

THE HOME FRONT

CHAPTER I

GOING TO WAR

HOURLY the War drew nearer; threat followed threat; ultimatum, ultimatum. My mind shrank from the menace sweeping down on us, as children's do from belief in death and misfortune, vainly clinging to the fancy that great disasters only happen to other people. To the last I trusted that somehow the clash would be averted; the madness of world war, our own country drawn into the maelstrom, too hugely inconceivable.

Keir Hardie's heart-wrung warnings of the great catastrophe, his passionate pleading with the workers of all countries to rise up against it; even his talks with me when Haldane's Army Bill¹ was passing through the Commons, full and confidential as they were, had failed to rouse me to the imminence of the tragedy, despite my deep love and respect for him. I had heard him with a sympathy which lacked the acuteness of realisation. For me the strenuous social struggles in which we were engaged at home had obscured even the dim realisation I had of the foreign policies drawing us all into the world conflict. It could not be otherwise. Held as I was in the grip of the "Cat and Mouse Act,"² plunging repeatedly into new challenges to the Government, new contests between the police who came to re-arrest me, and the East End people, flocking in their thousands to my defence; repeatedly dragged back again to the prison cell, from which release came only by the painful miseries of the hunger and thirst strike; my horizon was narrowed to the fierce, immediate struggle. On account of that struggle I had seen, during the past twelve months, but little of Keir Hardie, with whom for the nine previous years I had ever been closely in touch.³ Such knowledge as I had of economics and of politics,

¹ Hardie opposed this Bill stubbornly and bitterly, seeing in it a prelude to war and conscription.

² The Prisoners Temporary Discharge for Ill-health Act applied to Suffragette hunger-strikers, who were let out of prison on licence to recover from their privations, then taken back to prison to complete their sentences. (See *The Suffragette Movement*. Longmans Green.)

³ Not yet had I read my father's speeches of 1870 revealing the huge ambitions and commitments which were now to play their part in making our country a principal in the appalling conflict he then foretold.

of wheat or of wholesale flour from the corn millers had advanced. Canadian exporters professed their solidarity with the Empire, declaring the Overseas Dominions prepared to give their last man and their last shilling "to aid the mother country"; yet when war conditions removed the competition of European supplies, they seized the opportunity to raise the price of their wheat to British consumers. It was vainly hoped that prices might fall when the expected record crop from the United States should appear, to compete with that of these fine Canadian loyalists. The lust of gain which swayed world markets, bringing starvation to millions, displayed itself in small matters and in great. The Shop-Assistants Union complained that certain London shops had put their employees on half pay and were working them full time "on account of the war," which had enabled the shopkeepers to raise their prices.

Lady Frances Balfour wrote to the *Daily Mail*:

"Let there be no complaining in our streets. . . . Women can save the situation by accepting it. We have heard of women giving tongue over the counter because the full tale of their goods could not be delivered at the usual price. Such people are as deserving of being treated as deserters as ever any soldier is who runs from the rifle fire of the entrenched position he has to take."

A callous saying this to mothers whose children were crying for food.

Though gambling in food prices continued apace, martial law was applied towards refractory workers. If dockers unloading the ships quibbled over their task, they were dismissed and soldiers were ordered to take their places.

CHAPTER III

MEETING THE GREAT EMERGENCY

INTERNATIONALISM seemed vanquished; its most prominent sponsors turned war-mongers: Green, of the Peace and Arbitration Society, whom my father called "peace and arbitration Green"; Hervé the French Anti-Patriot; Norman Angel, who named war "the great illusion"; H. G. Wells and a host of others; my mother, though I did not know it yet, one of the fiercest jingoes; even the sage, Peter Kropotkin, not untouched by the hypnotism of the great conflict.

During those brief days I had spent in Ireland the last vain, desperate efforts had been made to avert the impending tragedy. Lloyd George had deserted the peace party. Morley, Burns and Trevelyan had resigned from the Government rather than soil their conscience by participation in the War.

On July 29th the International Socialist Bureau, hastily convened in Brussels, had resolved on a special conference in Paris, on August 9th; a conference which never met; for war had sealed the frontiers, and the international Socialist movement had been rent in twain, its principles of fraternity vanquished by the trump of war. This debacle still unforeseen, on July 30th the Bureau participated in a great peace demonstration. Keir Hardie, Jaurés, Haase of Germany and the rest, marched under white banners, bearing the inscription: "Guerre à la Guerre!" "War on War!" Haase declared that Germany must not intervene even should Russia enter the conflict. He warned the Governments in the event of war:

"The peoples, tired out by such manifold misery and oppressions, may wake up and establish a Socialist society."

Jaurés, with his leonine head and impassioned oratory, in the last speech he was to make before his assassination, uttered a last prediction: ". . . typhoid will finish the work of the shells; and as death and misery aid in striking men down, so the masses, sobered and come to their senses, will turn towards the directing Germans, French, Russians, Italians; and will ask what reasons they can give for all these corpses. Then revolution, freed from its chains, will say to them: 'Away and seek pardon from God and man!'"

On July 31st Keir Hardie as chairman, Arthur Henderson as secretary of the British section of the International Socialist Bureau, had issued

an appeal to the workers against the War. It is said to have been drafted by the long-standing jingo, H. M. Hyndman. How lightly men draft manifestos they scarcely mean!

"... Stand together for peace! Combine and conquer the militarist enemy and the self-seeking imperialists, to-day, once and for all. ... Proclaim that for you the days of plunder and butchery have gone by. ...

"Down with class rule! Down with brute force! Down with war! Up with the peaceful rule of the people!"

On August 2nd a Trafalgar Square anti-war demonstration was held by the Bureau, with as many speakers of prominence who could claim to speak for Labour and Socialism as the brief notice allowed. Keir Hardie was there and Arthur Henderson, H. M. Hyndman, Will Thorne, Ben Tillett and many others who presently were cheering for the War.

In every belligerent country such demonstrations were held, organised by the Socialists, responded to by the populace far beyond the Socialist ranks. The cry went forth: "War on War!" "Long live the International Brotherhood of the Peoples!" Greetings were sent from Britain to Germany; from Germany to France and Russia. Yet when the great conflict had actually been joined, only a small fraction of those who had cried for peace and brotherhood maintained their stand.

When Grey made known that Britain had declared war on Germany, Keir Hardie protested on behalf of the workers,

"Had they been consulted war would not have happened. Why were they not consulted?"

J. R. MacDonald said:

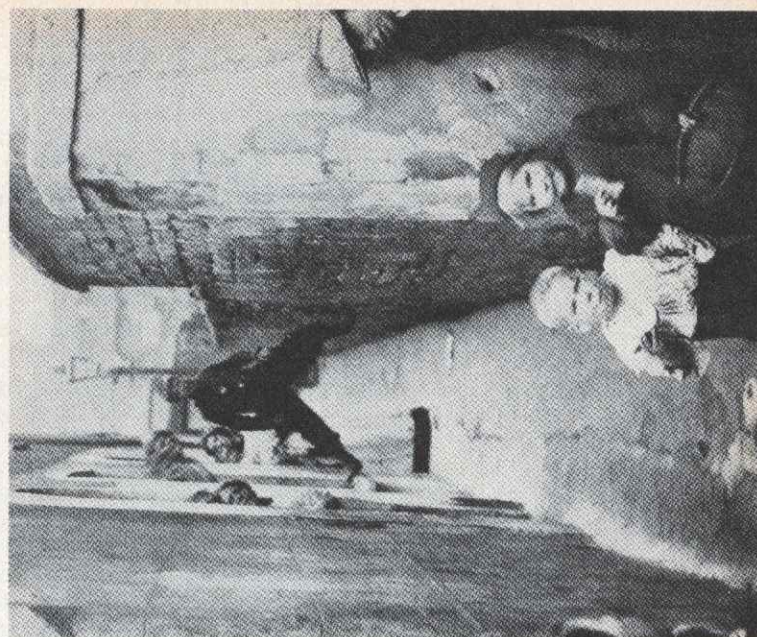
"I think Sir Edward Grey¹ is wrong. I think the Government which he represents, and for which he speaks, is wrong. I think the verdict of history will be that they are wrong. ... Whatever may be said of us, whatever attacks may be made upon us, we will say this country ought to have remained neutral."

Keir Hardie being dead, those words of MacDonald assured him, when the conflict was over, the position of first Labour Prime Minister; when uttered they covered him with obloquy.

Hardie and MacDonald voiced their protest against the war to a House of bitter hostility, which in that hour amounted to a passionate hatred such as MacDonald had never faced. Even after that scene, the Labour Members of Parliament met and adopted a declaration:

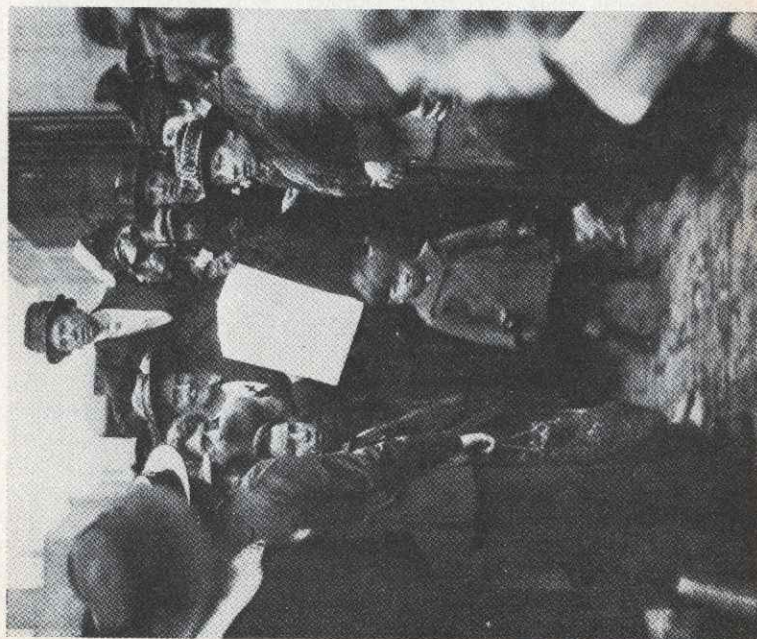
"That the conflict between the nations of Europe, in which this country is involved, is owing to foreign ministers pursuing diplomatic policies for the purpose of maintaining a balance of power; that our own policy of understanding with France and Russia only was bound

¹ Afterwards Viscount Grey of Fallodon.



Norah Smyth

HOUSES FOR HEROES



Norah Smyth

SELLING THE WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT AT AN EAST END MEETING

Mrs. Walker speaking.

to increase the power of Russia, both in Europe and Asia, and to endanger good relations with Germany. . . .

"That the Labour movement reiterates the fact that it has opposed the policy which has produced the War. . . ."

The very night on which this manifesto was adopted, as the *Socialist Review* disclosed, the majority of the Labour Members refused to permit MacDonald to read its terms to the House. MacDonald resigned from the chairmanship of the Parliamentary Labour Party, which he had held since 1911. As the War advanced, he flinched somewhat from the courage of that first stand. There was a letter of his to the mayor of Leicester to be read at a recruiting meeting; there were speeches in the House of Commons, one of them stating: "We entered the War with a bright flag of ideals," which failed to support his first declaration. Yet he advocated peace by negotiation throughout, he gave his name for the collection of funds to aid Conscientious Objectors, he was vilified by the War Party—for these things he received admiration and loyalty without stint from those who hated war.

His place as chairman of the Labour Party was taken by Arthur Henderson, who had joined with Hardie in issuing the appeal to international brotherhood, in the name of the International Socialist Bureau. But recently a Liberal, opposed to the creation of an independent Labour Party, Henderson had been given the post of secretary to the British section, in the hope of drawing him unequivocally into the Socialist fold. A grievous mistake this, for the position required a Socialist of well-grounded theory and proven trust.

Before August was out, on the invitation of Asquith, the Labour Members agreed to co-operate with the Liberals and Tories in a joint recruiting campaign, wherein the war policy of the Government must be justified and extolled. The *Socialist Review* complained that thereafter, with the exception of four of the six I.L.P. Members of Parliament, Ramsay MacDonald, Keir Hardie, F. W. Jowett and Tom Richardson, all the Labour Members of Parliament "in a greater or less degree" identified themselves with the war policy of the Government and its so-called "non-political" recruiting campaign.

W. C. Anderson, who came in at a by-election, was not yet elected to Parliament. Philip Snowden was in America when war broke out. His I.L.P. colleagues were in doubt and anxiety as to the attitude he would take—but on his return he clove to the pacifist minority—a tiny minority indeed!

