

who had brought many cases of gross sweating to the notice of Parliament, expressed the pious hope that women would not be sweated; "something like a decent minimum" should be given to them. The case for equal pay went by default.

The fact was as clearly apparent as need be: Big Business said "We are not going to pay men's wages to women; we are not going to have these women buying fur coats and pianos at our expense!" The Government was of the same mind. The women were left to the tea-and-bread and fried-chips-in-a-paper status which they had always occupied.

At the Women's War Service meetings representatives of the Board of Trade continued protesting that women would get equal pay with men for equal results. "The intention was not," oh no, assuredly not "to engage a cheap substitute for men's labour."¹

On July 4th, 1915, Herbert Broome, who was said to have secured fifty recruits for the Navy, was asked, when speaking at a recruiting meeting, whether soldiers returning from the War would be sure of getting their jobs back. He replied that if women had taken their work at lower wages, he feared not, and deplored the fact that railwaymen, earning 27s., had been replaced by girls at 12s. 6d. An officer in the crowd protested: "You are doing more harm than good." As he stepped from the platform Broome was arrested for "using words prejudicial to recruiting" and got twenty-one days in jail, without the option of a fine!

Whilst the ruthless school were thus gaining a firmer hold in the Government here, Italy was brought into the War. How French influences worked to that achievement, and the part played in the work by Mussolini, who, by aid of the pistol and bludgeon, was to become the Dictator of Italy, must be told in another volume. The Italian Socialist Party took no part in the War, and firmly adhered to its pre-War declarations of international solidarity.

¹ Captain Williams, Board of Trade representative at Manchester.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FIRST AIR RAID¹

I WAS writing at home one evening. On the silence arose an ominous grinding . . . growing in volume . . . throbbing, pulsating . . . filling the air with its sound. . . .

Then huge reports smote the ear, shattering, deafening, and the roar of falling masonry. . . . An air raid!

Mrs. Payne was on my threshold, her face ineffably tender. "Miss Pankhurst, come down to us!" Half smiling, she reached out her arms to me: "Let us keep together!"

I went to her from my little table in the corner. She clung to me trembling. The angry grinding still pulsated above us. Again that terrific burst of noise; those awful bangs, the roar of the falling buildings, the rattle of shrapnel on the roof close above our heads.

"No use to worry; only a few houses will be struck among the thousands," I rallied her gently, feeling detached from it all—and far away. The thought of the bombs crashing down on the densely populated city was appalling—yet for our household I had no least shade of apprehension—and for myself Life had no great claim. I was only a member of the salvage corps, saving and succouring as I might amid this wreckage, happy if I might aid in laying some stones to build the city of the future.

"Come down," she pleaded, in the next quiet interval. Up or down was the same in a two-storied dwelling, aged and gimcrack; but to please her I went where she would, supporting her, for she almost failed at the stairs. Jim Payne was waiting for us below. . . . Again the huge reports, louder, yet louder; the roar more monstrous. . . .

"Jim, go and find Miss Smyth," Mrs. Payne murmured, her voice breaking. Obediently he fetched Smyth. She had been out on the flat roof, trying to see the aeroplanes, and was eager to return. "Nonsense!" I ordered, "do not be foolhardy!" "This roof cannot save us if the house is struck," she protested. "I know, but you need not get shrapnel in your eyes," I answered her sharply. "Can you not hear it on the roof?"

¹ British air raids on German towns began in September 1914. The first attempted German air raids on Britain were in December 1914. The first air raid on London was on May 31st, 1915. On October 1st, 1914, the Home Secretary had prohibited illuminated signs and directed the partial obscuring of street and shop lights. In December the lights were further dimmed, street lamps more heavily smeared with black paint, buses and trams lit only enough to collect fares. Street markets closed at dusk. Black curtains became the rule.