamation were gone to the death they had chosen, embracing her as a bride.

Their flame of romance extinguished, the world seemed darker, more sordidly ruthless in materialism and the rule of might. I felt it as a wound in the great comity of life, a dishonouring blot on our human escutcheon

<sup>1</sup> Son of Count George Plunkett.



## CHAPTER XLI

### CONSCRIPTION OF MARRIED MEN—N.C.F. PROSECUTED—BODKIN— PEACE PILGRIMS

PEACE talk was growing. The Pope had appealed to the warring nations to end the War. The speeches of Karl Liebknecht, widely published by our jingo Press for their denunciations of the German Government, encouraged in our Pacifists the hopeful belief that the peace movement was strong in Germany. A Peace Negotiations Committee was formed, on the initiative of Herbert Dunnico of the Peace Society. The I.L.P., the Society of Friends, the Union of Democratic Control, our Workers Suffrage Federation, the Women's International League, and other societies were represented. A Peace Memorial was circulated:

"We, the undersigned, urge H.M. Government to seek the earliest opportunity of promoting negotiations with the object of securing a just and lasting peace."

763,000 signatures were obtained to this memorial, not without some attempts at intimidation. My old friend Mrs. Brimley and Ethel Tolle-mache, both ex-members of the W.S.P.U. who had joined our Federation because of their opposition to the War, pluckily started out in Leyton-stone on a house-to-house canvass for signatures. They were soon placed under arrest and taken to the police station, where after six hours' detention, they were released, with a warning that the powers of the D.O.R.A. would be used against them should they continue.

Secret Sessions of both Lords and Commons were held, that the Government might advance more pointed arguments for extending Conscription than it was considered politic to publish abroad. On May 2nd Asquith announced that compulsion would be extended to the married men, to rope in 200,000 more of them than could be obtained by voluntary means.

The committeemen of the No Conscription Fellowship, most of whom have since been elected to Parliament, were arrested, and tried at the Mansion House for a leaflet urging the repeal of Conscription. Bodkin, the unconscious comedian, who had become notorious for his absurdities in suffragette trials, declared in prosecuting them that "war would be impossible if the view that war is wrong, and that it is wrong to support the carrying on of war, were generally held." Edward Fuller, a young journalist, who often spoke at our meetings, printed Bodkin's *bon mot* in poster form, as an argument against war. He gave an order for its display

## CONSCRIPTION OF MARRIED MEN

to a Stratford billposter, who prudently dispatched a copy to the War Office to ascertain if its publication would be permitted. Fuller was thereupon charged with doing "an act preparatory to the commission of an act" prohibited by the D.O.R.A. He was fined £100 and £25 costs, or 91 days' imprisonment, but owing to Parliamentary protests on his behalf, he was released before the sentence was fully served.

Fines totalling £800 were ordered against eight members of the N.C.F. committee. It was agreed that five of them should refuse to pay the fine and suffer imprisonment. They were Fenner Brockway, W. J. Chamberlain, Walter Ayles, a Bristol Town Councillor and afterwards Labour M.P., A. Barratt Brown, afterwards Vice-Principal of Ruskin College, Oxford, and John P. Fletcher.

Conscription was being used as a means of industrial compulsion, to an extent which would have raised an outcry in peace time. When the Dundee jute workers struck work, men who had been exempted from military service, as essential to the industry, were called to the Army at the instance of their employers, as soon as they went on strike.

When the Military Service Act was extended to married men the Lords inserted, and the Government accepted, an amendment permitting the military authorities to claim exempted men a fortnight after ceasing to be employed as munitioners, though six weeks must elapse before they could obtain new employment unless the late employer would grant a leaving certificate. Philip Snowden complained to Parliament, on May 18th, that 300 men of the Labour Company Reserve Battalion Border Regiment were replacing navvies at Morecambe and getting only Army pay for their work. There were many such cases.

From the introduction of compulsory military service, there was a growing demand for the conscription of wealth. George Wardle, a Labour Member of Parliament, declared that the income tax ought to have been raised to at least 7s. 6d. or 10s. in the £; he would cheerfully have paid it, he said, to secure the equality of sacrifice of which so much had been said.

The Press declared that Germany was offering peace terms. In due course the British Press reproduced, from the *Chicago Daily News*, a reply from Sir Edward Grey: "The Allies can tolerate no peace which leaves the wrongs of this war unredressed." So public opinion fed on rumour and rhetoric.

Clara Cole and Rosa Hobhouse set out on a peace pilgrimage, walking through the country to distribute literature against war, including the Pope's appeal for peace. After five days they were arrested at Kettering and sent to prison for five months. Great rage was manifested by her accusers when there was found in Clara's pocket an "Anathema." She had written: "Is there no strength in your cold madhouse to cry halt, cowards, cowards, and again grey-bearded cowards!" Even Rosa was struck with consternation at this denunciation!

Rosa Hobhouse was a Quaker with the mystic's temperament. She



of times during the War. But the family has a weakness ; they like going to prison."

I was to serve another term in Holloway ; but not yet.

The Entente Governments had indicated their contemptuous rejection of the Peace Note, though the official Allied answer had not yet been given. Lloyd George had refused Parliament an opportunity to discuss it.

Bonar Law, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, secured another war credit of four hundred millions and disclosed that the War was now costing £5,710,000 a day ; enough, complained the poor old Liberal, Sir William Byles, to provide every family in the British Isles with a comfortable cottage and two acres of land.

