

had been struck; the Militant Suffrage movement had begun.

The days of the Tory Government were running out. On October 13th, Sir Edward Grey was coming to the historic Manchester Free Trade Hall to announce the policy of the coming Liberal Government. The W.S.P.U. was to meet him with the question: "Will the Liberal Government give women the vote?" Unless he gave a definite undertaking in the affirmative, which was considered improbable, for he had refused to receive a deputation, a disturbance was to be made, which would cause a sensation throughout the country. Mrs. Pankhurst had to consider her registrarship, but Christabel set out for the meeting with the words: "I shall sleep in prison to-night!" She was accompanied by a new recruit, Annie Kenney, an Oldham cotton operative.

Grey refused to answer the question. The girls were thrown out, and were arrested after a struggle in the hall and an attempt to speak in the street outside. When the turmoil had subsided, Grey said: "As far as I can understand, the trouble arose from a desire to know my opinion on Women's Suffrage. That is a question which I could not deal with here to-night, because it is not, and I do not think it is likely to be, a Party question."

Christabel was ordered imprisonment for a week, Annie Kenney for three days, in lieu of fines which they refused to pay. Mrs. Pankhurst hurried to the cells with proud congratulations, pleading in motherly solicitude: "You have carried it far enough; now I

think you ought to let me pay your fines and take you home," "If you pay my fine I will never go home again," her daughter answered hotly.¹ Mrs. Pankhurst was deeply moved. Keir Hardie telegraphed: "The thing is a dastardly outrage; but do not worry, it will do immense good to the cause. Can I do anything?" He was the only prominent person who uttered a word of support. The Press was unanimous in hostility; Suffragists throughout the country silent; but the big Manchester public gave the prisoners a tremendous ovation. Christabel was threatened with expulsion from Manchester University, and obliged to pledge herself to refrain from making any further disturbance. The rest of us must continue the fight.

The Conservatives resigned on December 4th. Campbell-Bannerman formed a Liberal Government. A General Election was called for the New Year. In town after town, where Cabinet Ministers appeared, we raised our little white banners, uttered our cry: "Will the Liberal Government give women the vote?" were violently ejected, held our meetings outside. Sometimes the people struck us with sticks and umbrellas; they were wild to get the Tories out and thought we were trying to help them. Twenty years of Conservative rule had left a big crop of reforms overdue. But everywhere we had some support. In Manchester the audiences often prevented Winston Churchill speaking because he refused to answer us.

Mrs. Pankhurst was in Merthyr Tydfil working for

¹ *Vide My Own Story* by Emmeline Pankhurst (Eveleigh Nash, 1914).