

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



*about to be Conscripted! This is how your King and country are treating the lads who voluntarily enlisted!"*

The day Mrs. Best went to prison a letter from Sir Frederick Milner (who was working to ameliorate the lot of disabled soldiers, and to provide hostels, clubs, and aural instruction for the deaf) appeared in *The Times*. He complained that the "cruel treatment of many discharged soldiers" was "enough to break one's heart." In September he had prepared a statement giving proof of "the callous and capricious way in which the men had been treated." The principal London papers had agreed to publish simultaneously, but the Censor had suppressed it. "Now that voluntary recruiting is over," he said, "I hope to be able to state the case for these gallant men." Sir Frederick Milner was too influential to be prosecuted.

Our East London Federation organised a procession from Tower Hill to Holloway to protest against the sentence on Nellie Best. We invited the Women's International League to co-operate. I was present on the League executive when our invitation was read.

To my surprise the chairman, Mrs. Swanwick, opposed acceptance. "I do not think the sentence is severe—when her country is at war—I should have thought it might have been death," she objected. Thus heavily did the hypnotism of war overhang even pacifist circles.

"It is merely a reprint of an appeal for funds in an American magazine with her own comment at the head," I urged, handing the leaflet.

"I see on it the names of several American millionaires!" Mrs. Swanwick answered acidly, as though the document were suspect on that account.

It was decided that the League could not officially support our protest; its members could follow the banners unofficially, if they chose.

All the well-known Conscientious Objectors were refused exemption<sup>1</sup>: Clifford Allen, chairman of the No Conscription Fellowship, Scott Duckers and C. H. Norman who had started a "Stop the War" Committee soon after hostilities began, Fenner Brockway, editor of the *Labour Leader*, and many more. Peculiarly unjust was the rejection of the claim to a conscientious objection of Reginald Roper, M.A., M.Ed., the brother of Esther Roper, secretary of the Suffrage Society in Manchester. Roper was an anti-militarist of long standing. As a headmaster he had substituted

<sup>1</sup> Since the vast majority of the Tribunals refused complete exemption, and the wording of the Conscience Clause was ambiguous, its meaning was tested by Appeal to the Court, on April 18th, 1916. The case was tried by Justices Darling, Lawrence, and Avory. Darling and Lawrence declared that exemption could be granted to C.O.'s from Combatant Service only; but Avory refused to agree. The Government thereupon passed an Amending Act directing that exemption on conscientious, as on other grounds, might be absolute, conditional, or temporary. The Tribunals still refused to grant absolute exemption to C.O.s.

scientific physical training for military drill, and for years had been working to introduce this change into all schools.

Daily came news of the cruelties heaped upon the Objectors. Their judges on the Tribunals greeted them with insult and abuse. A scientist employed by the Manchester Corporation was accused of "exploiting God" to save his own skin, and of being "a deliberate and rank blasphemer," a "coward," a "cad," and "nothing but an unwholesome mass of stinking fat." Another was told: "You are only fit to be on the point of a German bayonet." "A great many people have an objection to joining the 'no-courage corps.'" "I have had enough of these Conscientious Objectors; serve them all alike!" "If you insist on making a statement I shall send for the police."<sup>1</sup>

The Pelham Committee was appointed to advise Tribunals to what service of national importance a Conscientious Objector might be relegated; but the advice was ignored. Tribunals continued either to refuse all exemption, or to offer the N.C.C., in which the Objectors declined to serve. When a Conscientious Objector who was a teacher urged that educational work was of national importance, the chairman of the Tribunal replied: "Only for attested men." To be a Conscientious Objector was to be thrust into the Army though physically unfit in a most excessive degree, and even if doing work of essential importance for which soldiers were being brought back from the Army.