A handful of Liberals aided the I.L.P. pacifist group to defend, with such courage and faith as they could muster, the ideals of peace and human fraternity: Joseph King and R. L. Outhwaite, who are dead, Trevelyan and Ponsonby, and Lees Smith, who later went over to the Labour Party in the hope (alas! still unrealised) that it would open a new era in world affairs, D. M. Mason, Richard Lambert, J. H. Whitehouse, T. E. Harvey, Arnold Rowntree and a few others.



General Photographic Agency

"OVER THERE"

Keir Hardie had hastened to his constituency. In the London streets, and even in Nevill's Court where he lived, at the railway stations on his journey to Wales, he was hooted and hustled. Everyone knew him; war fury burst out upon him. His meeting in Aberdare was broken up by a determined crowd of jingoes who had come from the Liberal and Conservative clubs. His words were inaudible to the majority of those present; but Harry Morris told me that in reply to a taunt, "Where are your two boys?" Keir Hardie answered: "I would rather see my two boys put up against a wall and shot than see them go to the War." His voice broke; overwhelmed by his grief he could say no more. His friends would have it, even Morris who loved him dearly, that the meeting arranged for him in Merthyr should be abandoned—a false move, as such flinching always is. Only the fact that they saw him thus broken and bowed by the stroke of illness could excuse it. He spurred them to another meeting in Merthyr soon, and was received with cheers and affection as of old.

Already he was a broken man. The shock of the War had dealt him a mortal blow. Each time I saw him, I realised with increased uneasiness, that he was despondent and restless, as I had never known him. One night when I was speaking at the Poplar Town Hall a telegram from him was brought to me, telling me not to worry about a Press report concerning him. My anxiety aroused, I rushed off to Nevill's Court as soon as the meeting was over. He disclosed that he had had a seizure in the House of Commons. Dr. Addison had gone to his aid. It was the first sign of a grave condition.

The Labour movement accepted the War quietly, as an accomplished fact. On August 6th, at a meeting in a House of Commons committee room, a War Emergency Workers' National Committee was formed, representing the great body of the working class political, industrial and co-operative organisations, to safeguard the interests of the workers in the great emergency. The Committee was largely without power, for the national officials of the organisations represented, had mostly entered into the war-time truce of solidarity with the Government and its policies; it lumbered somewhat slowly to its opinions, and was often late for the emergency in its decisions; it was purely a mouthpiece and lacked all machinery for action; yet it was the one collective means of expression which the Labour movement possessed. The movement would have acted wisely had it maintained such a committee as a permanent institution.

Before the British Government could declare war it had parleyed with the great banking interests which control the financial machinery of the country, recognising them as its masters. These must be satisfied, though the little homes without financial reserves went over the rapids of war dislocation.

On August 2nd a proclamation had been issued postponing the payment of certain bills of exchange for a month beyond the original date of their maturity. Next day three successive Bank Holidays were announced, to prevent a run on the banks, and an emergency Moratorium Act was rushed through, giving the Government power to authorise by Royal proclamation the postponement, for any specified period, of all or any sort of payments. On August 6th and 12th the Bank Holidays which had ushered in the War, were followed up by proclamations, authorising the postponement of most payments over £5 for one month, subject to the payment of interest on the debt at the current Bank rate. Subsequent proclamations made further postponements.

Paper money was issued and lent to the banks up to 20 per cent. of their liabilities. Lloyd George, in negotiation with the Governor of the Bank of England, the bankers, the accepting houses and the great trading interests, agreed to place the credit of the Government behind the banks in discounting approved pre-moratorium bills of exchange, giving the acceptor the opportunity of postponing payment until one year after the close of the War, provided he paid interest at 2 per cent. above current Bank rate. Meanwhile the Government was to make good any loss to the banks.

It was instructive to notice how Acts of Parliament sped through both Houses in a single day, now that Party rivalries ceased to obstruct, and Parliamentary histrionics were no longer the main business of Ministerial life.

In November the Treasury appointed a committee representing the banks and the chambers of commerce to make advances to British traders in respect of debts outstanding in foreign countries. The traders were to pay the banks for the accommodation at 6½ per cent., the Government was to bear 75 per cent. of the eventual loss, if any. The Treasury also provided the finance to ensure that certain loans to members of the Stock Exchange need not be repaid until a year after the War.

In all this, and in many other directions, there were unwonted opportunities of enrichment for bankers and financiers, unwonted honours and emoluments for the persons who manned the numerous committees which were being set up to deal with every aspect of finance and trade. These transactions, as always, were mysterious to all save a few experts. A Mr. Crisp who had floated loans in China in opposition to the policy of the British Government and four other Powers, and who appeared to have ousted the Barings from the Russian Government's loan business, complained that he was denied the facilities granted to other banks. Lloyd George replied that the "trained sense of the financier indicates on the whole which is good business and which is bad business. That is the answer to a case like Crisp." He added that advances had been

strove for relief from other sources, we now always provided poor families with a book of meal tickets; that eased a little their terrible situation.

We made quite a festival of the opening. Smyth¹ and I and all the organisers took a meal in the restaurant the first day. Smyth and I kept it up for some time, but I had to withdraw at last, for Mrs. Ennis Richmond's large use of dried beans was too much for my digestion, which still suffered the effects of the pre-War hunger and thirst strikes. I went about embracing a hot water bottle, to assuage my pains, till Mrs. Payne persuaded me to return to the individual catering from which we were endeavouring to emancipate her.

Zelie Emerson had scurried back to us from the United States, eager to be in the thick of it. She was stirring me up to do something for our old Bow Road district. Presently she was lading out soup in Tryphena Place, Bow Common Lane, an unsavoury neighbourhood, her black eyes frowning intent, and her red lips pursed—her little plump figure hurrying, scurrying. Mrs. Bird, Mrs. Walker and others were doing the same in the East India Dock Road. These were cramped, unsuitable premises, both; I changed them shortly.

We opened another clinic and milk station at Crowder Hall, Bow Road, where we had hidden in a disused stable one night when I had been a fugitive under the "Cat and Mouse" Act. Mary Philips was pleading to start a clinic and milk centre in Canning Town. This too was done. Then Zelie Emerson persuaded us to let her organise another in Bethnal Green.

Amongst the Press people who came to us at that time almost daily in quest of copy was a woman who took some photographs in the restaurant. She induced two little boys to go out into the yard and pose for her, sitting on the doorstep, with their plates on their knees. About two months later the photograph appeared in a paper accompanied by a nasty little story warning the public against misplaced appeals to its sympathy. It was alleged that these little fellows, though not in want, were in the habit of begging, and had run round and begged "a plate of nice soup" from the Suffragettes, their mother being idle and careless. In actual fact the mother was a poor hard-working woman who took in sewing to eke out her husband's scanty earnings. Her baby was dying when she gave her boys the pennies to get a meal at our restaurant that she might give all her time to the infant. The mother came round to me indignant, complaining that the neighbours were sneering at her, and the boys and girls making game of her children. I assured her that we had no part in the article; and wrote at once to the editor, protesting that the libel had caused serious annoyance to

¹ I hoped that our "Cost Price" Restaurants, which the Press obligingly advertised, would be widely copied. This hope was not vain. Many voluntary agencies followed suit in other districts and at length the Ministry of Food opened restaurants not so cheap as ours, it is true, but less expensive than those supplied by private enterprise. It was hoped that they might remain as part of the new era which many people preached would follow the War, but they died away with the Food Ministry itself.

the mother and her children and was detrimental to our organisation and its work. I was astonished to learn that in response to my complaint the paper had sent an emissary post haste to the home of the little boys, and had given their parents £300 to say nothing more about the affair. Submerged in poverty, they were overjoyed to receive this amazing sum. I was told that the father would set himself up in business with it, as a vendor of hardware.

The management of our first restaurants did not proceed entirely without jars. Mrs. Richmond's views on food values were regarded by our Bow friends as outrageous, whilst to her the rigid application of her tenets was a matter of principle. She expatiated on the valuable properties of the potato skin, and insisted that the tubers must go unpeeled into the soup. Her East End assistants, one and all, objected. It was a shame, they declared, to give such "muck" to poor people! Even the customers, hungry as they were, were seen surreptitiously to examine with pained and disappointed resignation the dark-hued tubers.

I reasoned with Mrs. Richmond; she bristled with importance, prepared to do battle for her theories.

It happened that I saw Keir Hardie the same night. "What shall I do?" I asked him. "Shall I permit the Expert to improve the people against their will?"

To my surprise, he answered decisively: "I think so."

When I urged that the people associated potato skins with contempt he expressed impatience with those who murmured at wholesome food provided in friendly guise, and broke off: "Have we fallen so low that we must discuss potato skins?"

I felt rebuked. In the struggle to provide for our people my mind was withdrawing itself from the thought of the great tragedy over there.

Dear Keir Hardie, how he was martyred by perpetual consciousness of that carnage! I had been awed by his misery at a mine explosion years before. Now in his deep eyes was the restless agony of a man in torment.

"I don't agree," Lansbury said to me, "with the way the I.L.P. is doing—attacking the foreign policy of the Government; I think they are spoiling the movement."

Constant struggle with the miseries of the great conflagration often made the causes which led to it seem tragically remote to me, in those days; but I considered Lansbury conceded too much to the War Party.

A little later when Keir Hardie bitterly complained of the *Daily Citizen*, the Labour Party organ, calling it a "jingo rag" he was "ashamed" to open, I asked him: "Why don't you get Lansbury to make the *Daily Herald* a Pacifist paper and join forces with him?"

He made no answer, only an impatient movement. A minute later I wondered that I could have thought it possible to combine, in a closely-knit venture, two men so different—the one tenacious as a rock, stirred by swift fire and passion, yet reserved, according to the old adage that still waters run deep; the other volatile, voluble, changeable as the winds, working up to the popular thrills of the moment, and riding the storm of them with delighted zest. Yet though I saw their huge incompatibility, I could not wholly abandon the idea which would give Keir Hardie a voice in a daily paper. I mentioned it to Lansbury: "Why don't you make the *Herald* an out and out Pacifist paper and throw in your lot with Keir Hardie and the I.L.P.?"

Lansbury stared at me. "I don't think you read the *Herald*. It is a Pacifist paper," he said reproachfully.

Alas, folk do not know their inconsistencies!

Bernard Shaw's *Common Sense about the War*¹ was published that autumn. It was the naughtiest agglomeration of contradictions the great jester had ever perpetrated. In provocative mood he flung out:

"No doubt the heroic remedy for this tragic misunderstanding is that both armies should shoot their officers and go home to gather in their harvests in the villages and make a revolution in the towns."

And:

"There are only two flags in the world henceforth: the Red flag of democratic Socialism and the Black flag of Capitalism."

He insisted that British militarists, and not German, had begun the propaganda of an Anglo-German war; that the Kaiser's assumption of God-given right to rule was outdone by that of the British ruling classes, and quoted Lord Roberts on "the will to conquer which has never failed us," and "the great task committed to us by Providence." He argued that the war guilt amounted to six of one and half a dozen of the other, so far as the rival groups of belligerent Powers were concerned; and the Franco-Russian alliance just as much a menace to peace as the Austro-German one.

¹ Supplement to the *New Statesman*, November 14th, 1914.

Then he blew all this case to the winds, and announced that Britain "was compelled to enter the War" as "the responsible policeman of the West."

"Had the Foreign Office been the International Socialist Bureau . . . the result would still have been the same." "We are supporting the War as a war on war." "We must have the best army in Europe." "We in England are fighting to show the Prussians they shall not trample on us or our neighbours if we can help it, and that if they are fools enough to make fighting efficiency the test of civilisation we can play that game as destructively as they. That is the simple truth, and the jolliest and most inspiring ground to recruit on. It stirs the blood and stiffens the back."

Though this was his conclusion, and all his spicily-phrased "common sense" thus negated, an avalanche of condemnation descended upon him; for a moment no man was more vilified by the jingoes, and notably by the Labour organ the *Daily Citizen*.

Keir Hardie, who in his work-driven existence had not time to wade through much verbiage, however witty, read Shaw's bold opening passages and wrote to him in an expansive moment, concluding:

"It is the expression of a heart which now throbs towards you with feelings almost of devotion."

After Keir Hardie's death Shaw disclosed the existence of the letter, and the fact that he had never answered it!

The War and its measures proceeded, monstrous and ruthless. Only the rush of work and activity shaded our vision from its horror. I was reading, writing and speaking about diplomatic history and the international politics of war in the light of the great suffering I had seen arise from it. Morel's *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, of which a second edition came out in December 1914, and a third in October 1915, Brailsford's *War of Steel and Gold*, Morel's *Truth and the War*, which was published later, provided masses of scathing facts. They were read by hundreds of people who would have laid them aside as too heavy and difficult at ordinary times. I had these and many more. Herbert Dunnico lent me books from the library of the Peace Society. The writings of Karl Marx, Kropotkin, William Godwin, William Morris—all those who attacked the ethics of present society at its base took on a deeper meaning.

