

In September my sister, Christabel, returned from her self-imposed exile in Paris, by which, since March 1912, she had evaded imprisonment with Mrs. Pankhurst and the Pethick Lawrences on the Suffragette conspiracy charge. The Amnesty covered her now; she could come and go as she chose. She was to speak in the London Opera House on September 8th. I had not heard from her since our Federation was severed from the W.S.P.U. at the beginning of the year.¹ I went to the meeting. The empty stage was hung with dark green velvet. She appeared there alone, lit by a shaft of lime-light, clad in her favourite pale green, graceful and slender. Her W.S.P.U. adorers filed up and presented her with wreaths. She laid them in a semicircle at her feet.

The tableau was charming; but to me, imbued with the sorrow and suffering of war time, strangely incongruous and unreal. She vouchsafed not one of the militant suffrage points her audience desired to hear. Victor Duval, of the Men's Political Union for Women's Enfranchisement, interrupted with a cry of "Votes for Women." She checked him impatiently: "We cannot discuss that now." Her speech was wholly for the War; light, dialectic, as though of some academic political contest; no hint appeared of the appalling tragedy. I listened to her with grief, resolving to write and speak more urgently for peace.

When she had done, I made my way to the speakers' ante-room. Christabel was alone there, save for an occasional steward or secretary, coming and going for this or that. An impenetrable barrier lay between us. "Is Mother here?" I asked her. She answered laconically that she would be coming soon; and occupied herself over some papers, with unraised eyes. I waited, impatient, till Mrs. Pankhurst entered, surrounded by a group of women I may have known, but did not recognise. We exchanged a brief greeting, distant as through a veil.

As I left the hall alone, a little knot of East End women, with yellow-haired Mrs. Watkins and black-eyed Zelig Emerson in the van, raised vociferous cheers for me, which were cheerfully echoed from the outer fringes of the crowd gathered at the doors. Embarrassed, I pushed my way hastily through the press, and heard the shrill yelling of my name, in opposition to cries for Christabel and Mrs. Pankhurst, as they came out to a waiting car. I was irritated beyond measure, and hurried home without waiting for my henchwomen.

Again Mrs. Pankhurst and Christabel were in Paris. Then, a little later, it was announced that they were coming back to England for a platform campaign to recruit men for the Army. Reading the Press announcement I wept under a surge of old memories and affections, which broke over me—I thought of my father's peace crusade of the 'seventies in which she had met him, the girl, Emmeline Goulden, in the ardour of her youth; his unswerving life-long advocacy of Peace and Internationalism, in which, for nineteen years, she had supported

¹ See *The Suffragette Movement*, by Sylvia Pankhurst. Longmans Green.

him; her stand with us, her children, against the Boer War—all this negated a vast rift lay between our past and her present intention!

I wrote to her on the impulse. She replied, very haughtily: "I am ashamed to know where you and Adela stand."

It was a shock to me when I read some speech of hers that she wished her boy had been marching with the armies. The vision of him came to my eyes, that gentle youth seeking amongst ancient philosophies the perfection of ethics. I knew that he must have loathed the War. A doubt sprang to my mind; would he have been coerced into enlistment by his love for her? Was it best that he had died? The very thought seemed treason to him. Yet the doubt troubled me, as though he were here with the choice before him. Her words recurred to me horribly. She wished he had been marching with those poor lads driven out there to the carnage. I was anguished that she had said it; that she could contemplate the thought of sending him to destruction. Had she forgotten him in his loveliness, that boy my heart would have burst to save? Whenever the memory recurred, it stabbed me with a new wound. How could she think of sending her darling to be rent and mangled? How could she know so little of him that she had failed to sense how alien, how hideous in its bestial hate and gross materialism, this butchery must have been to him?

The event created little impression in this country; even to the Pacifists it was obscured by the abuse showered upon Wilson for not having entered the War, and for his statement that a nation might be "too proud to fight."

It was not until September that Wilson received a qualified pledge not to sink without warning or life-saving. After the *Sussex* was torpedoed in the following March his ultimatum threatening to break diplomatic relations secured a more definite pledge in May 1916. This was acclaimed as a signal victory for his methods.

Twelve hundred men had lost their lives when the battle-cruisers *Cressy*, *Aboukir* and *Hogue* were torpedoed in September 1914. We scarcely heard of it till their poor widows came pleading to us for pension; but those were sailors, wedded to the calling of death. The loss of the *Lusitania* touched us nearer; her passengers were harmless and helpless travellers, not soldiers and sailors who had gone out to kill. Important people had gone down with the ship. Lord Rhondda and his daughter had been passengers; they had been hours in the sea; and she was on the W.S.P.U. platform, in the heart of London, telling her experiences. The Press teemed with accounts by the survivors. Britain was thrilled.

There was a fierce clamour for reprisals. The meanest elements among the jingoes worked up the first of the anti-German riots. These were deliberately organised, in no sense a spontaneous popular outburst; but the prospect of looting without fear of punishment made its appeal to certain sections of the poor and ignorant. Many a home was wrecked; many a peaceable working family lost its all. Stones were flung, children injured. Doris Lester of Kingsley Hall, Bow, was hurt in defending some of the poor families.