Philip Snowden protested:

"Never since the days of Judge Jeffreys and the Bloody Assize has such a travesty of justice been seen. . . . The Appeal Courts have acted even more illegally than the Local Tribunals."<sup>2</sup>

Whilst yet we waited anxiously for news of the Objectors whose appeals had been denied, J. H. Tennant in the House of Commons declared, on behalf of the Government, that protection from the death penalty for refusal to obey military orders, could only apply to men whom the Tribunals admitted to be conscientious. The majority of the Conscientious Objectors, since the Tribunals had dismissed their appeals, would receive no further protection from the conscience clause and would be subject to the Army Act.<sup>3</sup> Tennant appeared to imply that even if a man's conscientious objection were accepted by the Tribunal, refusal to enter the N.C.C. might be punished with death. I have no doubt that these threats would have been carried out, and many C.O.'s would have been executed, save for the shield of a considerable public opinion in their defence. Undoubtedly many Objectors, especially the earlier groups to brave the ordeal, looked death very squarely in the face.

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons Official Report, March 22nd, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> Speech at the N.C.F. Conference, Devonshire House, Bishopsgate, April 8th, 1916.

<sup>3</sup> The Army Act Section 9 (1) provides:

"Every person subject to military law who disobeys in such manner as to show a wilful defiance of authority any lawful demand given personally by his superior officer, shall on conviction by court martial be liable to suffer death or such punishment as in this Act mentioned."



## CHAPTER XLI

CONSCRIPTION OF MARRIED MEN—N.C.F. PROSECUTED—BODKIN—  
PEACE PILGRIMS

PEACE talk was growing. The Pope had appealed to the warring nations to end the War. The speeches of Karl Liebknecht, widely published by our jingo Press for their denunciations of the German Government, encouraged in our Pacifists the hopeful belief that the peace movement was strong in Germany. A Peace Negotiations Committee was formed, on the initiative of Herbert Dunnico of the Peace Society. The I.L.P., the Society of Friends, the Union of Democratic Control, our Workers Suffrage Federation, the Women's International League, and other societies were represented. A Peace Memorial was circulated:

"We, the undersigned, urge H.M. Government to seek the earliest opportunity of promoting negotiations with the object of securing a just and lasting peace."

763,000 signatures were obtained to this memorial, not without some attempts at intimidation. My old friend Mrs. Brimley and Ethel Tolle-mache, both ex-members of the W.S.P.U. who had joined our Federation because of their opposition to the War, pluckily started out in Leyton-stone on a house-to-house canvass for signatures. They were soon placed under arrest and taken to the police station, where after six hours' detention, they were released, with a warning that the powers of the D.O.R.A. would be used against them should they continue.

Secret Sessions of both Lords and Commons were held, that the Government might advance more pointed arguments for extending Conscription than it was considered politic to publish abroad. On May 2nd Asquith announced that compulsion would be extended to the married men, to rope in 200,000 more of them than could be obtained by voluntary means.

The committeemen of the No Conscription Fellowship, most of whom have since been elected to Parliament, were arrested, and tried at the Mansion House for a leaflet urging the repeal of Conscription. Bodkin, the unconscious comedian, who had become notorious for his absurdities in suffragette trials, declared in prosecuting them that "war would be impossible if the view that war is wrong, and that it is wrong to support the carrying on of war, were generally held." Edward Fuller, a young journalist, who often spoke at our meetings, printed Bodkin's *bon mot* in poster form, as an argument against war. He gave an order for its display

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to a Stratford billposter, who prudently dispatched a copy to the War Office to ascertain if its publication would be permitted. Fuller was thereupon charged with doing "an act preparatory to the commission of an act" prohibited by the D.O.R.A. He was fined £100 and £25 costs, or 91 days' imprisonment, but owing to Parliamentary protests on his behalf, he was released before the sentence was fully served.

Fines totalling £800 were ordered against eight members of the N.C.F. committee. It was agreed that five of them should refuse to pay the fine and suffer imprisonment. They were Fenner Brockway, W. J. Chamberlain, Walter Ayles, a Bristol Town Councillor and afterwards Labour M.P., A. Barratt Brown, afterwards Vice-Principal of Ruskin College, Oxford, and John P. Fletcher.

