

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 Steelsmelters' 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.