Mrs. Nuess, one of our Poplar members, an English woman, married to a German, a good voluntary worker for our Federation who had made innumerable little sacrifices to aid those poorer than herself, saw her home utterly dismantled, even to the tools, so costly and so essential, by which her industrious husband and son earned their living as cabinet-makers. She saw her husband, her son and daughter, dragged out of the house by the mob. What had become of them? Were they killed or imprisoned? A day of agonised suspense elapsed before they were able to rejoin her.

A neighbour, English as herself, and like herself, married to a German, passed through the same terrible experience; and in fear and grief was prematurely confined, alone in the empty house, with only the bare boards on which to lay herself. I was shocked, as one is by tragedies near to one. How cruel that such a thing could happen in a city where not a shot of the War had been heard! Ah, poor humanity, how far you must travel yet to become civilised!

We knew that in all the belligerent countries the same cruel hardships were falling upon people equally defenceless, equally innocent of their cause. It was officially stated in the House of Commons that 237

persons had been injured in the riots, but women like this poor friend of mine made no report of their suffering.

The saddest feature of all was that the disturbance, though its onset was organised from without, was largely a hunger riot; the women and children who snatched bread and meat from the aliens, snatched it, not from hatred of Germany, but because they were hungry.

On May 13th orders were given for the arrest of all alien enemies of military age. The ostensible object of the rioting had been achieved. Niederhofer, our big, kind fellow at the factory, had never been molested, not a window of his was broken. He too was arrested and sent to Knockeloe internment camp in the Isle of Man. He wrote to me, begging my aid to release him, that he might return to his family. He offered even to assist in the making of shells; for in his youth he had learnt this, too, in a German munition factory. I pleaded that he was essential for the training of our toy makers. Nothing availed. He was held till the close of the War. His wife and six children were repatriated long before him. They and he later returned to a Germany of acute poverty, and he wrote to me telling me of their straits and imploring me to find friends who would buy from him the beautiful Christmas toys he had made.

On May 8th, 1915, Lord Robert Cecil read to the Commons a letter from one of the poor English lads held as prisoners of war in Germany:

"We are locked up separately in small cells from 12 feet long to 6 feet broad, and not allowed to speak to anybody. A bowl with a little coffee in it forms our breakfast, and a mixture of potatoes and meat our lunch. At about 2.45 we walk in a tiny little yard about 20 yards long for about three-quarters of an hour, still not allowed to speak, and then back to the cell for the rest of the day. We are allowed to write as much as we like, and receive parcels and letters, but no smoking at any time. This life will become a nightmare."

Asquith commented, with the Pecksniffian hypocrisy frequent amongst politicians, and widely accounted as a virtue in war time:

"The maltreatment of prisoners is a form of cruelty which was not even common in the Dark Ages, and it appears to have been left, as so many other fiendish devices in this Great War, to one of the Christian nations to invent and elaborate."

The conditions of imprisonment the soldier's letter had described, were identical with those of the ordinary prisoner in this country, save that the ordinary prisoner is very much worse off since he may only receive and write one letter a month, on the one sheet of paper provided by the authorities; for the rest, he has only a slate to write on, no paper, pen or pencil being permitted in his cell. As Suffragettes, some thousands of us had endured this sort of imprisonment at the hands of Asquith's Government before the War. Even whilst he spoke, women war prisoners, interned without any charge being formulated against

stockings were doffed when the children arrived each morning. They were bathed and prettily dressed in the nursery garments, provided by friendly donors, and kept in careful order by Lucy Burgis, whom I had first met during my first term at the Manchester High School for Girls; a great girl in a sailor suit, she was then, with flaxen hair turned to pepper and salt now.

Opposite, just down the short Gunmakers' Lane, was the big Victoria Park. The toddlers went thither daily, each with a tiny hand grasping a rope, held also by nurses and teachers, to keep the group together.

We could take forty children into the day nursery now, but ten times that number of places were applied for.

Sybil Smith gathered more voluntary helpers for the bigger family in the new premises. Lady Emily Lutyens sent a daughter to develop a social consciousness. The Press made a stunt of the "Mothers' Arms." The City Corporation of London, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education gave grants to it. Charles Gulliver of the Holborn Empire arranged Sunday League benefits for it. All sorts of people came down to see it. This great publicity gave the spur to start similar institutions both near and far.

Eight months after the War began, arose a great talk of War Babies. Dear! dear! one might almost have thought that the business of the Army was to propagate infants! Ronald McNeill, a Tory M.P., had set the ball rolling by a letter to the *Morning Post*, wherein he had appealed to the religious leaders of the nation to come forward:

"With an honest and courageous pronouncement that under existing circumstances the mothers of our soldiers' children are to be treated with no scorn or dishonour, and that the infants themselves should receive a loyal and unashamed welcome."

He suggested a drastic reformation of the Bastardy laws "if only as a temporary measure." Since the mothers would have no separation allowances and no means of support, he urged that the infants should be "boldly adopted as the children of the State."