Conscription was being used as a means of industrial compulsion, to an extent which would have raised an outcry in peace time. When the Dundee jute workers struck work, men who had been exempted from military service, as essential to the industry, were called to the Army at the instance of their employers, as soon as they went on strike.

When the Military Service Act was extended to married men the Lords inserted, and the Government accepted, an amendment permitting the military authorities to claim exempted men a fortnight after ceasing to be employed as munitioners, though six weeks must elapse before they could obtain new employment unless the late employer would grant a leaving certificate. Philip Snowden complained to Parliament, on May 18th, that 300 men of the Labour Company Reserve Battalion Border Regiment were replacing navvies at Morecambe and getting only Army pay for their work. There were many such cases.

From the introduction of compulsory military service, there was a growing demand for the conscription of wealth. George Wardle, a Labour Member of Parliament, declared that the income tax ought to have been raised to at least 7s. 6d. or 10s. in the £; he would cheerfully have paid it, he said, to secure the equality of sacrifice of which so much had been said.

The Press declared that Germany was offering peace terms. In due course the British Press reproduced, from the *Chicago Daily News*, a reply from Sir Edward Grey: "The Allies can tolerate no peace which leaves the wrongs of this war unredressed." So public opinion fed on rumour and rhetoric.

Clara Cole and Rosa Hobhouse set out on a peace pilgrimage, walking through the country to distribute literature against war, including the Pope's appeal for peace. After five days they were arrested at Kettering and sent to prison for five months. Great rage was manifested by her accusers when there was found in Clara's pocket an "Anathema." She had written: "Is there no strength in your cold madhouse to cry halt, cowards, cowards, and again grey-bearded cowards!" Even Rosa was struck with consternation at the production of this denunciation!

Rosa Hobhouse was a Quaker with the mystic's temperament. She



## THE HOME FRONT

	Firm A. employing men.		Firm B. employing women.	
	Piece-work. Price.	No. done in 10 hrs.	Piece-work. Price.	No. done in 10 hrs.
Rough part (open end) .	2d.	150	$\frac{3}{4}$ d.	150
Boring . . . . .	11 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.	36	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	34
Cutting to weight .	4d.	90	1d.	72
Grooving and waving .	3d.	100	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	80
Recessing base . . .	4d.	65	2 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.	40
Turning band . . .	4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	65	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	50
Finishing turning .	6d.	90	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	50

Thus whilst the piece-rate pay of the women, on most operations, varied from a half to a quarter that of the men, their output was not much less. For the masses of women who could not claim to be doing precisely the work hitherto done by men, no standard was yet fixed. At last, on July 6th, when leaving the Munitions Office to succeed Kitchener at the War Office, Lloyd George issued an Order fixing the wages of such women. If over 18 years and employed by time, they were to get 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per hour. Girls of 17 were to get 4d. per hour; girls of 16, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., and girls under 16, 3d. Piece rates were to yield 4d. per hour over 18 years; 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. at 17 years; 3d. at 16, and 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. under 16 years. It was, of course, highly unusual to fix piece rates below time rates; they were ordinarily fixed to yield at least time and a quarter. *Broken utterly was the vaunted promise of equal pay for piece rates!*

These rates were not minima but fixed wages. Dr. Addison plainly stated in the House of Commons<sup>1</sup> that the women would not be permitted to apply to the arbitrators appointed under the Munitions Acts to secure increased wages.

Only  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per hour was to be added to the wage of women employed in the so-called "danger zones," where accidents were a common feature of their employment.

In respect of girls under 18 years, employed on work customarily done by men over 18 years, a further Lloyd George Order was issued. These youngsters were to get 18s. a week at 17 years; 16s. at 16; and 14s. a week under 16 years. The piece rates were to be 10 per cent. less than those of men, for girls of 17 years; 20 per cent. less for girls of 16 years; and 30 per cent. less for girls under 16. These proposals to handicap the girls in setting them to compete with experienced men, would have been Gilbertian in their absurdity had they not been so tragically rapacious in the employers' interest. In numbers of sad cases the girl was at her father's bench, doing his old work at a lower rate, whilst he had returned from the War a broken man, pensionless, or getting perhaps the broken man's pittance of 4s. 8d. a week!

