

much of goodness as I do. I try to spur them to revolt against the hideous conditions under which they live."

She uttered a deprecating snort, and spoke of their need of "higher things." The American, scenting the breath of conflict between us, tactfully interposed with questions of the neighbourhood and its history.

The guests gathered at the door of the small hospital building, eager to enter; but the matron met them acidly; her patients were at rest; none might enter. Even Mrs. Astor could not question her decision.

There was still something to be seen, for some of the "Tommies," in the shapeless garments of the now familiar hospital blue, were sitting about in wheeled chairs and playing on the lawn. Some stopped to have a word with them; but the ladies found them less willing to be talked to than patients prostrate in bed. The gentlemen, in their well-cut clothes, adopted a humorous tone towards these curious working men, who had never been thought so interesting before the War. The soldiers were surly, and little disposed to respond to their banter. The guests wandered away.

A poor fellow, whose bed had been brought outside, had his wife and little children beside him. He knew me, and signalled me to come to them. He was trying to talk cheerfully; but a dull torpor overcame him; there were depths of misery in his eyes. His wife, distressed by his silence, could hardly restrain her tears, but bravely assured me he would soon be well. When she rose to fetch their toddling baby running far across the grass, the soldier told me both his legs had been amputated, but his wife did not know it yet. Shocked by this knowledge, I found difficulty in facing her unknowing eyes.

Returning aloof from the house party, I was overtaken by the long strides of the American.

"It is glorious to come to your country at a time like this!" he broke in on me; "to see all this wonderful selflessness and unity amongst all classes. I tell you it's an inspiration to us Americans! We did not know the old country had it in her!"

Some hot words burst from me, of hatred for such canting untruth, and of sorrow for the poor fellows we had left down there in the vale.

He answered quietly: "I understand you." His talk seemed quenched.

The words of my old great-aunt: "A fat sorrow is better than a lean one," knelled in my mind.

I was glad I had refused to remain till Monday. The great car was waiting now to speed me to the nearest railway station.

£15 had been collected at the little meeting and Mrs. Astor herself gave Lady Sybil Smith a donation to swell the sum; but of that anon.

CHAPTER XIX

PEACE EFFORTS—THE WOMEN'S CONGRESS AT THE HAGUE

THE War grew daily more terrible. The miseries of a winter in the trenches were followed by frantic efforts to break through the opposing lines, in which thousands of lives were lost without result. On the shores of the Dardanelles poor fellows were dying in attempting the impossible, the blockade was tightened—submarine warfare intensified. Behind the great offensive, Peace efforts were feebly striving. News filtered through that there had been a Truce in the Trenches on Christmas Day, that British and German soldiers had thrown down their arms to fraternise, exchanging little keepsakes and comforts, rejoicing in the respite from slaughter their mutual confidence had won for them, finding themselves as brothers in their adversity. This brief manifestation of human solidarity, banned from official reports, was never permitted to recur.

Vain efforts were being made to resurrect the Socialist International. The Dutch Socialists had given hospitality to the Secretary of the International Socialist Bureau, Camille Huysmans, a Belgian. It was their hope that on neutral soil he would be able to perform the difficult task of resuscitation. The difficulties were great, and Huysmans unequal to the task. The officials of the Majority Socialist Parties in belligerent nations maintained, until the end of the War, their refusal to meet the Socialists of the countries with which the capitalist Governments of their countries were in conflict.

The Socialist Parties of the northern neutral countries had met at Copenhagen in January 1915 and had issued a manifesto denouncing the War as a product of Capitalist imperialism and its secret diplomacy, and calling on the Socialists of the belligerent nations to be active for peace, and to work with renewed energy to conquer political power. The leaders who controlled the Socialist parties of the belligerent nations were in no mood to second such a pronouncement. Under the auspices of the British Section of the International Socialist Bureau, a conference, which was supposed to represent the Socialist movements of Britain, France, Belgium and Russia, issued a declaration strongly supporting the cause of the Allied Governments, and declaring the Socialists of their countries "inflexibly resolved to fight until victory is achieved." When this manifesto was condemned at the I.L.P.

conference, J. R. MacDonald, who had been a party to it, characteristically replied that it was a compromise. He urged his critics to "be very careful to remember the date on which it was passed."

