

wholly without income, got 5s. A husband and wife with two children, who had no income, got 10s. Two adults and three children were given 12s., and a man and wife with four children the same amount, though they, too, had no income. A woman with dependent children aged seven and ten had earned 1s., her only income, and got 3s. in tickets.

Whilst thus cruelly cutting down the doles, the Mayor again failed to summon the committee. I endeavoured to secure a Town's Meeting of protest; the requisite number of ratepayers' signatures were sent up, but the Mayor and Council refused their sanction. All this I exposed in the *Dreadnought*. The Committee, on which so many important personages had seats, acquiesced in being totally ignored.

## CHAPTER XI

## WAR CONTRACTS AND WAR LOANS—BIG PROFITS FROM SWEATED LABOUR

WAR work was already growing up, to provide a rich harvest for contractors, served by a piteous army of sweated women, ill-clad, ill-fed, starved of sleep and rest. A mushroom-like growth of new clothiers and equipment-makers began to appear, dwelling houses were converted into factories, factories extended their premises.

With unemployment still rife, the working of excessive overtime—often unpaid for—was exacted, on the plea of "national necessity." Time was "cribbed" from the workers' dinner-hour, seven days' labour imposed, wages often reduced. Close by us clothiers on Army contracts were working till 8 p.m. and on Sundays; at a well-known preserving factory women worked from 7.30 a.m. to 6 p.m. for 11s. a week, and on till 9.30 p.m. for 2½d. per hour. At another East End factory women, standing in water at their work, were paid 8s. a week. A Poplar firm was giving out soldiers' shirts at 2s. 1d. per dozen, minus 2½d. a reel for the cotton. The harsh, dark khaki material tried the women's eyes and made their fingers sore. They could not produce more than a dozen shirts a day, try as they might. Army vests were being made in Woolwich for 10½d. a dozen. The Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses complained that in Plymouth soldiers' breeches were being made throughout for 7½d., and khaki uniforms complete for 1s. 6d. The Stepney Public Health Committee declared that Army contracts were often four times sub-let, each sub-contractor making a profit at the expense of the sweated women doing the work, soldiers' trousers were being finished at 1½d. per pair. H. D. Roberts, Chairman of the Liverpool Anti-Sweating League, complained that on kit-bags and military uniforms women were paid 25 per cent. less than the low minimum of 3½d. per hour prescribed by the Clothing Trade Board.

I had constantly availed myself of Runciman's invitation, of September 8th, to appeal to the Board of Trade for redress in cases of sweating, but with little result. On October 23rd, I received a somewhat amazing letter:

MADAM,

I am directed by the Board of Trade to acknowledge your letter of October 14th, with enclosure addressed to the President, on the subject of rates of wages paid by a sub-contractor for machining Army shirts, and in reply to say that no minimum rates having been fixed for the branch