Separation allowances for these girls and their infants would have provided a more acceptable solution; but so far from any legislative aid being given to them, it remained the rule that even the paltry affiliation orders might not be applied for in respect of soldiers under orders for abroad.¹ Cathcart Wason reminded the Commons that a man whom the Court had ordered to pay towards the support of his illegitimate child could escape his responsibility by joining the Navy, but even this striking injustice the Government refused to rectify. Moreover, however much a man might be desirous of doing the right thing by his natural child and its mother, he could not get separation allowance for them, unless he had wholly supported the mother before the War. Many a youth would have married his sweetheart, when he found a baby was on the way, had he been able to do it. If he were killed before he could get home to marry, the girl must bear her burden alone.

The Government took no action. The Bastardy laws remained in their ancient iniquity. Public opinion was little changed. A committee of inquiry presided over by Mrs. Creighton decided that the war baby problem had been exaggerated. The W.S.P.U. with much advertisement had announced its intention "to deal with the problem of the war babies" by adopting as many illegitimate girl war babies as possible, but its effort stopped short at five infants. The question proved an unpopular one; people felt that to advertise the existence of such infants was a reflection upon the conduct of the troops. Mrs. Pankhurst found it necessary to observe that there had always been illegitimate

¹ The Naval Discipline (No. 2) Act 1915, declared sailors liable to support their wives and children though execution might not be taken against their person or pay in respect of maintenance orders. If the Admiralty thought fit, and if it were satisfied that the defaulter had not been prevented by naval service from attendance at the hearing of the claim against him, the Admiralty would deduct a portion of his daily pay not exceeding, "in respect of a wife or children sixpence, and in respect of a bastard child fourpence." No action for maintenance could be taken against a sailor under orders for abroad, nor unless a sum sufficient to pay his expenses in attending the case were deposited with his commanding officer.

CHAPTER XXV

WOMEN'S WAR SERVICE—RIVAL DEMANDS—LLOYD GEORGE AND MRS. PANKHURST—THE EAST END PROTEST—THE MUNITIONS ACT AT WORK

THE Coalition Government had started off ostensibly with the support and good will of all parties ; but this was by no means the case. Many were determined to be rid of Asquith, and his nearest colleagues. The surrender of Haldane, who had been awarded the Order of Merit on his retirement, had by no means placated them. Agitations blustered against the Government, demanding increased stringency of the blockade, and especially that cotton should be declared contraband, let the United States say what it would ; the banishment of all persons of German birth or descent from the Government service ; above all, Conscription—military and industrial.

Out of 27,241 women who had by this time registered for War service, only 2,332 had been given work. Propaganda was insistent to get women into the munition factories, and every sort of work ordinarily performed by men. The sections clamouring for the military conscription of men saw in the industrial service of women a means to their end. Feminists who were advocates of Conscription for men believed themselves adding to the importance of women by demanding that women also should be conscripts.

The reawakened W.S.P.U. was loudest in the demand for "compulsory national service for men and women alike" ; "Women demand the right to help in saving the country !" Lloyd George now possessed the implicit confidence of his old enemies Christabel and Mrs. Pankhurst ; he was cheerfully disposed to accept their services. He agreed to receive a women's War Service deputation, to be organised by them on Saturday, July 17th ; and to review a great procession which was to march with it. He promised finance for the show out of Government funds, and placed the official War Service registers at the disposal of the W.S.P.U. The Press boomed the function as a national event. Women with handbills advertising it were rushing round the East End. A letter signed E. Pankhurst, calling women to the War Service demonstration, was mistaken by some in our district as an appeal from me. That cut me to the quick ; for my struggle was to prevent the exploitation of the people in the interests of the War.

Old militants of the W.S.P.U., who had suffered the hunger strike and been forcibly fed, were now interrupting its meetings with cries of "Votes for Women." Members of our Federation joined in the heckling. I did not want that ; I desired our women to employ themselves

in constructive effort, not in the fruitless decrying of those once our comrades, who had departed, as we considered, from progressive paths. If we must attack, let us attack the Government which held the power. At our members' general meeting I got a resolution passed that it was no part of our policy to interrupt the meetings of other Suffrage Societies.

Yet I could not rest content that this jingo demonstration, with its demand for compulsory War service, should stand forth unchallenged as representing the womanhood of the nation. Still less could I let pass, without protest, the new legislation which was so adversely determining the industrial position of women in war time. Our Federation also demanded an interview with Lloyd George and arranged a procession to Parliament for the night of Tuesday, July 20th. "*No National Service under Makers of Private Profit !*" "*Down with sweating !*" "*A Man's Wage for a Man's Job !*" "*Down with High Prices and Big Profits !*" Such were our slogans.

Lloyd George refused to receive us, but many both Labour and Liberal Members of Parliament urged us to persevere, including J. R. Clynes, though he was one of the greatest jingoes in the Labour Party, and Philip Snowden, who wrote:

"The fight is awfully hard, I know ; but you are doing magnificent work."

How greatly subsequent events were to alter his political attitude !

The big W.S.P.U. procession was produced according to promise. Boomed as it was, it could not have been otherwise. There were two miles of closely massed ranks, a pageant of the nations, led by Belgium with bare feet in sandals bearing a tattered flag. There were representations of the trades and professions in which women were called upon to serve. Women who had registered for War work and could not get it, munition workers and trainees released from the grind of their seven days' work that they might march, warmongers, war workers and sightseers, office and shop girls who had stayed in town to see the fun, soldiers' wives out for a jaunt, women of all sorts and conditions fell in behind the banners and bands, and sang the popular war-songs, "Tipperary" and all the rest. The procession was lauded as a magnificent achievement, and a proof of the enthusiasm of women for the National Cause.