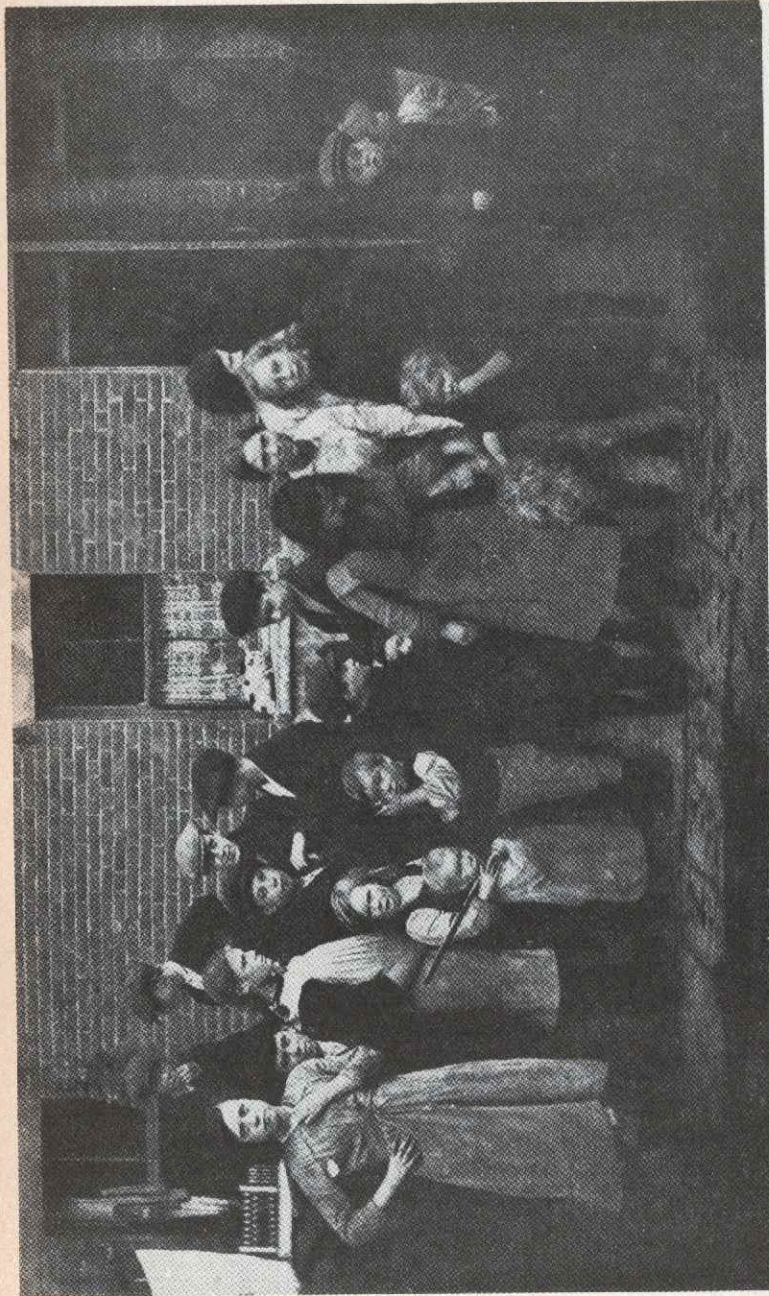
On December 20th President Wilson, acting at last without the procrastinating Colonel House, issued his long-belated summons to the belligerent nations to make peace. The Press here received it with a howl of fury, denouncing especially his statement that the concrete objects for which the War was being waged had not been defined by either side, and that, as stated in general terms by their leaders, the objects of the belligerent governments on both sides appeared the same.

Despite the chorus of newspaper repudiation directed by the Government Press Bureau, great hopes were raised. The I.L.P. sent President Wilson a letter of gratitude, which appeared *fulsome* when read later on, after Wilson had become the war leader of America, at the head of a government which was persecuting American Conscientious Objectors, and had flung into jail the old Socialist, Eugene Debs.

The Central Powers replied to Wilson's Note, by proposing "an immediate meeting of delegates of the belligerent States at some neutral place" and expressed their willingness to collaborate with America in the prevention of future war.

The House-Wilson plan to join the Entente in the War, on the plea of Germany's refusal to accept America's call to peace, had miscarried—for Germany had accepted ; the Entente had rejected the call. It is true her Government had not openly made an avowal of her terms as Wilson had demanded, but the terms were conveyed to the President confidentially. Wilson declared them inadmissible. The best that can be said of them is that they were a bluff to ascertain how much Germany could obtain by bartering and manœuvre. In the confidential negotiations then taking place between the Entente Powers, the Tsar's Government offered to France and Britain "perfect freedom in drawing up the Western frontiers of Germany" in the expectation that they would allow the Russians "equal freedom in drawing up" their "frontiers between Germany and Austria."<sup>1</sup> The German Emperor's Government regarded frontiers and peoples in the same light as the Tsarist. Could it be otherwise ? Do my readers desire to believe that the Kaiser's Government was more enlight-

<sup>1</sup> Telegram of Sazonoff. Petrograd, February 24th, 1917.



Norah Smyth

THE HOMES THEY FOUGHT FOR  
East End children come out to play with my dog "Jim."