



NETTING MINES FOR THE NAVY

A "Women's Peace Crusade" was started in Glasgow during the summer of 1916 and evoked great enthusiasm and zeal. Helen Crawford, a Suffragette, and Agnes Dollan were its most prominent leaders. P. J. Dollan, the husband of the latter, was an I.L.P. City Councillor. For some time past he had sent me weekly "Scottish Notes" for the *Dreadnought*. A tall, lively, enthusiastic Scot, with a great mop of long curls, such as Socialist Scotsmen frequently carried, he was presently clapped into prison as a Conscientious Objector. All the other members of the Corporation of military age were exempted because of their office. Dollan might have accepted the same loophole; he preferred to take an open stand against the war as a Conscientious Objector, knowing that on this account exemption would be refused. Like James Maxton and other Socialist Objectors, he and his wife and boy had much to suffer. He was to be elected to Parliament in recognition of his courage later on.

Anti-war feeling was by no means confined to sophisticated intellectuals. One found it perhaps most firmly rooted amongst the simple, unlettered people of rural areas. In the tiny, small-paned windows of country cottages cards with red crosses indicated that a member of the household was fighting at the Front. On the parlour walls, among the flower-illuminated cards bearing scriptural texts, and the faded pictures of parents and grandparents, were photographs of soldier sons and husbands, and cheap magazine colour-prints of khaki heroes. Yet the talk in the cottages was not of victory, but of grief and bereavement, scarcity and high prices—eggs at 2½d. each in summer time, bread at 9½d., 10d., 10½d. per quartern. People said that the farmers dare not sell their wheat and hay except to the War Office, that bacon seized by the Government was going mouldy in the docks. Those who had relatives in the Channel seaports told heart-rending tales of the grievous return of vast numbers of wounded.

How Conscription and the D.O.R.A. were used against workers who held anti-war opinions, and how Labour leaders worked to nullify protest, was revealed by two striking cases, unctuously detailed to the Commons¹ by J. H. Thomas, the railwaymen's M.P., with great affectation of patriotism to impress the House—but an eye also to the gallery of popular approbation outside. Thomas already was boasting that he had "friends on the other side," among the railway directors, to wit; though he had not yet departed wholly from the ranks of democracy. He told that at Briton Ferry in South Wales a railway man and a steel smelter were imprisoned under the D.O.R.A. for distributing anti-war leaflets, and thereafter were dismissed by their employers. The steel-smelters immediately struck work, and thus procured the reinstatement of their man. The railwayman's fellow-workers, a more disciplined body, instead of acting on their own account, applied to their Union Executive to provide legal defence for their comrade against the D.O.R.A. charge. The Executive refused to grant their request. When the man was convicted and dismissed, his comrades, instead of striking immediately like the steel workers, applied to their Union Executive for permission to strike. The

¹ August 22nd.