

family. They have permitted me to read your interesting letters, and we have all wanted to be posted on the situation.¹⁸¹

Shortly after Sylvia's return to England, imprisoned suffragettes, once again denied the status of political prisoners, began hunger striking and were forcibly fed. Sylvia wrote a letter of protest, pointing out the dangers of force feeding, which was brought to the Home Secretary's notice by Sir Charles Henry. Sir Henry was 'a virulent anti-Suffragist' but he was also the brother-in-law of Alice and Irene Lewisohn.¹⁸² Alice Lewisohn's memoir of her work in theatre, published in 1959, departs briefly from her theme to recall her visit to England in the summer of 1914 in which she was profoundly struck by the contrast of Sylvia's campaign in East London and the complacency of the English upper class:

A scuffle with the police, then Sylvia Pankhurst shoved back into prison, threatening a hunger strike which might end in death. Meanwhile, suave and decorous Parliament lords and ladies, cabinet ministers, politicians, sipping tea on the terrace, with an air of 'all's well with the world'. Delegations, marches and bands, festivities and trooping of the colours for his Majesty's birthday, turbulent meetings of non-enfranchised women labourers.¹⁸³

Sylvia's work to create an East London campaign was undertaken alongside Emerson, who had moved to London to participate in the British suffragette movement. Emerson, with her immense experience of organising amongst working-class women in the Chicago garment workers' strike, played an important role in East London and was appointed honorary organiser 'to keep all the others going'.¹⁸⁴ After their expulsion from the WSPU, Emerson suggested that the now independent ELFS establish a newspaper of their own, launched in March 1914 as the *Woman's Dreadnought*.¹⁸⁵ In the quest to fund this project, Sylvia turned to America's millionaire suffragist, Alva Belmont. However, Belmont, who had formed a close friendship with Emmeline and Christabel, turned down Sylvia's request, leaving her to politely retreat, conceding that she could quite understand your great need for funds in America.¹⁸⁶

Sylvia herself was able to survive on the money she had made in the 1912 tour, despite her fears at the time that it would prove unprofitable. She later tried to support herself by offering articles to the American press. She was not always successful in her endeavours – the article she offered to the *Century Magazine* on Norway did not appear, while

a second article was sent twice to the *New York Times* to no avail.¹⁸⁷ However, in July 1913, the *New York Times* published Sylvia's account of her work in East London, for which she was paid \$72.90.¹⁸⁸ The following month, *McClure's Magazine* published her harrowing account of forcible feeding.¹⁸⁹ Twenty years later, Sylvia would re-use much of this material written for the American public in *The Suffragette Movement*.

Meanwhile, Sylvia and Emerson expanded the ELFS, eventually renting a house and hall on the Old Ford Road to be the centre for their organisation and to provide wider services: 'to organize a lending library, a choir, lectures, concerts, a "Junior Suffragettes' Club," and so on.'¹⁹⁰ Sylvia and Emerson seemed to be applying the model of the Settlement, based in the community, to political agitation. This was certainly the impression of Lavinia Dock, the nurse at the Henry Street Settlement who had been among the first three women to greet Sylvia upon her arrival in New York in 1911. Dock was in London in the spring of 1914 and wrote to an American friend about calling on Sylvia and Emerson where she said, applying a New Yorker's geography to the city, she observed their 'work among the toilers on the East Side':

Sylvia has the settlement idea in her mind. She was deeply impressed with our settlement, especially, and she is planning a settlement life down there for herself ... Then, after the vote is won, she looks forward to settlement life, a return to her art, but always keeping a political centre as a main purpose. She is a wonderful and inspired girl.¹⁹¹

Sylvia would never return to her art, but the ELFS would become increasingly like a Settlement, especially when the impoverishment occasioned by the First World War saw them establish cost-price restaurants, a nursery, a toy-making workshop and medical services. Emerson left the day after the Women's Hall on the Old Ford Road was opened, sailing for America (though she would later return to help the ELFS during the war). She had suffered immensely from force feeding in prison and had been a target of police brutality: a blow to the head had fractured her skull. Sylvia had persuaded her to leave for her own sake: 'I had the greatest difficulty to induce her to go, and suffered many a painful hour of distressful heart-searching on her account. I was grieved to lose her.'¹⁹² An undated letter from Emerson to Sylvia, which was probably written on the occasion of their second parting during the First World War and which was preserved by Sylvia in her papers, conveys how Emerson felt