The main facts of the dark history of fear, duplicity and greed which had led the belligerent nations to the brink of war were already known before the conflict. New details have since been supplied by those who wielded power and responsibility in making the tortuous mosaic of intrigue. In their own defence they have been unable to gloss over its

in it. Such social experiments as the toy factory might well have veiled from me its sorrows, but for the daily contact I had with the maimed and bereaved.

The new type of baby doll received instant popularity. The Women's Emergency Corps presently produced a rival to it, less artistic, more grotesque, but more quickly and easily made, and therefore cheaper. To fill these dolls was so simple that the Queen on a visit to the work-room was said to have stuffed one.

Hilda Jeffries, who came to us from the Chelsea Polytechnic, had remarkable aptitude for toy designing. She poured out monkeys, extraordinarily alive and knowing, playful lambs, saucy terriers, a stream of successes which took repeat orders for years. Factories of all sorts began making soft toys. The many varieties we know to-day were not seen before the War. The Teddy bear and the flat-faced rag doll practically monopolised the field.

Dolls with hard heads and limbs were more difficult. Edith Downing, a sculptor who had been a militant of the W.S.P.U., modelled for us one of the first of them with a pretty child's head, far removed from the conventional doll. I got it very efficiently reproduced by a manufacturer, somewhere in London, who before the War pretended his goods were French, because British dolls were regarded as mere imitations of no account. I essayed to get a china reproduction from the Potteries. After many enquiries a firm agreed to do it; but though the sample seemed just passable, the bulk delivery was exceedingly bad; the colour fugitive, the glaze uneven and sticky-looking. We did not adventure any further in the china dolls, but the firm which had sent us a barrel-load of failures and other potteries persevered in the quest.

We were able to watch the progress of other factories at the exhibitions of British toys which the Board of Trade organised periodically for the new toy industry.

The management of the factory was a source of anxiety. One morning in the early stages a Polish woman, perhaps thirty-five years of age, came to me with a letter from Keir Hardie, to whom she had gone with a letter from someone else. Pale and crushed-looking, she said she had come to London to organise an exhibition of Swiss products, which had been abandoned on account of the War. She pleaded that she was utterly stranded. She told me she had previously been employed in the management, though not the technical management, of a philanthropic training school for corset-making in Switzerland. Her English was broken and scanty; but I assumed she could add up a column of figures, and engaged her forthwith to keep the books at the factory, then just beginning. She knew nothing of commercial book-keeping, but I telephoned to my uncle, Herbert Goulden, who dealt in paper and book-cloth in the City, to come over and tutor her; which he did very kindly several times a week till she knew the ropes. Very soon she was manager of the factory; the self-effacing Joachim quickly slipped away, leaving her dominant. In those days the manageress professed for me un-

alterable devotion, flinging her arms around me with ecstatic cries: "Ah, Miss Pankhurst! Sweet! Sweet!" and declaring that flowers should spring from the ground where I trod. I pitied her as a woman alone and bereaved. Insistent in her demands for the factory she would conjure me, in the name of Karl Marx, whenever I cited finances as an obstacle to her wishes. As a "clerical worker" she must be employed shorter hours than the toy-makers, on no account beginning till 10 a.m. This was an established Trade Union principle.

I found myself under the constant necessity of inspecting the factory products. Many times in the early days I had to stop batches of dolls and toys going out, and Smyth and I had to put other things aside to work late at night, touching up painted toys, re-fastening dolls' wigs, renovating dolls' clothes. More than once I went to the factory early and discovered the young girls playing ball with the toys, which got thumbled and soiled in the process. When the enthusiasm of learning a new toy had evaporated and output failed to keep pace with anticipations, I suggested that piece rates might be a regrettable necessity to enable the toys to pay their way, but the tenets of Karl Marx were cited as an insurmountable barrier with so much vehemence that I capitulated.

Pricing, of which I had learnt the rule of thumb from my mother's Manchester adventure in shopkeeping, was Greek to the staff. The first toys despatched to Selfridges went out without a delivery note, and this big firm declared it contrary to their custom to pay unless delivery could be proved. All such failings I strove to remedy. Generous helpers responded to my appeals. Amongst others an I.L.P. traveller in fancy goods, Mr. Durant of Birmingham, gave coaching in business management. A Suffragette comrade, whose fine sewing was a marvel, taught our workers some of her craft and her pride in it. Little Agnes Kirner gazed at her with admiration, and wept with disappointment when her own sewing failed to reach the standard. Smyth poured some hundreds of her modest inheritance into the factory, others gave smaller sums.

One evening, long after war work had liquidated unemployment, and the Queen Mary Rooms were no more, and after many declarations that unless the factory could be made self-supporting it must close, Smyth and I went sadly thither, to say that the closing time had come. All responded with proposals to take reduced wages until they could pull up output. Karl Marx now was ousted in favour of "your great economists, Stuart Mill and Adam Smith." The manageress urged the piece rates she had denounced. Smyth provided a little more capital from her inheritance. Later, when the corner was turned successfully, Dr. Tchaykovsky deposited shares to guarantee the factory an overdraft in the slack summer season.

Our manageress blossomed into a capable saleswoman, a watchful manager, keen to reduce prices, demanding that the number of designs should be limited, and the style of the toys be altered, in order that the price might be brought down. Commercial necessity was crushing most

of trade in question, the Shirtmaking Trade Board (Great Britain) have given notice of certain minimum rates of wages which they propose to fix; but it is not known whether, after considering objections to the rates, they will adhere to the proposals, and at the present time no such rates are in operation.

I am, Madam, your obedient servant,
S. G. BARNES.

This was an utter denial of Runciman's own promise, and of the Fair Contracts Clause, which was supposed to protect all persons employed on Government work against unfair rates. I wrote to Runciman in a rage of indignation:

"In substance I take the letter to mean that you cannot, will not, and do not care to do anything to prevent the sweating of working women, who are executing orders for the Government, through the medium of contractors and sub-contractors. This being the case, to reply to us as you did, when we saw you, was dishonest in the extreme."

I sent the correspondence to the Press. *The Manchester Guardian* published it in full. To my astonishment, and still greater indignation, an official of the National Anti-Sweating League leapt into the lists to defend the Government and the sweating contractors. Replying to me through an interviewer sent to him by the *Manchester Guardian*, he declared: "As a matter of fact the prices being paid for Government work are in general good . . . any good worker used to the particular kind of work" should be able, he said, to earn £1 a week or more. He insisted that girls in well-equipped power-driven factories were earning 40s. a week and upwards. That was not my experience.

About that time a crowd of workers at Kent's big brush factory in Victoria Park Road, Bow, had come to me with their brushes and bristles, and their pay envelopes stamped with the broad arrow—to show they were doing Government work. Their fingers were cut and bleeding, bent and permanently deformed by the wire, their eyes red and sore from excessive labour. They were paid 1s. 2d. a dozen brushes, each having 163 holes to be filled. The quickest worker in the factory had managed to earn 11s. 1d., of which 3s. had been made by taking her work home at night, after toiling from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the factory. Other workers had made only from 6s. to 8s., part of it also at home. Out-workers were paid a penny a dozen less than the factory hands, machine workers only 9d. a dozen, the quickest of them making but 12s. a week, the average 7s. or 8s.

I cited this case, in replying to the Anti-Sweating League, and quoted also the rates complained of by the Stepney Public Health Committee, and the Liverpool Anti-Sweating League.

The Anti-Sweating League official still, through the *Manchester Guardian*, defended the contractors, denying the charges from Stepney, and ignoring those from Liverpool, though the League was originally an offshoot of his own organisation. He observed sententiously that if the

facts in regard to Kent's brushmakers were as serious as alleged, they should at once be communicated to the Director of Contracts at the War Office. This I had done, as a matter of routine, as soon as the case came to my notice. Moreover, the facts had already been communicated to Mr. J. J. Mallon, the Secretary of the National Anti-Sweating League, a member of the I.L.P. and an intimate friend of Mary Macarthur. Arthur Henderson, M.P., had sent the facts to the National Anti-Sweating League when I had appealed to him for aid. War time patriotism provided the Government with many strange defenders!

As usual, it was Keir Hardie who secured increased pay for Kent's brushmakers. The method I learnt from him then, and often employed thereafter, was simple, though tedious. It was to goad the Government into compelling the worst wage-payers among its contractors to conform to the rates of other firms of the same sort by appealing to the "Fair Contracts Clause." Yet alas, alas, even the best of the contractors paid grievously little to women workers.

Roberts, the chairman of the Liverpool Anti-Sweating League, refused to be ignored. He retorted that women who earned £1 a week on Army work usually accomplished it by the aid of overtime. He showed that employers paying women 2½d. for soldiers' kit bags were selling them to the Government for 5s. He gave a list of authenticated cases of sweating, including that of a woman, after four years' experience on power machines, working from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and paid 6s. a week.

The Public Health officers of Bethnal Green, undismayed by the doubt the Anti-Sweating official had cast on their statements, continued publishing gross instances of sweating. The making of soldiers' flannel belts paid for at 8d. a dozen, cotton provided by worker, time to make, eight hours; khaki sleeve waistcoats at 3s. per dozen; a contractor paying 3½d. a dozen for soldiers' needle-cases to a woman farming them out at 2d. a dozen. The Workers' War Emergency Committee, to which Mallon, Mary Macarthur and their friends all owed allegiance, also rushed to the charge, reporting cases of women making soldiers' shirts in the West End at 2s. 6d. per dozen, women earning 1d. per hour on soldiers' pillows, and 1s. for a long day's work on soldiers' beds. The Paddington Local Distress Committee declared 1½d. to 1½d. the district price for "finishing" soldiers' trousers; capable workers could do only one pair per hour.

Women complained to me daily. A mother supporting six children brought me her pay envelope. In four hours she could make seven soldiers' bags and received 5½d. The material was so thick and harsh that she sometimes broke many needles. A Bow contractor was paying 1d. a dozen less for brushes than Kent's before the increase; another paid 1s. 8d. for 400 eyelet holes on soldiers' kit bags; a woman earned 5s. 7d. at the work in 42 hours.

I complained to the War Office of the rates for soldiers' shirts paid by a Stepney firm; the employer transferred the shirts to outworkers, and kept the indoor workers to blouse-making. The rates for the shirts

CHAPTER XVIII

PATRIOTISM IN HIGH PLACES

IN mid-March Sybil Smith arranged a drawing-room meeting on behalf of our toy factory, at the Waldorf Astors' big house at Maidenhead. To conclude the arrangement I had to interview Mrs. Astor, as she was then, in their London house. I saw her very formally for a few moments, in a great dark room, where she looked like a bit of Dresden china with her flaxen hair and pink and white skin.

Sybil Smith and I went down to Maidenhead together. Mrs. Astor met our train, and we were packed into a big motor car with other guests, including two smartly tailored young men in civilian dress. Our hostess discoursed volubly on the "slackers," who refused their share of war service; duty to one's country was obviously a favourite theme with her. She had been reading a wonderful book, which had informed her that to indulge in luxury was to increase "the poor man's burden." "I am going to be austere!" she shouted, eyeing us all with a glance of challenge. "I am not going to increase the poor man's burden!"

She told us merrily she expected a considerable audience at our meeting, adding, with an abundance of American slang, which rendered some of her observations incomprehensible to me, that invitations had been extended to many persons of the neighbourhood, who had long been angling for a chance to visit her.

Mounting an incline, the motor overtook a young horseman. To my astonishment Mrs. Astor thrust her elegant head out of the window, and sang out in strident tones:

"Charlie McCartney, the pride of the nuts!" Her voice rose to a fierce shriek: "Why aren't you in khaki?"

Then she reseated herself with a triumphant smile which claimed our admiration; and fired off some caustic epithets anent that young neighbour of hers, whom she desired might be driven to enlist. Her own husband, a major then, was by no means at the Front; but habited in perfect khaki was keeping up appearances and setting a proper example to others.

The car was now taking us up the drive to the Astor mansion, where the servants assisted us to alight. As soon as we crossed the threshold of the great entrance hall where a roaring fire welcomed us, our hostess was hurried away in a stir of talk. A tragic telegram had arrived in her absence. The news flew around. An officer had been killed at the Front. One of Mrs. Astor's beautiful sisters had lost her friend. She

was heartbroken. Ah! Ah! sighs and regrets. All the guests learnt. All the guests sympathised. How sad! How sad, indeed!