The significant fact remained that the organisation of this demonstration had been paid for by the Government ; whereas in the pre-War struggle of the Suffragettes larger and more elaborate demonstrations had been financed by the enthusiasts of the movement itself. Where were those enthusiasts now? Scattered in a hundred directions. Even in the thinned ranks of those who remained supporters of the W.S.P.U. in its changed policy, there was not the disposition to sacrifice all for the Union, which had made it a power in its Votes for Women fight.

Lloyd George received the deputation in the wooden buildings

who had abandoned it, saw in this cry an opportunity to assert the women's claim. Christabel and Mrs. Pankhurst fiercely opposed all attempt to drag women's suffrage forward until after the War. Their W.S.P.U. was now advertising a so-called "loyal and patriotic meeting" in the Albert Hall, the scene of its old Suffragette triumphs. The object was to demand a more vigorous prosecution of the War. Lord Willoughby de Broke, who had championed the most extreme suffragette militancy in pre-war days, and Annan Bryce, a pre-war anti-suffragist and a leader of extreme militarists, were among the speakers. The *Times* puffed the meeting hugely. Christabel, impetuous as ever, issued a circular bluntly declaring: "The Prime Minister and Sir Edward Grey are unfit for the responsible positions they hold."

Two days before the meeting Sir John Simon replied to a Parliamentary question that the proprietors of the Albert Hall would doubtless "consider the propriety of permitting their building to be used for such a purpose at such a time." Already that morning the proprietors had cancelled the letting of the Hall, no doubt on a hint from the Home Office. The *Times* made no protest. The names of Lord Willoughby de Broke and Mr. Annan Bryce were mentioned no more in connection with the meeting. The W.S.P.U. was abandoned to be the scapegoat. The London Pavilion, where the Union had been holding regular weekly meetings, was now also closed to it. Unable to procure any large halls in Central London, it was compelled to fall back on small meetings in its own offices in Great Portland Street.¹

The Archdeacon of Westminster declared Mrs. Pankhurst's attack on Asquith and Grey prompted by their long refusal of Votes for Women in pre-war days, but this she indignantly denied. She and Christabel continued their campaign for the dismissal of Asquith, whom Christabel described as "the best friend of the Austro-Germans," and of Lord Robert Cecil and Sir Eyre Crowe, a permanent official at the Foreign Office, who was vilified for having a German wife and as being himself half German and the nephew of Admiral von Holtzendorff, chief of the German naval staff. The demand for the dismissal of General Sir William Robertson was presently added to the rest.

The W.S.P.U. organ, the *Suffragette*, had now changed its name to *Britannia*. In November it was raided. Its printing was transferred from Spottiswoode's to the Utopia Press of the *Clarion* people, who had come to its aid during the old Suffragette militancy, and who were themselves pro-war. In December *Britannia* was driven by police action from the Utopia Press. Thereafter it came out for some months in all sorts of types and sizes—sometimes a mere single foolscap sheet produced on a hand-worked duplicating machine and scarcely legible. The W.S.P.U. women were printing it on the roofs of houses, someone told me.

All this seemed to me unutterably remote from human realities.

¹ The great building, Lincoln's Inn House, Kingsway, the W.S.P.U. had occupied before the War had already been given up.

The War was being prosecuted to its bitter end whether one would or no. The W.S.P.U. with its women sticking white feathers into the buttonholes of reluctant men, and brandishing little placards with the slogan: "Intern them all!" was only the noisiest of the extreme war factions; its policy was the policy of Sir Edward Carson, who resigned from the Cabinet on the score that the Government had not sent the requisite troops to Serbia, of Gibson Bowles, of L. S. Amery, Captain Guest, Annan Bryce and a crowd of Tory hot-bloods, and of Northcliffe the "Cabinet Maker," who, driven by the Gargantuan hates of war, ended in megalomania and loss of reason.

Few who bore the hardships of the trenches suffered thus violently from the war spirit. I found the soldiers generally of my own way of thinking. As a rule, nothing I could say was too strong for them.

I remember one of our meetings at the Brotherhood Church, Southgate Road, maintained by the efforts of F. R. Swan as a centre of informal Christian Socialist propaganda and an open platform for many sorts of reformers. It was a pitch-dark night and snowing hard. Having gone there previously with others, I had not noticed the way to the church. As I stepped from our door an Army van driver pulled up to attend to his car. He recognised me with enthusiasm and offered to give me a lift. I accepted the offer. With the best possible intentions, he put me down far out of my course. Thus I got to the meeting late. Mrs. Swanwick was on the platform, entirely nonplussed by a crowd of uproarious youths in khaki, who crowded the front seats, and shouted hilarious nonsense in chorus, to the prompting of an officer. "Let us talk it out, boys," she vainly appealed, peering at them through her spectacles; then turned and hurried from the platform, shaking her head. She had seen me coming and left the task to me.