Across the ruins of the International came the voice of Karl Liebknecht, demanding on the floor of the Prussian Landtag the democratisation of the franchise and of foreign policy.

"Democratic control by the people would have prevented the War. . . . Away with the hypocrisy of civil peace! On with the international class struggle for the emancipation of the working class and against the War!"

His words thrilled round the world, evoking the heartbeat of a multitude. Brave Karl Liebknecht!

Already on December 2nd, 1914, he had voted against the War Credits in the German Reichstag. No British Socialist was ready to follow his example. On March 10th, 1915, Liebknecht repeated his negative. We learnt with joy that on March 18th several thousand women, who had organised secretly with this intent, had appeared before the Reichstag, shouting for peace. Karl Liebknecht from a window in the Reichstag had addressed them. As punishment he was ordered to the Front—to his death his friends feared. He had been joined by Ledebour, Ruhle, Mehring, Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg in a manifesto calling for an immediate peace, without annexations, which would secure political and economic independence to every nation, disarmament, and the compulsory arbitration of international disputes. At Christmas Liebknecht had conveyed a message to the I.L.P. in London appealing for a new Socialist International.

In March a conference of Socialist women, summoned by Clara Zetkin, the International Secretary of the Women's Socialist Organisation, and one of the leaders of the German Social Democratic Party, met secretly in Berne. It was attended by delegates from both factions of warring nations, who met in their old fraternity, to utter a call for the speedy ending of the War, and a peace which should impose no humiliating condition on any nation. Unheralded and unchronicled, little was heard of the event. Women Socialists of all countries had overcome the nationalist hysteria of war time, which held the male leaders of the International in its grip. Clara had planned this conference with Rosa Luxemburg. They intended to go together across the frontiers to visit the Socialists of the other nations. Then Rosa was arrested. Clara saw her in prison, then went to Holland, but was unable to pass the Belgian frontier. She sent couriers to Huysmans but he did not reply. Soon Clara was herself in prison for four months; she was ill when she came out, but she persevered with the conference. The Social Democratic leaders declared it an offence against the discipline of the Party and forbade their members to distribute the conference manifestoes.

Amongst women of another milieu a movement for peace was also

germinant. At Christmas Emily Hobhouse, Helen Bright Clark, Margaret Clark Gillett, Sophia and Lily Sturge, Isabella Ford, Lady Barlow and Lady Courtney of Penwith had addressed a letter to the women of Germany and Austria, urging them to join in calling for a truce. Through *Jus Suffragii*, the organ of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, whose editor, Miss Sheepshanks, bravely upheld its internationalism, despite very great discouragement from the majority of the British Suffrage Societies, a response was received from prominent German and Austrian women.

Dr. Aletta Jacobs and other Dutch Suffragists now issued an appeal for a women's international congress at The Hague, to urge the belligerent governments to call a truce to define their peace terms; and to demand the submission of international disputes to arbitration; the democratic control of foreign policy; that no territory should be transferred without the consent of its population; the political enfranchisement of women; and the inclusion of women delegates in the conference of Powers which would follow the War. The conference was to cost £1,000; the Dutch Suffragists offered a third of the sum; the German Suffragists responded with a further third. The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies under Mrs. Fawcett, which represented British women in the International Suffrage Alliance, repudiated the Congress; but a group of seceders from that organisation met with other women's organisations, including our Federation, in conference at the Caxton Hall to answer the invitation from Holland. The delegates were enthusiastic. More than 200 of us volunteered to go to The Hague.