Mrs. Astor could not attend our little function; she was beside her bereaved sister. Regrettable, truly; yet, save for the cause, I should have been glad of her absence. Already I began to feel a fish out of water in her environment and wished myself a thousand miles away from her hospitality. Yet one's crest was subdued; one's heart tamed by that sorrow, that stricken love, now striving with the agony of its loss. Ah Life! Ah Time! We are all as one, at heart!

This was the levelling influence of war time. Keir Hardie told me that when he saw a man whom he regarded as "one of the worst Members of Parliament" bowed by the news that his only son had been killed at the Front, he wanted to fling his arms about his neck.

Sadly we set out our toys in the ornate drawing-room. Whilst we yet laboured with the ill depression of the blow, a motley of well-dressed women swept in on us. I spoke to them quietly of the hard, grey life in the East End; of the women and girls making toys in our little factory; drudges, errand girls, charwomen learning to paint, the sausage-filler turned designer. I strove to reveal to them within our poor ones the eternal psyche, striving for release from its dull prison. I was well received; many people enjoy having their hearts touched—then pass to the next sensation, quite unchanged. The collection taken, the crowd swarmed to a buffet laden with glittering delicacies, consuming, or discarding with a nibble, over the teacups, heedless of that austerity our hostess preached.

Now to our rooms to dress; great chilly spaces, but each with its own bathroom and fine marble bath. Poor Sybil had talked so devotedly to the visitors that she had had no tea. She peeped into my room. "I am so cold and I wanted a cup of tea. I wish I had brought Mrs. Bowdson with me. She would have fetched me one from the kitchen!"

Of the feminine portion of the house-party I was first to appear, and sat aloof, fingering magazines on a divan. The men in their starched fronts gathered around the fire. Balfour,¹ in the centre of the throng, with his back to the blaze, talked with his flippant, senile elegance: "All Governments lie, you know, but *this* Government!" "Ha-ha!" an admiring chorus hung on his words.

At last came the ladies, amongst them Mrs. Astor and her sisters, all with their delicate, flaxen fairness, in black silk gowns with delightful white ruffles. The more intimate guests tendered condolences, the less intimate wore an air of solicitous sympathy.

At the dinner, noisy with talk and sumptuous with abundant meats, I heard the voice of my hostess above the clatter, declaring her intended austerity. I sat beside my host who told me importantly that he had received two remarkable letters from my sister Christabel—one of them he had sent to the War Office, the other to the Minister of Blockade.

¹ A. J., afterwards Lord Balfour.

With such chilling and bitter sarcasm the ardent idealism of the pioneer is ever met ; yet the true pioneers fling out their golden conceptions on the world, recking not of obstacles, serene in their faith.

From French Suffragists came equally emphatic denunciations. An American woman who considered joining the Women's International Congress Movement sent a copy of its objects to ex-President Roosevelt : he condemned them as "silly and base."

Mrs. Astor wrote to me that she would never have invited me to her house, had she known I would offer to attend such a Congress. She added that she had learnt we were paying £1 a week in the toy factory, instead of the 10s. of the Queen Mary Rooms. Had she known it she would not have aided us. Many members of the Women's Social and Political Union, who during its inactivity had worked for our Federation, now sheered off and left us. Some even of those who had professed internationalist and pacifist views now rallied to their old allegiance to Mrs. Pankhurst and Christabel ; some hesitated, uncertain what course to take. Many subscribers to our work for mothers and children withdrew. By every post came letters refusing further support. "Subscribers are falling off like dead leaves at the end of the season !" I said to Smyth, but we held on, redoubling our efforts, that those who depended on us might not suffer. Many times, before and since, the choice came to me, whether for the sake of the work I was doing, to stay my hand and remain silent, or to speak and do what I believed to be right, knowing that through me, all else that I was prominently engaged in would suffer attack and perhaps extinction. I was guided by the opinion that freedom of thought and speech is more important than any good which can ever come of concealing one's views, and by the knowledge that in the hour of its greatest unpopularity the pioneering cause needs one most. Yet it was often hard to choose thus sternly, flying in the face of what seemed prudent, casting to the winds the result of laborious effort ; hard, not on my own account ; for I had shed all personal aims when I gave up painting in the years of the Suffragette struggle before the War ; hard only on account of the work I was striving to do, and the people who looked to me for aid. On this occasion we weathered the storm. Smyth came forward as usual with donations and loans, writing off most of the latter, too, as donations, when she found, as financial secretary, they were too hard to repay. New workers and subscribers came gradually in to replace the departed.

The women of Russia, Germany, Austria, France and Belgium were permitted to proceed to the Congress ; but the British Government, having directed the Press abuse of our mission, refused to let British women go. McKenna, at one point, conceded to Miss Courtney and Miss Marshall, who were conducting the negotiations, that passports should be issued to twenty women of discretion, whom he selected from the two hundred. Some of the chosen were quite flattered by his choice : such phrases as : "They don't mind when they feel they can really trust you" fell from their lips. It is impossible to describe the atmosphere of repression which overhung the movement. Vain efforts

at diplomacy attempted to parry opposition. In the *Dreadnought* I had written of the Women's Peace Conference at The Hague. I received a letter of protest from Miss Crystal MacMillan of the British Committee for the Congress :

"British Committee of the
International Women's Congress.

"DEAR MISS PANKHURST,

"It has been pointed out to us that in the *Woman's Dreadnought* you speak of this International Congress as a 'Peace Congress.' This is giving rise to a good deal of misunderstanding, as the Congress cannot fairly be so described. The definition of the terms of peace is the only point in connection with peace on which it expresses an opinion or makes a demand. To call it a 'Peace Conference' gives the impression that its object is to demand peace at any price. We shall be very glad, therefore, if you will do what you can to remove the false impression which has been created.

"C. MACMILLAN."

Alas, for the caution and confidence of the chosen ladies ; McKenna, for all his promises, did not permit them to sail. Miss Courtney, it is true, had been too sharp for him. When he assured her : "Of course I should have no objection to issue permits to you and Miss Marshall," she answered : "I will take mine now," and was allowed to proceed. The others were kept waiting expectant, until the eleventh hour. On one occasion McKenna assured them that he would have issued the necessary permits to them there and then ; but the official whose duty it was to affix his signature to the documents had left the office for the night. It would be quite out of order for himself, or anyone save that particular official to sign. On their final visit he assured the chosen ladies that he would assuredly have let them travel at last ; but, to his great regret, "the boats had stopped running" on account of a great event of which they would certainly read in the Press. No notice of the event ever appeared. The ladies declared they had been tricked. The rest of us were curtly and frankly informed that no permits to attend the Congress were being issued.

Having no illusion that I might receive a permit, I had drafted a series of resolutions to be sent to the Congress. These covered the abolition of secret and sectional treaties and alliances and the creation of a permanent peace treaty uniting all nations ; the abolition of national armies and navies ; the democratisation of the international Court of Arbitration and the extension of its scope. I showed the resolutions to Keir Hardie ; he took the sheets from me eagerly. "This is important," he said, in his forceful way, and urged me to propose that a committee be appointed by the Congress to consider such proposals. "Then something may come of it," he said. We did not know that the American delegates to the Congress, amongst whom was Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, had held a preliminary conference on their voyage from New York and had worked out a similar programme.

I saw little of Keir Hardie in those days, so burdened I was by the volume and stress of our work. He had sunk into a great sadness. Whenever we met I found him ill and suffering. I left him heavy with anxiety. As I waited in Bishopsgate for the Old Ford 'bus, a thought, tragic and luminant, seized me—not my thought it seemed, but one from without, which assailed me. In a flash I realised the long struggle sustained in the advanced countries, through many generations, to waken the masses that they might gain control of their national Parliaments: I saw them at last make entry into the citadel, only to find it empty, the power gone—removed to an international Government, wherein the dead-weight of backward peoples would strangle all progress for generations to come. Was this the truthful augur of Internationalism? Was it thus that privilege and poverty would be buttressed in their ancient reign? Profound melancholy closed down on me. How static was this poverty, cruel and stultifying, with which we warred!

All schemes for international arbitration and agreement seemed empirical. The belief flared up insistent that only from a society re-created from the root, replacing the universal conflict of to-day by universal co-operation, could permanent peace arise. Yearning for the golden age of the coming equalitarian society, I passed, in thought, to the extremist pole, whereat all save a world-embracing social rebirth and reconstruction seemed mere trumpery. Then the daily fight with misery and hardship recalled me to do what I could for each of these poor ones.

The Women's Congress met in due course. Jane Addams, whom John Burns had described as America's finest citizen, presided over the gathering. She declared it the most deeply moving she had ever known. Historically it is to be regretted that the net demand for a truce made in the original appeal from Dutch women did not find a place in the final verdict of the Congress. Yet the belligerent governments were asked "to put an end to this bloodshed and begin peace negotiations." The neutral governments were urged to form a council offering continuous mediation, which should invite suggestions for a settlement of the conflict from each of the belligerent nations and should itself submit to them reasonable proposals for peace. Envoys were appointed to urge these demands. Jane Addams, Dr. Aletta Jacobs, and Rosa Genoni of Italy, for her country had not yet entered the War, went as neutrals to the belligerent Governments. Rosika Schwimmer of Hungary, and others of the belligerent countries, visited the neutrals. It was probably the unique position of Jane Addams in American regard which induced Asquith and Grey to receive the envoys of this Congress which British women had not been permitted to attend.

In France the envoys had audience of Delcassé and Viviani, and of Davignon, on behalf of the Belgian Government at Havre; in Italy of Sonnino, Salandra and the Pope, in Berlin of von Bethmann

Hollweg, in Vienna of Count Stürgkh, in Budapest of Count Tiza and Baron Burian. Everywhere they received fair words of encouragement to no purpose. The European neutrals would gladly have undertaken the proposed mediation; they were suffering too much from the British blockade to be other than anxious to take every step which might bring the War to a close; but all neutral effort was rendered ineffective by the refusal to participate of America, the only powerful neutral. President Wilson referred the envoys to his special factotum, Colonel House, and to Robert Lansing, Counsellor of the Department of State, then assistant to W. J. Bryan in United States foreign affairs. House, who regarded peace negotiations on America's behalf as his own particular province, dismissed the appeal of the Women's Congress for neutral mediation as "utterly impracticable." Mediation by a group of neutral nations did not appeal to him; he desired mediation by Wilson and America, to their everlasting glory, and to ensure an adequate share for American interests in exploiting the undeveloped territories of the world. He was by no means a pacifist of Jane Addams's gentle type.

From the Women's Congress at The Hague arose a permanent organisation. A British Section, termed the Women's International League, was formed in the autumn. As at the preliminary Conference, all the women's organisations working for Peace were invited to send delegates: Suffragists, Socialists, Labourists and Quakers being thus represented. I was elected to the Executive. The majority of its London members were seceders from Mrs. Fawcett's National Union of Suffrage Societies. The work, therefore, assumed a cautious and moderate tone. Our Federation delegates were out-voted, when we proposed that the title should be the Women's International Peace League, and that women of foreign citizenship, resident in Britain, should be admitted to membership of the British Section. Mrs. Swanwick opposed the proposition on the ground that "a great deal of mud" would be cast at the organisation. Even the British wives of aliens were excluded.

The non-militant Suffragists felt the fierce opposition to our Peace efforts more sharply than Suffragettes and Socialists, who had already borne the brunt of championing unpopular causes.

The organisation was from the first overshadowed by the tremendous magnitude of its task. It worked many degrees below the high-keyed enthusiasm of the Hague Conference. It carried no fiery cross; but tried, in a quiet way, sincerely, if at times haltingly, to understand the causes of war, and to advance the causes of Peace by negotiation, and the enfranchisement of women. From time to time it expressed itself by resolution in careful phrases; from time to time it held a public meeting, from which notorious people were, as a rule, prudently excluded. All Peace work laboured under the weight of harsh adversity. The less could be accomplished, alas, the more lengthy, were the sittings of the Committee. They lasted from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. It seemed almost like undertaking the labours of Penelope, when I essayed to

induce the Executive to call a week's Conference to debate such international questions, then to the fore, as the Freedom of the Seas, Disarmament, the Self-Determination of Oppressed Nationalities and so on! Protracted as the task was, it was accomplished at length! When I returned to the East End after these lengthy sittings, to find myself obliged to cut out sleep, and work forty-eight hours, with scarcely a break, to cope with the arrears which had accumulated during my absence, I often told my East End colleagues I should prefer to resign from the W.I.L. "Oh, do stay there and leaven them!" Norah Smyth and others urged me: but I did so reluctantly. In the East End we were equally powerless to stay the hideous progress of the War; but we could alleviate some of its miseries. To me it was essential to be able to voice my opinions spontaneously, and without fear or favour. To trim one's statements, in order to conciliate influential opinion, oppressed me with a sense of insincerity.

