

thrown in perhaps, is really the very height and depth of mistaken philanthropy, or desire for notoriety. What mothers want is their husbands and sons intact. . . . How I hate this taking from us of our able-bodied, to whom we have a right to look for sympathy and love! And what is offered to those who are bereaved and cannot be comforted? A few coins, certificates, buttons, badges, rubbish of all sorts! What is there for those who return crippled, insane, nervous wrecks? A beautiful hospital in which to live out their days, chocolates, cigarettes, parts of the alphabet sewn on their coats, visits from duchesses. . . . All sense of values seems lost. . . . I am every day freshly disappointed in my sex—they are too meek and swallow everything imposed upon them as their duty. The men, I believe, would be thankful if we had the courage to make known in high places our scorn, detestation, and silent heartbreak over their barbarism."

That woman had a glimpse of the horror and waste of the War. She was right; the women were too meek. Only one in all those years importuned me with determination to get her husband out of the Army. The only son of Austrian parents, whom he supported by watchmaking, he was himself a British subject by reason of his birth here. His father, a feeble old man, had been cruelly and needlessly interned. The very day his father was incarcerated, the young man was taken for the Army. Previously exempted as medically unfit, he was the victim of the latest "comb out." From France he wrote to his wife repeatedly that his reason would be overthrown were he compelled to remain in the trenches. She was pregnant with their first child. Torn by a grief overwhelming at this separation from her husband, she was plunged with her old mother-in-law into unaccustomed poverty by the removal of their breadwinner, on whose behalf came only the wife's allowance of 12s. 6d. a week! Their home had been given up. They were living in one room in a slum. Even so they went short of food. These were the elements of the case. I had small hope of achievement when I commenced, but by sheer persistence I managed to get him released. She came frequently to spur me, white and tragic, beautiful and passionate. I was stirred to the depths by her torrents of grief. I gave her tea each time she came and was pained by her ravenous hunger.

The Welsh miners had adopted a resolution threatening to strike on November 27th if the Government had not taken control of the food supplies by that date, as well as to secure the increased wage to which they were entitled by the rules of the coalfield, in accordance with the rise in the selling price of coal. The strike was averted by a Government promise to appoint a Food Controller; by a temporary increment of 15 per cent. in wages whilst an audit of coal prices was being made; and a D.O.R.A. order that the South Wales mines "should pass into the possession of the Board of Trade." The ownership was merely nominal, but the miners were jubilant at this sign of their power.

I was often among them and saw them flushed with triumph. The South Wales Socialist Society, which led the Left Wing in the mines, met in the Aberystwith Café, a modest little tea-shop at Tonypandy, in the Rhondda. The advent of the social revolution was confidently discussed there. By demanding higher wages and lower hours, getting all mine workers into the Miners' Federation, and gaining control of the Federation by the Left Wing, it was thought that, in some crisis, Socialism would be secured. Dai Davis, the secretary, assured me that because of the Navy's dependence on South Wales coal the miners held the fate of the British Empire in their hand. When the right time came, they would lead the rest of the proletariat into the promised land, where all should be "better than well." He brushed aside my warning that the Navy would soon be run by oil. "Impossible!" he declared. "Impossible! It cannot be done!"

I stayed in his house, a poor place. His wife, tired and careworn, was sewing for their living, for his wage-earning was interrupted by his outside activities. His colleagues were mainly better read and more thoughtful than he. Charlie Gibbons, whose eyesight was compelling him to leave the mines, aspired to a lectureship at the Central Labour College. W. M. Hay, jolly and portly, in the War aftermath of unemployment and disillusion, became a lecturer in the brewers' interests against temperance legislation, a dismal denial of his old faith and work. Will Mainwaring, the learned Marxian and real leader of the group, with his caustic tongue, was feared and respected by all the rest. His thesis was ever that the long era of Capitalism was preparing for the sure and inevitable advent of Socialism. Most excitable, most active and talkative, least theoretical and visionary, was A. J. Cook. They all made game of him. Yet he had the ear of the crowd, for he had been to prison for the cause. He cried his convictions to the four winds, whilst others expressed their most revolutionary sentiments at the Aberystwith. He was a lean, gawky fellow, poorly and carelessly dressed, his red hair dishevelled, always hoarse and shaken with a cough from too much oration, limping from an injury to his leg, rushing from meeting to meeting, with scant time or patience to talk in cafés.

The committees appointed to regulate food prices in the early months of war had been forgotten. Coal had risen in price since the Coal Act, which was passed ostensibly to keep the price stationary.

In November 1916 the *Statist* estimated that since the War the price of vegetables had risen 129 per cent.; sugar, tea, and coffee 74 per cent.; textiles 70 per cent.; sundries 67 per cent.; minerals 63 per cent.; animal food 58 per cent. "Standard Bread," much lauded by the *Daily Mail*, produced by milling a higher proportion of the wheat, was now compulsory; but the cost was not thereby lowered. The quartern loaf reached 10½d. on November 6th and the waste available for animal food rose steeply in price. Potatoes had more than trebled in price. The supply was restricted and a potato crop failure in Ireland occasioned acute distress, but the