On July 27th the Women's Industrial Council called a conference

<sup>1</sup> August 1st, 1916.



Workers' Dreadnought

THE AUTHOR WITH A DEPUTATION OF OLD AGE PENSIONERS



A typewritten slip came to me, worded mysteriously—an invitation to Mrs. Pethick Lawrence's flat in Clements Inn, to meet "a special visitor."

I found there some members of the Women's International League executive, and facing them a frail, elderly woman—Emily Hobhouse, known for her Pacifist zeal during the South African War and her work of alleviation amongst the women and children herded into Concentration Camps when the Boer farms were systematically burned to destroy all cover for their men. I had seen her but once—a decade since. To-day she seemed aged and saddened, and was obviously labouring under a painful agitation. Catherine Marshall explained that Mrs. Lawrence had provided this opportunity for us to meet Miss Hobhouse and hear her story, as it would be impolitic for the executive to invite her to its offices. Marshall's tone was deprecatory in the extreme.

In a silence which breathed hostility and dismay, Emily Hobhouse briefly reported on the work attempted by the headquarter's committee of the Women's International League at The Hague which had called our British section into being, and on which she had worked from its inception. She told us then, that she had come from Germany and Belgium, having obtained from Bethmann Hollweg permission to visit the internment camps in Germany, and to investigate conditions in Belgium. She gave us a plain and, I felt, meticulously accurate story of what she had seen, unlike the lurid versions then current here, but agreeing with what Dr. Scarlett Syngé had written for me of the internment camps several months before. On her way here she had gone to the British authorities in Paris, telling them where she had been and what she had seen. On reaching England she was treated with the utmost ignominy, stripped and searched, as though she had been a spy. This had obviously wounded her to the quick. She had written Sir Edward Grey, whom she knew, her desire to lay before him the information she had obtained, but he had refused to see her.

It seemed as she spoke that we were in a Court for the trial of crimes, and she the prisoner in the dock. When she ceased no one questioned her; no one commented on her experience; Catherine Marshall, as secretary, indicated to her that our committee did not accept her as representing the British section of the Women's International League on the international executive at The Hague. She assumed that she expressed our united view, though the question had never been debated on the executive.

A voice at my elbow broke clumsily across the emotional tension, with the observation that Miss Hobhouse might join the British section as an ordinary member, like anyone else, if she chose. She answered that she did not ask credentials to pursue her work at The Hague from the British section of the League. "I do not wish to be a member of the body!" she concluded in trembling indignation.

Shocked by so churlish a reception of this woman with her long record of fearless integrity in the cause of peace, and by her evident distress, I blurted, a grip at my heart making speech difficult: "I have heard what Miss Hobhouse has said with extreme pain! I hope she will join us."

"No! No!" she murmured, and hurried impetuously from the room.

Mrs. Lawrence contributed the only touch of human warmth, with genial words, following her guest to the outer door.

I voiced some brief expressions of respect for the work of Emily Hobhouse, and my opinion that we ought to feel honoured to work with her. My words fell responseless as from a wall of ice.

"When the Government really trusts you, they don't treat you like that!" the foolish phrase jarred on me. I learnt from the others where Hobhouse was staying; hastened there, and telephoned at the entrance to know if she would see me. She refused to come to the instrument, sending a message that she could see no one.

"She classes me with the Philistines, regards me as an emissary of the committee, trying to gloss the matter over!" I thought, my heart on fire.

I hurried home and wrote to her on my way in the 'bus, telling her what I thought of it: "I felt we were like Peter denying Christ!"

"Take this letter to her," I urged Smyth. "Tell her! Explain to her! She thinks I am in the crowd against her. She would not see me. Unless she is really ill she will see you!"

As usual, amiably acquiescent in such turbulent distresses, Smyth smilingly accepted my mission, and sending up my letter as her passport, was warmly received.