CHAPTER XX

THE MUNITION WORKERS—SHORTAGE OF MUNITIONS—GOVERNMENT
APPEAL TO WOMEN

THE hardships and dangers of munition work began to appear. On March 15th W. C. Anderson complained in the House of Commons that at Armstrong Whitworth's Elswick factory women were employed seven days a week for upwards of twelve hours a day. They got from 8s. to 11s. a week with a bonus forfeited for failure to work Sundays. Some of the girls had worked 20 hours at a stretch and 95 hours a week. Two girls had died of dope poisoning at the Army aeroplane works at Crayford, and when the first death occurred, 43 others were found to be seriously affected by the fumes.

News was coming through that the failure of the British attempt to drive back the German lines at Neuve Chapelle had been due to shortage of munitions. To the jingo super-patriot, failure to excel must needs be criminal: Asquith, the War Office, Kitchener, each and all had a share of execration from the extreme jingoes. Nowadays, military experts write dispassionately that the British military authorities were unversed in trench warfare, and slower than the Germans to appreciate the huge scale of the ammunition required and that British weapons were crudely inferior to the German. From the national arsenal at Woolwich came complaints that the men and machines there were, even then, not fully employed, and that before the War and since, the national armament factories had gone short of work in order that more orders might be given to the private armament firms. It was alleged that private firms had been subsidised to keep up equipment in case of war, but had not fulfilled their contracts in this respect.

Undoubtedly the munitions were inadequate to the vast scale of hostilities. The Government was abused for lack of forethought, for sloth and inefficiency. The attack was hastily diverted from the Government and the armament firms, to the munition workers overwhelmed by excessive toil. A twelve hour day and seven day week had become usual and was often exceeded in the munition factories. Nevertheless, Lloyd George received a deputation of employers who declared that drunkenness, and bad time-keeping in the factories were hindering the supply of munitions to the trenches. Under his sponsorship their charges were given wide currency as incontrovertible fact. Keir Hardie, acutely ill, flashed out a protest:¹

¹ At a demonstration held in connection with the I.L.P. Annual Conference at Norwich.

"In time of war one would have thought the rich classes would grovel on their knees before the working classes who are doing so much to pile up their wealth. Instead, the men who are working eighty-four hours a week are being libelled, maligned and insulted; and on the authority of their employers, the lying word, accepted without inquiry by Lloyd George, went round the world that the working-class were a set of drunken hooligans. That is the reward they got. The truth is that the shifts could be arranged to overtake all the work. Mr. John Hill of the boilermakers, has shown that if the shipbuilders would reduce their contracts 10 per cent., the Government would get all their work done, but the shipbuilders will not do it because their ships are being sold at two and three times their pre-War value."

Lloyd George squirmed at the attack and protested by telegram that he was misrepresented. Keir Hardie replied doggedly:

"I pointed out that the employers, when before you, had put the whole blame on the drinking habits of the workers, and you, by accepting their statement without challenge, had given world currency to the fiction that the workers were drunken wasters."

Lloyd George continued protesting: "Wild accusations . . . mischievous statements . . . excited prejudice," explaining that his own strictures had only intended to apply to a "small section" of the workers. The matter did not end there; a Government White Paper was issued to drive home the charges of intemperance and absenteeism. James O'Grady, M.P., and other officials of approved societies under the National Insurance Act vainly replied that their books were flooded with cases of men who were ill from over-work.

Attacks were launched against Trade Unionism. Its practices were denounced as limiting the output per man and preventing the influx of new workers into the munition factories, although the men then employed, and all the members of the Unions concerned, were insufficient to supply the overwhelming stream of Government orders.

It is true that the Trade Unions were holding tenaciously to the system of demarkation between the processes allocated to various classes of workers. Above all, they clung to the sharp line drawn between the occupations of the skilled workmen who had served an apprenticeship to the trade, and the tasks which might be performed by the workers outside this relatively fortunate class. Yet such self-protective measures by no means justified or explained the excessive overtime employers were exacting in all classes of war work, whilst hundreds of unemployed people were clamouring at their gates.

That the employers were slow in adapting themselves to the vastness of war output need not be accounted to them as malice. Undoubtedly profits were the primary concern with the average of them, and the exhaustion of the workers counted little against the cost of additional plant or any difficulties and expenses of management which working three shifts might entail.

In March the Board of Trade issued an appeal to women to register at the Labour Exchanges for war service in industry, agriculture and munition making. 57,000 women who had hitherto been wage earners were still workless, according to official estimates, and there was no definite plan for the employment of the new recruits: but the enrolment of the women would help to keep patriotic fervour at boiling point: it would maintain a pool of surplus labour and the volunteers would be needed later on. Registration forms were sent out broadcast to the plethora of women's organisations which had grown up in pre-War years: Liberal, Conservative, Temperance, Religious, Philanthropic, and, above all, Suffragist, the most active by far.

It was grimly humorous that this appeal should come to us from the very Government which had so long and stubbornly opposed itself to our struggle for the vote, as those of us who had maintained our demand during the War were not slow to observe. Our Federation, the Women's Freedom League, the United Suffragists and the Irish Women's Franchise League immediately issued manifestoes demanding the vote, and insisting that a woman who did a man's work should get a man's pay. Even Mrs. Fawcett's N.U.W.S.S., though it kept silence as to the vote, rose to the point of asking "equal pay for equal work."

I at once issued an appeal to women's organisations to unite in demanding for women equal pay and representation on the tribunals which were being set up to deal with wages and conditions. I urged the calling of a joint conference of women's organisations and Labour organisations. I made it my business to ensure that the conference should be held and that the Labour organisations should be its conveners. I wanted the women pledged to demand equal pay, and to get them into the Trade Unions, as well as to ensure that the woman who needed her wage for sustenance should not be crushed out by the well-to-do volunteer working for patriotism and pocket money. I wanted the Labour organisations to take the lead in working-class interests, and also to commit them to the demand for equal pay, towards which they were apathetic. I called at the Labour Party office, then so small and sparsely staffed, despite its large membership. J. S. Middleton, the model official, with his air of being bled by too much desk work, met me with earnest agreement. I saw Mary Macarthur, and urged her that the Women's Trade Unions should not abandon the lead to non-representative bodies, formed in other than working-class interests. It was essential for their welfare that the wage earners—men and women—should be kept together as a united force, and that the Trade Unions should shoulder practical responsibility towards the women. Surprised, perhaps, that I should come to her thus after our acute differences over underpayment of women in the Queen's Workrooms, Mary Macarthur was genial enough. "What do you want us to do?" she asked me, and with a good deal of cordiality agreed to my suggestions.

A preliminary conference of women's organisations was accordingly summoned, and at its request, the Workers' War Emergency Committee

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 Tonypany, 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.¹ 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 Allen² 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

¹ Independent Labour Party.

² Now Lord Allen of Hurtwood.

of the Russian Seamen's Union had been illegally arrested in Egypt, and taken to Russia for trial and sentence, a violation of the right of asylum. Keir Hardie had vainly tried to induce Sir Edward Grey to intervene. Keir Hardie's last words to the conference were a denunciation of the alliance with the government of the Tsars, against which he had fought since its inception: "The alliance with Russia is not to help Belgium; it is to open up fresh fields for Capitalist exploitation."

I saw Keir Hardie at Nevill's Court when he returned from Norwich. He looked aged and broken. Deeply dejected, he told me he could not endure to be alone there any longer, and had made arrangements to go for treatment to a hydro at Caterham. Never before in all the years I had known him had he spoken thus. Often had I pleaded with him that he should abandon his solitary life, and urged on him his need of warmth and cheer, on returning from late sittings in Parliament and from journeys about the country. At all hours of the night and small hours he came back to the solitude of dark and fireless rooms; where, save for the old woman who came in to clean, he had all to do for himself. Always until now he had declared his contentment.

Deeply concerned, I wrote to him at Caterham. In answer I received a letter written by another hand:

May 27th, 1915.

DEAR SYLVIA,

I wish I could respond worthily to your letter of the other day. That is out of the question.

I may be at Nevill's Court on Monday for about two hours—12 noon till 2 o'clock, and if you could make it convenient to come and see me then I shall be delighted.

I have given up Nevill's Court, and intend to gift and sell a lot of the stuff that is there. You have, I think, two products of your genius there, one hangs over the fireplace and the other on the left-hand side of the room as you go in. The one over the fireplace I have so closely associated with you that I should not like to part with it, and if you can see your way to allow my nominal ownership to continue, I shall regard that with pleasure.

I have a great many letters of yours, especially those from America, and a good many others. They are well worth preserving, and I should like to return these to you. I could let you have the whole of those now at Nevill's Court, and you could use your discretion as to which are most worthy of being kept and published. But I must leave the matter entirely in your hands. I have not *now* the capacity for dealing with such a matter.

There is much in what you say about the War and the state of my health.

As aye,

Frank Smith had been his scribe; only the concluding words, "As aye, K." were added in his own hand, shaky and trembling, which was of old so firm.

I read again the sad epistle. Not lightly was this decision taken. No hope deluded me that his intention was to move, as I had urged him, to more comfortable surroundings, or to share a home with others. Too well I knew him, thus to mistake his meaning. His words knelled on my heart with finality and farewell. For all that he was and stood for, grief surged within me. I saw that the word "now" had been inserted by his own hand. So that was his thought: to give permanency to those letters I had written to him in the unconscious communion of friendship.

Anxiously I hastened to him at the time he had appointed. I found him alone in the old rooms. With a voice low and muffled, he confirmed the purport of his letter. I understood that he was announcing to me the final close of his working life, his imminent death, that he admitted no hope of recovery, expected never to return. My heart revolted against this decision, which he conveyed as an irrevocable decree; yet I could not argue or gainsay him. The surging of great sorrow, pent tears and cries suppressed, stifled all utterance.

Now he would even return to me the picture he had written his desire for, the child I had painted at Penshurst, which, he would have it, resembled me. That decision wounded me as a stroke of doom. I had clung to the thought that his wish to keep it meant he had hold on life still. Yet my lips could form no plea, no protest. . . . He wanted to give me some keepsake from his books or furniture; urged me to choose; tried, despite my silence, to enlist my interest in this or that.

"I don't want to be given anything!" at last I blurted. Only the poor little pang that he should seek by small things to divert me, overcome, for an instant, the anguish of the great loss.

We were tongue-tied as never before, I struggling dumbly, desperately, to maintain my slender self-control, that I might not distress him, might not add to the suffering obviously consuming him.

Frank Smith came in, talking disjointedly, moving awkwardly, in his kind clumsiness, cut to the heart like me, so well I knew. Grief held me speechless. They exchanged some words on indifferent matters, both constrained, laconic, heavy with the sorrow oppressing the three of us. Keir in his agony, mysterious, unkened, seemed to loom over us like some great, tragic ruin.

At last in a transient moment, when Frank Smith was away on some errand, I summoned courage to take leave. Grieving too much to feel clearly aught else save grieving, I felt him near me, heard for the last time his voice: "You have been very brave!"

Torn with the hopeless misery one feels at death, I went from those old rooms.

His kind looks hung in my eyes, his accents in my ears. . . . Visions of youth and childhood mingled with the thought of him . . . happy scenes . . . high faiths and hopes . . . great imaginings. . . .

I would not surrender hope of him. No, no, despite the parting.

On July 28th came a postcard from him, the postal stamp "Caterham Valley," the writing trembling, irregular.

"DEAR SYLPHIA,

"In about a week I expect to be gone from here with no more mind control than when I came.

Love."

Alas! he had forgotten even the spelling of my so familiar name! Yet, yet would I not surrender hope of him.

I dreamt in waking dreams of his return, rested, revived, as he came back from that voyage round the world in 1908, after we all had thought him dying. I spoke of my hopes and fears for him to Frank Smith. Yes; he too believed, so he reassured me, that Keir would return with his old fire.

Zelie Emerson put into my hands a copy of the *Suffragette*, displaying a vile cartoon from *Punch*, portraying the Kaiser giving a grossly vulgarised Keir Hardie a bag of money!

"Also the Nobel prize (though tardy)
I now confer on Keir von Hardie."

Greatly pained, I wrote to Mrs. Pankhurst that I had seen it, telling her: "He is dying." I believed that her old love for him must flame out against further insults, did she know his state. She did not answer me.

I learnt later that the W.S.P.U. had sent Flora Drummond into his constituency, the Merthyr Boroughs, to work for the Labour renegade, who hoped to succeed him, the jingo Stanton, who joined with the notorious Captain Tupper and others of the sort in smashing peace meetings.