I did not doubt I could win the lads. In the surprise which followed her disappearance, I sped round to the platform and forged ahead on the subject of their conditions as soldiers, and the treatment of their families. At once a number of the disturbers began to listen. When those nearest the officer interrupted me at his signal, others called for order. Failing to secure it, a third of them walked out protesting, and telling our stewards at the door that they agreed with every word I said. A discharged soldier rose to appeal for silence. The officer, anxious to prevent the discussion of the soldiers' own grievances, called his squad to join him in a dirge-like droning: "Why don't you talk about the War?" I offered to explain my opposition to it in ten minutes, and to give any one of them ten minutes to reply. The lads enthusiastically accepted the challenge, and the officer was put up to reply. When he had had his turn, I replied to him, then he to me, and so we continued. There were only two slight breaches of the undertaking to keep order, and presently the lads had become my open supporters, and were shouting: "Good kid!" and clapping with animation, when I scored a point at the expense of their officer. Unaccustomed to platform ruses, he made no effort to disguise his lack of democratic opinion, which the soldiers were quick to perceive. Afterwards they listened to a broad,

CHAPTER XLVII

THE AMATEUR WAR STRATEGISTS

THE dreary drawing on of the War, unrelieved by any great glamorous successes of Britain, or even of the Allies, roused the pride of insular patriots to fury. Stay-at-home war enthusiasts clamoured for scapegoats, finding in every reverse evidence of criminal negligence, treachery, pro-Germanism in high places. Lloyd George, as a member of the Cabinet from the outbreak of War, was responsible, with the rest, for all that had happened; but he assumed the attitude of one who would have put matters right, if only he had known the inner facts of the case, or had been given a free hand. Aloof from the deep sorrows and anxieties of the great populace arose the clamour of rival war strategists, demanding enormous campaigns in the East, great naval adventures, stronger efforts in the West, a more stringent blockade.

The amateur strategists at home outdid the naval and military professionals in vehemence and certitude. Vast theatres of war, huge schemes for recarving the map of Europe seethed in their minds. Westerners, Easterners, more-war-on-the-sea men, intrigued by the would-be management of the World War, entirely forgot that their schemes must all depend on the humble fellows who were being blown, as Lloyd George had it, into "bundles of bloody rags."

The little Welsh lawyer, reared in a country village, untravelled, wholly devoid of military experience, whose pugnacity had made him Secretary of State for War to the largest Empire, in the hugest, ghastliest war of all time, rivalled the ambitious and reckless Churchill in tremendous projects of Eastern conquest. The die-hard Tories, the war-mongers and Conscriptionists of peace time, who had shrieked for more battleships, and denounced him and his Cabinet colleagues as "Little Englanders" in the eight years of Liberal Government before the War, the noisy jingoes of the Boer War, from whom on a once-notorious occasion he had escaped, it was said, disguised as a policeman, were now all in league with Lloyd George. As the instrument and coadjutor of Northcliffe, the jingo of jingoes, he was preparing to oust his old chief in the cause of war ruthlessness, and meanwhile would work with anyone and everyone to that end.

The W.S.P.U. kept pace with his policy—nay, outran it. Lloyd George desired to send an expedition of a million men to attack Germany and Austria in and through the Balkans. *Britannia* described this as "a masterly and victory-bringing plan," deploring that Churchill's Dardanelles adventure had been calamitously preferred to it. "The road to

Berlin passes through the Balkans, Budapest, and Vienna!" *Britannia* headlined, finding great perfidy in Bulgaria, the purest chivalry in her neighbour, Serbia. *Britannia* knew neither scruple nor caution in denouncing as "traitors" the opponents of its policies, however highly-placed. The quick mind of its editor, leaping unhesitant to what seemed to her the point, demanded the fulfilment of the policies she espoused with all the vehemence which had characterised her in Suffragette militancy.

Rumours of treachery and intrigue flew about London. What was whispered elsewhere was printed in the *Britannia* and shouted on the platforms of the W.S.P.U. Some irrational persons conceived the notion that impostors, posing as spiritualists with occult powers, were plotting illicit aid to Germany, by corrupting patriotic minds. Annie Kenny must visit them, to expose them, and get their mouthings published in the *Britannia*. Side by side with such follies, news and documents found their way from official quarters into the columns of *Britannia*. Amongst them were confidential circulars issued to certain politicians and journalists by Brigadier-General Howell, with the alleged approval of General Sir William Robertson, and in harmony, it was said, with the policy of Asquith, Grey, and Haldane. In these circulars Howell discussed the War with great cynicism. He advocated withdrawal from the Dardanelles, and no assistance to Serbia. He suggested that Bulgaria should be "bribed" with territory taken from Greece and Serbia, to induce her "to turn against Germany and cut the communications between the Central Empires and Turkey." He argued that if it were decided to compensate Greece and Serbia for their loss of territory with money, the cost of two or three days of the War divided between them would suffice. He referred to Serbia with disparagement as "our unchosen ally," "a foreign conqueror and bitter oppressor in Macedonia," "moreover, for the time being she does not exist. . . . It is not policy to ourselves . . . to constitute ourselves the champion of all the Serbian ambitions."