Later I saw Emily Hobhouse at the home of Mrs. Hubbard Ellis. She told me that the secretary and chairman of our W.I.L. committee had seen her, and told her categorically that she must not come to their office, and that they repudiated her as representing our section at The Hague. I protested on the executive that our officers had not been authorised to take such action, and that I, at least, was wounded by association with it. As usually happens in such cases, the matter was glossed over. I was out-maneuvred, as often happened, in dealing with the officials; for I had no heart for a wire-pulling contest with co-workers.

Again I heard that phrase: "When the Government really trusts you, they don't treat you like that." These women had had their political training under Millicent Garrett Fawcett. They believed, probably, that she, and not Emily Hobhouse, had given the true version of the South African concentration camps,<sup>1</sup> the hideous death-roll of women and children in the camps notwithstanding. Emily Hobhouse had been anathematised in the Boer War. They shrank from drawing upon themselves the new odium now heaped upon her. As constitutional Suffragists they had prided themselves as being "law-abiding"; they had not learnt yet that obedience to authority is of smaller value than obedience to conscience. Catherine Marshall had the opportunity to learn that when she joined the No Conscription Fellowship committee. When the men were taken to prison she became its honorary secretary. She did not go to prison, but many of her colleagues did.

Emily Hobhouse wrote for the *Dreadnought* an account of her visit

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Fawcett was one of a number of ladies sent by the British Government of the time to produce a white-washing report on the concentration camps into which the women and children were herded when the Boer farms were systematically burned to the ground.



Our East End speakers were received with a running fire of disparaging gibes and interruptions.

Mrs. Pascoe, for all her poverty, a matron of sternest virtue, of iron self-respect, was shouted down by the crowd of well-dressed women. Indignantly she faced them, her little black bonnet gone awry in her distress, her worn hands tightly clasped. "I cannot go on," she protested, "till the *ladies* will let me speak!"

The W.S.P.U. members led the fray against us, declaring that any talk of a wider franchise would be disastrous to the votes for women cause. I was sore-hearted for our East End mothers and young factory girls, assailed thus rudely. I was bruised in spirit by this littleness and myopia of view. I had not expected this hostility, above all not this bitterness. In the *Dreadnought* that week I had published reports of their work, contributed by themselves from most of the suffrage societies; all had been thus invited and I had given the addresses of those which had not sent reports. Our members took the strife at once more philosophically and more furiously than I. Our "Poplar girls," the Lagsdings and the Watts's, who worked at Morton's biscuit factory in Millwall, surveyed the interrupters with curling lips and scornful eyes, jeering: "It is a pity we are not well educated like them!"

When the resolution was put only Emmeline Pethick Lawrence and the Women's International League voted with us. Our proposal was hopelessly defeated. Yet the time-spirit was with our demand, the old proposals to enfranchise a million or so of widows and spinsters would never carry. We had stirred the other societies to feel some need for combined action. It was decided to elect a committee, call another conference, send a deputation to the Government. I resigned the secretaryship, and got our Federation to appoint another delegate, feeling it wise to let the representatives of the other societies go their way without me for a while. Our organisation had a work to do in the country no other would undertake: Manhood Suffrage must and would come; opinion must be prepared to accept Womanhood Suffrage. We must get as broad a measure as we could.

We had a woman workers' petition going the round of the munition factories, declaring that if a woman could cast a shell she could cast a vote. Katie Manicom, organising for the Workers' Union in the Southern Counties, whom we had trained as an organiser in our Federation, Alice MacLennan<sup>1</sup> in the Manchester district, Mrs. Leigh Rothwell, organising for the National Union of Women Workers, the Labour Councillors, Taylor and Dollan in Glasgow, and numbers of others up and down the country, as well as our own W.S.F. branches in Scotland, the North of

<sup>1</sup> Alice MacLennan was the first woman in the Manchester area to be a party to an agreement in the engineering trade between employers and employed. Her great activities were suddenly cut short by a terrible accident. A fire broke out in the Lime Street Hotel, where she was staying. In attempting to escape, she fell through a glass roof, and was terribly hurt. With one leg gone, and other serious disabilities, she bravely returned to her work when she emerged from the hospital.