Memories weighed on me. Flora Drummond and he and I, speaking together at the demonstration in the Merthyr drill hall after the first Suffragette conspiracy trial, when Mrs. Pankhurst and the Pethick Lawrences had stood in the dock together; Flora Drummond squatting familiarly on the hearthrug beside Keir Hardie's chair in his old home at 14 Nevill's Court; Flora Drummond, who had named her son, Keir, after him, and had been wont to run to him with confident importunity when any trouble threatened. I thought of his visits to our home in Manchester, so long ago; my father's great love for him; how staunch a friend Keir Hardie was to us in the after years!

I had written: "He is dying," yet I would not accept that thought; there must still be hope. He was at Cumnock, with his family. I had no direct word of him.

I woke early one Sunday morning with a dream of him fondling some little puppy, as he often did. There was always a strong attraction between the dogs and him; not one of them approached him but he must have to do with it. I heard again the gentle regret in his "My old dog," spoken of one who had died, as of a well-loved friend. The thought came to me that a soft-furred, shaggy puppy, of some big dog sort, now humorous and rollicking, now snuggling to him appealing for sympathy and warmth, would soothe and divert him. Many times, in the years when I had lived alone, he had urged me to get myself a dog; and had told me he would have one with him at Nevill's Court, save for his frequent absences.

I set my steps to the dog market held on Sunday mornings in the Bethnal Green Road. I would look for a grey old English sheep-dog, the most human of dogs, so far as I know them. As always, the market was thronged with shabby black-coated men, but the dogs were few. There was only one litter of big dog puppies of any sort—retrievers, six weeks old, the vendor told me; fat little fellows they were, as round as barrels, with long, black, silky fur. I gathered up one and enjoyed the feel of it, warm and confiding, as it lay on my knees in the 'bus. Almost happy I felt, notwithstanding the sad occasion of it, to have thought of this little means to please and serve Keir Hardie. I could see his amused surprise at this new arrival—imagined his way with it.

At home the puppy presented well; everyone liked him and laughed at him. "He is only here for a little while," I told Mrs. Payne.

But now I had bought the puppy, how could it reach him? Was anyone going North who could take it? I wrote to Frank Smith. He advised me against sending it, for the present, at least. Keir Hardie was much too ill to care for it; indeed they had been obliged to send away a dog because it distressed him. Ill news indeed—to one who knew him.

I kept the dog—I hoped for only a little. Donald, I called him, after the best-loved of the many pit ponies Keir Hardie befriended in his boyhood; but in the office, the kitchen, the restaurant, they called him Jimmie—Keir Hardie's familiar nickname when a lad, which he had from many an old friend still. After a week's attempt to keep him Donald, I accepted "Jim" for him, as though Fate had had a voice in it.

We were preparing for a joint demonstration in Trafalgar Square against Conscription, now obviously at hand. All the active movements for Socialism, Social Reform and free institutions were rallying to us. Among the speakers nominated by the Socialist, Labour, Suffrage and

Trade Union organisations which joined us were H. M. Hyndman, the old Social Democrat, who had never shed the ethics of jingo imperialism, and for that reason was fighting a losing battle to maintain his hold on the Socialist organisation he had created, E. C. Fairchild, who was to succeed him in its leadership, W. C. Anderson, M.P., of the I.L.P., John Hill and Fred Bramley, the leaders of the Boilermakers' Union and Furnishing Trades Union, Outhwaite, the Single Tax M.P., Mrs. Despard, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, and many more.

It was a great gathering, ordered, united. My part of the speaking was over, an effort not small in so large a crowd. Newsboys with posters of a special edition came running to the meeting, a sight unusual on a Sunday. Strange words glared at me:

"DEATH OF KEIR HARDIE."

The world seemed rocking.

"Is it true?" I turned to W. C. Anderson, standing beside me.

"It must be," he answered gently; then, practical and alert: "I'll draft a resolution; he was *our* man."

Around me seemed a strange dullness. . . . "You feel faint?" Barbara Tchaikovsky eyed me, doctoral. "Sit down and put your head between your knees," she ordered, enforcing her words with kind constraint.

I was not faint, but stunned and stricken. Yet I let her have her way with me, not caring. The world was dreary and grey, and Life too pitilessly cruel. . . .

I felt as they who had lost their dearest in the War; for the War had killed him, as surely as it had killed the men who went to the trenches and were shot. The struggle we were waging to improve material conditions, though for the very poorest, suddenly appeared sordid, the fight against Conscription mere paltering. I wished, with an intensity which seemed to burn up all other feeling, that while there was yet time, I had gone with him as a missionary through the country denouncing the War. Ruthlessly I examined myself, deciding that though I had spoken against the War, the greater part of my struggle had been waged for economic conditions. "Oh yes, I know this is a capitalist war; if capitalism were ended, wars would be no more; yet the politics of this War, in their callous wickedness; these you have not sufficiently exposed. . . . You have attacked the effects of war and of capitalism more often than those two great causes from which they spring."

Through the speeches, the greetings, the leave-takings, reproaches stormed within me. In the silent night they bore on me with torment; too sharp, too sharp, it seemed, to be endured—and yet beyond was a great absence, an abyss profound, limitless, terrifying. . . . oh, to return!

Feverishly the mind sought to transform what might have been to what was, nay is, is, is. . . . bringing the dead to life, renewing again

the dear old comradeship, making it dearer yet and more complete. Scenes of make-believe, more vivid than memories, raced through my brain—phantoms, delusions, mocking dreams, folly, folly. . . . always again that drear abyss, silent, grey, fathomless. . . . Oh no! Oh no, no, no! Let this hour pass! Let this hour never be!

To have stood beside him; travelled with him; laid aside all else to support and cherish him. Not one had borne that part towards him fully. All had their work, their families, their health, their incapacities—not one had said: "I will give my all to serve with him, and to serve him." Lesser men and women have known such serviceable companionship. Not you, O you tower of strength! In the lonely heights of your isolation, this was denied to you!

The great regrets surged over me—for words unsaid and things undone, for hours unlive. . . . ah, to have seen the last of him! Within me rose the great rebellion against the cruelties of our life, and its denials. . . . its foolish, vain denials. . . .

In the exhaustion of early morning some calmness came to me. I thought of him mantled in his great reserve, impregnable.

I felt the charge laid on me to make a more pointed and urgent struggle against the War and the influences which gave it birth.

I spent the day putting down for the *Dreadnought* some of the thoughts I had of him, and with conviction wrote:

"Keir Hardie has been the greatest human being of our time: when the dust raised by opposition to the pioneer has settled, this will be known by all."

A letter came to me from Frank Smith, written at the office of Robert Williams, the architect, in Cliffords Inn, lent from love of Keir Hardie for the unemployed and other agitations.

"September 26th, 1915.

"DEAR SYLVIA PANKHURST,

"I feel I must send you a line, but I hardly seem able to do it. What a loss is ours. I don't think anyone, among the many thousands who mourn for him, knew, understood or loved him better than you and I—and *now*!

"I only had a note from his brother George written on Saturday afternoon saying he had left him sleeping at the nursing home in Glasgow—and then to see it in the papers!

"Dear old Keir—how true a friend he was. I know how deeply and sincerely he ever held you in his mind and heart—

"I cannot write any more beyond saying again how great a loss is ours.

"Ever yours sincerely,

"FRANK SMITH."

I saw Frank Smith later in the dark little office in Cliffords Inn and put to him a question, restless in my mind :

"He wrote to me that he had not 'mind control.' What did he mean?"

"He had delusions."

"What sort of delusions?"

"With Lloyd George riding in a motor car," Frank Smith answered, with a gesture of misery.

A meeting to honour Keir Hardie was held in the Memorial Hall. I remember the hoarse, deep roar of applause which greeted J. R. MacDonald when he rose. Men sprang to their feet and cheered him, and cheered again because he was the target on whom the attack of the conscriptionists and the jingoes mainly centred. He spoke tenderly of Keir Hardie, as did all that night. The spirit loomed over us of our leader and friend, who had loved humanity as others love their immediate families, and, feeling more deeply than the many can, had been stricken unto death by the Great War, in which he had neither kith nor kin of his blood, but the shattered brotherhood of the world whereon his hopes were set.

Among the leaders of the Socialist International none had foreseen so urgently and painfully as he, the approaching menace of the World War; none more clearly conceived its prevention by a general refusal of the workers in all countries to assist in the conflict.

The proposal for the international general strike of the workers against war had been pioneered in the international Socialist congresses by the Dutchman, Domela Nieuwenhuis, since 1891 and by Hervé, the French "anti-patriot," as he called himself. Bebel, the German Socialist leader, and the majority of his party had opposed it as "impossible and beyond discussion." Hervé's propaganda had found large support in the French Socialist Party. Jaurès, its leader, at the Stuttgart International Socialist Congress had given his assent to a resolution of the French party in which the general strike and insurrection was mentioned as one of the means by which the workers might oppose war. That this assent, though sincere, was mainly academic later events were to indicate. The Stuttgart Conference eventually adopted a formula in which direct endorsement of the general strike against war was avoided and the differences in the opposing policies glossed over. At the Copenhagen Conference in 1910 Keir Hardie and Edouard Vaillant of France moved an amendment, drafted by Hardie himself, declaring for the general strike against war, "especially in the industries which supply war with its implements (arms and ammunition, transport, etc.)." Vandervelde of Belgium, the skilful diplomatist, who was to find a seat in the Belgian Coalition War Cabinet, persuaded Hardie and Vaillant to accept the reference of their proposal to the International Socialist Bureau, for study and report to the next conference. The report should have been presented at the Conference which never was held, for the World War had come and found the Socialists unprepared. Like Hervé, the "anti-patriot," who at the first trump of war had become patriot of the patriots, jingo of the jingoes, the battalions of the International had turned to rend each other.

To Keir Hardie the International general strike against war was an article of profound faith. Once he had accepted it, in his clear-minded definite way, it became one of the great objects of his life to work for it steadily, persistently. Advocating it and defending it through Press and platform in this country, again and again he tore himself from the pressure of home politics, to pioneer for it abroad—in France, Belgium,

Hungary, Scandinavia, above all in Germany. He wrote to me from Copenhagen during the Socialist International Congress of 1910:

"We have been having the usual trouble with the S.D.F.,¹ but have now got them finally in hand and have turned Hyndman off the Bureau.² I have accepted invitations to speak at two meetings in Sweden next week, and from there I go on to Frankfort-on-Main for a demonstration. . . ."

H. M. Hyndman, as is well known, had long predicted war with Germany, demanding Conscription, to raise what he termed "a citizen army," and advocating naval and military preparedness for the approaching war. He had bitterly attacked Keir Hardie's propaganda of international working class solidarity.

In August 1912 Keir Hardie and Arthur Henderson, on behalf of the British Section of the International Socialist Bureau, had addressed a letter to the Trade Unions of this country, urging an "anti-war strike," as "supplementary" to political action, and to be used "where political action is not yet sufficiently developed to prevent" war.

In the Morocco crisis of 1911 Keir Hardie had called on British workers to hold themselves prepared, so that in the event of war, not a soldier or a cannon should be transported by ship or train.³ Ten months before the World War he was at the German Socialist Congress in Jena, pleading for the establishment of the United States of Europe. Eight months before the War he was speaking for peace with Jaurès, Adler and Vandervelde in London. On the very eve of the conflict he was with the International Socialist Bureau in Brussels, striving to avert the War.

¹ The party of H. M. Hyndman. Hardie here used the old initials of this organisation, the "Social Democratic Federation," though it had become the British Socialist Party.

² The International Socialist Bureau, of which Hyndman had been an original member.

³ Speech at International Peace Demonstration, London, August 17th, 1911.

May O'Callaghan, my sub-editor, who prided herself upon her compatriotism with Bernard Shaw, regarding him in some subtle fashion as a piece of her own property, urged that she should write him asking for an article on Keir Hardie for the *Dreadnought* of the following week. Having kissed the blarney-stone, like all the Irish, and sharing their gift of humour, she was much more likely than I to succeed immediately in such a task. She obtained at once the promise of a Shaw article which was to appear simultaneously in the *Merthyr Pioneer*. She received also one of Shaw's characteristic letters wherein, most unexpectedly, he observed that his article was "not nearly so good as Sylvia's." He added graciously: "Will you undertake to send me the *Dreadnought* every week during my life (I am now in my 59th year) if I pay you a ten years' subscription? Anticipating a favourable reply, I enclose a cheque for £2 3s. 4d."

It was a thrifty bargain, for though the *Dreadnought* lasted only nine years more, its price rose perforce, with the rising cost of paper and printing, and from a halfpenny became twopence before the War ended.