The Congress now began to receive tremendous publicity. The Press condemned it; prominent women assailed it. We who had agreed to go were execrated. Mrs. Fawcett declared that to talk of peace while the German armies were in France and Belgium was "akin to treason." Mrs. Cecil Chapman, President of the New Constitutional Society for Women's Suffrage, considered the time "painfully inopportune" for members of the belligerent nations to confer. The W.S.P.U., which had been *hors de combat* and existing on occasional speeches by Christabel and Mrs. Pankhurst, now burst into life to oppose the Congress. The *Suffragette* reappeared on April 16th, 1915, after eight months' suspension, declaring in its leading article that it was a "thousand times more" the duty of militant Suffragettes to fight the Kaiser for the sake of liberty, than it had been to fight anti-Suffrage Governments. Nina Boyle, in the Women's Freedom League organ, *The Vote*, attacked *Jus Suffragii* for becoming "the mouthpiece" of the promoters of the Conference, and protested that the Women's Freedom League "refused to ask for more legislation—even reform legislation—until women could help to control and administer it." She marvelled that there should be Suffragists "who imagine it possible for them . . . to be an international power, and set in motion reforms vaster and more quixotic than any body of men with franchise, representatives, and Cabinet Ministers in their pocket, would venture to attack at the present moment."

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

induce the Executive to call a week's Conference to debate such international questions, then to the fore, as the Freedom of the Seas, Disarmament, the Self-Determination of Oppressed Nationalities and so on! Protracted as the task was, it was accomplished at length! When I returned to the East End after these lengthy sittings, to find myself obliged to cut out sleep, and work forty-eight hours, with scarcely a break, to cope with the arrears which had accumulated during my absence, I often told my East End colleagues I should prefer to resign from the W.I.L. "Oh, do stay there and leaven them!" Norah Smyth and others urged me: but I did so reluctantly. In the East End we were equally powerless to stay the hideous progress of the War; but we could alleviate some of its miseries. To me it was essential to be able to voice my opinions spontaneously, and without fear or favour. To trim one's statements, in order to conciliate influential opinion, oppressed me with a sense of insincerity.

CHAPTER XX

THE MUNITION WORKERS—SHORTAGE OF MUNITIONS—GOVERNMENT
APPEAL TO WOMEN

THE hardships and dangers of munition work began to appear. On March 15th W. C. Anderson complained in the House of Commons that at Armstrong Whitworth's Elswick factory women were employed seven days a week for upwards of twelve hours a day. They got from 8s. to 11s. a week with a bonus forfeited for failure to work Sundays. Some of the girls had worked 20 hours at a stretch and 95 hours a week. Two girls had died of dope poisoning at the Army aeroplane works at Crayford, and when the first death occurred, 43 others were found to be seriously affected by the fumes.

News was coming through that the failure of the British attempt to drive back the German lines at Neuve Chapelle had been due to shortage of munitions. To the jingo super-patriot, failure to excel must needs be criminal: Asquith, the War Office, Kitchener, each and all had a share of execration from the extreme jingoes. Nowadays, military experts write dispassionately that the British military authorities were unversed in trench warfare, and slower than the Germans to appreciate the huge scale of the ammunition required and that British weapons were crudely inferior to the German. From the national arsenal at Woolwich came complaints that the men and machines there were, even then, not fully employed, and that before the War and since, the national armament factories had gone short of work in order that more orders might be given to the private armament firms. It was alleged that private firms had been subsidised to keep up equipment in case of war, but had not fulfilled their contracts in this respect.

Undoubtedly the munitions were inadequate to the vast scale of hostilities. The Government was abused for lack of forethought, for sloth and inefficiency. The attack was hastily diverted from the Government and the armament firms, to the munition workers overwhelmed by excessive toil. A twelve hour day and seven day week had become usual and was often exceeded in the munition factories. Nevertheless, Lloyd George received a deputation of employers who declared that drunkenness, and bad time-keeping in the factories were hindering the supply of munitions to the trenches. Under his sponsorship their charges were given wide currency as incontrovertible fact. Keir Hardie, acutely ill, flashed out a protest:¹

¹ At a demonstration held in connection with the I.L.P. Annual Conference at Norwich.