Such views accorded ill with the public utterances of British statesmen. They caused *Britannia* to fulminate with rage, denouncing Robertson as "Hindenburg's partner," "the tool and accomplice of the traitors Grey, Asquith, and Cecil." "Robertson spells compromise, peace, and the downfall of the British Empire."

To Haldane, who was made a bogey in many more powerful quarters, *Britannia* attributed the dominant influence in the Foreign Office.

A little crowd of women, led by Jessie Kenney,¹ her pale face working fiercely, mobbed Haldane from the Commons to his residence, shouting: "Traitor Haldane!" Mrs. Annan Bryce, from the W.S.P.U. platform, endeavoured to make the flesh creep, by insisting that nothing was done in the Foreign Office without Haldane's connivance, and that he had actually been to Switzerland to meet Von Buelow. "All these little games have been going on behind your back!" she cried. "You will wake up and find a peace has been made which will be the ruin of our Empire!" Mrs. Annan Bryce was writing to the Liberal and Unionist

¹ An early member of the W.S.P.U., an ex-textile operative from Lees near Oldham. Her sister Annie was a prominent militant before the War.

war committees, fulminating against "Haldanism," urgent in her insistence that "Asquith must go." She was hand in glove with Christabel and also with important jingoes in the Liberal and Tory Parties.

Closer co-operation with the Allies; one diplomatic centre for the Allies in France, where the roar of the guns might spur it to action, not in London among the safe-placed intrigues of pro-German pacifists; an Allied War Council; an Allied General Staff; naval decisions, as well as military, to be taken by the Allies jointly; cotton on the contraband list; fatty oils on the contraband list; a sterner blockade; more extensive internments; the cancellation of naturalisation certificates to all Germans, Austrians, Bulgarians, and Turks; expulsion from the Government service of all people of enemy origin and relationships: these were the demands of Christabel in the *Britannia*. Bitter were her complaints that supplies were reaching Germany from Turkey, through the Balkans, from America, through other neutral nations. "Traitor Grey!" Openly, fiercely she stigmatised him, "pro-Bulgarian Grey"! He had forbidden Serbia to attack Bulgaria until Bulgaria herself had initiated the fight, on the pretence that, if left alone, Bulgaria might remain neutral. That Grey had done this, with the clear and treacherous intent to assist Germany, Christabel amazingly asserted—"Traitor Grey," who refused to guarantee Greek integrity to bring her into the War, who refused to recognise the insurgent Government of "great Venizelos," and to secure from him the munitions collected at Thessaly and an army of 800,000 Greek soldiers to fight on the side of the Allies. More soldiers! More soldiers! More men to maim and mangle; that was the insatiable demand of all the War organs, the *Times*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Morning Post*, the *Globe*, and *Britannia* with the rest. *Britannia* shrieked of "pro-Bulgarianism in the Foreign Office!" "Traitor Grey betrays Venizelos." Mrs. Pankhurst declared on platforms that Grey was weak in mind or corrupt. In Suffragette days her references to opponents had been always couched in temperate terms, though her policy had been extreme. All that was changed.

Now that Lloyd George was at the War Office, the W.S.P.U. came forward with another women's war procession, on July 22nd. It was organised under his patronage, and reviewed by him, this time from a War Office balcony, with Winston Churchill and Herbert Samuel at his elbow.

The *Britannia*, which since November 1915 had existed precariously, printed—and none too clearly—ostensibly by its adherents, now appeared under the open imprint of a commercial firm. It had leaked out that Lloyd George had granted £3,000 of Government money to the W.S.P.U. women's munitions procession of the previous summer. Snowden and Pringle had challenged the expenditure in the Commons. The *Britannia* retorted that the much greater sums paid to newspaper proprietors and advertising agents in connection with the recruiting campaign had not been challenged. The W.S.P.U. procession of 1916 was no less elaborate than its predecessor. There were pageants of Empire, of Allied nations, of war-work and what not. Dominant above all was the demand, enunciated on more than half a hundred banners disposed at intervals throughout the show: "We want Hughes!" "Hughes on the War Council!"

"Hughes the People's choice!" "Hughes return at once!" "Come back, Hughes!" "Hughes . . .!" "Hughes . . .!" "Hughes . . .!" This Hughes was no other than the Labour Prime Minister of Australia, the one-time organiser of the riverside workers there, whom his old Labour colleagues now mostly regarded as a disgraceful renegade. He had climbed to office by the Labour-Socialist Movement to become a mouthpiece of extremist capitalist imperialism. For his drastic way with German commerce he had secured a seat on the British Privy Council, and toured this country making bellicose speeches. The W.S.P.U., and its *Britannia*, hailed Hughes as the destined saviour of the British Empire, if only those pro-German wobblers in the Government could be induced to put him in the War Cabinet. If Hughes had been in the War Cabinet all the strategies the W.S.P.U. and *Britannia* approved would have been carried out; the blockade would have been intensified; Bulgaria attacked; Venizelos recognised; Constantine and Sophie, "those pro-German spies," consigned to oblivion; Asquith, Grey, Haldane, "those traitors," altogether dismissed; and Serbia saved—Serbia! Serbia! Roumania would already have come into the War on the side of the Allies, the War would have been won, the Germans utterly vanquished, utterly—if only Hughes had been in the War Cabinet!