Shaw's article proved typically Shavian, with a bitterness, to me, almost too acid:

"There is, I feel sure, a very general feeling of relief in the House of Commons and the Labour Party that Keir Hardie's body lies mouldering in the grave. . . . I really do not see what Hardie could do but die. Could we expect him to hang on and sit there among the poor slaves who imagined themselves Socialists until the touchstone of war found them out and exposed them for what they are? . . . That the workers themselves—the Labour Party he had so painfully dragged into existence—should snatch still more eagerly at the War to surrender those liberties and escape back into servility, crying: 'You may trust your masters: they will treat you well.' . . . This was what broke the will to live in Keir Hardie."

And there was Jim, poor fellow, who looked up at me with his eyes of love. He had proved to be no retriever, but a cross-bred old English sheep-dog. His black coat had turned iron-grey; his black eyes golden-brown like the eyes of him I bought him for. "A funny old thing with a noble head," people called him. Hard driven as I was with work, I had no time for him, but I kept him with me, and fondled him more than I would have done under other circumstances. He responded generously, as a good dog will, repaying our poor care of them, in affection, a thousand-fold. He was given to pranks. The habit of poking shoes and slippers into convenient corners, into which some of the office workers had fallen, was quickly cured; for towards shoes of all sorts he was ruthless. Hats, too, on many occasions he demolished. His period of destructiveness quickly passed, but never his playfulness. He had a great way of dancing before one on his hind legs, and gently dabbing at one with his fore-paws, his mouth open as though he were smiling and pleading for a game. "Dear Jim, you are the pet of us all!" Mrs. Snedden, the cook in the restaurant, responded to his appeal; a quiet little widow with grown-up daughters, she treated him as affectionately as though he had been a child, and so did all the workers about the place. Yet he was always my dog, though I never fed him and on the whole had little time to notice him. When I was away in the provinces speaking, he kept to my rooms, and if driven out would lay himself at my bedroom door in the little dark passage, where whoever came by was apt to tread on him. If he could elude the vigilance of Mrs. Payne, he would crouch on my bed and remain there, caring nothing for food or drink, his long hair in wet weather making a hideous mess of it, till Mrs. Payne rushed in to change the coverings with excited outcries. When I was at home Jim never once played that trick on us!

He knew my step and sprang always swift to the door to give me a greeting. Dear Jim, dear dogs, so faithful in your ungrudging love which satisfies us not.

At one of the Labour conferences held about then to discuss the emergencies of the time, I met Katharine Bruce Glasier; I had not come across her for many a year. She seemed not a day older, the same emotional, impulsive Katharine as when I first saw her in Manchester twenty-three years before. Her daughter, the Jeannie I knew as a chubby baby, and a toddler of two or three, was beside her. I could not discern in the girl's pretty pale face and soft-voiced smoothness a hint of her mother's rebellious emotions, or her father's romantic vision. "She is Margaret Bondfield's secretary!" her mother told me with evident pride; but Katharine would have been secretary to none; she was ever for a way of her own. Malcolm, her son, came to greet her in the dinner hour; fair and flaxen, his curly hair growing far back from the forehead, like his father's, his blue eyes cold and prominent; they seemed without feeling—a lad who had not found himself, one would say. It was a shock to see his mother's son in a brass-buttoned Naval uniform; I felt a pang of sorrowful pity for her; but she seemed both happy and proud of him, and gleefully told me he had run away to sea. Yet despite her bubbling exterior cheerfulness, at heart, I felt, she must be stricken with grief, disappointment and apprehension. She talked with her old helter-skelter enthusiasm of her endless campaigning: "I told them that war is murder. . . . I gave them it straight from the heart! John So-and-so told me he didn't know which to admire most—the woman or her audience!"

Yes, she was the old Kate Conway of her early Socialist days, not one whit changed; but the Socialism had become Pacifism, and the Atheism, Christian Science.

In one of the conference intervals a crowd of us went to tea somewhere—perhaps the International Women's Suffrage Club in Grafton Street. Mrs. Glasier and I were alone together. She spoke of Keir Hardie, "Keir," as she always called him, his greatness, his wisdom, the early days of the I.L.P. She was one of the little band of its first speakers.

"We all recognised Keir as our leader. I obeyed him more than my husband—more than Bruce," she said; and babbled on in her incoherent fashion: "Hardie wasn't his name, you know. Hardie was only his stepfather. . . . that's why he was so absolutely different from the rest of them. . . . His mother recognised it. 'Keir's father was a very different man from this!' she told me herself, the old lady; oh, lassie, a dear old lady, and a very fine woman . . . of course it was a love match. She's said to me, the old lady: 'You love your man?' Oh lassie, she knew I did; that is why she could talk to me. 'And wouldn't you go to your man?' she asked me. 'Ah, that I would, my dearie, against the world!' I answered her; you may believe me! . . . Those three! Those three! . . . Ah, lassie, there is nothing like a love match! Love is the crown of life! You know about Bruce, of course. I must have told you the story. His mother's father wouldn't give his consent; Bruce's father rode away with her on a great black horse at midnight. . . . Her father

sent a company of horsemen after them to catch them, but they got away clear. . . .

"Keir . . . poor Keir! . . . Ah yes, dearie, didn't you know? His mother, she thought the world of him but she wouldn't. . . . We all knew it, but . . . His beautiful silence."

Waves of thought were rending me, grief for the sadness of life, amaze at its poignant drama. Novels, romances, what is the need of them? Not one is so strange, so poignant as the true romance of Life.

In her talk Katharine Glasier had mentioned that the proof of the first chapter of Keir Hardie's autobiography had been found since his death. He had told me that the loss, at the *Labour Leader* office, of this first chapter had deterred him from continuing the book; he could not bring himself to begin it again. I begged that I might see it, and presently it was lent to me—two brief, pregnant galleys of print. A part of Mrs. Glasier's strange story it confirmed; for he told there that his birth was branded with "the bar sinister." He spoke of his mother, Mary Keir; but of his father not. A moving record of the childhood, both hard and tragic, of the man who was to build the Labour Party, it has been re-told in part by others; it should be published in his own burning words.

Later that year I was speaking in Glasgow and met, for the first time, his sister Agnes Aiton, the only one of his mother's children I had seen who had some hint of a look of him in her tender face. Only some brief words we had together, but I felt a bond between us. Later I received a letter from her:

"You will be thinking I have forgotten you, but you are ever in my mind since I saw you in Glasgow. I had often heard of you, but never seen you until I met you in Mrs. Crawford's, and my heart went out to you for the sake of one I knew thought the world of you. . . ."

When next in Glasgow I stayed with her at Cambuslang. She told me things of him which brought both sorrow and wonder to my heart.

It was under the spell of his eulogy of Keir Hardie that I asked Bernard Shaw to speak for us in aid of the Mothers' Arms. He consented very amiably. The demand for tickets was great; we made a much needed profit of £75 for the fund.

Shaw's speech was to me intensely disappointing. In a being less wayward one would have said it was deliberately intended to efface the impression of his *Common Sense about the War*. Indeed in some of its passages it was decidedly jingo. I felt really ashamed to be his chairman and dissociated myself and our organisation from his remarks with as little offence as I could—I believe with success, for he told me I had "the family charm." Afterwards I wrote to him expressing regret, which I knew to be shared by many to whom his name was a household word, that he had not taken a definite stand against the War, and urging him to do so. He answered that in helping to save the babies I was accomplishing something effective; to oppose the War was hopeless. "How can you hope to convert the public," he asked, "when you cannot even convert your mother and Christabel?"

Later I read, with regret, and also with wrath, his flippant account of how he had been, as he termed it, "joy-riding at the Front." The article was in praise of the British military machine and its fighting qualities.

His *O'Leary, V.C.*, I considered an inexcusable production. His early attitude towards the Russian Revolution and his whitewashing of Mussolini enraged me; but for much that he has written one must be grateful. I believe that in sum his influence has been of great value in our public life. I sympathise with the view of some witty person who observed, "Shaw is a good man fallen among Fabians." Had he imbibed the doctrines of Marx, as he would have us believe,¹ and turned thence to the genial influences of Peter Kropotkin and William Morris, the rapier of his wit might have been more penetrating.

¹ Vide *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism* (Constable) and many prefaces.



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,¹ and some of 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

¹ 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.

sentimental Cockney appeal from the mother of two soldier sons, old Mrs. Boyce of the Social Democratic Federation. It was an artistic triumph, in its own Albert Chevalieresque vein, and "brought down the house" as completely as any performance of the old London comedian. We parted from the soldier lads on the best of terms.

In looking through the *Dreadnought* of that period, I find a witty little letter from Rose Rosenberg of Bethnal Green, who was afterwards made an O.B.E. for her services as Private Secretary to Ramsay MacDonald whilst Prime Minister. She suggested:

"Women should in future refuse to take over men's work, unless and until an undertaking is made by those who administer the law, that Members of Parliament who are of military age, be released, and enabled to join the colours with their pals, and women asked to fill *their* places. This proposition seems to me very pertinent and consistent."

Snowden was advocating in the Commons a tax on capital, rising from 1 per cent. on fortunes over £1,000 capital value, to 10 per cent. on those over £1,000,000. A tax so graded would bring in a revenue of £500,000,000. How much better this, he declared, than to starve the poor! He asked how it was possible that in war time handkerchiefs were on sale in Bond Street at £20 the half-dozen, and that a portrait had been sold for £35,000. McKenna had said that the rich had obligations, but Snowden replied that "the country would suffer far less by the rich being compelled to break their obligations than by the poor being compelled to break theirs." Alas, how readily men forget such utterances.¹ The Capital Levy suggested by Snowden was originally proposed by F. W. Pethick Lawrence. Later on the Labour Party sponsored it for a while, then dropped it completely.

The Trades Councils summoned a conference to discuss the extortionate cost of food. W. C. Anderson called Runciman's attention to freight charges which had risen from £60 to £600. Runciman kept a stiff lip. His family and associates were profiting exceedingly by such charges. His wife, addressing the Yorkshire Council of Women's Liberal Associations, complained that "men seemed to regard food as a fundamental right." In her opinion it was not. She urged that people must not only economise, but stint themselves in war time.

On December 2nd Asquith and McKenna addressed a conference of organised workers urging economy. Asquith was obliged to hurry away to the much advertised costly wedding festivities of his daughter, which, unfortunately for his economy text, were held that day. Before leaving, he admitted a rise of 30 per cent. in the cost of living and that

¹ Alas, when Snowden, as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1931, found himself faced with unusual difficulties he too protected the rich at the expense of the poor.

roughly one-third of the workers had received an average increase in wages of 3s. a week. A resolution to commend the speeches of Ministers to the "earnest and favourable consideration of Trade Unionists" was received with derisive laughter; but Fred Bramley's amendment, pledging Trade Union assistance in placing the financial situation on a legislative basis of "equal sacrifice for all," received only 40 votes amongst more than 1,000 delegates, because bellicose Colonel John Ward denounced it as a "pacifist" proposal, which would mean "the loss of 50,000 British lives."

Peace talk was growing. Ponsonby, Trevelyan and others were asking Parliamentary questions about the Government war aims. There were many rumours that peace terms had been received from Germany. Mrs. Payne wrote to the Press, offering two-thirds of her capital towards an indemnity to Belgium, to be provided by peace lovers, in the hope that on this basis the warring nations would open peace negotiations. She begged other women to join her in establishing this fund. Her offer and plea were ignored by all save the I.L.P. and the other small groups of pacifists; her offer of capital remained unseconded. She asked me to meet her at the Savoy Hotel. I found her a pretty young woman, fair-haired and rosy, spontaneous and unsophisticated, grieving that her husband was at the Front, and anxious to bring him home with the husbands of all other wives.

Shortly afterwards Henry Ford, the American motor manufacturer, offered his entire fortune to facilitate the calling of a conference of neutral Powers to mediate between the belligerents. He urged President Wilson to initiate this action. In the new year Ford chartered what was called his *Peace Ship* from U.S.A. to Stockholm, where an unofficial conference was held, calling on the neutral nations to mediate and the belligerents to state their terms of peace. Such efforts were as mere straws in the tempest. Not one whit did any belligerent government heed them. Wilson ignored them. Colonel House dismissed Ford's peace hopes as "crude," and respected him only as a manufacturer.

Keir Hardie's Merthyr seat had been won by the war party. "The old Adam in most of us unaffectedly rejoices," observed the *Glasgow Herald*, announcing the victory of Stanton, the Labour renegade who had sounded the depths of jingoism. The expression was apt. It was a victory of primitive passion. James Winston, the Labour Party candidate, was by no means a strong fighter; he could neither take up the challenge of the War Party and express a firmly reasoned opposition to the War, nor make a vigorous offensive from the workers' standpoint against the Government and the profiteers.

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

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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.