England, the Midlands, and the South, were getting these forms into the factories. We had a resolution calling on the Government to enfranchise every adult woman and man steadily circulating amongst the Trade Unions. It was passed by hundreds of branches each week, and sent to the Government.

In the spring of 1916 rumours that the Government would shortly deal with the franchise became more insistent. Mrs. Fawcett emerged from her war silence, with a letter to Asquith, suggesting that women might be included in any forthcoming Franchise Bill. Asquith replied that "if and when" it might be necessary to undertake franchise legislation, the considerations in support of women's enfranchisement would be "fully and impartially weighed without any prejudgment from the controversies of the past." Those words were vague; but they might indicate an advance. One could not be sure of it, yet I had regarded our old opponent, Asquith, as preparing to capitulate since our East End deputation had interviewed him in the weeks before the War.

*The Times* predicted the introduction of a measure to enfranchise the soldiers and sailors after Whitsuntide. I got W. C. Anderson to ask whether women would be included. Bonar Law, on the Government's behalf, refused to answer. I wrote to all the suffrage societies and many prominent suffragists appealing to them to concentrate their energy and attention on the situation. In the Federation we redoubled our activities, in meetings and demonstrations, in inducing the Labour organisations to demand, not a mere Registration Bill, but a Franchise Bill to include the whole people. The United Suffragists and others joined in the pressure for women, if not specifically for all women.

I felt that the moment had come for new action. One morning I woke with the thought: "Call another conference, and invite industrial and co-operative organisations, as well as the suffrage societies to counterbalance the stubborn Old Guard." It was clear to my mind that another effort must be made to create a representative Adult Suffrage Council, and that it could be done with success if the basis of representation were enlarged. I broached the matter to Smyth. To my surprise she opposed me: "Why should we always have the labour and expense of every new move which is made? See how we are burdened: Peace, anti-Conscription, Tribunals, Wages, Suffrage—distress work, political work—always something new—we have scarcely finished with one conference, demonstration, exhibition before another is on our hands; often we are preparing for several big functions at once! Get one of the other societies to call it! We can't afford it!"

I could have overcome her objections; but my heart smote me in regard to finance. She was often coming to the rescue, paying this debt or that for the Federation, making a loan to round the week's expense, and then writing it off, as something which never could be repaid. We were raising at headquarters about £7,000 a year apart from donations in kind, which were substantial, and the incomes of the branches; but the sum was too small for our numerous activities. I reflected that there might be wisdom in getting another society to move. I was on the executive of the Women's



International League; I would propose the conference there. I did so. The idea was accepted. The conference met in June. Several societies, which had opposed Adult Suffrage in January, now supported it. An executive was formed. The initiators of the Women's International League, trained in the compromise school of Mrs. Fawcett's society, assumed the official positions on this committee also; it was natural, as they had been conveners; that is the way of politics. I knew them to be but timid converts, and presently, seeing their disposition to compromise, I endeavoured to strengthen the position by calling a conference of industrial organisations in August, which formed an Adult Suffrage Joint Committee with Fred Bramley as chairman and Dr. Salter (afterwards Labour M.P. for Bermondsey) as treasurer. Smyth raised no objection this time. She was as apprehensive as I, that the new Adult Suffrage Council I had taken the initiative in creating, would abandon the adult suffrage pass. "If only I had not stopped you calling the conference!" she repined. I told her it was probably best as it was.

We pressed on with our work, a conference of Labour organisations in Leicester, public demonstrations in Newcastle, Leeds, Bradford, Birmingham, Sheffield, Portsmouth; we had branches in these, and other towns now. Mrs. Boyce was pioneering for us in Glasgow, and had all the Labour organisations there supporting an adult suffrage demonstration on Glasgow Green. Lansbury and I went up to speak at it. There was a tremendous crowd.