The W.S.P.U. had opened a £10,000 "Victory Fund," "to support the campaign against a compromise peace," and "to get Mr. W. M. Hughes of Australia on to the Inner War Council of the Empire." These objects appeared to be synonymous in W.S.P.U. opinion. What an anticlimax for the Union, which had once placed its faith only in women!

The W.S.P.U. was not alone in demanding the return of Australia's "Billy" Hughes. His name had become the general slogan of extremist jingoism. The *Globe* declared he had greater driving power than any British statesman "since Joe Chamberlain in his prime," and asserted that "pro-German influences" were working to keep him at the Antipodes. The *Financial News* asserted that if a plebiscite were taken of the Stock Exchange there would be a 90 per cent. poll in favour of Hughes; the *National Review* that "without him we have little chance of winning the War!" Leo Maxse at the Unionist Party Conference demanded that Bonar Law, as Conservative leader in the Coalition Government, should invite Hughes on to the War Council; but Law replied that only the Prime Minister could do it. Lord Templetown in the House of Lords raised the same slogan. Ladies Templetown and Leith of Fyvie opened an office in St. James's Place to promote a memorial demanding the appointment of Hughes as "a member of the inner and supreme War council."

Whilst the women munitioners cheered him, striking the bright shell cases they had brought from the factory which rang at their blows with a gong-like sound, Lloyd George applauded the "Come back, Hughes" banner. Yet perhaps, after all, he was not much pleased with this Hughes outcry. Certainly he did not put the Australian in his Cabinet when he seized the Premiership for himself. Munition girls saluted Lloyd George with hands of livid yellow. "Those lasses are making their war sacrifice!" a soldier said.

On October 26th, 1916, she was removed from Aylesbury to Holloway Prison, where she was placed in the remand hospital. Her husband was informed that she would only be entitled to a visit once in three months, on condition of good behaviour; but the visit could not be from him. Though the authorities gave no reason for her removal to Holloway Prison, and though he could not learn that she had been tried for any offence, he thought she was under punishment. He wrote to the Home Office begging to know whether this were the case, promising to ask her not to do anything insubordinate. As before there was no reply. The husband and wife were now interned within twenty minutes' walk of each other; for months they begged in vain to be allowed to meet. The woman was ceaseless in her appeals. She addressed many petitions to the Home Office, and in her letters to husband and children emphasised her yearning to see him.

After nearly five months, on Thursday, March 15th, 1917, Ahlers was notified that his wife was dangerously ill. On two consecutive days he was taken to her cell and found her unconscious. On the morning of the third day he was told that she was dead. The long-desired visit had come too late. On Tuesday an inquest was held in the prison, whereat it was declared that Mrs. Ahlers had died of veronal poisoning. A letter had been found under her pillow, telling her husband that she could endure her life no longer, begging him to forgive her, and saying she knew her daughter would keep the home going for her father and brothers. Poor girl, she and the younger boy, a child of fourteen, were alone together.

The girl believed, and she had said it at the inquest, that if only her mother might sometimes have seen her father, this tragic thing would not have happened. Her soldier brother said the same, protesting that his father was naturalised, and he and his brother and sister were British subjects born in England. He had chanced to get leave that week, and though the regimental authorities had recalled him when they heard of the inquest, he had disregarded their order, and remained to attend it nevertheless.

Dr. Forward, the prison medical officer and deputy-governor, a quiet pale man (I knew him well), had stated in evidence that he had found Mrs. Ahlers unconscious, and as she complained of pains in the head, he thought she might be suffering from a cerebral tumour or epilepsy. Not for some hours did he take a stomach washing and send it to the Home Office analyst, who discovered traces of veronal. The usual methods for combating the drug were not taken until valuable time had been lost. The question of how Mrs. Ahlers obtained the drug was never cleared up. There was no evidence from Aylesbury. Her daughter was passionate to know more; what had happened to her poor mother inside those prisons? I was stricken by the futile cruelty of it all.

CHAPTER LI

VOTES FOR WOMEN

THE cry of "Votes for the fighting men!" was a better stick with which to beat the Government, than talk of remote lands, unknown to the multitude, and the squabbles of war strategists. It was now the slogan of Northcliffe, Carson, and a crowd of Tory extremists, and of Labour jingoes like Will Thorne, who cried: "One gun one vote!" coupled with a clamour for the disfranchisement of Conscientious Objectors, which was eventually obtained. Already in the spring of 1916 *The Times* had been threatening the Government with "strong and natural hostility," unless a special soldiers' and sailors' franchise were introduced. The first Act, to extend the time of the Parliament of which Conscription had been the price, was nearing the end of its term. Unless it were extended, the Parliament must expire in September. The residential changes brought about by enlistment, and the movement of workers to munition areas, would produce wholesale disfranchisement, if the election were to be taken on the old register, and the old qualifications. Adult suffrage, with continuous registration, was the only practical solution. Before Conscription became law, I had seen Lord Northcliffe. I had sought him, because I knew his power, much as I disliked it. I had urged on him that the tremendous cataclysm of the War, and the huge sacrifices it was forcing on the people, should sweep away the old cheese-paring ideas of the franchise, and extend complete adult suffrage to men and women alike. He declared himself impressed by my argument, and with the air of a super-premier promised to take the matter into consideration.