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,¹ 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

¹ 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."¹

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

¹ House of Commons, 23rd February, 1855.

before they are settled with by the Pay Office. . . . These men get nothing until I write to S. and S. help, or the minister of the parish to look into the matter. Were it not for the action I am able to take, many of these men would be left utterly destitute."

This helpful action by this particular official was done purely on his own initiative, and formed no part of his official duties. His experience, and that of Sir Frederick Milner, was my own. The question glared at me : was this the grossest inefficiency conceivable, or was it the deliberate policy of the Government to leave the broken men to sink or swim without aid, so that they might be forced into the labour market, and the power of their shattered frames to toil might be tested, under the stern urge of hunger, before their pensions were assessed ?

In every case the Medical Board insisted upon knowing the man's earnings when determining pension, and the man must answer truthfully under pain of being punished for a lie. Their earnings, if they could earn at all, were reckoned in reduction of pension, however feeble and broken might be their condition. This done, men with the wounds of battle and operation unhealed, with eyes newly extracted, limbs newly amputated, crippled by rheumatism and "trench foot," had their pensions determined, not on their present state of health and capacity, but on the condition the medical assessors believed would be theirs after a period of recovery. Even then the pension was still only conditional, and subject to reduction or stoppage should their condition improve.

"That disabled men shall not be discharged until arrangements for the payment of pension are complete ; that there shall be no interim between the cessation of Army pay and separation allowance, and the commencement of pension."

This was the resolution of our League of Rights often emphasised.

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"Ask the lady to come upstairs," I said. It was only one short flight, but Nurse Hebbes answered : "Oh no ; she is not fit to walk upstairs !"

I went down to the visitor. She sat panting for breath. I knew her well. A tidy woman, not yet forty years of age. Nature had given her a clear skin and bright hair ; there was a grey ghastliness over her now. I saw with concern the change hardship had wrought in her. She was eight months pregnant, suffering from heart strain and general debility. She spoke to me painfully, in a slow hoarse voice. Her case had been coming back and back to me since December 1914. When war broke out she had six children, the eldest a girl of seventeen afflicted by hip disease, who would never be able to earn her living, the youngest a two-months-old baby. Her husband was a chief scaffolder, a steady, hard-working man, earning a regular wage of 42s. 6d. a week, never ill, never idle. He had been a soldier years before and had fought through the Boer War. He enlisted when the Great War broke out. From sleeping in tents on marshy ground, without proper protection in wet, cold weather, he had been stricken with rheumatoid arthritis in the arms and legs. His hands were so drawn that he could scarcely open them. He was discharged on December 16th, 1914. His pay and his wife's separation allowance ceased. He had come back to his old life, a broken man, racked with pain, scarcely able to hobble with the aid of a stick. The wife got £2 from the local S.S.F.A., but was told that the Association could do no more. The family had only the earnings of the eldest boy, a child of fourteen, to depend on. Nurse Hebbes brought their unhappy plight to my knowledge, and with Keir Hardie's help, I secured a temporary grant of 17s. 6d. a week. We protested, without success, that this was too small a pittance for the maintenance of eight people. The home was in fact steadily dismantled, everything possible being pawned and sold to keep the rent paid and the children from crying for food.

On April 5th, 1915, "the Lords and other Commissioners" of Chelsea Hospital were "pleased to grant the soldier a pension of eighteenpence a day for twelve months conditional, with arrears from December 17th, 1914. The S.S.F.A. grant of 17s. 6d. a week ceased ; the family must henceforth exist on a mere 10s. 6d. weekly. But the unfortunate people were nevertheless, for the time being, overjoyed ; because the accumulated arrears enabled them to satisfy their chronic hunger, and to get some necessities out of pawn.

Their future would be grim. Determined to avert the blow, if I could, I claimed 25s. a week for the man and 2s. 6d. each for his five dependent children on the strength of the then recent recommendations of the Select Committee appointed in response to widespread complaint to deal with the pensions scandal.

Chelsea Hospital replied that the Select Committee's recommendations, though men were being recruited on the promise of them, were not yet in force. In May 1915 the man succeeded in doing three weeks' light work ; but from pain and illness was compelled to desist.

The Committee's recommendations were at last embodied in a Royal Warrant. Again I appealed for increased pension, and on our doctor's

to Belgium. She computed that 15,000 houses had been burnt out of a total of 2,000,000, which she compared with the destruction wrought in the South African War, when 30,000 Boer farms were burnt and many towns and villages entirely levelled to the ground. She reported the widely advertised destruction of Louvain a fiction, though the world-famous library had been burnt to the ground, and some damage done to the cathedral. Few people can endure such truths in war time. A tremendous outcry was raised against her. Butcher and others in Parliament called upon the Government to punish her.

Thereafter she made a point of seeing me when she came to London. She was in feeble health, and suffered from heart complaint. I have often found those who are least physically able in body most courageous in spirit. I remember going to her when she was staying in the Buckingham Palace Hotel. She was lying on the top of the bed to rest and urged me to lie and rest too. I assented to satisfy her, but felt very restless, anxious to be up and stride about; there was so much to do; I never wanted to be still unless I were absolutely prostrate with illness. I had lost a glove and dismissed the matter carelessly: "Oh, we in the East End seldom put them on!" I saw that I had cut across her prejudices—she was essentially precise and ladylike in the rather finicking manner of those days. She rejoined rather stiffly: "I should have thought they would have been worn for cleanliness." "Why not a mask on one's face?" it was on the tip of my tongue to ask her, flippantly; but I reflected that, after all, there was something in her remark. I remember Keir Hardie once snatching off my gloves, half impatient, half playful, and asking almost in anger: "Aren't your hands clean?" So differently people regard dress and its conventions. He was essentially a child of nature, she a little old maid moulded by the conventions in which her life had been cast. All the greater was the courage she needed to defy, as she did, the full force of conventional opinion at its most rigid point; all the greater was the cost to her.

Hostility now turned also upon Dr. Synge. She published that autumn, through the National Labour Press, a pamphlet, embodying her own report on the internment camps in Germany. She was assailed in the Press as a pro-German. On this account the Birmingham Health Committee refused to sanction her appointment as assistant medical officer to the Little Bromwich fever hospital. As an anti-climax to all the uproar, Bishop Bury went, with Government approval, to report on conditions at the Ruhleben internment camp, and confirmed the reports of Emily Hobhouse and Ella Scarlett Synge.

Very aptly the English wife of a German schoolmaster interned in the Isle of Man wrote to me:

"Everyone here believes that prisoners of war in Germany are deliberately ill-treated. No one believes that prisoners of war in England are anything but luxuriously treated. Yet I hear from my husband in Knockaloe that the poorest of the poor men in his compound have been driven

by hunger to killing a stray cat and eating it. In Germany, I take it, the papers extol the excellencies of their camps and the villainies of the English camps. My husband was struck on the head with a bayonet by a drunken soldier, and the commandant refused to hold an enquiry. . . . I do not see what can be done; no paper would publish an account of a camp from an insider's point of view!"¹

In October 1916 an appeal addressed to Asquith from the Head Captains of the men interned in Knockaloe Camp, Isle of Man, came to me, with a request for publication. Its phrases were poignant with despair:

"You have created untold misery for thousands and thousands of families, ruined many of us financially and morally. . . .

"Our records show how reasonable and extraordinarily patient we have been. . . . But everything has its limit. . . . A third winter cannot be tolerated unless you want to turn men into maniacs. We have appealed often . . . all in vain. We now demand: let us free to go . . . to our own countries, or any neutral country. . . . 40,000 men (in the whole of Great Britain) are on your conscience. Yours is the responsibility for all the misery caused to the unhappy wives, children, and relations, for all their sufferings and heart-burning. . . ."

I learnt soon after that one of the prisoners at the Alexandra Palace Aliens Internment Camp had been imprisoned in the guardroom for writing to members of the Government about the hardships there.

There came to me also a letter from Alan MacDougal, a supporter of Suffragettes in pre-War days, protesting against "the horror to which, not only the conscript, but the soldier, and above all the young soldier, of whatever category, is condemned by a few weeks of Army life. . . ."

I put the two protests together under the title: "The Trail of the War." A few days later I received a letter from a reader in Derby, telling me that his house had been raided and the *Dreadnought* seized, on account of these letters.

Boards of Guardians, under instruction of the Local Government Board, were everywhere cutting down the miserable allowances of the British wives of alien enemies, and insisting that they must get work, though, as everyone knew, popular prejudice and jingo intimidation made this well-nigh impossible. Many who were not themselves prejudiced against these unfortunates, were afraid to employ them. One poor British wife, who obtained work under her maiden name, was punished by imprisonment for this newly-fabricated offence.

Some time before Grace Jungk, an unfortunate English woman married to a German, had lost her employment on account of her German name.

¹ The American Ambassador in Germany was instructed by his Government not to visit the prisoners of war camps. Wilson perhaps desired to avoid being drawn into the controversy. Meanwhile the British were distributing within the enemy lines illustrated booklets showing German prisoners regaled upon capture with food and chocolate from British "Tommies," and living under happy conditions in British internment camps.

carving; flinging to the ground some litter of coloured paper, and declaring it a blossoming garden of lovely flowers; riveting shackles upon the people, and proclaiming that he was crowning them with liberty.

The Labour Party had decided to support Lloyd George's Government. Brace and Roberts again got subordinate posts; James Parker was made a Junior Lord of the Treasury. It was the end of his connection with the I.L.P., which had sponsored him. Stephen Walsh was appointed to serve under Neville Chamberlain in the Ministry of National Service, which the working Trade Unionist was apt to regard as a ministry of national slavery. Stout John Hodge, of the Steel-smelters' Union, was made Minister of Labour. A shrewd, efficient administrator of his Union, he was one of the team whose lack of idealism had crucified the spirit of Keir Hardie. Little was to be expected of him. George Barnes was at the Pensions Office. I went to him, as I had been to other Ministers, in the effort to get injustices redressed. He received me alone and cordially, repeatedly protesting anxiety to better the sad plight of the discharged men. There seemed about him an almost eager friendliness, and the wistfulness of one who has severed connection with old friends and old endeavours and finds himself a stranger in his new office, its pomps unreal, unsatisfying, its barriers overwhelming, himself a weak man, his possibilities of achievement very small.

He spoke of my mother, assuring me she was right in her war attitude; in justifying her, I thought, striving to justify himself. At moments he seemed to me a phantom, blotted out by the memory of his earlier self, as I saw him when first the "Labour Representation Committee" got its "Labour Group" into Parliament, and he was wont to speak affectionately of Keir Hardie as "our honoured chief." Often on the Terrace beside the Thames I had talked with those two so different men—friends as it seemed. Deep was the rift between them when Keir Hardie died, despised and rejected by the Party he had formed!

CHAPTER LVI

TRAINING THE CHILD

"ALL these little children have lost their fathers in the War!" Annie Ferne at the Mothers' Arms told me sadly, with a sweep of her hand which comprehended two-thirds of the babies on the flat roof.

I was worried about the toddlers. They grew chubby and rosy; they acquired cleanly habits; voluntary workers came to pet and play with them; toys poured into the Mothers' Arms without stint, but as soon as they came, they were broken and thrown away. Sybil Smith sent a big rocking-horse, as large as a Shetland pony, used for years by her children, but in perfect condition still. Within a month of its arrival, it was no more. Every hair of the tail and mane had gone; the eyes were gouged out, every joint in the wood severed; the remnants had been torn from their stand. To me it was amazing that young children under five years of age could have done it. To the busy staff at the nursery it was all a matter of course; one could not even get the horse repaired, for half the almost unrecognisable pieces of battered wood had been thrown in the fire or the dustbin before I knew. To me this meant more than the wrecking of a costly toy. It impressed on me that the toddlers had learnt only one sort of game: to pound and break, to tear and destroy. That must be altered. As I rushed through the day's papers, marking the news items, my eye caught a tiny paragraph: Muriel Matters had returned from studying under Maria Montessori in Barcelona. I telephoned here and there until I got in touch with her. She responded with zealous understanding. She had herself experienced the same need when she helped Larkin and Connolly in the Dublin lock-out of 1912. She had tried to procure a Montessori teacher then, and having discovered such teachers unobtainable, she had gone to Barcelona to fit herself to supply the lack. Of course, I would have it that she must come to the Mothers' Arms to initiate the Montessori Method.

Within a fortnight we had everything in readiness. Willie Lansbury had got the low shelves and little tables made for us at Lansbury's yard. A partition had been removed on the second floor at the Mothers' Arms to throw two rooms into one. The Montessori apparatus had been procured. Mrs. Savoy had made at cost price the small hair, nail, and sweeping brushes. Muriel Matters and her coadjutor, Hildegard Gunn, with admirable good taste, economy, and expedition, had run about procuring all else that was appropriate.