On July 13th, 1916, Asquith announced a Select Committee to consider franchise and registration. Carson protested against such delay in granting the vote to soldiers and sailors, declaring it a "perfect scandal." Six days later the Government motion for a Select Committee was introduced. Its reception was so hostile that it was withdrawn. Herbert Samuel, who moved it on the Government's behalf, deprecated raising the franchise issue in this, or any form, because women's suffrage and other difficult matters would be involved. Carson responded with a gibe:

"What is a munition worker, what is a woman, who is a woman, and should a woman have a vote, and all the rest of it."

Women's chance of enfranchisement seemed precarious indeed! To make matters worse, Mrs. Fawcett, on behalf of her National Union of Suffrage Societies, issued a manifesto:

"If the proposed new register is limited to reinstating on the roll of voters those men now serving their country in the Navy or Army, or who have lost their qualifications through not fulfilling the conditions of residence which the present electoral law enforces, we should not raise, or attempt to raise, the consideration of our claims."

In our view this was folly of the most egregious sort. We protested:

"If there is time to make changes in franchise or registration, there is time to give votes to all."

The foremost Liberal organ, the *Manchester Guardian*, was advocating Manhood Suffrage, and assuming the postponement of women's suffrage until after the War. I wrote to object; the Editor answered:

"It is a question between urging the Government to do something

they may conceivably be persuaded to do, and something it is impossible to believe this Government, at this juncture, would think of doing."

Margaret Ashton, a veteran suffragist and pillar of Liberalism in Manchester, declared the *Guardian's* attitude "astounding." Its attitude was but too common, however, in Party political circles.

On August 16th Asquith announced that a General Election would again be avoided by a Bill to prolong the Parliament; and that a Registration Bill would be introduced, to prevent the disfranchisement of those who had been voters before the War through change of residence for munition work or service in the Army or Navy. The military authorities objected to men voting at the Front, so voting in the trenches would not be allowed. As to women, Asquith declared they had an unanswerable claim to be included in the extension of the franchise. He could not think that the House would deny this. For himself he added: "I say frankly I cannot deny their claim."

It was a striking *volte face*, though I had expected it. More amazing was the reply of Commander Bellairs, an anti-suffragist of old standing, who averred that Mrs. Pankhurst and her W.S.P.U. had called him out of the House to repudiate Asquith's statement about the women's claim, and to insist that votes for soldiers and sailors must take precedence of votes for women.

"They express the utmost anxiety that the soldiers and sailors shall be given the vote . . . they authorise me to say that they will not allow themselves to be used to prevent the soldiers and sailors from being given the vote."<sup>1</sup>

I read these words in the Official Parliamentary Report with consternation that so complete an abandonment of convictions which had appeared so passionate had been possible. Many people refused to believe the statement authorised; but, in due course, it was reproduced in the *Britannia*, with solemn confirmation.

The answer to those who were deserting the votes-for-women cause for that of enfranchising the men in the trenches, was: *Votes for All*. We raised that challenge a week later at the Euston Theatre, under the auspices of our Adult Suffrage Joint Committee, with a crowd of speakers, representing working-class interests. Shortly afterwards the spectacle was witnessed of Mrs. Pankhurst, supported by life-long anti-suffragists like Leo Maxse, holding a Queen's Hall meeting to demand votes for the fighting men. She protested that Asquith had "used the men to dish the women," and now was trying to "use the women to dish the men." She declared "in the name of women" that they were ready to make any sacrifice in order that the sacrifices already made should not be in vain.<sup>2</sup>

On August 21st Lord Crewe, moving the Bill to postpone all elections for eight months longer, observed that if the franchise were to be extended on the score of war service, women's claims must be considered. Lord Cromer, as usual, raised the anti-suffrage standard, and demanded a definite pledge that the Government would not put votes for women into

<sup>1</sup> Official Parliamentary Report.

<sup>2</sup> *Britannia*, October 6th, 1916.