As already explained, our Federation had been demanding a vote for every woman over 21 since before the War. In December, 1915, I put before the women's suffrage societies the plea I had made to Northcliffe. I got our Federation to call an informal conference in the little room behind Miss Thring's suffrage shop in the Adelphi. With the exception of the W.S.P.U. and Mrs. Fawcett's N.U.W.S.S., most of the societies sent delegates. They all, without exception, gave assent. A management committee was appointed, with myself as hon. secretary, to convene a larger conference. I was greatly rejoiced by this cordial acceptance of the wider demand; but, alas, when the delegates reported the proposal to their executives, the old guard took alarm. The conference which met in the Essex Hall was a stormy one. It was well attended, all the societies were present; but almost all were bitterly hostile to our project, and not one was prepared, yet, to go all the way with us, in demanding either a vote for every woman over 21, or adult suffrage for all men and women.

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 MacLennan¹ 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

¹ 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

refinement and clarity of mind, and the too patent fact that she was overstrained with labour and under-nourished. Towards me he was harsh and hostile, regarding me, it seemed, as one who was leading my unsophisticated companions to dangerous freedom of thought, and to aspirations beyond their station.

It was inevitable, with the War dominating all else, that apathy should be our greatest enemy. Bernard Shaw wrote flippantly :

"It is not worth fussing about the suffrage until we are sure that there are ever to be any more elections. . . . There is nothing more fatal to democracy than elections . . . what is wanted for women is an iron law that Parliament shall consist of a certain proportion of men and women. . . . M.P.s should be *unselected* like jurors."¹

Does Shaw ever collate and endeavour to reconcile his political utterances ?

The officials of the suffrage societies, including, to my chagrin, the lobbyist of the Adult Suffrage Council I had created, were at the House of Commons enquiring of Members of Parliament what sort of franchise it would be wise to ask for. There was talk of giving women the vote at a later age than men. This insulting proposition was complacently received by many women eager to snatch at whatever franchise they could secure, in fear that they might get no franchise at all. The hateful atmosphere of Parliamentary intrigue was still maintained in face of the great sorrows of the War, the common humanity of all men and women still obscured by prejudices selfish and absurd.

Sir John Simon was deprecating agitation for the Vote, as he had deprecated agitation against Conscription. We scouted such advice and continued working with all the force we could muster. I was convinced that the question whether we should get the franchise, and the scope of the franchise we should get, depended on the women themselves—the more we demanded, and the more insistent our demand, the more we should secure.

Relays of our working women were daily in the Lobby. As they stood there, pleading for their franchise, they saw a party of French munitionettes, brought over by the W.S.P.U., ushered into the inner citadel, with much ceremony. These French women were liberally fêted and entertained. The Lord Mayor gave them lunch at the Mansion House, with Mrs. Pankhurst and a crowd of war enthusiasts. The patriotism of French women was lauded to the skies ; but they are still without the Vote ! So much for the story that it was their war work which secured the franchise for British women.

¹ *Workers' Dreadnought*, September 16th, 1916.

CHAPTER LII

"ON THE RUN"

THE war resisters who refused to appear before the tribunals were of two sorts. Some went about their ordinary avocations until arrested ; others attempted to escape altogether from the net the Military Service Acts had drawn. Mrs. —, one of our Bow members who had been in prison as a Suffragette, with the help of another member, a dressmaker living alone, succeeded in hiding her husband and brother-in-law until the War was over. Up and down the country friendly homes were provided for the fugitives, whose position grew daily more precarious, for the authorities stopped men at random, on the chance that they might be absentees. In those days every man out of khaki carried his exemption or discharge papers on his person—if he possessed them. One poor lad fled to Epping Forest, and led there a spare existence feeding on the bark of trees and on forest roots and fruits not usually employed for human consumption, eked out by occasional gifts of food, obtained on nocturnal visits to friends. Mrs. Payne made up a bed for him on her sofa when he ventured to Old Ford. He told her he was "beginning to see green." She feared his mind was unhinged, and lavished on him her tender sympathy. Her heart warmed always to the feeble in mind, for the sake of her own poor Jessie.

On November 16th we were at the *Daily Herald* League's annual reunion in the Holborn Hall. Two military officers suddenly appeared on the platform, with half a dozen soldiers to "round up" absentees. A great shouting arose from the "Heraldites." Lansbury was in the midst of a speech. The officers ordered him to cease talking, and procure order for them. He stood silent and frowning with folded arms. Uproar continued until the officers left the platform and a large force of police filed in to hold the doors and examine the papers of every man who attempted to leave. We dragged out the evening to the latest possible time for closing the hall ; then the four youths who were war resisters went down to meet their fate. They had been active in propaganda for peace, speaking out boldly at open-air meetings until this night. One woman fainted as she saw them go. Another, in passionate misery, flung herself desperately upon the police advancing to seize them. They hustled her away with them, under arrest. A youth who was found to possess exemption papers, was flung headforemost down the steps.

A crowd of us tramped back to the East End, for the 'buses had ceased